# BESpeak



#### January 2011

#### **Newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society**

# Sunday Platforms

10:30 am

(details on pages 4 and 5)

January 2

Annual Pancake Breakfast

Please bring a side dish to share. Pancakes, syrup, and drinks will be provided.

January 9

"Evangelizing for Evolution" Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader

The Baltimore Ethical Society

January 16

"No Impact Man" *Colin Beavan* 

Founder and Executive Director of the No Impact Project

January 23

"The Ethics of Harry Potter"

Amy Anderson

Play Therapist and Northern Virginia Ethical Society member

January 30

"Ethical Eating" *Maya Kosok* 

Environmental Educator and Washington Ethical Society member

## Other Activities

(details on page 5, 6, 7, and 8)

Moveable Treats Sun., Jan. 2

Poetry Group Sun., Jan. 9, 9:30 am

Board Meeting Sun., Jan. 9 - 12:30 pm

Movie Night Fri., Jan. 14 - 7:30 pm

Mindfulness Meditation Sun., Jan. 16 - 9:30 am

Program Committee Sun., Jan. 16 - 12:30 am

Ethical Action Committee Sun., Jan. 23 - 9:15 am

"Ethical Culture Basics" Sun. Jan. 23, 12:30 - 2:30 pm Adult Ed Class with Leader Hugh Taft-Morales

Newcomers' Meeting Sun. Jan. 30, 12:00 pm

## **Snack Schedule**

Last names starting with:

Jan. 9: A to F Jan. 16: G to L Jan. 23: M to R Jan. 30: S to Z

# **Ethical Quote**

Man is a creature who depends entirely on revelation. In all his intellectual endeavor, he should always listen, always be intent to hear and see.

He should not strive to superimpose the strictures of his own mind, his systems of thought upon reality . .

.

At the beginning of all spiritual endeavor stands humility, and he who loses it can achieve no other heights than the heights of disillusionment.

Dr. Frederich Dessauer Atomic Physicist

Ethical Humanist Sunday School

10:30 am - Noon



#### **BESpeak**

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Editor: Karen Elliott Circulation: Judy Katz Deadline: 1st Sunday of the prior month

#### Officers:

#### Other Board Members:

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Music	Susie Ketzis
Poetry	Kirk Mullen
Programs	Karen Elliott
Publicity	Emil Volcheck
Sunday School	Kirk Mullen

Officiant Coordinator......Kathryn Sloboda weddings@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org

Ethical Culture/Humanist Officiants: Karen Elliott Stephen Meskin Karen Helm Kirk Mullen Rosemary Klein

Leader: Leader Emeritus: Hugh Taft-Morales Fritz Williams

Contacts by e-mail: use President, VicePresident (one word), Treasurer, Secretary, Poet, or Admin followed by @BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org. For general questions: askBES@gmail.com.

Explore BES on the Web at www.BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org Web Master.....Emil Volcheck

# President's Column

## Only Connect\*

Some months ago warnings that I was in danger of losing my job became more than symbols and signs. With my boss moving on to a new job out of the country, my contract shortened from one year to six months with an ending date of December 31, and new folks itching to get in to "clean house," reality was hardly avoidable. Not that I wanted to avoid it, though I can be quite comfortable not thinking about it.

I took stock. Already having lived a full and varied work life and finding my current work as a medical editor relatively satisfying, I was eager to stay put — and so I am relieved that circumstances have presented that will allow me to continue "bringing the written word" to clinical and hospital staff.

I am relieved — and I am grateful. So many days the empathy, sympathy, and concern I received from the Baltimore Ethical Society community helped me summon my own inner resources. That connection between other and self is so necessary and motivating.

BES folks asked how I was doing. Two fellow Board members asked for my resume, which they offered to circulate. In ways large and small, the BES community respected my time, space, and commitments.

BES offers so many opportunities to make those crucial connections between other and self. To begin the December Board meeting, each member gave a brief appreciation of something meaningful in ethical culture or his/her personal life. One member spoke of the "belonging" that she had encountered here at BES. Another expressed an appreciation of the "team work" that was taking place.

Think of the connection deep within those words "belonging" and "team work." As the new year swings into place, keep your mind and heart open for all the connections of community that BES has to offer. They can help you through those tough times and bring out your best!

