

BESpeak

JUNE-AUGUST 2012

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Reporting on Baltimore CoR

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

The Baltimore Ethical Society is one of nine member organizations that make up the Baltimore Coalition of Reason (CoR). CoR builds community among humanists, atheists, and free-thinkers and raises public awareness that people can be good, compassionate, and ethical without believing in a god. BES benefits from participating in the Coalition because it increases visibility of our unique brand of humanism, warm community, and humanist Sunday school. Our participation also gives us an opportunity to share Ethical Culture with the other groups in the Coalition and to cooperate with them on shared projects.

A highlight of the year was the March 24 Reason Rally on the National Mall. Bill Creasy of Baltimore Secular Humanists recruited several volunteers from CoR to serve as VIP ushers. Many from Baltimore attended the rally, some stopping by my home for bagels and coffee beforehand. With the support of the American Humanist Association, the Coalition helped organize a new group, the LGBT Humanist Council of Baltimore, whose intent is to exchange ideas on local organizing in coming out as LGBT and humanist!

Baltimore CoR had a media opportunity in November, when we sent a speaker to participate in the local television debate show *Square Off* with Richard Sher on ABC 2. Catherine Blackwell of the UMBC Secular Student Alliance made a great impression representing Baltimore CoR. BES's own Emil Volcheck spoke about Baltimore CoR to some 700 people at Maryland Institute College of Art's Brown Auditorium during Ignite Baltimore #10 in March.

Baltimore CoR organized or sponsored several events, including our second celebration of HumanLight in December, a lecture on religious fundamentalism by Professor Bjorn Krondorfer in October, a presentation and discussion on "Parenting Beyond Belief" by Dale McGowan, a book tour lecture by Sean Faircloth on *Attack*

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SUMMER SUNDAYS

10:30-11:30 a.m.

Informal discussions on topics related to social, spiritual, and philosophical issues – or just a little bit of fun.

(details on pages 4-5)

JUNE 3

"A Fair Share for Rabbits"

Kathleen Wilsbach

JUNE 10

"Seeking Criminal Justice Reform"

Hugh Taft-Morales

JUNE 17

"Final Exit Explained"

Em Sabatiuk

JUNE 24

"Revolutionizing Nuclear Power"

Stuart Hirsch

JULY 1

"Report on the AHA Annual Conference"

Emil Volcheck & Kathleen Wilsbach

JULY 8

"Putting on Our Sunday Best!"

Joint Meeting with WES & NoVES

JULY 15

"On the Limits of Knowledge and its Implications for Life"

Rajeev Kumar

JULY 22

"Women's Issues and Gender Roles"

Baltimore Ethical Society –
Youth Action (BES-YA)

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Learn more about Ignite Baltimore at www.ignite-baltimore.com and watch Emil's talk on YouTube at youtu.be/rvx1Tc3zcaw.

BESpeak

is published monthly
September through June by
the Baltimore Ethical Society
306 W. Franklin St., Suite 102
Baltimore, MD 21201-4661
410-581-2322

Issue 420

Managing Editor: Kathryn Sloboda
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Proofreading & Circulation:
Judy Katz
Deadline: 10th of the prior month

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On the web at bmoreethical.org

Giving is the Glue

by Rosemary Klein, *Outgoing BES President*

This past year has unfolded well – and during it what’s stood out has been the strength of our Ethical Culture commitment energized by the appreciation of each other we share.

We know that there are areas toward which we need to sustain and augment our commitment. Religious education is one as is ethical action. Our membership, I believe – because the possibilities of Ethical Culture are so engaging – will only stand to grow (it has been exciting to have welcomed six new members in the past year). May’s membership meeting brings us to a point in the year where if we didn’t stop to be grateful, we would be remiss. Long-time members who have contributed much continue to contribute – and we are grateful to the vitality, historical wisdom, and renewed efforts they share with us. Newer members have taken it upon themselves to chair committees, organize elements of our Sunday program, deliver platforms, even flip flapjacks at our annual pancake breakfast.

In the past two years – when I’ve been fortunate enough to be president guiding an Ethical Culture I revere – a bit of a revival has occurred. BES is strong and growing stronger. It has – as a group – embraced social media (so many people helped with this but a special thanks to our intern Tommy Park), extended its outreach, tended well to its own, and recognized the power of its history. That history (thanks to the efforts of Emil Volcheck and Gordon Stills) has been commemorated by our mayor, who designated April 21 (the date of the signing of our incorporation) as Baltimore Ethical Society Day. And Kathryn Sloboda has breathed new life into our personality. She has been creative and innovative in designing our image – compelling to us as well as to the outside world – and has been instrumental in attending to imaginative ways to boost our income such as our website bookstore and our 60th anniversary’s silent auction.

