



Vol. XXXVIII No. 11
November 2024

HUMANIST Monthly

A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society
Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

Sunday, November 10th, 2024

In Person at 12:30 PM and Online at 1:00 PM

LIVE TO SEE THE DAY: COMING OF AGE IN AMERICAN POVERTY

Kensington, Philadelphia, is distinguished only by its poverty. It is home to Ryan, Giancarlos and Emmanuel, three Puerto Rican children who live among the most marginalized families in the United States. This is the story of their coming-of-age, which is beset by violence--the violence of homelessness, hunger, incarceration, stray bullets, sexual and physical assault, the hypermasculine logic of the streets, and the drug trade. In Kensington, eighteenth birthdays are not rites of passage, but statistical miracles. Although all three are high school dropouts, they are on a quest to defy their fate, and their neighborhood. Nikhil Goyal follows Ryan, Giancarlos and Emmanuel on their mission, plunging deep into their lives as they strive to resist their designated place in the social hierarchy.



Nikhil Goyal

Nikhil Goyal is a sociologist and author. He earned his B.A. at Goddard College, and earned his M.Phil. and Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge. He also served as senior policy advisor on education and children for Chairman Senator Bernie Sanders on the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and Budget. He developed education, child care and child tax credit federal legislation, as well as tuition-free college programs for incarcerated people and correctional workers in Vermont. He has taught sociology at New York University, the University of Vermont, and Wesleyan University. Nikhil has appeared on CNN, Fox, and MSNBC, and written for the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, and Time. His book, which is the subject of this talk, was named Best Book of 2023 by The New Yorker.

This event is free and open to the public. It will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, New York and via Zoom. Light refreshments will be available before the talk, but **please bring your own beverage**. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please follow the instructions below to request an email invitation to attend.

ANYONE WHO IS NOT A CURRENT PAID MEMBER of CDHS can attend. Send an email request to: CDHS.Albany@gmail.com. Please send the request several days prior, or you may log onto our Meetup page: <https://www.meetup.com/Capital-District-Humanist-Society/>, then click on JOIN, then click on ATTEND, and use the RSVP function, and the link will be available.

The Capital District Humanist Society provides a supportive community for exchanging ideas, heightening our knowledge of the world and ourselves, fostering moral and ethical growth, and promoting the principles of secular humanism. CDHS is a member organization for people with humanist values. Our values include commitment to free inquiry, rational thought, lifelong education, democracy, social concern, and fellowship.

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc.

Established 1986

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety>



CDHS is affiliated with:

The American Humanist Association (AHA)

Center for Inquiry (CSI)

Humanists International (HI)

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA)

On Sunday, December 8th, 2024, 12:30 PM (In Person) and 1:00 PM (Online)

The Capital District Humanist Society Presents:

Losing the Dark – The Importance of Dark Skies to Astronomy, Nature, and Us

Finding truly dark skies has gotten harder and harder as humanity has become more urban. This not only makes it difficult for astronomers to see faint night sky objects, it has an effect on wildlife who also take their cues from the stars. Join Dr. Mindy Townsend, astronomer with the Dudley Observatory at Siena as she discusses the unintended consequences of lighting up the world.

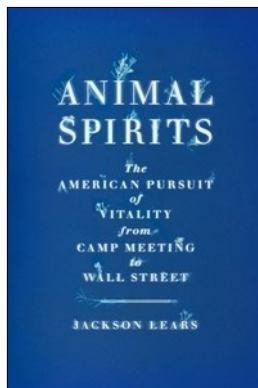


Dr. Mindy Townsend

Dr. Mindy Townsend is the Dudley Astronomer with Siena College in Loudonville, NY. After earning a BA in Political Science, a BS in Physics, and then a Law Degree, and passing her bar, she then returned to her original passion for space and astronomy, and received a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Kansas where her dissertation focused on how very massive galaxies grow. She has over 5 years experience conducting outreach and communicating science with K-12 students and the public.