# Rosemary

\* 100 years ago E. M. Forster ended his novel Howards End with the words "Only connect." This briefest of commands has been characterized as typical of "Forster's <u>humanistic</u> impulse toward understanding and sympathy." At a lunch (continued on next page)

#### by Leader Hugh Ethical Inspiration Taft-Morales

My December platform address was entitled, "The Spirit of Giving," and focused on mean years of life for another human being. avoiding the overly materialistic madness of the holiday season. It did not touch on humbling and inspiring acts of giving this past month that may have saved the lives of two family friends. After months of precarious and anxious waiting, one friend received a liver from an accident victim, and the other – a young woman in her twenties – received bone marrow from a healthy but anonymous stranger. These transplants were really the only realistic options for their long-term survival. With fingers crossed, we hope their positive recoveries continue.

Given that we are now in January, the month of renewed commitment and New Year's resolutions, I suggest an easy way to keep the spirit of giving alive this year: if you haven't already, consider registering for organ donation! Last year my friend Kate Lovelady, Leader of the St. Louis Ethical Society, wrote about how easy it was for her to assure that she was properly registered. In honor of those who donated life to our family friends, today I followed Kate's lead and double-checked with both the Maryland DMV and the website "Donate Life Maryland" at https:// www.donatelifemaryland.org/. It reminded

me how just a few seconds of my time might

Our friend with a new liver spoke of the ambivalence he and his wife felt. They knew that, while they both hoped and prayed for a healthy liver to become available, this would only be possible due to a tragic accident and the death of another person. But for the young woman now beginning to produce healthy blood cells and platelets, no loss of life was necessary. Registering as a bone marrow donor, however, can require sacrifice of 30-40 hours over a month, and possibly some travel. You can find out more and register at http:// www.marrow.org/.

On the two websites listed above you can read testimonials of survivors. Acts of charity in the form of organ and bone marrow donation remind us of both our own frailty and our interconnection. We are, in the end, amazingly delicate creatures of skin, blood and bones, privileged to be alive in a universe of rocks and empty space. The fact that we can transfer vital resources from one physical body demonstrates is a marvel of science and the reality of our interconnection with all other human beings. May we remember that as we embark on what we hope will be a Happy New Year!

## President's Column continued

just weeks ago on the day before Thanksgiving, the father of my godson and my friend of 40 years quoted those Forster words to his wife and me in closure to a satisfying conversation we'd had about the depth and longevity of our friendship. Hugh Taft-Morales in this issue also addresses the profound and far-reaching implications of interconnectivity.

# E R W E K E N D

Looking for the perfect winter break? Consider joining members of the Washington Ethical Society for a wonderful Winter Weekend February 18-21, 2010 at Camp Soles Y. Set on a picturesque lake near Somerset, Pennsylvania, Camp Soles is about 3½ hours from the DC area, but only minutes from Seven Springs and Hidden Valley ski resorts. It is a great place to relax and socialize with sing-alongs, board games, ping pong, crafts, sledding and tubing down the big hill outside the main lodge. There is fun for all!

For only \$100, you can spend 2 nights in a heated cabin with hot water, and 5 or 6 hearty meals; or for only \$140, you can stay 3 nights (through the Presidents Day holiday on Monday), with 7 meals. Kids ages 3-5 pay only \$50-\$70 depending on the number of nights; and kids under 3 are free! These modest fees also include a square dance with live band and caller, and lots of snacks. For more information, contact Karl Kosok or Emily Glazer at 301/589-0034 or emglazer@gmail.com and tell them you are from BES. Sign up early to pick your cabin and bunkmates.

# Sunday Platform Programs

#### Jan. 2

#### Annual Pancake Breakfast

Celebrate the new year with the Ethical community at our annual pancake breakfast. Pancakes, syrup, and drinks are provided – bring a side dish or special topping to share.

Jan. 9

"Evangelizing for Evolution" Hugh Taft-Morales Leader

The Baltimore Ethical Society

Although Ethical Culture places deed before creed, there are few claims about reality more universally accepted within humanism than the theory of evolution. Yet creationism is alive and well in the United States. In preparing to celebrate Darwin Day next month, how can evolution satisfy human spiritual yearnings for experiences such as awe, humility, and a connection to something greater than ourselves? Can humanists ethically evangelize for evolution?