In building this Society, each of us champions the good of what we believe in – and that is one vital element that keeps us both alive and lively. Extending our programs through the summer has particularly been advocated by Stephen Meskin, our conscientious treasurer, and Karen Elliott, past president and this past year newly installed on the American Ethical Union Board. Hugh – whose name I rarely pronounce correctly – has brought an undeniable spirit to our community. He has reminded us so thoughtfully of all the knowledge that undergirds our Ethical Culture and of the inspired spirit that we must bring to its renewal and maintenance.

In many ways we have all extended ourselves. For my part I have tried my very best to encourage you to put your skills to work for BES and to appreciate all of your efforts at the moment that you’ve contributed them. I hope that deep within yourself you know how much your contribution means to our Ethical Society.

Now as we move into a fresh year, let’s commit to each of us giving in whatever way we can – small or large, maintenance or growth, financially or through volunteerism, regularly or occasionally.



Reflections on Existentialism

by Katherine "Kate" LaClair, BES member

Listening to Hugh's talk on Existentialism last month gave us all a lot to think about. Sometimes the knowledge that I will be removed from all that I love is unbearable, and I struggle with finding ways to be fully at peace with the reality of death. These thoughts resurfaced in me as I listened to Hugh speak, as I'm sure they did in many people. Then walking home, I had a wonderful moment of peace and clarity that I felt compelled to share. I saw a family stop at a beautiful rose bush to admire its abundant and radiant blooms. It always makes me smile to see people share simple joys with the ones they love. With the transience of life still fresh in my mind, I felt a part of me remark that those blooms last for such a short period, but I realized that I did not feel any sadness about that fact. We do not mourn the loss of a single rose. It's beauty is enduring for those who see it, and we are assured of more when we

plant for further seasons. In the same way, we can strive not to mourn the loss of our own lives, but appreciate the beauty of these moments that we have, and take every opportunity to lay the groundwork that will help those who come after us to thrive. Those who have come before us have made all the things that we want and need most in our lives possible. From basic agriculture to the wonders of new technology to building strong and compassionate communities such as Ethical Culture, we owe it all to those who are no longer alive. They have given us gifts that are invaluable and which we can only repay by paying them forward. Let that be our impetus to continue "the good fight," even in the face of what can sometimes be a grim reality. Others will follow, and they will need our strength, our innovation, and our tenacity to have lives such as those that we have been fortunate enough to enjoy.

SUMMER SUNDAYS

(continued from page 1)

JULY 29

"Reflections of a Family Practitioner"

Susan Henley, MD

AUGUST 5

"Artisan Jewelry Making"

Dianne Hirsch

AUGUST 12

"Katsu-Ryu Kempo: The Physical & Ethical Dimension of a Martial Art"

Richard Campbell

AUGUST 19

"Physical Fitness in Daily Life"

Erik Thiele Orberg, MD

AUGUST 26

"Annual Clean-Up: Day 2"

John Reuter

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Religious education will be on hiatus for the months of June, July, and August. Please join us when we resume in September!

OTHER ACTIVITIES

BES-YA Ethical Action Outing

June 9, 9:00 a.m.

Moveable Treats

June 10, July 8, & Aug. 12

Board Meeting

June 3, July 8, & Aug. 12, 12:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

June 17, July 15, & Aug. 19, 9:30 a.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

June 14, July 12, & Aug. 9, 5:45 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club

June 27, July 25, August 22, 7:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

June 24, July 29, & Aug. 26, 12:00 p.m.

Annual Clean-Up Day

Saturday, Aug. 25, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

60th Anniversary Dinner



Just a few of the attendees, photographed from the balcony of the Octagon at Mt. Washington Conference Center, listening to Leader Hugh Taft-Morales' address.

JUNE 3

“A Fair Share for Rabbits”

Kathleen Wilsbach

A great summer program start – fun for adults and children alike! By popular demand Kathleen Wilsbach, manager of the Maryland/DC/Northern Virginia House Rabbit Society Chapter and BES member, returns (with a rabbit at her side)– to reprise her program that met with acclaim in 2010. You will be treated to a wonderful visual program illustrating the intelligence and ingenuity of these fun-loving furry mammals. (Did you know, for instance, that rabbits dance, purr and flop over when happy?) Kathleen will explain her choice to spend so much time and energy helping rabbits (since its 1988 founding, the House Rabbit Society has rescued over 20,000 rabbits!). As the Autumn 2008 *Clover Leaf* (House Rabbit Society newsletter) noted of Kathleen: “One rabbit at a time, she was making a difference.”