This program will take place both in person (at 12:30 PM) and online (at 1:00 PM) via Zoom. The in-person event will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, NY. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be available at the in-person meeting before the speaker's presentation. Current paid CDHS members will automatically receive an invite to the on-line meeting via email. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please see page 1 to request an email invitation to attend.

CDHS Book Group is reading *Animal Spirits: The American Pursuit of Vitality from Camp Meeting to Wall Street* by Jackson Lears. The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays.



Contact Frank Robinson if you would like to join the spirited and informative discussion.

CDHS Executive Council

Executive Director	Don Porterfield
Acting Secretary	Vacant
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Publications	Carol Quantock
Social Activities	Candace Fuller
Membership, Telephone	Judith Herbert
Meetup Coordinator	Fred Levine
Compliance	Vacant
Member at Large	Sherry Levine

Appointed Positions

Hospitality	Sue Parry
Room Arrangements	Frank Robinson
Caring Network	Rosina Ansaldo

Did Ulysses S. Grant Predict This About the Next Civil War?

*"Let us begin by guarding against every enemy threatening the perpetuity of free republican institutions," President Grant advised.
by David Mikkelsen, originally published in Snopes, January 17, 2021*

On Jan. 6, 2021, the U.S. Capitol was attacked by a mob of President Donald Trump's supporters seeking to prevent certification of Joe Biden's victory over Trump in the 2020 presidential election. One of the many news reports that followed in the aftermath of that event noted the existence of "far-right talk of a coming civil war" among the Capitol rioters, who had been motivated by false claims propagated by Trump that the election had been "stolen" and "rigged."

In that climate, social media users began circulating a purported quotation from Ulysses S. Grant, Commanding General of the U.S. Army during the American Civil War, and 18th president of the United States from 1869 to 1877. According to that quotation, Grant once predicted that "if we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence," that war would not be waged between regional factions, but "between patriotism and intelligence on one side, and superstition, ambition, and ignorance on the other":

"If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side, and superstition, ambition, and ignorance on the other."

This statement is recorded as having been uttered by Grant. The occasion was a speech given at the Annual Reunion of the Army of the Tennessee in Des Moines, Iowa, on Sept. 29, 1875.

As Grant approached his last full year in the White House, and the coming of the nation's centennial celebration, he spoke of the importance of ensuring an educated citizenry and maintaining the separation of church and state in order to protect the rights enshrined in the U.S. Constitution — and to head off a conflict with the forces of "superstition, ambition, and ignorance":

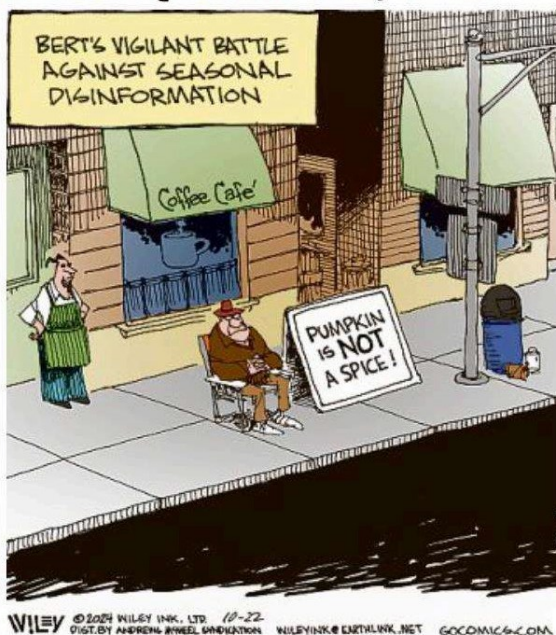
"I do not bring into this assemblage politics, certainly not partisan politics, but it is a fair subject for soldiers in their deliberations to consider what may be necessary to secure the prize for which they battled in a republic like ours. Where the citizen is sovereign and the official the servant, where no power is exercised except by the will of the people, it is important that the sovereign — the people — should possess intelligence.