Hugh Taft-Morales is the Leader of The Baltimore Ethical Society as well as working with the Ethical Society Without Walls (ESWoW). He lives in Takoma Park, Maryland. He taught philosophy and history in high school for twenty-five years, graduated from Yale College in 1979, earned a Masters in Philosophy in 1986 from University of Kent in England. Hugh received a certificate in Humanist Leadership from the Humanist Institute in May of 2009.

Jan. 16

"No Impact Man" *Colin Beavan* 

Founder and Executive Director of the No Impact Project

Colin Beavan will discuss his experiment with ways of living that might both improve quality of life and be less harmful to the planet in this joint meeting (via computer link-up) with the Ethical Culture Society of West-chester. He will also share his efforts to attract broad public attention to the range of pressing

environmental crises including: food system sustainability, climate change, water scarcity, and materials and energy resource depletion.

Colin Beavan is the author of the book, No Impact Man: The Adventures Of A Guilty Liberal Who Attempts To Save The Planet And The Discoveries He Makes About Himself And Our Way Of Life In The Process. Colin is the founder and Executive Director of the No Impact Project, an international environmental non-profit dedicated to empowering citizens to make choices which better their lives and lower their environmental impact. The movie No Impact Man is a Sundance-selected documentary, released in September, 2009.

Jan. 23
"The Ethics of Harry Potter" *Amy Anderson Play Therapist* 

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books chronicling the adventures of the young wizard are among the best-selling books of all times. These books have also created controversy and are among the most banned books of all times, most often by conservative Christians. But beyond the religious controversy, there are moral themes in the books; themes to which children and adults world wide have responded strongly.

Amy Anderson graduated from Yale Divinity School and is currently a play therapist. She is a member of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society.

Jan. 30

"Ethical Eating" *Maya Kosok* 

Environmental Educator

Join Maya Kosok, an environmental educator, Ethical Culturist, and occasional farmer, as she explores the intersection of Ethical Culture and the wonderful world of eating. She will take a close look at her own evolving opinions about food and invite you to make conscious choices about food.

Maya Kosok worked on an organic educational farm in California and currently works at Real Food Farm, an urban farm in northeast Baltimore. She is a member of the Washington Ethical Society.

# Guidelines for "Moveable Treats" & Moveable Feast

These guidelines come from Damon R. Hersh, Moveable Feast's Executive Chef: All food must be individually portioned. Please no left-overs, or unused or past date products from homes. (Licensed, inspected organizations are more accepted based on more stringent guidelines they must follow.) We reserve the right to refuse any food products that do not fit these protocols. We reserve the right to utilize all donated food products to our best decision.

#### Items we love to accept:

- 1. Baked goods\*
- 2. Fresh produce
- Individually wrapped baked goods\*
- 4. Bulk food donations from food service organizations
- 5. Individually packaged snacks
- 6. Bottled beverages
- 7. Canned goods Non-dented, non-expired
- 8. Cookies, brownies, cakes, cupcakes (all portioned)\*
- \*All baked goods should have an ingredient list.

#### Items we cannot accept:

- 1. Bulk proteins, meat, seafood (of any kind)
- 2. Bulk packaged cupcakes, breads, baked goods
- 3. Store bought chips, pretzels, candies (unless in snack pack size)
- 4. Previously prepared and then frozen foods
- 5. Leftovers from fridge cleaning, picnics, parties etc
- 6. Un-packaged anything
- 7. Food products in damaged packaging (dents, labels missing etc)

As a good rule of thumb, the farther a product is from its natural state, the less likely we are to accept it. In addition, if the item's history is even in doubt as to the sanitation practices used to prepare, store, package, or transport it, we can't accept it.

# New York Society for Ethical Culture Building Rededication by Hugh Taft-Morales

After three days attending the National Leaders Council meeting in New Jersey, I was honored to join over 350 people for the rededication of the home of the New York Society for Ethical Culture (NYSEC). Designed by Art Nouveau style pioneer architect Robert Kohn, a life-long member of NYSEC, the building was completed in 1910.

