



# Rational Inquiry

Dare  
to  
think

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

NEWSLETTER

WINTER, 2006

The San Diego Association for Rational Inquiry is dedicated to the encouragement of rational thought in all areas of human affairs. Composed of citizens from every walk of life, and with a variety of technical, scientific, legal, and humanistic backgrounds, the association strives to encourage rational discourse in the life of San Diego. For more information, see page seven.



February Meeting

## How Do Archaeologists Know What They Know?

By Cindy Stankowski and Keith Taylor

We have a good history of San Diego dating back to the earliest visits of Juan Cabrillo the Spanish explorer who sailed into our bay in 1542. But people were here before that. How long were they here? Where did they come from? How do we know?.

Less than 1% of the stuff of our lives are preserved in the archaeological record. So with all this “missing” data, how do we know what we know? SDARI people will be glad to know that the answer lies in hard science: relative and absolute dating, obsidian hydration dating, tree ring analysis and spectrography. Another part is detective work, linking ephemeral clues together to paint a picture of the past. An important com-

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## FEDERAL JUDGE SAYS NO TO INTELLIGENT DESIGN

by Barbara B. Hemmingsen

The Dover Area School District is a comprehensive K-12 school district that educates 3,600 students who live in a suburban/rural area in York County, Pennsylvania. (Ref 1) The Dover Area School Board of Directors voted 6-3 in October, 2004, that : “Students will be made aware of gaps/problems in Darwin’s theory and of other theories of evolution including, but not limited to, intelligent design. Note: Origins of Life is not taught.” (Ref 2)

A month later, the School District announced that beginning January 2005, teachers would be required to read the following statement to the ninth grade biology class at Dover High School: “The Pennsylvania Academic Standards require students to learn about Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and eventually to take a standardized test of which evolution is a part. Because Darwin’s Theory is a theory, it continues to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The Theory is not a fact. Gaps in the Theory exist for which there is

no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations. Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin’s view. The reference book, *Of Pandas and People*, is available for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves. With respect to any theory, students are encouraged to keep an open

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## New Officers

A hearty welcome to our new officers voted in at the November 27, 2005 meeting. They are:

President: Paul Wenger

Vice President: Walt Carver

Secretary and Program Chair: Keith Taylor

Treasurer: Barbara Hemmingsen

Board Member At large: Edvard Hemmingsen



## Rational Musings by the President

Let me start this new role and my first column by introducing myself. My name is Paul Wenger and I am the new president of SDARI. I graduated from UCSD with a degree in economics, but I am not an economist. I am also not a writer/journalist, academic, or scientist. I am a skeptic.

Back in 2003 our community suffered a minor identity crisis when a group of us argued that terms like “atheist” and “skeptic” were unpopular and too negative. This group proposed that we call ourselves *brights*. All of the skeptic and humanist magazines that I was aware of debated the name change. In *Skeptic*, Vol. 10 No. 3, they called it The Big “Bright” Brouhaha. A long list of names was collected and a focus group was asked to rank them. Among the more popular names were “critical thinkers,” “freethinker,” “skeptics,” “rationalists,” and “seekers.” Everyone loved the name “brights”—except for all the people who hated it! “We shouldn’t let others change our name because *they* have slandered it,” responded one reader to the statement that “atheist” is an unpopular name.

Whether you call yourself a bright, a secular humanist, or whatever, I think it’s important that we each choose a name that we like and a simple, brief definition of that name so we can tell people who we are and be more visible. It’s important that we not allow others to label us and define who we are. We

must decide what these terms mean because these terms describe us—not them.

I choose to call myself a skeptic, but defining what that is has taken much thought. Recently I was thinking about the subjects that skeptics investigate: psychics, monsters, UFOs, alternative medicine, pseudoscience, pseudohistory, intelligent design, faith healing, and so on. It occurred to me that *skepticism is the study of deception*—deception by others and self-deception. I like this definition because everyone knows what deception is and everyone knows that they don’t like it.

