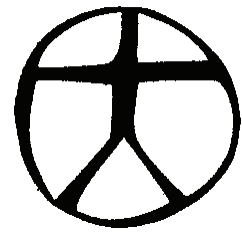


# BESpeak



February 2011

Newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society

## Sunday Platforms

10:30 am  
(details on pages 4 and 5)

February 6

“Nuclear Power:  
Renaissance or Relapse?”

*Paul Gunter*  
*Beyond Nuclear*

February 13

**\*\*DARWIN DAY\*\***

*Joint meeting with the*  
*Baltimore Secular Humanists*

“What Did

Charles Darwin  
REALLY Discover?”  
*Dr. Thomas R. Holtz, Jr*  
*Senior Lecturer in Vertebrate*  
*Paleontology, UMCP*

February 20

“Listening to Autism”

*Mark Osteen, PhD.*  
*Prof., Loyola University*  
*of Maryland*

February 27

“Ethel Merston: The Life  
of a Spiritual Seeker”

*Mary Ellen Korman*  
*Author*

## Other Activities

(details on page 6, 7, and 8)

Moveable Treats

Sun., Feb. 6

Poetry Group

Sun., Feb. 6, 9:30 am

Board Meeting

Sun., Feb. 6 - 12:30 pm

Movie Night

Fri., Feb. 11 - 7:30 pm

Mindfulness Meditation

Sun., Feb. 13 - 9:30 am

Program Committee

Sun., Feb. 13 - 12:30 am

Ethical Action

Committee

Sun., Feb. 20 - 9:15 am

Newcomers' Meeting

Sun. Feb. 27, 12:00 pm

Snack Schedule

Last names starting with:

Feb. 6: A to F

Feb. 13: G to L

Feb. 20: M to R

Feb. 27: S to Z

## Ethical Quote

We are at the mercy of nature, the earthquake, tidal wave, the famine and plague. Despite our medical science and protective and preventive efforts, every one of us has upon us a sentence of death. This we cannot avoid. We must prepare for it.

But whatever the illimitable powers outside, we have the power to change ourselves inwardly, to become beings of dignity and integrity and to live with a certain noble courage in dealing with life and death.

*Felix Adler*  
*Founder of the Ethical*  
*Culture movement*

Ethical Humanist  
Sunday School

10:30 am - Noon



**BESpeak**

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

**President's Column**

**Processing the Process**

The topic of this month's column is in and of itself less than exciting, but I hope that there's inspiration in it. This is a column about all the ins and outs that result in the process of completing a task.

The task—reviewing and rewriting the BES committee descriptions—came from our retreat last March. At that meeting I volunteered to undertake the effort. The process that followed wound up being relatively painstaking.

First, all of the extant committee descriptions were tracked down. Three versions of committee descriptions surfaced: those in the constitution, those written in task form by former president Karen Elliott, and a document supplied by Judy and Dick Katz that detailed an earlier set of descriptions differing from those in the constitution.

Then I began to ask general questions from some involved in chairing committees. After I've done only a couple of hours of this, I realized that the assignment would be better served by more structure and involvement, and I called on the Board for support. The Board was given all of the gathered descriptions as well as guidelines to use in developing new ones. Overall assistance was provided, in particular, by Kathryn Sloboda, John Reuter, and Hugh Taft-Morales.

Current (or past in the case of the vacancies) committee chairs were asked, using the existing descriptions as a basis, to put together a committee description that seemed up-to-date, sensible, and conclusive. Bob Corbett, Karen Elliott, Judy Katz, Kirk Mullen, John Reuter, Em Sabatiuk, Hugh Taft-Morales, and Emil Volcheck worked on crafting descriptions, the completion of which was, at times, aided by conversations with and research provided by assisting Board members and myself. When a draft of a committee was completed, I edited it and sought input on the edits made.

Finally, the committee descriptions were given to the Board in November for thorough review. In assessing, the Board members were charged with considering first how well the descriptions put forth

(Continued on page 7)

# Ethical Inspiration by Leader Hugh Taft-Morales

Upon hearing about the theory of evolution, the wife of the Bishop of Worcester said, "Let us hope it is not true, but if it is, let us pray that it does not become generally known." Well, as far as I am concerned, even today it is not well known enough. So I shout, "Happy Darwin Day!!!" And what are you doing to celebrate? Have you strung the gorilla garlands around the fireplace? Cooked your primordial pea stew? Brought donated copies of *Origins of the Species* down to the local school library?

