

# NJHN Board of Directors

## Board Position Slate for 2015-17

Report prepared by Timothy Ridge, Nominating Committee Chairperson

The slate of the NJHN Board of Directors for the coming year includes:

1. Those members who are in mid-term.
2. Those current members with expiring terms who would like to retain their board positions.
3. New board members.

1. The following are mid-term current board members:

**Gary Brill, Patrick Colucci, Michael Jacobsen, Tim Ridge, Bill Schlegel**

2. The following are current board members with expiring terms who would like to retain their positions for the next term (*requiring confirmation vote*):



**Tamar Kieval Brill**

Tamar originally hails from Albany, NY and lived in NYC between 1972 and 1982 for college and graduate school. She has a B.A. in psychology and education from Barnard College, Columbia University, and a M.A. in counseling from NYU. Aside from a five-year stint in corporate America, she's spent all of her working life in higher education, first at NYU and for the last 29 years as at Rutgers University, where she is an assistant dean in the School of Arts and Sciences' Office of Academic Services. Although she was raised in a very observant Jewish household, she realized in college

that she did not believe in God and sought out Humanist organizations about 30 years ago. She has been a member of the NJHN for about six years, though attended many events for much longer than that. She has served as a member of the NJHN Board since 2011, assisting with the membership committee, and has also been involved in the Humanist Community at Rutgers University. Tamar is also a member of the I.L. Peretz Secular Jewish Community. She is married to Gary Brill and they have a 25-year old son, Zach, who is a graduate student at The University of California-Berkeley.



### **Linda Mastellone**

Linda Mastellone has been the Secretary of Board of Directors of the New Jersey Humanist Network since 2011. Linda was a councilwoman for Flemington Borough (2008-10) and a member of the Flemington-Raritan School Board (2011-12). Professionally, Linda was the Executive Director of the Franklin Township Chamber of Commerce and the Events Coordinator for the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce. Both positions helped her learn about non-profit management--including financial matters, organizing, and event planning. When she was an instructor at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, she got involved in the CFI-affiliated secular group RUSH (Rationalists United for Secular Humanism), helping to plan meetings, organizing outreach (like the Friday the 13th superstition tabling complete with ladders, open umbrellas, and lots and lots of breaking mirrors!), and getting to know some of the best and brightest in the secular community. She has used those skills to help NJHN as it continues to grow and reach out to the Humanist community.



### **Lisa Ridge**

I have been a member of NJHN since 2002. I am the current President, a position I held from 2003-2008 and again since July 2014. I also served as Vice President from 2011-2014, Program Chair from 2003-Present, and Membership Chair from 2009-Present.

I knew at a young age (third grade) that I didn't believe in the god I was taught existed by my parents and the Catholic Church. I still vividly remember seeing Madalyn Murray O'Hair on The Phil Donahue Show and The Tonight Show and that was when I realized I was an atheist. It wasn't until the late 1990s that I heard the term "Humanism" and finally found the worldview that matched how I have lived my life. I was an

environmental activist with the Sierra Club from 1980-2004 at the local, state, and national levels, but became more involved in secular activism after moving to New Jersey in 2001. I'm a member of the American Humanist Association, American Atheists, Secular Woman, Foundation Beyond Belief, Americans United for Separation of Church & State, and Red Bank Humanists, which I aided in founding.

I enjoy being part of an active Humanist community -- a real network -- in and around New Jersey, and I'm always looking for ways for NJHN to grow and be fun. I'm an Air Force veteran, work for the State Judiciary's Appellate Division, and live with my husband Tim, another NJHN Board member, and our cats in Ewing in Mercer County.



### **Marilyn Francis**

When I first heard about the New Jersey Humanist Network, I was thrilled to know that there was a local group of free-thinkers. I have always been an atheist, and until I was in my fifties, I did not know I had any atheist friends. It is very important to have an organization where humanism is the norm. I'd like to continue to be on your Board of Directors and help spread the word that it is more than OK to build your life around reason and integrity.



### **Jennifer M. Vriens**

Jennifer has made social justice her lifelong passion. She has worked in women's issues, including domestic violence, reproductive rights and women's economic empowerment for her entire career, now focusing in fundraising for those issues. She currently serves as the Director of Development and Marketing at the YWCA Union County, Union County's domestic violence program. Continuing her commitment to women's issues and philanthropy, Jennifer was the Founding President of the New Jersey Abortion Access Fund, New Jersey's first state-wide abortion fund. Jennifer is a relative newcomer to the free-thought movement, joining the New Jersey Humanist Network in 2012. She self-identified as a non-believer in 2009, after many years of doubt. To her, religion has no place in a progressive society seeking peace, justice, and respect

for all people. Jennifer has a master's degree in Counseling and a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Delaware, and is a Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE).

3. The following NJHN members have accepted nominations to serve on the board for the next term (*requiring confirmation vote*):

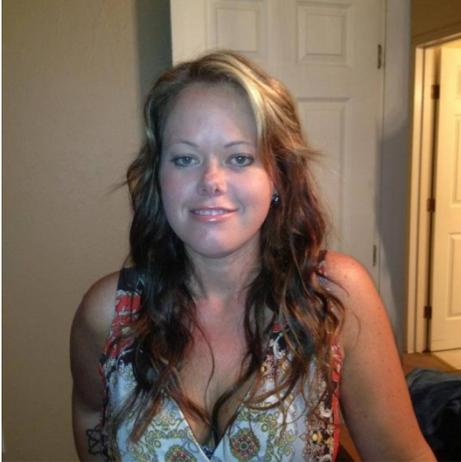


### **Geoff Blackwell**

Although he was raised in a devoutly-Catholic environment, Geoffrey Blackwell abandoned religion shortly after learning Santa wasn't real, and has been an outspoken atheist since his freshman year of high school.

Geoff has been active in political and secular organizations since 2006, and is eager to return to secular activism after a necessary hiatus while attending Rutgers School of Law, where he served as president of the International Law Society and independently studied religious freedom and freedom of conscience issues in both international and domestic US law.

He now hosts a podcast, under the pseudonym Oliver, with his co-host, Amanda Knief, discussing legal issues and developments from a progressive, secular-humanist perspective.



### **Shannon Morgan**

Shannon lives in Woodbury Heights, having recently relocated there from Cape May County where she lived her entire life. Active for three years with the South Jersey Humanists, she then got involved with the Gloucester County Humanists after moving last summer. She works as a project manager in the commercial construction industry.

She was raised in whatever religion her mother was into at the time. She was baptized Catholic, followed by a stint with the Born-Againists at "Praise Tabernacle," and then a few years as an Episcopalian. At 18, she struck out to "find" the right religion for her, attending every denomination of Christian service as well as visits to a Hindu Temple and Muslim Mosque. In the end, none of them made sense. She became an apathetic atheist for several years, becoming more serious about her nonbelief around 2004 when she saw the religious right getting more and more involved in politics and the line between church and state becoming increasingly blurred.

She has done a lot of volunteer work with female prisoners and recent female parolees in halfway houses, tutoring for GED preparation and in basic life skills.