An AP article in the Jan. 8 **North County Times** titled, “Soldiers question use of more armor despite study,” caught my attention. An Armed Forces medical examiner’s study found that improved body armor could produce a significant reduction in battlefield deaths and injuries. Several of the soldiers interviewed did not agree with the study. Some felt it would be better to have less protection and more mobility. “You can slap body armor on all you want, but it’s not going to help anything. When it’s your time, it’s your time...I’d go out with less body armor if I could,” said one soldier. Other soldiers said that “more body armor is of greater concern at home than among soldiers in Iraq, who have seen firsthand how life and death hang on a sliver of luck...” How do you weigh the Pentagon study against the eyewitness experiences of soldiers on the battlefield?

This story is from *Skeptic*, Vol. 11 No. 3, *The Double-Blind Gaze*.



## Camp Quest Expands to the West

Camp Quest begins operations this summer right here on the West Coast, in California! Under the name, Camp Quest West (CQW), the inaugural camping week will be July 15–21, 2006. CQW has contracted with Camp Watanda in the Gold Country, about 70 miles north of Sacramento for the exclusive use of their facilities during that week.

CQW was recently awarded a grant of \$5,000 by Institute for Humanist Studies (HIS) to help the new organization get up and running. They are operating officially as Atheist Alliance, an IRS 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, and can accept checks under the Camp Quest West name.

CQW is affiliated with National Camp Quest (Ohio), the first secular summer camp for youth in the history of the United States. Camp Quest was specifically designed for children of agnostics, atheists, brights, freethinkers, humanists, Unitarians, or whatever terms might be applied to those who maintain a naturalistic, not supernaturalistic, world view. Campers will be girls and boys ages 8-17.

Camp Quest’s purpose is to build a strong, healthy community among the youth participants. In addition to fun camp activities such as swim-

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ming, canoeing, campfires, stargazing, and outdoor sports, Camp Quest’s knowledgeable counselors and guest volunteers will lead the youth in learning activities that teach them about freethought and humanist principals. Activities cover critical thinking, science, history, civics, and ethics. Campers develop and improve their rational thinking skills in fun, hands-on learning activities and programs.

The steering group for this new camp includes eager volunteers from several freethought groups here in California, including our own SDARI. The members of this group, and their affiliations are as follows:

**Chris Lindstrom**, Camp Director, also Humanist Community Board member

**Jennifer Hallman**, Camp Treasurer, also San Francisco Atheists Steering Committee

**Lydia Rice**, Fundraising Director, also Humanists Community member

**Blair Johnson**, Program Development, also Round Earth Society Cal Poly Pomona

**Dwain Deets**, Marketing Director, also newsletter editor for SDARI

More information is available at the CQW website, at [www.campquestwest.org](http://www.campquestwest.org). The website also includes application forms for prospective campers, means for inquiring about or applying for volunteer activities, and for making donations to the camp online.



Letters From Members

**Irrationality Persists**

*Ed: This letter was inadvertently omitted from the Autumn issue. The commentary is equally pertinent today.*



To the Editor,

In the Saturday, September 24, 2005, issue of the Los Angeles Times (Orange County edition) there is a long article entitled “A Mother’s Denial, a Daughter’s Death”. This heart-breaking story describes how an HIV positive mother refused medication during her pregnancies, refused to have her children tested for the virus, breast-fed her babies and, in fact, denied them appropriate medical intervention because she believes that HIV does not cause AIDS. Her 3 year old daughter died recently of AIDS-related pneumonia. Her belief is based on the claims of UC Berkeley biology professor Peter Duesberg. I wrote an article for *Rational Inquiry* in 2001 about these claims (“The Odd Claims of the HIV Dissenters: HIV does not Cause AIDS”, vol. 6, no. 4, Oct-Dec 2001, available on [www.SDARI.org](http://www.SDARI.org)) in which I

