

And just like that, the Summer comes to an end (at least weather-wise) and Fall is distinctly in the air (besides the smoke that hangs over NWA at the moment!). The **Ozarks Chapter of FFRF** continues to hit new milestones, and we've firmly cemented our presence in the area. From our successful speaker series, to tabling at Farmers Markets and Pride Events, all the way to Denver for the FFRF National Convention, the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF was "omnipresent".

For those who were there on our **3rd Annual Constitution Day** event with Seth Andrews, what a great evening it was! With his presentation titled *Seth Andrews VS. God: Who is the Better Intelligent Designer?*, a group of over 50 people came together to listen to this entertaining set. Seth was kind enough to stay around after the presentation, meeting with everyone who wished to say hello, and was generous in signing autographs to all who wanted one. We appreciate Seth Andrews traveling to Northwest Arkansas, and thank Northwest Arkansas Community College for allowing us to host this event. And a BIG thank you to everyone who traveled from afar to join and support the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF as we observed the importance of the Establishment Clause in the Constitution!!



Seth Andrews, acclaimed activist & author, presenting to the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF on Tuesday, September 17, 2024



Group photo with Seth Andrews

(if there was a God, he wouldn't let the speaker stand in the back row ;)

At the end of September, the 47th Annual FFRF National Convention was held in Denver, CO. FFRF has always done a great job curating a fabulous list of speakers, and this year was no different. From Dan Barker & Annie Laurie-Gaylor, to Ron Reagan (Jr.), the weekend was inspiring and motivating. Gail & George Naidl, along with me, were the attendees representing our chapter. As this was my third convention, I made an effort to network with the top brass within FFRF.org and shared my business insights on how to strengthen the organization. I'm really excited by how receptive FFRF.org has been, and even more excited that some of these ideas are being implemented, like a page in the monthly Freethought Today dedicated to happenings at the local chapters. Moreover, this convention illustrated that the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF is one of the more active groups in the nation, so kudos to everyone for making this happen. And as a cherry on top, I engaged with several of the speakers, and many were open to the idea of visiting the Ozark region and meeting with our chapter. Good things in store for 2025!!



Chris Sweeny (Ozarks Chapter of FFRF) with Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.



Chris Sweeny with Mickey Dollens, Member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives



Chris Sweeny (Ozarks FFRF), David Williamson (Central Florida Freethought), Adam Greenberg (husband of Kate) and Kate Cohen (Washington Post columnist and author of *We of Little Faith: Why I Stopped Pretending to Believe (and Maybe You Should Too)*)

As we wrap up the summer season, it's important to reflect on all that was accomplished and give recognition to those who participated. During 2024, our group:

- Volunteered at the NWA Women's Shelter and Elizabeth Richardson Center in Rogers, AR.
- Picked up trash along a one-mile stretch of AR-12 as part of Arkansas Adopt-A-Highway.
- Held monthly tabling events at the Bentonville & Fayetteville Farmers Markets from April through October.
- Sponsored a 30 day billboard run during the month of April.
- Participated in Pride Events in Fort Smith and Fayetteville
- Hosted a Summer Speaker series, which included Matthew D. Taylor (Protest Scholar at the Institute for Islamic, Christian & Jewish Studies), Christopher Line (Staff Attorney with FFRF) and Seth Andrews (Author, Activist and host of the Thinking Atheist).
- Held our 3rd Annual Constitution Day Event on September 17th.
- Represented our chapter at the 47th Annual FFRF National Convention in Denver, CO.
- Created an official Ozarks Chapter of FFRF logo and had t-shirts made.

I want to recognize and thank several people who have volunteered their time to this cause, including **James Brazeal, LaDonna Powell, Ryan Bradburn, Sarah Nickerson, George & Gail Naidl, Chip Ballew, Julie Odum, Bill & Linda Farrell, Linda Laue** and all of the other individuals who

have given so much to our nascent organization. Collectively, we've been able to do wonderful things in our community, and I'm excited for what the future holds!

As we move into the fall, we still have several events on the horizon we'd love to have you join. Here are the events coming up over the next few months:

October 20th (Sunday) - 10:00am to 11:00am

- Sunday Secular Meetup - With the season settling down, we will be headed back to Ozark Natural Foods (380 N College Ave, Fayetteville, AR 72701) for our monthly business meeting & discussion. All are welcome to attend. Invite your secular friends! James Brazeal will be leading this meeting.

October 26th (Saturday) - 7:30am to 12:30pm

- **Fayetteville Farmers Market** - our last farmers market event of the 2024 season, come visit us in front of the Bank of Fayetteville (1 S Block Ave, Fayetteville, AR 72701).

November 24th (Sunday) - 11:00am

- The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be speaking at the **Eureka Unitarian Universalist Fellowship** (17 Elk St, Eureka Springs, AR 72632). This event is free and open to the public. After the speech, there will be a social meetup at **Gotahold Brewing** at 1:00pm. We invite all our members to mix & mingle with the freethinking community in Eureka Springs!

December 14th (Saturday) - 5:00pm

- **Bentonville Christmas Parade** - The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF will be applying to participate in the 2024 Bentonville Christmas Parade. After an incredibly successful winter solstice float, our group hopes to return bigger and better in 2024. More details to follow!

We will also be looking to add a volunteer opportunity as we approach the holidays, and for those interested, we will be partnering with the **Arkansas Society of Freethinkers** to sponsor a "Bill of Rights" Nativity Display at the Capitol Building in Little Rock. More details to follow in next month's newsletter.

In closing, I'd be remiss not to mention the importance of voting. As citizens of the United States, we have the privilege to have our voices heard on who we want to represent us in government. This right should not be taken lightly. Regardless of your political affiliation, the most important thing a citizen can do is VOTE! Democracy requires participation and we each have a civic duty to uphold our freedoms. Please do your part and GO VOTE! USA!!!

Respectfully,

Chris Sweeny
Ozarks Chapter of FFRF.org
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