The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is to preserve us as a free nation. If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's, but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side, and superstition, ambition, and ignorance on the other.

Now in this centennial year of our national existence, I believe it a good time to begin the work of strengthening the foundation of the house commenced by our patriotic forefathers one hundred years ago, at Concord and Lexington. Let us all labor to add all needful guarantees for the more perfect security of free thought, free speech, and free press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiments, and of equal rights and privileges to all men, irrespective of nationality, color, or religion.

Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support, no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school. Resolve that the State or Nation, or both combined, shall furnish to every child growing up in the land, the means of acquiring a good common-school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan, or atheistic tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate. With these safeguards, I believe the battles which created the Army of the Tennessee will not have been fought in vain."

NON SEQUITUR Wiley Miller



Join the bunch for lunch! We will gather at a location TBD on November 21 at 11:30 AM. December's date is the 19th. Please let Rosina Ansaldo know by Wednesday evening if you'll be joining them.

NOTE: We're looking for more suggestions for restaurants for the Lunch Bunch. We'd like to give our local eateries a chance by rotating them every few months and returning to the ones that get enthusiastic thumbs up. Please send ideas to Rosina Ansaldo. Thanks!

RECAP OF OUR OCTOBER SPEAKER'S TALK

by Don Porterfield

Dr. Lee Dugatkin's presentation, *Well-Connected Animals: Social Networks & the Complexity of Animal Societies*, was based on research about the influence of social networks and information sharing on animal behavior. He believes this research can provide insights into the evolution of human social behavior. Dr. Dugatkin used the concept of social networks to emphasize their role in shaping animal behavior and the importance of understanding their structure. He discussed studies of three different species: macaque monkeys on an isolated island near Puerto Rico; bottle-nose dolphins along the Brazilian coast; and chimpanzees in Uganda.

A troupe of macaque monkeys were introduced to the deserted Cayo Santiago Island in the mid-20th century and have been the focus of ongoing studies since then. Lee indicated that grooming behavior was a good indicator of the degree and strength of social connections within various subgroups of the monkeys. In general, these subgroups did not intermingle. He noted that Hurricane Maria in 2017 led to significant changes in the social grooming networks, with individuals forming more friendships post-hurricane. The study also found that the number of babies produced increased significantly after the hurricane. Lee emphasized the importance of understanding these dynamics, as they have implications for how both animals and humans deal with natural catastrophes.

Studies of dolphins near the Brazil coast found a unique system involving social networks within the dolphin population and how one of the dolphin networks interacts with local fishermen to the benefit of both. One of the dolphin networks would signal fishermen when their mutual prey (mullet), were in the area. The fisherman were able catch more fish because they had learned where the mullet school was located and the dolphins were able to catch and eat more of their prey as the mullets fled the fisherman's nets.

A researcher studying chimpanzees in the Boudango forest in Uganda witnessed the creation of a new tool, a moss sponge, by a dominant chimpanzee called Nick. The researcher noticed that after Nick created the sponge to collect water from shallow depressions, other chimps in his immediate social network began making their own moss sponges, presumably after they observed Nick's behavior. Chimpanzees in other social networks, which did not observe Nick's behavior, did not create or use moss sponges. However, a single chimpanzee outside of Nick's social network found a discarded moss sponge and learned how to make and use the tool after examining it.

Dr. Dugatkin noted that these three cases and the complexity of social networks in other animal species, including honeybees, crickets, kangaroos, and whales show how information is passed from one individual to others. Lee also suggested that someone's propensity to join a particular political group can be illustrated, in part, by the behavior of house finches, where males with more red feathers tend to stay in their group, while those with less red plumage leave to find other groups where they can do better.

A recording of Ben's presentation can be found on the CDHS YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/vlu5itu9F4I>.