pointed out the lack of scientific evidence for them. I wish the mother had read my article, and the voluminous material on the CDC and National Institutes of Health websites. But maybe

her habit of irrational thinking is too deeply ingrained. She deeply mourns the loss of her daughter who, she says, had simply chosen to “ ‘go home’ ”. According to the article: “She struggled most with the whys. ‘Why our child - so appreciated, so held, so carefully nurtured - and not one ignored, abused or abandoned?’ she wrote. ‘How come what we offered was not enough to keep her here when children with far less - impatient distracted parents, a small apartment on a busy street, extended day care, Oscar Mayer Lunchable - will happily stay?’”

We have a lot of work to do folks.

Barbara B. Hemmingsen,  
Professor of Microbiology,  
Retired,  
San Diego State Univ and  
Treasurer of SDARI



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ponent is held in the cultural aspects of present day people. And some things we just don’t know—yet. Please join us for a presentation on 10,000 years of San Diego history and a new understanding of the past.

Our February speaker’s personal commitment is one that every SDARI member can applaud. She intends to continue to have a positive impact in the community by making new ideas and information accessible in the museum setting.

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An Open Letter  
Concerning  
Religion and Science

“Within the community of Christian believers there are areas of dispute and disagreement, including the proper way to interpret Holy Scripture. While virtually all Christians take the Bible seriously and hold it to be authoritative in matters of faith and practice, the overwhelming majority do not read the Bible literally, as they would a science textbook. Many of the beloved stories found in the Bible – the Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the ark – convey timeless truths about God, human beings, and the proper relationship between Creator and creation expressed in the only form capable of transmitting these truths from generation to generation. Religious truth is of a different order from scientific truth. Its purpose is not to convey scientific information but to transform hearts.”

“We the undersigned, Christian clergy from many different traditions, believe that the timeless truths of the Bible and the discoveries of modern science may comfortably coexist. We believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as ‘one theory among others’ is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children. We believe that among God’s good gifts are human minds capable of critical thought and that the failure to fully employ this gift is a rejection of the will of our Creator. To argue that God’s loving plan of salvation for humanity precludes the full employment of the God-given faculty of reason is to attempt to limit God, an act of hubris. We urge school board members to preserve the integrity of the science curriculum by affirming the teaching of the theory of evolution as a

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Clergy in Support of Teaching Evolution

*Ed: This is the welcoming statement on the “Clergy Letter Project” website [http://www.uwosh.edu/colleges/cols/clergy\\_project.htm](http://www.uwosh.edu/colleges/cols/clergy_project.htm) The open letter is in the sidebar.*

“For too long, the misperception that science and religion are inevitably in conflict has created unnecessary division and confusion, especially concerning the teaching of evolution. I wanted to let the public know that numerous clergy from most denominations have tremendous respect for evolutionary theory and have embraced it as a core component of human knowledge, fully harmonious with religious faith.

In the fall of 2004, I worked with clergy throughout Wisconsin to prepare a statement in support of teaching evolution. We were called to action by a series of anti-evolution policies passed by the school board in Grantsburg, WI. The response was overwhelming. In a few weeks, nearly 200 clergy signed the statement, which we sent to the

Grantsburg school board on December 16, 2004. The outpouring of support from clergy around the country encouraged me to make this a nationwide project.”

See the website mentioned above.