JUNE 10

“Seeking Criminal Justice Reform”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of BES, conducts a discussion of criminal justice reform as considered in general by Michelle Alexander in her book *The New Jim Crow* and as addressed specifically by a growing coalition of Baltimore organizations working to transfer money from prisons to recreation centers and other services that provide positive opportunities for the youth of our city.

JUNE 17

“Final Exit Explained”

Em Sabatiuk

Final Exit is a group that emerged in 2004 from the Hemlock Society with its primary mission being to serve U.S. residents who suffer intolerable medical circumstances, are mentally competent, want to end their lives, and meet the criteria established by Final Exit. Em Sabatiuk, one of a group of seniors with the all-volunteer Final Exit and a BES member, will explore the purposes and procedures of the organization and answer questions about its mission and criteria. Sabatiuk has been an Ethical Culture member for 60 years, beginning in 1952 when she moved to New Jersey and became a member at large with the American Ethical Union.

JUNE 24

“Revolutionizing Nuclear Power”

Stuart Hirsch

Stuart Hirsch, a BES member, says that the topic of this talk was inspired by a recent BES lecture that addressed the problems of nuclear power. During the question & answer period of the lecture, Stuart asked about nuclear fusion and received the response that wind and solar can do the job of providing clean, carbon-free power for our civilization. For Stuart, that answer was not correct and led him

to do further research in regard to cleaner, safer nuclear power. He learned that there is a clean, safe, economical, nuclear fuel – thorium. His talk will explore how thorium can revolutionize nuclear power by solving all the current problems associated with it and why thorium should become the energy of choice for most future power plants. He will also explore why “renewables” – energy from natural resources including wind, sunlight, and rain – may help but simply can't provide our growing population with anywhere near enough power for a high standard of living.

JULY 1

“Report on the American Humanist Association Annual Conference”

Emil Volcheck & Kathleen Wilsbach

Our new president and his wife report on the 71st Annual American Humanist Association Conference, which they attended in early June in New Orleans. Among the subjects addressed at this conference were humanist philosophy, atheist ethics, church-state separation, sexuality, women's rights, and LGBT equality. Plus as Kathleen noted “As a geeky humanist feminist, I just couldn't pass up seeing George Takei and Gloria Steinem [being honored as Humanist of the Year] and, of course, I love New Orleans.”

JULY 8

“Putting on Our Sunday Best!”

Baltimore Ethical Society will gather with members of the Washington and Northern Virginia Ethical Societies, our Chesapeake area neighbors, to celebrate Ethical Culture. This joint meeting – which will start at 11:00 a.m. – will be hosted at the Washington Ethical Society (WES, 7750 16th Street Northwest, D.C. 20012). Along with the Leaders of the three societies – Amanda Poppei, Mary Herman, Jone Johnson Lewis, and Hugh Taft-Morales – we will explore what it is that makes our Sunday morning meetings special! An informal lunch is planned for after platform. Plenty of street parking is available around the WES – and a carpooling arrangement that will leave from BES that morning will be arranged if enough people express interest. Anyone who would like to carpool *must* let Rosemary know *no later than June 30* by email (rvk1012@aol.com) or phone (410-747-0594).

JULY 15

“On the Limits of Knowledge and its Implications for Life”

Rajeev Kumar

Although the importance of knowledge in human affairs is typically widely known, what is often not properly understood is its “limitations.” In this talk, Rajeev Kumar, a member of BES, will focus on the latter issue. Combining his personal insight on the topic and relevant literature from various scientific disciplines, he will discuss how this issue is closely related to the well-being of humans, their relationships, and the planet they share. Dr. Rajeev Kumar is an assistant professor of business administration at the Kutztown University of Pennsylvania.

He received a PhD in information and operations management from University of Connecticut. His undergraduate degree is in industrial engineering from Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur.