Refreshments Volunteers Still Needed for 2025

Sue Parry reports that for the remainder of 2024, enough volunteers have signed up to bring refreshments to monthly meetings. Unless otherwise announced, meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month. Light snacks/finger foods such as chips and dips, cookies, cheese and crackers, etc. are what works the best. **Refreshments volunteers are not responsible for beverages, as members will bring their own.** Please see below for more details:

- Volunteers for 2024: **November 10: Olga and Don Porterfield; December 8: Carol Quantock.**
- Venue: Pinnacle Living at Forts Ferry, 45 Forts Ferry Road, Latham, NY 12110 in the Library/Lounge.
- Setup time: arrive between 12:00 noon—12:15 PM to set up food table; plates, utensils, etc. are located in the CDHS cart.
- Plan on 20-25 in-person attendees, but choose food that you'd be willing to take home if there are leftovers, but usually there are people who are interested in taking leftovers.

To volunteer or for more information, please contact Sue Parry at sueparryharmony@gmail.com.

Pastor: If we "publicly execute a few women," false rape allegations would end

Joel Webbon wants to see Old Testament law adopted in order to punish certain women

(Excerpted from Friendly Atheist, October 25, 2024)

Proving once again that patriarchal culture is alive and well in white evangelical churches, Christian pastor Joel Webbon said during a recent sermon that women who falsely accuse men of rape should be murdered by the government.

Webbon, pastor of Covenant Bible Church in Georgetown, Texas (not far from Austin), argued that ancient Israeli law mandated this. If you accused someone of a crime, and your allegation was found to be false, you would face whatever punishment the accused would have suffered. If the alleged crime warranted the death penalty, then the lying accuser would be put to death. And it would be done in public.

That, he continued, should apply to women who falsely accuse men of rape.

"In Israel, and this should be the law of the land in our country and every country still to this day, this is a timeless principle, a timeless, universal truth," Webbon preached. "If you perjure yourself by bearing false witness accusing somebody else, whatever the penalty would have been for that person had they been found guilty, then that penalty should fall on your head for falsely accusing them."

"If that were to occur and the just penalties were to be enforced, you, the false accuser, is now put to death," Webbon declared. "And that's a public death. It's a public sentence, publicly carried out, then the citizens of these United States of America, you know what they would do? #MeToo would end real fast. False accusing, playing the victim when you're actually not; you know how to end that real fast? All you have to do is publicly execute a few women who have lied."

Upon hearing the reaction from the congregation, Webbon added in the original sermon, "There are nicer ways to say that... The reason I say things the way I do is because I'm convinced there's not a better way to say it. I think that's precisely the way to say it."

Even though Webbon believes rapists should suffer the same fate—state-sponsored execution—you can tell that it's the women who lie, not the men who actually commit those crimes, that get him more riled up.

After *Right Wing Watch* shared that clip, Webbon responded by basically saying, Yeah, that's exactly what I meant: "The biblical penalty for rape is death. Therefore, if a woman lies about being raped, the biblical penalty for her is also death."

There are obviously all kinds of problems with his Christian fantasy here, none of which garnered any bit of thought. The obvious one is that rapists today aren't put to death. Even if that was the penalty in the Bible, it's not our law. And conservative Christian pastors, no matter how much they whine about being persecuted, have never spent much time pushing for harsher sentences for men who commit sins. If they did, they might have to say goodbye to a bunch of their religious colleagues and preferred political candidates.

He also said "#MeToo would end real fast." Why would it end? The movement wasn't abuse false allegations. It was about women sharing stories about how they've been survivors of abuse in order to let others know they're not alone. Unless, of course, you believe that the women telling those stories include a whole bunch of liars.

Then, there's a question of how they would know the woman is lying. Many women don't speak up at all after being assaulted because they're aware of the negative repercussions awaiting them. If they speak up at all, we've seen what happens: They're often targeted, harassed, threatened. Even if they have the courage to deal with all that, it's still incredibly hard to prove that a man committed the crime.

If Webbon's law went into effect, the end result would be more men raping women because women would be pressured to keep quiet about it lest they be accused of telling a lie. He doesn't care.