Sincerely,

Michael Zimmerman, Dean  
College of Letters and Sciences  
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

*Ed: According to the website, over 10,100 clergy have signed this letter. On 12 February 2006 scores of Christian churches will discuss the compatibility of religion and science on the 197th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. The intent is stated that religion and science are not adversaries thereby elevating the quality of the national debate on this topic.*



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mind. The school leaves the discussion of the Origins of Life to individual students and their families. As a Standards-driven district, class instruction focuses upon preparing students to achieve proficiency on Standards-based assessments.”(Ref 2)

On December 14, 2004, several parents filed suit in United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania challenging the constitutionality of the October resolution and the November statement under the U.S. Constitution

and the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as Case No. 04cv2688, Tammy Kitzmiller et al. Plaintiffs v. Dover Area School District, et al. Defendants. John E. Jones III was assigned to judge the case. (Ref 2)

Space here does not permit a description of the testimony during the trial, except to say that the lawyers for the Plaintiffs were aided by the National Center for Science Education (Eugenie Scott, Executive Director) in preparing testimony and

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in questioning the witnesses in favor of Intelligent Design (e.g., Michael Behe). The main supporter of Intelligent Design, the Discovery Institute (Ref 3) in Seattle, WA, was leery of this court case and, in a friend-of-the-court brief, asked the court not to equate intelligent design with religion because "...such instruction [in ID] might reflect valid secular purposes and could enhance religious neutrality." The lawyers for the plaintiffs argued against this brief saying it was an improper attempt to get ID into the case without subjecting proponents to cross-examination (Ref 4).

From the conclusion of the decision issued by Judge Jones on Dec. 20, 2005 (Ref. 2):

"The proper application of both the endorsement and Lemon tests to the facts of this case makes it abundantly clear that the Board's ID Policy violates the Establishment Clause. In making this determination, we have addressed the seminal question of whether ID is science. We have concluded that it is not, and moreover that ID cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents.

"Both Defendants and many of the leading proponents of ID make a bedrock assumption which is utterly false. Their presupposition is that evolutionary theory is antithetical to a belief in the existence of a supreme being and to religion in general. Repeatedly in this trial, Plaintiffs' scientific experts testified that the theory of evolution represents good science, is overwhelmingly accepted by the scientific community, and that it in no way conflicts with, nor does it deny, the existence of a divine creator.

"To be sure, Darwin's theory of evolution is imperfect. However, the fact that a scientific theory cannot yet render an explanation on every point should not be used as a pretext to thrust an untestable alternative hypothesis grounded in religion into the science classroom or to misrepresent well-established scientific propositions.

"The citizens of the Dover area were poorly served by the members of the Board who voted for the ID Policy. It is ironic that several of these individuals, who so staunchly and proudly touted their religious convictions in public, would time and again lie to cover their tracks and disguise the real purpose behind the ID Policy.

"With that said, we do not question that many of the leading advocates of ID have bona fide and deeply held beliefs which drive their scholarly endeavors. Nor do we controvert that ID should continue to be studied, debated, and discussed. As stated, our conclusion today is that it is unconstitutional to teach ID as an alternative to evolution in a public school science classroom.

"Those who disagree with our holding will likely mark it as the product of an activist judge. If so, they will have erred as this is manifestly not an activist Court. Rather, this case came to us as the result of the activism of an ill-informed faction on a school board, aided by a national public interest law firm eager to find a constitutional test case on ID, who in combination drove the Board to adopt an imprudent and ultimately unconstitutional policy. The breathtaking inanity of the Board's decision is evident when considered against the factual backdrop which has now been fully revealed through this trial. The students, parents, and teachers of the Dover Area School District deserved better than to be dragged into this legal maelstrom, with its resulting

utter waste of monetary and personal resources.

"To preserve the separation of church and state mandated by the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and Art. I, ¶ 3 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, we will enter an order permanently enjoining Defendants from maintaining the ID Policy in any school within the Dover Area School District, from requiring teachers to denigrate or disparage the scientific theory of evolution, and from requiring teachers to refer to a religious, alternative theory known as ID. We will also issue a declaratory judgment that Plaintiffs' rights under the Constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have been violated by Defendants' actions.

"Defendants' actions in violation of Plaintiffs' civil rights as guaranteed to them by the Constitution of the United States and 42 U.S.C. ¶ 1983 subject Defendants to liability with respect to injunctive and declaratory relief, but also for nominal damages and the reasonable value of Plaintiffs' attorneys' services and costs incurred in vindicating Plaintiffs' constitutional rights.

"NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

"1. A declaratory judgment is hereby issued in favor of Plaintiffs pursuant to 28 U.S.C. ¶¶ 2201, 2202, and 42 U.S.C. ¶ 1983 such that Defendants' ID Policy violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and Art. I, ¶ 3 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

"2. Pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 65, Defendants are permanently enjoined from maintaining the ID Policy in any school within the Dover Area School District.

"3. Because Plaintiffs seek nominal

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damages, Plaintiffs shall file with the Court and serve on Defendants, their claim for damages and a verified statement of any fees and/or costs to which they claim entitlement. Defendants shall have the right to object to any such fees and costs to the extent provided in the applicable statutes and court rules.”  
s/John E. Jones III

John E. Jones III  
United States District Judge

Although this ruling is a victory for those who would have science, not religion, taught in the science classroom, the battle is not over. According to an opinion piece written by John G. West and published in USA Today, Dec. 22, 2005 :

“Contrary to Judge John Jones’ assertions, intelligent design is not a religious-based idea, but instead an evidence-based scientific theory that holds there are certain features of living systems and the universe that are best explained by an intelligent cause. No legal decree can remove the digitally coded information from DNA, nor molecular machines from cells. The facts of biology cannot be overruled by a federal judge. Research on intelligent design will continue to go forward, and the scientific evidence will win out in the end.

“Evolutionists used to style themselves the champions of free speech and academic freedom against unthinking dogmatism. But increasingly, they have become the new dogmatists, demanding judicially-imposed censorship of dissent.” (Ref 5).

Stay tuned.



**References.**

1. <http://www.dover.k12.pa.us/doversd/lib/doversd/Superwebwelcome.htm> (last accessed Dec. 29, 2005).
2. <http://www.ncseweb.org> (last accessed

Dec. 29, 2005). Note: the entire transcript from the trial is available on this website.

3. [www.discovery.org](http://www.discovery.org) (last accessed Dec. 29, 2005).

4. Nussbaum, P. (2005) ‘Design’ proponents look beyond Dover. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* Oct. 20, 2005.

5. <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=3114&program=CSC%20-%20Views%20and%20News> (last accessed Dec. 29, 2005).

**Editor’s comment.** SDARI has sponsored many lectures in the past dealing with this issue. Eugenie Scott gave a well-received lecture in January, 2005, on Evolution vs. Creationism(s). We have also heard from Mark Perakh, a well-known critic of ID, and the author of a recent book *Unintelligent Design*.



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Orthopedic surgeons believed that arthroscopic surgical debridement, a type of knee surgery, was very effective because a month after surgery patients who couldn’t walk before the surgery were running and jumping. One surgeon decided to test it using double-blind, placebo-controlled methodology. The fake surgery worked just as well as the real thing. Given the hundreds of thousands of surgeries performed every year over several decades, thousands of surgeons had been fooled by their own eyes and experiences.

As any decent skeptic knows, eyewitness testimony is unreliable, and that’s why skepticism uses the tools of logic, reason, and science

to try to eliminate human subjectivity and bias when searching for answers. In the case of the body armor, answers that could save lives. I’m not saying that the soldiers are wrong, I don’t have all the evidence.

I’m pointing out how skepticism helps us to weigh the evidence correctly.

Paul Wenger



**A Day Without Church-State Separation**

The San Diego Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State presents Rev. Barry Lynn, Executive Director, speaking on “A Day without Church/State Separation: Unthinkable?” Saturday, Feb. 25, 2006, 3 p.m., Scottish Rite Center, 1895 Camino Del Rio South, San Diego. For more information call 619-850-1559. The meeting is free and open to the public. Stay for a chapter meeting to discuss ways to ensure church-state separation.