While coming up with traditions to celebrate this contemporary holiday may seem a bit silly, there is a growing community in which this silliness makes a lot of sense. Whether it is within Ethical Culture circles, or the broader humanist network, establishing traditions helps publicize the importance of evolution. Let's not hide it under a rock, but declare it loud and clear.

While it is a humble effort, check out <http://www.darwinday.org/>, the website for the International Darwin Day Foundation. It would be nice if more organizations listed their celebrations here. It would demonstrate an evolution towards, in Darwinian vocabulary, "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful." But building traditions, like evolution, takes time. It is humbling.

In my January 9 platform I spoke of the humility that comes when I contemplate my simian roots. (If you want a copy of this talk,

,e-mail me at leader@

baltimoreethicalsociety.org.) Whether when reading Darwin or wandering through the National Zoo's Ape House, evolutionary awareness inspires me without inducing arrogance or shame. It offers a kind of humility very different than the type experienced by those like my wife, Maureen, whose Catholic school education labeled her a sinner. For her this was a destructive humility wrapped up in guilt for being a failed experiment of God.

On the other hand, when I embrace evolution today I experience a humility that includes a sense of awe for the marvelous processes of nature. This mix of wonder and modesty allows me to be more realistic about both human limitation and potential. It motivates me to seek the best and forgive the worst, whether in myself or others. It reflects the words of zoologist Desmond Morris: "I viewed my fellow man not as a fallen angel, but as a risen ape."

So have faith Darwinists! Evolution can teach us, however slowly, to treat each other more realistically. Lewis Thomas, in "On the Uncertainty of Science" declares, "I take it as an article of faith that we humans are a profoundly immature species, only now beginning the process of learning how to learn." Darwin Day is an opportunity to continue this process, in ourselves and in our children. What are you doing February 12?

## News from the Board

At the January Board meeting, President Rosemary Klein proposed the creation of a new committee - the "Communications Deliverables Committee." Its mission is to "oversee the branding, design, production, and maintenance of communication deliverables - print and electronic content particularly - for the organization overall and for specific committee and Board needs." The Board agreed to the creation of the committee and later Kathryn Sloboda volunteered to chair the committee. She was accepted as chair by the President and her appointment was subsequently agreed to by the Board. Congratulations and many thanks go out to Kathryn for taking this on! Sound interesting? Kathryn is looking for volunteers.

## Sunday Platform Programs

Feb. 6

### “Nuclear Power: Renaissance or Relapse?”

*Paul Gunter, Beyond Nuclear*

The nuclear power industry and its champions are proposing a massive technological revival of new reactor construction of as many as 100 new reactors in the United States in the next 30 years, including a colossal French owned and designed new reactor on the shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Lusby, Maryland now in the federal license application process.

After being described by Forbes in 1985 as "the largest managerial disaster in business history" and the collapse of new reactor construction in the United States essentially in 1979, what has changed and what has stayed the same for the prospect of a nuclear renaissance? What are the reasonable, feasible and commercially viable alternatives less harmful to the environment that can address global climate change and provide energy security? Come see this presentation by Beyond Nuclear for answers to these questions and many more.

**Paul Gunter** acts as the regulatory watchdog over the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the nuclear power industry. He is a 2008 recipient of the Jane Bagley Lehman Award from the Tides Foundation for environmental and has appeared on television shows including BBC World News and Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now." He was a co-founder of the antinuclear Clamshell Alliance in 1976 to oppose the construction of the Seabrook (NH) nuclear power plant through non-violent direct action that launched the U.S. antinuclear movement. An environmental activist and energy policy analyst, he has been an ardent critic of atomic power development for more than 30 years. Paul is a New Englander who was born in Mississippi and raised in Detroit, MI.

**Beyond Nuclear** aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic.

Feb. 13

### **Special Darwin Day Joint Meeting with Balto. Secular Humanists**

“What Did Charles Darwin  
REALLY Discover?” ”

*Dr. Thomas R. Holtz, Jr*

*Senior Lecturer in Vertebrate Paleontology, UMCP*

Everyone knows that Charles Darwin was the pivotal figure in the science of Evolution, but fewer people are aware of what his particular contributions actually were. In this special Darwin Day joint meeting with Baltimore Secular Humanists, Dr. Holtz will examine what was known about evolution prior to Darwin's work; Darwin's education and voyages; his co-discovery of Natural Selection; and some of his other contributions to the earth and life sciences.