None of this is surprising coming from Webbon, though. He is, as *Mother Jones'* Kiera Butler memorably described, a TheoBro. He's a guy who keeps a running list of his own controversies, like when he says husbands should control what their wives read and that Christians who willingly live in California are stupid.

He's also a proud Christian Nationalist, and his partner-in-theology, Oklahoma State Senator Dusty Deever, filed a bill earlier this year that would have enacted Webbon's little fantasy, subjecting false accusers to whatever punishment their accusation warranted. (That bill, thankfully, went nowhere.) Deever said he just wanted to enact biblical Old Testament law. Even though Oklahoma already punishes false criminal allegations with a fine and/or imprisonment, he wanted to go even further to please his God.

Webbon is not considered a fringe pastor like the New Independent Fundamentalist Baptists I've covered in the past, but he too shares their bloodlust. Those guys fantasize about the government executing gay men and Webbon wants the government to execute lying women. But they're all basing their dreams on Old Testament law, as if that's the best way to go.

By the way, his church is not big. As the Daily Mail once put it, "The bearded cleric runs his church from a roadside restaurant outside Austin, but boasts nearly 200,000 followers on social media." That's what this is all about. He's a right-wing wannabe influencer who cosplays as a pastor and knows the best way to get attention is by linking the Bible to the most outrageous things he can think of—like when he said he doesn't trust Black doctors because he assumes they're less likely to be qualified than white ones.

But his brand of faith is the kind that's on the ascendance when we talk about Christian Nationalism.

Next Social: NYS Military Museum, November 14th

The temperatures are getting cooler and the days are getting shorter. With that in mind, we have scheduled a trip to Saratoga Springs to visit the NYS Military Museum and check out the craft beers, etc. at Druthers Brewing Company, 381 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

The museum houses artifacts, diaries and other primary documents that tell the story of NYS's prominent military history and contributions to the veterans.

Please note the date is **THURSDAY, November 14th** beginning at 10:30 AM at the museum, 61 Lake Avenue, Saratoga Springs. We decided to try a weekday to see if more people could attend. Your feedback is welcome.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Dee Fuller at candacelf13@gmail.com to let her know if you will be joining us for either the museum visit, lunch, or both.

October Social Recap

It was a spectacular fall day at Thacher Park and Indian Ladder Farms for the October Social. As can be seen in the photos, the gathering was small but enthusiastic. Let's give a big shout-out to Dee Fuller for arranging all our socials and making them such a success.



In Memory of Arlene Gilbert, 1933—2024

Long-time CDHS member Arlene Gilbert died peacefully on October 9, 2024 at home, surrounded by family, at the age of 90. She had been hospitalized for a few weeks but decided she wanted to cease all further medical treatment, except palliative care, and was able to go home with hospice assistance. Her five adult children and many of her grandchildren came to see her in her final days, and she seemed quite content. Arlene was an intelligent, fierce, and determined woman, who was active in many important causes locally and world wide. We were all so lucky to have known her. The family will host a memorial service at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Albany on Saturday, November 9, at 2:00 PM. In lieu of flowers, for those who wish, Arlene would be pleased if you supported one of these organizations: Doctors Without Borders, PBS, or the ACLU. Here is a link to the full obituary, which was printed in the Times Union on October 20: <https://edition.timesunion.com/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=7523b660-1114-46ca-bcd6-1a0c5b7f5944>.

Early Voting in New York Ends November 3rd!

As a service to Humanist Monthly readers, below is a list of the websites of local county boards of elections, which include each location's hours for early voting. In order to check your voter registration status, ballot information, and other important data, copy and paste the URL into your browser to see if your registration information is current.

