



# EARTHWARD

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## *Earth's Atheist Resistance To Holy Wars And Religious Devastation*

### **Greetings EARTHWARD Newsletter subscribers,**

I would like to begin this newsletter with a short Q&A. I believe the following question, which has come to my attention more than once, deserves priority:

**Q:** Are you guys still in operation?? Your website has not been updated for a very long time, and it has been ages since a newsletter was published.

**A:** While some pages of our website have been updated fairly recently, it is true that others are horribly overdue for an update. And this newsletter is, indeed, long overdue. The reason is not that there has been nothing to report; there has been plenty. Nor is it because we are no longer active. Despite a dwindling number of volunteers in total, and particularly those who are willing and able to contribute significant time and effort to the cause, those of us who remain have had to double or triple our efforts to keep the organization afloat and to continue providing aid to those in need. It is not an infinitely sustainable situation, however. Frankly, our Board of Directors has been forced to entertain the possibility of dissolution. We remain determined to persevere, at least until completion of our main project, to help restore the Okellos\* (the family of refugees in Kenya, who were forced by religious terrorists to abandon their farmland in Kenya), to a life of self-sufficiency. We are more-or-less (some more, some less) on the fence, as to whether or not we can continue beyond that point. It depends in large part on whether or not we will be able to find additional volunteers, to help carry on our activities. We continue to think that EARTHWARD's mission and contribution to society and to the atheist community is well worth preserving. If you agree, and can spare an hour or more per month, by all means PLEASE volunteer. If you are unable to contribute at least an hour a month, but know someone who perhaps could, please direct them our way.

Here are some of the more urgent roles we need to fill:

**Vice Chair:** Our Vice Chair has informed us that he will no longer be able to continue his position. He was one of our founding members, and we greatly appreciate his contributions over the years. We now urgently need a replacement. Under normal circumstances, it is not a particularly demanding position, however it is imperative to have someone to assume the role of Chair, should the Chair become unable to fulfill that role for unforeseen reasons.

**Treasurer:** For quite some time, our Chair has been doubling as Treasurer, because no other volunteers were available to fill this role. The demands of both of these posts together are difficult to meet, for one individual volunteer, however.

**Webmaster:** As noted, our website could use a thorough update. When we had a webmaster, we elected to combine that update with a complete overhaul, which would facilitate future maintenance, and add several new interactive features for our visitors. Unfortunately, this work remains about half finished, and we no longer have anyone available to complete it.

**Newsletter Editor:** The need to fill this role should be readily apparent to anyone who has been long awaiting this third edition.

Again, the above roles represent only our most urgent needs. Volunteers are also needed for numerous other activities. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [pr@earthward.org](mailto:pr@earthward.org) if you or someone you know might be interested in lending a hand. In the words of former President of the American Secular Union, Samuel Putnam:

*We look in vain to find him Upon his throne so grand,  
Then **turn your vision earthward— 'Tis we must lend a hand.***

### **Incorporation & Tax Exemption**

EARTHWARD is now incorporated in the state of Missouri. Also the US Internal Revenue Service has again recognized EARTHWARD as a tax-exempt charity organization. These facts may be confirmed at the following websites, respectively:

<https://www.sos.mo.gov/BusinessEntity/soskb/Corp.asp?2370497>

<http://www.irs.gov/app/pub-78/forwardToSearch.do> (enter "EARTHWARD" as organization name)

## **Okello\* Update**

Though the road to recovery is long and winding, the Okello family is clearly on it. They are now out of the disease-infested Nairobi slum they lived in when they first made contact with EARTHWARD. Their current living arrangements are humble by any standard, and they still face serious difficulties, from time to time, acquiring adequate food and medicine. But their environment is now much safer. The children are now able to attend school, and we have sent them some school supplies. Using funds provided by EARTHWARD, they have been able to purchase some of the supplies needed for construction of a long-term home, as well as seeds and other agricultural products, which they have planted for their own consumption, and perhaps for a little supplemental income as well. EARTHWARD has sent them a second-hand computer, image scanner, and various accessories, with which they intend to establish a computer consulting / Internet access service. Two additional computers are currently being prepared for them. In that building a prosperous business will take time, we have also helped them with some interim measures to acquire some income. For example, we sent them a digital camera, with which they will derive some income by providing photography services at special occasions.