**Dr. Thomas R. Holtz, Jr.** is a dinosaur paleobiologist and Senior Lecturer in Vertebrate Paleontology at the Department of Geology, University of Maryland, College Park. His expertise is the evolution, anatomy, and adaptations of the carnivorous dinosaurs, with emphasis on the Tyrannosauroida (tyrant dinosaurs: *Tyrannosaurus rex* and its kin). In addition to paleontology, he teaches courses on evolution, historical geology, global change, and the nature of science. He is the Faculty Director and co-creator of two residential honors programs in the sciences: Earth, Life & Time (<http://www.geol.umd.edu/~jmerck/eltsite>) and Science & Global Change (<http://www.geol.umd.edu/sgc>).

As well as technical publications, Dr. Holtz has authored several popular audience works on dinosaurs, including *Dinosaurs: The Most Complete Up-To-Date Encyclopedia for Dinosaur Lovers of All Ages* (Random House, 2007). He is frequently a consultant for and appears in documentaries shown on Discovery, National Geographic, BBC, and the History Channel, most notably the original *Walking with Dinosaurs*. His website is <http://www.geol.umd.edu/~tholtz/>.

## Sunday Platform Programs

Feb. 20

**“Listening to Autism”**

*Mark Osteen, PhD.*

*Prof., Loyola University of Maryland*

Prof. Osteen and his wife, Leslie Gilden, an advertising executive, have been living with autism for 20 years, since their son, Cameron, was two years old. We have heard or read stories of high-functioning autistics and the stress they put on families. But their son was an “ordinary” autistic child; in this context “ordinary” means severely autistic. He is now an autistic adult. How the three of them survived with little support (they were newcomers to Baltimore; their families are in Montana) is the subject of a book written by Mark: “One of Us: A Family’s Life with Autism,” which he and Leslie will talk about with us. Temple Grandin describes the book as “A brave dad’s honest diary of raising a son with severe autism.” Find out more about the book at <http://www.oneofusbook.com>.

Mark Osteen received his PhD in English from Emory University and moved to Baltimore in 1988. Since then he has been teaching at Loyola, where he is also Director of the Film Studies Program. Both he and Leslie grew up in Montana, where he was a touring rocker playing the sax before finally settling down to study English with special interests in Film and 20th century English and American Literature. He has written 2 other books, edited 5 more, and published innumerable scholarly articles and chapters. And he has not given up on music, helping to found Cold Spring Jazz Quartet and the Baltimore Jazz Alliance, of which he is now the President. For more information about Mark see <http://www.loyola.edu/fas/mosteen>.

Feb. 27

**“Ethel Merston:**

**The Life of a Spiritual Seeker”**

*Mary Ellen Korman*

*author*

*A Woman's Work with Gurdjieff, Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Anandamayi Ma & Pak Subuh* is a spiritual biography of a fascinating woman named Ethel Merston who studied with many spiritual luminaries of the 20th century. Born in late Victorian England, Ethel Merston's meeting with G.I. Gurdjieff in 1922 changed the orientation of her life, taking her to his Institute at the Prieuré near Paris, then in 1934 to India and the spiritual teachings of other great sages of the last century-Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayi Ma, Sunyata, Krishnamurti, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

For seven years she lived and worked in a rural village near Benares, at the same time working with the Indologist Alain Daniélou on his first book about music, before settling at the ashram of Ramana Maharshi where she lived the rest of her life. A resonant account of a spiritual seeker whose inner struggles, confusions and insights are recounted as she meets many of the key figures of her time, giving us a first-hand testimony of evolved beings, a work reflecting an epoch and a search.

Mary Ellen Korman has long been interested in spiritual transformation and its many approaches. She teaches a yoga of body impressions, and lives in southern Pennsylvania.

**Knowing is not enough,**

**We must apply.**

**Goethe**

**Willing is not enough,**

**We must do.**

# Ethical Memories . . .

by Rosemary Klein

Join the ever-swelling ranks of those contributing to the enthusiastic charge given by Gordon Stills to compile our BES history thoughtfully and meaningfully before it's lost altogether. We've heard from Diana Ulman, Ken Milford's daughter, and Dale Adams turned us on to the Afro-American newspaper and its article about the city-wide inauguration of the society. Mike Franch has passed along some historical material to our leader Huge Taft-Morales, and Ron Solomon has suggested that we (as he once did) check out the BES material in the AEU archives at the New York Society.

