

"Are you good without God? Millions are."

These words, superimposed over an image of blue sky and white clouds, appear on king-sized ads placed on the outsides of 11 Spokane Transit Authority buses. The ads will continue through September 25, which includes the run of the Spokane County Interstate Fair. They were placed by the Spokane Coalition of Reason with \$4,516.00 in funding from the United Coalition of Reason.

This ad campaign also marks the public launch of the Spokane Coalition of Reason, an alliance of three nontheistic groups in the Spokane area, with activities ranging from support to education to activism. As part of its launch, during the run of the bus ads, the Coalition will have an exhibit booth at the Spokane County Interstate Fair. The fair will be open September 9 through 18 and the Coalition's booth is number 95, located outdoors, west of the south end of the grandstand.

Moreover, the Spokane bus ad campaign is part of a larger effort. Since the spring of 2009 there have been similar bus ad and billboard campaigns in 25 states and the District of Columbia. These include a January 2010 billboard campaign in Seattle, Washington, as well as campaigns in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia. (The Utah campaign is running now and includes a billboard plus exhibit booths at two fairs in Salt Lake City.)

"The point of our nationwide awareness campaign is to reach out to the millions of atheists and agnostics living in the United States," explained Fred Edwards, national director of the United Coalition of Reason. "Such nontheists sometimes don't realize there's a community for them because they're inundated with religious messages at every turn. We hope our effort will serve as a beacon and let them know they aren't alone."

Reaching out to the like minded isn't the only goal of the effort: "We want people to understand that we are a legitimate part of the community," said Ray Ideus, a former Lutheran minister-turned-atheist who now directs the Spokane Coalition of Reason. "Individuals like us live throughout the interstate area, across Washington, and elsewhere. We're your family members and friends, your coworkers and neighbors, and quite possibly the person sitting next to you in church."

"Being visible is important to us," Edwards concluded, "because atheists and agnostics in our society often don't know many people of like mind. Furthermore, if traditionally religious people can be open about their views, why shouldn't we be open about ours?"

Spokane Coalition for Reason news release