New York State:

<https://elections.ny.gov/>

Albany County:

<https://www.albanycountyny.gov/departments/board-of-elections>

Columbia County:

<https://elections.columbiacountyny.com/home>

Delaware County:

<https://www.co.delaware.ny.us/departments/elec/elec.htm>

Fulton County:

<https://www.fultoncountyny.gov/board-elections>

Greene County:

<https://www.greenegovernment.com/departments/board-of-elections>

Hamilton County:

<https://www.hamiltoncounty.com/government/board-elections>

Herkimer County:

<https://www.herkimercountyny.gov/government/board-of-elections/>

Montgomery County:

<https://www.co.montgomery.ny.us/web/sites/departments/boe/default.asp>

Otsego County:

https://www.otsegocountyny.gov/departments/board_of_elections/

Rensselaer County:

<https://www.rensco.com/429/Elections>

Saratoga County:

<https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/departments/board-of-elections/>

Schenectady County:

<https://www.schenectadycountyny.gov/boe>

Schoharie County:

<https://www4.schohariecounty-ny.gov/departments/elections/>

Warren County:

<https://www.warrencountyny.gov/boe>

Washington County:

<https://www.washingtoncountyny.gov/197/Board-of-Elections>

Executive Council News

CDHS Election Results

The results of the CDHS election for Executive Council (EC) are in and Fred Levine was overwhelming re-elected as our Programs and Publicity Coordinator. Congratulations to Fred for being recognized for the great job he does finding and publicizing speakers for our monthly meetings. Thanks to all the members who participated in the CDHS election.

EC Needs Your Help

CDHS' continuing existence is highly dependent on members stepping forward in various ways to insure it remains a viable, thriving organization. All members are welcome to attend EC meetings to see how things work and whether you might be able help out. If you would like to make a positive difference for CDHS, reach out to a member of the EC about how to attend an EC meeting. You might be pleasantly surprised to find a good opportunity for you that may enhance the benefit you will get from our unique organization. Members with ideas, who are willing to help bring them to fruition would be most welcome.

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc. PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209

(518) 533-2666 E-mail us at cdhs.albany@gmail.com

Visit us on the web at humanistsociety.net

The Capital District Humanist Society (CDHS) is an independent, non-profit (and non-prophet), non-partisan and strictly non-religious educational and social organization for those who share humanist values: commitment to education, rational and free inquiry, democracy, social concerns and fellowship. CDHS is affiliated with the four major humanist organizations - the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and the Humanists International (HI).

There are five types of CDHS member support: Individual, \$50/yr.; Family, \$80/yr.; Sustaining, \$100/yr.; Patron, \$150/yr.; and Lifetime Member, one contribution of \$1000 or more.

Members receive our publication, *The Humanist Monthly*, and vote each September on the make-up of the governing Executive Council. Members are eligible for election to the Executive Council and may also serve as appointed officials. Members are welcome to attend Executive Council meetings.

The IRS recognizes CDHS as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all donations, both cash and materials with established "fair market value", qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

Donations are gratefully accepted to help speed our growth. CDHS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the IRS Code. Financial disclosure information and our annual report are available upon request.

If you know of someone who may be interested in CDHS, please pass this newsletter along or give us the name; we will send a sample copy or two with no obligation.

We value your input. In the best humanist tradition, CDHS has no rigid picture of itself. We ask you to join us, not follow us. What activities and services would you like CDHS to provide its members? Send us your suggestions, questions, and comments.



CDHS

PO Box 11209

Loudonville, NY 12211-0209

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Address service requested

CDHS ++ PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209 ++ (518) 533-2666

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MEMBER SUPPORT FORM

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City ++ State ++ Zip _____

Email _____ Fax _____

How did you hear about the Humanist Society? _____

All this information will be included in our Directory, which is distributed to members only, unless you request otherwise by checking and signing here: ☐ I do not want to be listed in the CDHS Member Directory _____

Levels of Member Support

Annual Payment **Date** ____/____/____

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership | \$ 50 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership | \$ 80 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member | \$100 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$150 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | one-time contribution of \$1000 or more | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional tax-deductible donation | \$ _____ | _____ |

Please make checks payable to CDHS

☐ Please send me additional information