And here's a Q&A that might help you decide how you might contribute to the gathering of BES history:

**Brian Solomon:** Gordon – Do you want snippets? Stories? A winding personal narrative? A poem? A song? I have scattered memories but am happy to weave them together into something... just curious what you'd like that something to look like?

**Gordon Stills:** Brian – What we are looking for, especially, is some of the history of BES. If you have a special memory of your time at the Society, we would love to have it. The "it" may be in any of the forms you suggest. My personal preference would be a poem, poetry being a special thing now at BES. A long narrative may be a bit much, considering the amount of history that must be covered, but feel free to be your creative self.

Or you might contribute photographs that will illumine the people and events celebrated through the years at BES. For instance, we hear that Susan Henley is on the lookout for the photos taken when Elam celebrated his first birthday here!

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## Sustainable Eating Resources from Maya Kosok of Real Food Farms

After her talk at the Society on January 30th, Maya gave us the following information for those interested in buying from or helping out at Real Food Farms.

- Volunteer days are 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month, 9am to noon, potluck lunch to follow, kids welcome, rain or shine, 2801 St. Lo Drive, Baltimore, MD 21213
- RFF produce can be purchased Fridays 4-5:30 p.m. at our weekly stand at the Belair-Edison Family Health Center (3120 Erdman Ave) and come summertime will be available 3 times weekly at a few locations around Clifton Park (check website or sign-up for newsletters to find out)
- People can sign up for monthly e-newsletters from RFF at this link: <http://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/d.jsp?llr=i88j5ccab&cp=oi&cm=1101758001000>

## President's Column - continued

*(Continued from page 2)*

served the needs of BES as it exists as an organization and second how well they served the individuals volunteering to staff committees.

At our January Board meeting, the descriptions were discussed with the object being consensus approval. The Ethical Action and Finance committees were passed with minor adjustments. As more extensive changes were suggested in the cases of the Membership, Caring, and Building committees, they are being revised for consideration at this month's Board meeting. A written proposal put forth in advance of the



R. Elizabeth Cornwell, Ph.D. Executive Director of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, accepting her **bmorethical** t-shirt after speaking on 11/14/10.

meeting to split the Public Relations committee (sometimes referred to as the Publicity committee) into a Public Relations Committee and a Communications Deliverable Committee, a move that will be reevaluated in six months, was also approved by consensus. The Program and Sunday School committees will be up for review this month. The end result will be a handy booklet of the agreed-upon descriptions augmented by a document of general guidelines applying across the board to all the committees that will serve to inform both current and prospective volunteers.

The process took time, attention, and work, but it also made clearer what our committees are charged with and how their duties and responsibilities serve to support and strengthen BES. The discussions and work that resulted from this task turned project were often enlightening and frequently enriching and motivating.

And the time spent? Well, time has been alluded to often as a precious asset, one of the few we enjoy that are free. No surprise then that investing time wisely is a frequently invoked admonition. (One of the best comments I've heard regarding time was made by John Reuter at a recent potluck when he referred to the time working people have on weekends as "prime real estate.")

The words "follow your star" is often evoked as a guide for those filled with passionate goals. For those invested in this project, that inspirational command was more along the lines of "follow the task." The hope is that they felt their time was wisely invested. Certainly what they did was admirable and deserves appreciation from BESers far and wide.

*Rosemary*

## 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
Feb. 6	Hugh Taft-Morales	Stephen Meskin	Karen Elliott	Kirk Mullen
Feb. 13	Rosemary Klein	Karen Elliott	Kirk Mullen	Karen Elliott
Feb 20	Judy Katz	John Reuter	Rosemary Klein	John Reuter
Feb. 27	Stephen Meskin	Karen Elliott	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 Em Sabatiuk, Chair of the BES Caring Committee, and her defense of death with dignity. I will let Em share her experience in her own words. I thank Em both for the article, and for her deep compassion and commitment to the members of BES.*

I did not think about my death very much until my mother unexpectedly died when I was fifteen. It was a tremendous shock and brought a painful awareness of the reality of life. Because of my experience I had a deep concern that I might not live to see my children through their childhoods and was greatly relieved when all three were grown and secure in their lives as adults.

