



Hi James,

A Happy Belated New Year to everyone! According to Larry David, it's well past the point to wish people a Happy New Year, but since this is our first newsletter of the year, we'll give ourselves a pass! ;-)

I hope everyone is staying warm and safe this weekend! A quick programming note, we postponed our volunteer event at the Northwest Arkansas Women's Shelter Thrift Store to next **Saturday, January 31st**. We hope to see you there!

Although January is considered a quiet month, the constant battering of the wall separating church and state never ends! The first bit of news comes from Bentonville School District, where [LifeWise Academy](#) has announced they are starting their first program at Gamble Elementary School in Centerton.

For those unaware, LifeWise Academy "*provides Bible Education to public school students during school hours*". LifeWise removes students from campus, which raises a lot of concerns about church-state separation, potential coercion (especially with treats/incentives), missing core subjects, and the distinct possibility of proselytizing rather than just character education. This is another shocking intrusion of religion in what is supposed to be a secular institution. First the Ten Commandments, now LifeWise is knocking on the door of public schools in Northwest Arkansas. Parents and the secular community at large should be aware of this real issue.

Bible based character education starting in January with Gamble Elementary in Centerton!



LifeWise Academy is trying to establish factions in NWA. Let's make our voices heard!

Turning to better news, the **Ozarks Chapter of FFRF** closed out 2025 by donating to three non-profit organizations. Last year, in accordance with FFRF's Annual Charitable Grant, our group donated funds to the following organizations that uphold separation between church & state:

- NPR affiliate station, [KUAF 91.3 Public Radio](#)
- [The OMNI Center for Peace, Justice & Equality](#)
- [Northwest Arkansas Women's Shelter](#)



For the first time, the Ozarks Chapter supported the OMNI Center for Peace, Justice and Equality.



The Ozarks Chapter continued our support of the Northwest Arkansas Women's Shelter.

Entering our 4th year in operation, our chapter is working to expand our presence and invite more citizens of the Ozarks under the tent of secularism. As part of this initiative, we are reaching out to similar like-minded organizations who share similar values and uphold church/state separation. And as of earlier this month, we are proud to announce that the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF is now an affiliate with [American Atheists](#) and [American Humanist Association](#)! These organizations work closely with FFRF on many fronts, and we encourage our members to research and support these organizations.

The screenshot shows the American Atheists website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: LEGAL CENTER, ACTIVISM, NEWS, EVENTS, ABOUT US, and DONATE. The main heading is 'Local Partners and Affiliates'. Below this, there is a text block stating: 'With over 230 affiliates nationwide, American Atheists is dedicated to developing and supporting an active and visible atheist community in the United States. We provide organizational and leadership support to local affiliates and help groups engage on emerging local civil rights issues, advocate for state-level legislation, and build thriving communities.' To the right, under the heading 'Activism', there is a list of links: State Legislation Tracker, Local Partners and Affiliates, American Atheist Magazine, and Billboard Campaigns. Below the text is a 'Map of Local Partners and Affiliates' showing a map of Arkansas with several location pins. A sidebar on the left provides details for the 'AR: Ozarks Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation', including its name, description, website (www.ozarksffrf.org), and a Facebook link. Below the map is a banner for the 'AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION' with the tagline 'ADVOCATING PROGRESSIVE VALUES AND EQUALITY FOR HUMANISTS, ATHEISTS, AND FREETHINKERS'. At the bottom, there is a table listing affiliates in Arkansas.

GROUP NAME	CITY	STATE	CHAPTER/AFFILIATE
Arkansas Society of Freethinkers	Little Rock	AR	Affiliate
Ozarks Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation	Bentonville	AR	Affiliate
Southwest Arkansas Freethinkers	Nashville	AR	Affiliate

The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF is growing our alliance by becoming affiliates of **American Atheists** and **American Humanists**.

Looking ahead to the warmer months, our chapter will be sponsoring a billboard (or billboards) to remind the public Separation Between Church and State is a Constitutional principle that needs to be protected. We're reaching out to our audience to help brainstorm billboard ideas! We'd love to see what ideas you have for a billboard! AI photo generators are awesome and can come up with some pretty crafty ideas! If you have an idea you'd like to submit, please email them to ozarksFFRF@gmail.com no later than **February 21st!** We'll share these with our audience and vote to select a winner. Here is an example of the billboard our group ran in 2024.



The Ozarks Chapter of FFRF is looking to raise awareness via a billboard. Help us brainstorm an idea!

Here is our Calendar of events for the next couple of months!

January 31st (Saturday) - 10:00am to 1:00pm

- [NWA Women's Shelter Thrift Store](#) - this *rescheduled* volunteer opportunity at the Thrift Store supports the NWA Women's Shelter. Consists of sorting clothes and light cleaning. Located at 1622 S 8th St, Rogers, AR 72756.

February 22nd (Sunday) - 10:00am to 11:00am

- **Sunday Secular Meetup** - our second General Meeting of 2026 at the [Meteor Cafe](#) in Fayetteville (417 M.L.K. Jr Blvd #130, Fayetteville, 72701).

March 7th (Saturday) - 2:00pm to 5:00pm (Tulsa, OK)

- [Ozarks FFRF Field Trip!](#) - Join **Seth Andrews**, **Erika "Gutsick Gibbon,"** and **Forrest Valkai** for three short presentations and roughly two hours of lively audience interaction at a freethought event right in the buckle of the Bible Belt. Event is being held at OU Schusterman Learning Center - Perkins Auditorium in Tulsa, OK. Tickets are \$35 per person.

March 15th (Sunday) - 10:00am to 11:00am

- **Secular Sunday Meeting @ Onyx Coffee Springdale** (100 E Emma Ave, Springdale, AR 72764) - Come join us for our monthly business and social meeting.

March 29th (Sunday) - 7:30am to 10:00am

- **Adopt-A-Highway Road Cleanup** - Our first road cleanup of 2026 will start at **Onyx Coffee** (101 E Walnut Ave, Rogers, AR 72756) at **7:30am**. We will carpool from downtown Rogers at 8:00am. The 1 mile section of road takes approximately 90 minutes to clean, and we anticipate returning to Rogers by 10:00am. Orange vests and trash bags will be provided by Benton County. For those able to join us, we recommend wearing long pants, gloves and hat (sunscreen and bug spray, if needed). We have plenty of "grabber tools" to borrow of these can be purchased online separately. Please come support the Ozarks Chapter of FFRF by doing good in our local community!

The **Ozarks Chapter of FFRF** helps bring together the secular community and advocate for separation between church and state. Your support, be it financial or simply showing up to one of our events, makes a meaningful impact and helps grow our cause. Please consider joining us at one of our events, or becoming a member of FFRF National and/or a member of the local Ozarks Chapter (us). We greatly appreciate our followers and supporters!

Finally, our 2026 Speaker Series is slowly coming together, and we'll be excited to announce our lineup by early spring! In the meantime, come visit our updated website for the latest news, archived photos and calendar of events. Check out **OzarksFFRF.org** for more information. Be safe and stay warm out there!

Kind Regards,

Chris Sweeny

Chapter Leader - Ozarks Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation

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www.ozarksffrf.org