**Check it Out**

*Misquoting Jesus : The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why;* by Bart Ehrman (read review at Amazon.com). One reviewer said, “...many interesting stories about the people who were involved in the search to find the real/original New Testament, and this material is rich indeed.”



# Membership Application

I would like to join the San Diego Association for Rational Inquiry. Enclosed is my annual membership fee of \$20 (\$12 for students, seniors, and disabled people, \$6 if younger than 18.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4: \_\_\_\_\_

Special interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: San Diego Association for Rational Inquiry Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
P.O. Box 623  
La Jolla, CA 92038-0623 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact Keith Taylor at 619-421-5844, or check our website at [www.sdari.org](http://www.sdari.org)

## SPEAKER from pg. 3

Cindy Stankowski received a Bachelor's degree *summa cum laude* in Anthropology from San Diego State University and a Master's degree in Museum Studies from San Francisco State University. She has been with the San Diego Archaeological Center since 1996, leading the effort to preserve our archaeological legacy. She brings an understanding of museum management to SDAC and has led symposia on curatorial issues throughout the state. Ms. Stankowski has worked extensively with local American Indian nations to promote cultural use of anthropological collections. She also seeks new and innovative ways for the public to connect with the past, including exhibits, seminars and school presentations.



## Consumer Protection Day

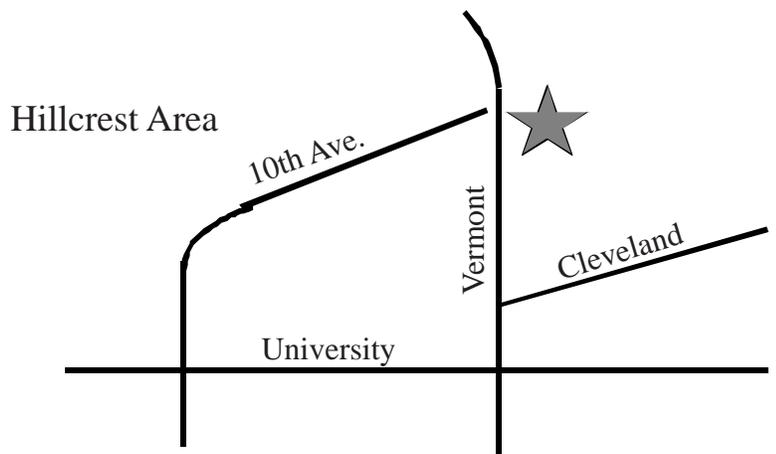
Consumer Protection Day, Saturday, Feb. 4, 2006, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Town & Country Resort Hotel, 500 Hotel Circle North, San Diego. Free admission, parking, exhibits, food and entertainment. RSVP to 1-877-926-8300. Morning panel: Identity theft. Afternoon panel: Financial scams against seniors. Sponsored by AARP, County

Supervisors Horn and Slater-Price, San Diego District Attorney's Office, and other government bodies.



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core component of human knowledge. We ask that science remain science and that religion remain religion, two very different, but complementary, forms of truth." 



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We are on the Web!  
[www.sdari.org](http://www.sdari.org)

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## San Diego Association for Rational Inquiry

President	Paul Wenger
Vice President	Walt Carver
Secretary	Keith R. Taylor
Treasurer	Barbara B. Hemmingsen
Program Chair	Keith R. Taylor
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## *Up-coming events:*

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In the **Joyce Beers Community Center** (see p. 7 for directions):

**Sunday February 26, 2006**

**6 p.m.** Pre-meeting social hour

**7 p.m.** Cindy Stankowski; Topic: "How Do Archaeologists Know What We Know?"

## Lecture Times and Meeting Location

Public lectures are held at 7 p.m. on the fourth Sunday of the month (except December.) The location of the meetings is the Joyce Beers Community center, at the intersection of Vermont and 10th Ave. in the Hillcrest area, near Ralphs and Trader Joe's markets (in Uptown District shopping Center.)

The lectures are free, but a donation of \$5 is suggested.