The family suffered a terrible loss, in that Nairobi slum, which they can never hope to recover. Their mother and wife tragically succumbed to multiple infections. For Peter, however, there was little time for mourning. He could not afford to divert his attention for long, from the formidable task of providing a livelihood for his family, nor the longer term goal of delivering them from abject poverty and moving them to a safer, cleaner and healthier environment. We are very pleased to have been able to help realize these goals in a number of ways. We greatly appreciate the kindness and generosity of our donors and volunteers, who have made that possible. Peter also found generosity locally, among his friends. The gentleman who donated land to the family, where they will settle once construction of a shelter is completed, exemplifies this generosity; as does another gentleman who loaned a cell phone to the family, to facilitate their communication with us and our affiliate in Uganda. Yet there were times when help was simply not available, and it was only Peter's resourcefulness and determination that pulled the family through.

## **Sponsorship**

Some of the families we have tried to help have endured some extremely harsh circumstances. The Okellos\*, for example, were forced to abandon their fertile farmland and flee to another country, when the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a group of religious terrorists who have undertaken to turn Uganda into a bible-based theocracy by a ruthless campaign of murder and destruction, attacked their village, abducted their aunt and murdered their uncle. Then they struggled for survival against starvation and the numerous maladies that infested their Nairobi slum habitat. In the course of that struggle, their mother tragically succumbed to some of those maladies. Such events are traumatic enough for adult family members, but what of the children? To enhance our ability to help families with suffering children, we launched our Sponsorship Program. Through this program, for only \$25 per month, anyone can help a child in dire need, and his family. And EARTHWARD guarantees that ALL of these monthly sponsorship donations are used for the specific family they were intended. They are never used for other projects or general expenses. Please see the details at:

<http://earthward.org/okellokids.shtml>

## **Witch Hunt**

Our Nigerian affiliate, Nigerian Humanist Movement, alerted us to a case in their region, in which a family's home was attacked by neighbors who accused them of witchery. Considerable damage was done to their home, the husband was badly beaten, and both parents were threatened with hanging and/or immolation. EARTHWARD sent \$30 to help the family recover, which was delivered by NHM.

## **AHA! (Atheists Helping Atheists!)**

In the opening paragraphs of this newsletter, I discussed our volunteer recruiting difficulties. We have had to face the possibility that our original premise a decade ago, that there are a multitude of atheists around the globe who would jump at the opportunity to help those in dire need, was simply wrong. One obstacle we did anticipate was to what extent we could reach that multitude, to make them aware of our organization and its activities. I believe we have done about as well as could be expected at overcoming that obstacle, but there seems to be another obstacle we overlooked entirely. We remain confident that altruistic inclinations among atheists are strong, however we failed to recognize that family and personal health and well-being is a concern that demands a great deal more attention for atheists than for theists. Of course, I do not suggest that atheists care more for their families than their religious counterparts. But the various religions, over the course of millennia, have established an infrastructure of community-specific support organizations for the benefit of their respective "flocks." Geographically dispersed atheists, on the other hand, have only begun to coalesce into a recognizable community, with the relatively recent proliferation of the Internet.

We launched a new initiative, tentatively called "Atheists Helping Atheists!", hoping to play a part in the development of such an infrastructure. The goal is to discover or develop, as well as to endorse and promote atheist-friendly, in other words faith-free, resources to assist atheists and their families in daily life. We hope that this, in turn, will free atheists to participate more fully in altruistic endeavors. If possible, we would like to make arrangements with third-party service providers we deem worthy of endorsement for discounted services to our volunteers, which would serve as an additional incentive to join.

The first such resource we created is a forum for mutual support and exchange of information of practical benefit to atheists. We invite all interested parties to take part in these discussions. We also created another forum, for the discussion of further planning and implementation of the AHA! initiative. We hope for your active participation in this forum as well. To join either of these discussions or to read further details of these forums, and the initiative in general, please see:

<http://earthward.org/aha.shtml>

\* Assumed names are used throughout this publication in reference to victims, in order to protect their privacy and security.