

Colorado Secular Organizations

A Study of Selected Successful Local Groups and How They Do It

by

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This is a continuation of the series *The Roots of Building a Secular Community*

Part 7 - Secular Celebrants Featuring Tim and Jennifer Bailey



Shebli Nikkole Photography, <https://www.sheblinikkole.com>

Secular Celebrants essentially perform the same functions as clergy without any attachment to god or religion. In the past, necessary life events were almost always performed by ministers, pastors, rabbis, etc. Most secular people don't go to church or believe in gods, and don't want any kind of religious ceremonies. Certified celebrants can legally perform any of the same functions without religious affiliations.

Tim Bailey, along with his wife, Jennifer, who live in Denver, have carved out a part time business as a husband and wife celebrant team, performing weddings and other services to the secular community. Being married helps their image. Tim is certified by the Humanist Society, part of the American Humanist Association. He has been performing weddings, memorials, celebration of life ceremonies, and funerals since 2008. Jennifer is certified by the Celebrant Foundation and Institute, specializing in Weddings and Ceremonies for Families and Children. She creatively weaves meaning and beauty into each ceremony, and has been a celebrant for 10 years.

Wedding ceremonies are the most popular events performed by Secular Celebrants. Tim and Jennifer's main function is to create and perform the ceremony, along with legalizing the wedding certificate. They take great pride in their work, and spend time with their couples, getting to know them, then creating and performing a custom ceremony, helping them make the transition into their new chapter of marriage.

Funeral services and memorials are the second most requested events. Traditionally, many of these services are more about God and Heaven than the person being remembered, and can be very "preachy". On the other hand, it is not all about Humanism, either. It is all about the person and their life. That is what these ceremonies are all about. Tim and Jennifer work with the family to tell a meaningful true-life story about the accomplishments of the deceased. Are religious relatives and friends upset about no God being mentioned? Given the ceremony's personalized account, they love it.

Other times of change events are performed by Celebrants, such as baby welcomings, renewal of vows, adoptions, coming of age, autumn years events, and other life transition celebrations, including pet ceremonies.

More About Weddings

Tim and Jennifer coordinate and perform secular weddings from the moment the couple enters the ceremony until they depart, walking into their new life together. However, there are at least three to six months of writing and creating the ceremony itself. To start the process, the couple is first given a three-page questionnaire. Then Tim and Jennifer write the first draft of the ceremony and afterward it goes back and forth with the couple, until the ceremony is exactly what the couple envisions.

Every ceremony is built from scratch for each couple's needs. It is never traditional or "cookie cutter". Instead of including religious overtones, the message is about the couple's values, philosophies, and lifestyles. The personal story of the couple is included, such as what brought them to this day, along with future goals.

For parents, relatives and friends, the celebration is about love and inclusiveness of the human experience, without "God" being mentioned. So, once again, how do religious relatives and friends take it? They love it and almost never object, because it is all about the couple, love, and life.

Edited excerpt of Jennifer and Tim's story taken from their website

<http://www.celebratingtimes.com/>

We are a husband and wife team, creating ceremonies to match client's lifestyles, philosophies and values. We love our work as celebrants. Here's our brief (edited) story.

Everyone deserves a meaningful ceremony that speaks to who they are and what they find important.

Who We Are. We, Tim and Jennifer Bailey, are a Life-Cycle Celebrant® team, creating and performing ceremonies together and individually. We are both skilled in performing meaningful ceremonies based on different customs and traditions. We have studied a wide variety of cultural ceremony elements. We are well versed regarding the importance of rites-of-passage, from weddings, renewals of vows, house-blessings, baby-naming ceremonies, pet ceremonies, coming of age ceremonies, autumn years ceremonies, celebration of life ceremonies, memorials and funerals, as well as seasonal celebrations and special events.

What We Do. We create and perform unique and memorable ceremonies that match your lifestyles, philosophies, and values. We work with you as we design and write your ceremony to match what you envision, customizing each ceremony with a personal story of what led up to this meaningful change.

Our vision is to create and perform ceremonies that will be remembered for a lifetime. Our ceremonies capture the importance of the natural yet life-changing events that individuals and couples experience. Contact us to arrange an appointment.



We met in the summer of 1997 in Arizona. Our wedding in April of 2001 was Renaissance themed, that we planned and organized ourselves. It was held outdoors near the Saguaro National Monument.

Secular Weddings and Weddings Free From Religion. Every month, we have been welcoming an increasing number of inquiries from couples who desire meaningful and personal ceremonies that have no religious elements. As it is a specialty of ours, we enjoy conversing with couples who seek us out for weddings that have no religion, whether they are non-religious or are an inter-faith couple. We work to create a meaningful and inspirational ceremony that eschews the old dogmas and verbiage that no longer meets the needs of contemporary couples and families.

We have a wide variety of secular and Humanist resources, readings, poetry, and quotations to reflect a secular union that remains meaningful, speaking to how you define your partnership. We re-imagine other ceremony elements to recapture a secular tradition while adhering to what is meaningful to the couple.

About Our Weddings. Each and every wedding we perform is as unique as the couple celebrating their momentous day. We do this by weaving your personal story into the wedding ceremony to provide personalized meaning and a ceremony that is uniquely yours.

Marriage Equality. Celebrating Times of Change is an avid supporter of Marriage Equality in Colorado, the USA, and worldwide. We had celebrated the legalization of same-sex marriage in Colorado on the 7th of October, 2014.



Sonja K Photography www.sonjakphotography.com

Humanist Funeral Services and Ceremonies that are Meaningful and Secular. Tim has been welcoming an increasing number of requests for Celebration of Life Ceremonies that are either fully secular and/or Humanist. The requests arrive from families and loved ones of the deceased who are either nonreligious, spiritual but not religious, or are from an inter-faith family. Some requests are from families who, although they may be religious, they recognize that the family-member who has passed was not particularly so, thus they request a ceremony that closely reflects the values of their departed loved-one.

An Increasingly Popular Ceremony for Children. A Baby Welcoming, or Baby Naming ceremony, is a beautiful event to introduce your family and close friends to the joyous new addition to your family.

Adoption Ceremonies. Adoption ceremonies are unique and personal welcoming ceremonies combining storytelling with a family blending ceremony. Whether you are adopting to begin a new family, or bringing a fortunate child into an existing family, an adoption ceremony can be a wonderful experience to provide a warm welcome and introduction for all. It is a time to reassert that the old stigmas of adoption are relics far into the past, as you set the stage and the tone for your newly enriched family for years to come.

New Home Welcoming Ceremonies. A New Home Welcoming Ceremony, with a celebration and personal story, is a time to mark your exciting moment of change in either purchasing and/or moving into a new home.

Coming of Age Ceremonies to mark a child's transition to adulthood. Coming of age ceremonies are popular in many European countries as well as within various international cultures and subcultures within the US.

Autumn Years Ceremonies. As our grandparents age, as our parents age, then as we age, there comes a time in which the responsibilities to the family and community change. The duties and expectations of our elders are altered as they approach their twilight years. Autumn Years Ceremonies can mark the change that our elders undergo as they become our wise men and wise women for our families and within our culture.



Ceremonies to Celebrate the Adoption of a Pet. Our animal companions are often as special to us as the human members of our families. Many people celebrate their adoption as much as they celebrate any welcoming of a new member into their family. For some people, pets are a large and essential part of their families, or are their families.

For further information, email us at info@celebratingtimes.com