In later years I began to question the much extolled longevity of life versus the quality of life. The prospect of becoming a long-term physical or financial burden to my family began to weigh upon my mind, so I was very receptive to information offered by the Hemlock Society, which later evolved into Compassion and Choices and the Final Exit Network (FEN). Both of these organizations continue to fight for an individual's basic human right to die at a time and in a way of his or her own choosing.

I read the book Final Exit by Derek Humphry and later attended a workshop of the Final Exit Network to know more about the right-to-die movement. I learned that FEN is dedicated to helping not only the terminally ill but also those suffering from an incurable condition such as might result from a stroke or be the case with emphysema or Parkinson's. My own concern is the possible diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, which I consider to be a devastating illness because it tends to be very long-term, removes the victim from reality, and in many ways is a terrible drain on the family involved. That is why I was so determined to be knowledgeable about the possible ways of achieving self-deliverance.

I have devoted time and energy to working for FEN, an organization bound by strict protocols that permit self-deliverance information to be provided but not the physical or chemical means to actually achieve it. The group is all voluntary and composed of first responders who interview prospective clients, exit guides who usually develop a caring relationship with the individual, and a medical board that determines the eligibility of the applicant. The person is invariably relieved and secure in the knowledge that advice and comfort are available to them in their time of crisis. In some instances people do not follow through but rather choose to have a natural death with palliative care and/or hospice. (cont'd.)



## Ethical Action Spotlight (cont'd)

As recently stated by Dick Walter, president of Vermont's Patient Choices at the End of Life, a not-for-profit advocacy and political action organization, "Death with dignity is a cause I feel in my heart, soul and conscience. It's worthy of every one of us who values life, treasures dignity, and wants never to be told by a stranger or bureaucrat that our life is not our own, or that suffering is the property of their law or morality...I am constantly encouraged and nourished by news of people's struggles to help their loved ones die in a humane way."

For those who wish to obtain more information about FEN, go to [www.finalexitnetwork.org](http://www.finalexitnetwork.org) or write to FEN, PO Box 665, Pennington, NJ 08534. At [org.opn.lists.right-to-die](mailto:org.opn.lists.right-to-die) one may access news of the international movement made available through a moderated news list.

*Do you have an ethical action commitment or event you are willing to share in the newsletter? Please contact Hugh at [Leader@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org](mailto:Leader@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org).*

### Poetry Group Feb. 6, 9:30 am

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
You read a poem  
And I'll read one, too.

**Bring one or more poems on the topic of the month. For the topic or more info, contact [poet@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org](mailto:poet@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org)**

### Ethical Mindfulness Meditation

**Feb. 13 at 9:30 am**

The teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh from an Ethical point of view (and with the ease of sitting on chairs instead of cushions).

**No experience needed.**  
Questions? Contact [KarenSElliott@aol.com](mailto:KarenSElliott@aol.com).

## Second Friday Ironweed Film Club

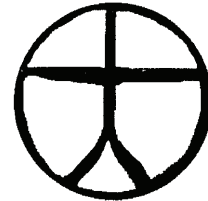
Friday, Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m.

This month we will screen "No Impact Man," a Sundance-selected documentary, which chronicles author Colin Beavan's yearlong experiment of living in New York City, with his wife and toddler, with as little environmental impact as possible. Colin spoke to the Society in a joint program with the Westchester Society last month and those attending got a taste of the film at the start of the talk. If you heard Colin speak, you'll be sure to want to find out more about this experience, but even if you didn't hear his talk you're sure to be both entertained and educated by this thoughtful look at some of the things we can do to leave a smaller footprint on the earth.

The screening is open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Ask Emil about free membership in the film club (email [volcheck@acm.org](mailto:volcheck@acm.org), cell 443/791-9910). Donations are requested for refreshments.

# BESpeak

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



**NEWSLETTER**  
**Please do not delay!**  
**TIME VALUE**

## **Newcomers' Meeting**

**Sunday Feb. 27 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 - Feb. 6**  
**Other Items - Every Sunday**

Support Moveable Feast in their work to feed people with AIDS or breast cancer and their families. Guidelines for donations are posted at the Society. For more information about Moveable Feast and their many additional programs, visit them on the web at [www.mfeast.org](http://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](mailto:admin@BaltimoreEthicalSociety.org).**