The ceremony for this historic Ethical Culture building included greetings from Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and the premiere of a documentary about the building narrated by James
Naughton entitled, *The Meeting House.* The three current
Leaders of the NYSEC, Anne
Klaeysen, Joe Chuman, and
Curt Collier gracefully ushered
the program along, while the
Ethical Culture Fieldston
School Chorus added musical
warmth.

But the highlight of the program for me was the keynote address by David Brancaccio, host of the public radio program *Marketplace*. Mr.

Brancaccio offered insights into how we might best "fix the future." I will not go into detail about the wisdom Mr.
Brancaccio shared, gleaned from his conversations with Americans in all different places in our economic landscape. He encouraged novel approaches to getting our needs met outside traditional economic systems, such as with "hour banks" where people swap their time rather than their dollars – I will tutor the dentist's son for two

(Continued on page 9)





On the left is a poster made by Camille to remind us to help the animals. To the right is Camille with the Certificate of Kindness presented to the Baltimore Ethical Society by the Defenders of Animal Rights for our contributions to their shelter.

## WRITING OUR HISTORY

A major project of Rosemary Klein's presidency is the writing of a history of The Baltimore Ethical Society, a project inspired by the September platform address by Antero Pietila, author of the book "Not in My Neighborhood."

As one of the senior members of BES, I was asked by Rosemary if I would serve as the "gathering point" for putting such a history together. Happy as I am to do this project, I am going to need a great amount of help from the present and past membership of the society, from the current and former friends of the society, as well as from people who may have "just heard about" the society over the passing years.

In succeeding newsletters, I will be putting forth assignments for the membership to help in this regard, nothing overbearing, nothing labor intensive, nothing psychologically stressful. Completion of these assignments will be easily accomplished by dropping me a note via email at <a href="mailto:PLQMSTRGHS@AOL.COM">PLQMSTRGHS@AOL.COM</a> or at the society some Sunday morning, or by giving me a call at 410-987-6776.

The assignments will be as simple as this first one: PLEASE GIVE ME THE NAME OF A PERSON YOU KNEW WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY AT SOME TIME IN THE PAST. If need be, we will publish these

names in the newsletter in hopes of jogging the collective memory of us all. Note: Choosing to give a name is purely voluntary, and if you think that the person whose name you give may have an objection to being named, than please respect that objection.

Putting together the history of BES is a project that must involve a wide range of the membership, including, especially, the children of members in the early-to-late 1950s, children who were Sunday School students from around 1952 through the mid-to-late 1960s.

We are hoping that those persons, now successful, accomplished adults, may have stored away, somewhere among their parents' papers, information that can be particularly useful for the history project. Hopefully, a little search by them through some memorabilia will produce a newsletter, a Sunday morning platform schedule, a seminar activity, a newspaper article, which could serve as a memory-jog for others who were active in the early years.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated as we move forward on this project. Both Rosemary and I are open to suggestions, ideas and concerns about how we proceed in this matter.

Peace --- Gordon Stills

# Ethical Action - Kid Style

Jeffrey Meisgeier and Rosemary Klein had each just [RK] Do you have animals yourself? started to teach BES Sunday School when together they decided that one part of their Sunday September 26, 2010 lesson would be to conduct an interview with Camille Henley about a subject very dear to her heart – the new ethical action project she'd taken on. As the interview took place, Camille, who is a very fine artist, painted a picture of a cat, which she described as "a feral and homeless calico—or as they say in England 'tortie and white'—cat."

[JM] What's the first thing you did to help

[CH] This is the first thing. Kirk [Mullen, chair of the Sunday School Committee and a teacher] was asking me if there was anything I would like to do for ethical action. I thought about volunteering at an animal shelter, but it would be so sad for me. I wouldn't be able to leave without taking home two cats!

[JM] Have you always loved animals? [CH] I have always loved them. My mom is passionate about them, too, but my dad not as much. He likes them some, but not cats; he likes bunnies. When he was a child, his bunny Bubblegum mated with the neighbor's bunny. She had six bunnies. They gave three away and kept three, named Richard, Harry (a girl), and Esmeralda. I live in an animal loving household. My brother also loves animals too.

[RK] Why did you get interested in helping animals?

[CH] Several years ago I was very shocked to learn about homeless animals. I read books a lot and found this out from books and started to get a newsletter from an animal shelter.

[RK] So you read about animals in books and that made you want to take care of animals? [CH] Yes. An example is The Encyclopedia of Cats that I got from Barnes & Noble. It had a selection on breeding and it said that unless you were planning to keep the cats you breed and show them than you should have them spayed or neutered, depending on their gender. It really is amazing that there are so many homeless animals, and I really love them.

[CH] I might in several months if I keep our outside birdbath in tip-top shape, like clean and

refill it and make sure the fountain in it isn't plugged and keep the pond going. If I do this successfully for six months, we can get a hamster.

[RK] What advice about pets do you have for people?

[CH] You should get them from a shelter. If you have pets, you should make sure that they're spayed or neutered, so they cannot reproduce.

[JM] Has anyone influenced you about how to care for animals?

[CH] Karen [Elliott, a Sunday School teacher and former BES president] did several years ago. There was this little black kitten in a back room at BES. He was so cute because he had these huge eyes – so now when I draw cats I always give them huge eyes. We gave him some milk and it was cute cause Karen named him SK for "Small Kitten."

[M] What's the most important thing you could say to people about taking care of animals? [CH] You are scientifically an animal, and people should consider animals their brothers and sisters. Some people consider their pets their kin. It makes me think how much people love their animals and how much animals need love. My friend Agasou has a cat named Bart. Bart is an orange tabby, and Agasou calls Bart "his brother."

Asked which of the Ethical Commitments her ethical action most illustrates, Camille is quick to say it is number eight: "Self-reflection and our social nature require us to shape a more humane world." Camille says she understands how important it is to act on the principle that "Our social nature requires that we reach beyond ourselves and try to decrease the suffering and increase the creativity in the world."

Camille enjoyed the interview about the ethical action she's interested in very much. In fact she reviewed and approved every word!

# Sunday Morning Volunteer Schedule

Jan. 2: Pancake makers & flippers: Karen Elliott (Op./Cl.), Susan Henley, and Rosemary Klein

Date	Presiding	Sound	Sunday School	Opening/Closing
Jan. 9	Kirk Mullen	Stephen Meskin	Karen Elliott	Kirk Mullen
Jan. 16	Emil Volcheck	Karen Elliott	Kirk Mullen	Karen Elliott
Jan. 23	Joan Bromberg	Emil Volcheck	Rosemary Klein	Emil Volcheck
Jan. 30	Karen Elliott	John Reuter	Jeffrey Meisgeier	Karen Elliott

NOTE: If you are unable to attend when scheduled, notify Karen Elliott (platform duties) or Kirk Mullen (Sunday School).

# **Ethical Action Spotlight!**

This month's Ethical Action Spotlight is turned on Kathleen Wilsbach and a little lesson she shared with me about the spirit of holiday giving, especially when the gift is a goat, cow or pig! In my December platform, I mentioned that in the past my adult nephews and nieces received from me a card from Heifer International indicating that farm animals were given in their names to individuals in poor nations.

In doing this, I put aside some minor internal resistance about figuratively gift-wrapping live animals for slaughter because human starvation seemed a more pressing evil. I also assumed some animals would be kept for milk and treated humanely. However, thanks to Kathleen, I have rethought my gifting strategy.

Kathleen pointed out some ethically questionable policies of Heifer International, such as "zero grazing." This approach places donated animals into confined spaces so as to better control spread of animal waste. The fact that this is motivated in part by some admirable environmental concerns does not mitigate the problems caused by the factory-farming type of food production. The image of warehoused animals is a far cry from the photo of a cute little boy lovingly holding a lamb on the cover of Heifer International's catalog.

But even more ironic than the animal cruelty of factory farming is the fact that animals are not necessarily the best long-term solution to hunger. Kathleen steered me to a number of articles pointing out the inefficiency of meat production, a reality I knew on some level already. I just needed to apply it to my holiday donation giving habits!

She urged me to consider alternative charities, such as Freedom from Hunger that focuses on more sustainable nutrition supplementation strategies. After a brief investigation into "Freedom from Hunger" I think I may have found a solution to my ethical quandary. Check it out at http://www.freedomfromhunger.org/ and help build grassroots partnerships that really can make a difference. Thanks to Kathleen for swinging into the Ethical Action spotlight in her typically friendly and supportive way!

Do you have an ethical action commitment or event you are willing to share in the newsletter? Please contact Hugh at Leader@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org.

# Ethical Culture Basics

A class for adults & teens Sunday, January 23, 12:30-2:30PM

Can you explain Ethical Culture in one sentence? Whether you are new to Ethical Culture, or a lifelong member just wanting to brush up on the basics, join Hugh Taft-Morales for this 90 minute class. We will review the philosophy of founder Felix Adler, the history of the Ethical Culture movement, and how Ethical Culture is applied in the lives of our members today. Ideas we will address include the inherent worth of every individual, the importance of ethical relations, and the efforts to build social justice. For more info: leader@bmorethical.org.

# Ethical Mindfulness Meditation

Jan. 16 at 9:30 am

The teachings of Thich
Nhat Hanh from an Ethical
point of view. No
experience needed.
Questions? Contact
KarenSElliott@aol.com.

## Poetry Group Jan. 9, 9:30 am

Bring one or more poems on the topic of the month. To find out the topic, or for more about the group, contact poet@BaltimoreEthical Society.org

# Second Friday Ironweed Film Club

Friday, Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.

This month we will screen "Mine" (http://www.ironweedfilms.com/ films/mine). Hailed as "absorbing," "a must see," "Oscar material" and "the best movie at SXSW," MINE is a feature-length, independent documentary about the essential bond between humans and animals, set against the backdrop of one of the worst natural disasters in modern U.S. history: Hurricane Katrina. This gripping, character-driven story follows New Orleans residents as they attempt the daunting task of trying to reunite with their pets who have been adopted by families all over the country, and chronicles the custody battles that arise when two families love the same pet. Who determines the fate of the animals—and the people involved? A compelling meditation on race, class and the power of compassion, MINE examines how we treat animals as an extension of how we view and treat each other. Screening open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Ask Emil about free membership in the film club (email volcheck@acm.org, cell 443/791-9910). Donations are requested for refreshments.

# NYSEC Building Rededication

By Hugh Taft-Morales

(Continued from page 5) hours in exchange for a cavity filled. And look, no sales taxes!

What struck me most, however, was that Mr. Brancaccio reflected a refreshing mix of Ethical Culture values and real world economic savvy. He pointed out the growing gap between rich and poor in the United States. He critiqued the misguided measuring tools of economic success that count stuff but not satisfaction. He recommended how we might better make the economy work for more of us with alternative economic approaches.

The rededication ceremony stressed Ethical Culture's role in generating, and providing a platform for, creative thinking to serve ethical ends. Having just completed a three-day retreat with my fellow Ethical Culture Leaders, I am energized that we have begun our ethical action focus on Economic Justice for 2010-2011. I hope that the Baltimore Ethical Society, like that of our founding sister society in New York, uses its platform to stimulate the creative conversations so central to Ethical Culture. Given the state of the economy, it is particularly necessary today. It was nice to rededicate a building. It was inspiring to rededicate ourselves to progressive ethical thinking!

# BESpeak

Baltimore Ethical Society 306 W. Franklin St., Ste. 102 Baltimore, MD 21201-4661

NEWSLETTER Please do not delay! TIME VALUE



# Newcomers' Meeting Sunday Jan. 30 at 12:30 pm

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Attended a meeting or two? Thinking about joining? Come to the Newcomers' Meeting, held following the last platform of every month, and learn more about Ethical Culture and about our Society—its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and attendance is recommended before becoming a member.

## Help Moveable Feast Baked Goods - Jan. 2 Other Items - Every Sunday

Support Moveable Feast in their work to feed people with AIDS or breast cancer and their families. Their guidelines have changed; see p. 5 for the current information. For more information about Moveable Feast and their many additional programs, visit them on the web at www.mfeast,.org.

Welcome to "BESpeak", the newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society, free to members of BES. If you have asked for a paper copy, the date to the right of your name is the last month you will receive the newsletter unless you request that it be extended. We also ask that you make a contribution to help defray the costs of printing and mailing. Send checks payable to BES to: BESpeak, 306 W. Franklin St., Ste. 102, Baltimore, MD 21201. Thank you.

Anyone wishing to receive an e-mail copy of each month's programs and a link to the full BESpeak should send an e-mail to admin@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org.