JULY 22

“Women’s Issues and Gender Roles”

Baltimore Ethical Society –Youth Action (BES-YA)

A discussion among BES-YA members and attendees about how women are portrayed in the media (television, advertising, etc.) facilitated by Katherine “Kate” LaClair, BES member, PhD candidate in cellular and molecular medicine at Johns Hopkins, and founder of BES-YA. How do media portrayals shape this American society, and how do they affect the current generation of girls and boys? Should we work to change the impact media can exert on gender, and if so, how? Mature children/teenagers are encouraged to attend. This issue is one that BES-YA regards as very important to be mindful of for those who are growing up. Parents, feel free to contact Kate LaClair (201-978-3191) with any questions about content and appropriateness of the discussion for your child.

JULY 29

“Reflections of a Family Practitioner”

Susan Henley, MD

Long-time BES member Susan Henley takes time from her busy and dedicated career to reflect on what she has learned in her professional life, how it fulfills her, and how it translates into other areas of her life, including her family.

AUGUST 5

“Artisan Jewelry Making”

Dianne Hirsch

Designing and producing jewelry has proven to be a totally unexpected avenue for Dianne Hirsch's creativity. She notes that "What started as a lark has now become a passion. It's like some circuit in my brain has been activated, and a whole new world is now available to me." This Sunday she will discuss and demonstrate the creative process she uses when making the jewelry she sells in her business Dos Gatos Artisan Jewelry. Dianne, a BES member, is also a member of the Gem Cutters Guild of Baltimore. For the past two and a half years, she has been showing her jewelry, designed from sterling silver, vermeil, brass, copper, and semi-precious gems.

AUGUST 12

“Katsu-Ryu Kempo: The Physical & Ethical Dimension of a Martial Art”

Richard Campbell

This is the third in Richard Campbell's series of presentations on the Japanese martial arts. Katsu Ryu Kempo is a soft style relying on relaxation and speed to achieve its effects. When first learning it one relies on slow, gentle motions primarily with the hands. It is easily at-

tempted. The platform will include an introduction, active participation by those attending, and the usual talk back.

AUGUST 19

“Physical Fitness in Daily Life”

Erik Thiele Orberg, MD

This summer millions looked to London with pride as athletes competed at the 2012 Summer Olympics. The media coverage and pay of top athletes rivals that of political leaders and movie stars. Colleges regard highly the education of varsity student-athletes. Yet despite all the interest and admiration of professional sports, most individuals rarely engage in physical activity themselves. In our everyday lives, success at amateur sports is undervalued in comparison to individual professional or social accomplishments. Why does such a discrepancy exist, and how does it impact on our national health as well as our personal well-being and longevity? Born in Boston, Erik at age one moved with his parents to Campinas, Brazil, living there for eight years prior to moving to Vienna, Austria. In 2010 he graduated from the Medical University of Vienna and is now pursuing his PhD in immunology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. A passionate runner, Erik recently became the captain of the Hopkins Marathon Team. Five full marathons are among a variety of races he will run in 2012. His next goal is a sub-3 PR.

AUGUST 26

“Annual Clean-Up: Day 2”

John Reuter

We will complete anything left undone from Saturday's official annual clean-up and contemplate the year to come.

SEPTEMBER 2

“Labor Day Picnic”

Stuart and Dianne Hirsch

The Hirsch's have graciously volunteered to host our Labor Day Picnic this year. Details will be distributed closer to the date.



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IRONWEED
film
CLUB

June 27, July 25, August 22,
7:30 p.m.

In June, the film club will screen *The Billionaire's Tea Party*, which exposes the practice of "astroturfing," that is, creating fake grassroots activism through political manipulation. Filmmaker Taki Oldham goes into the trenches exposing how the Koch brothers and their billionaire cronies are investing tons of capital in an effort to make it appear that 'we the people' are solidly opposed to the President's proposals on healthcare, the environment and paying a fair tax.

View the trailer on the Ironweed website at <http://www.ironweedfilms.com/current-films-s/46.htm> and join the Meetup at <http://meetup.com/byYq6>.

What will we screen in July and August? It's too soon to tell, but more information will be sent closer to the dates via BES e-mail lists and our Meetup group.

Screenings are open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Contact Emil about free membership in the film club (volcheck@acm.org or 443/791-9910). Donations are requested for refreshments.

MONDAY, JUNE 11, 7:00–9:00 P.M.

The Day the Universe Changed A philosophically fun video and discussion series!

Come view and discuss the final installment of a video series by James Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed*. Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales leads the discussion on Mon-

day, June 11, at 7:00 p.m. This last installment is called *Worlds Without End: Changing Knowledge, Changing Reality*. Open to the public.



Everyone Invited to BES-YA Kick-Off Event

by Katherine "Kate" LaClair

The newly formed BES-Youth Action (BES-YA) group is gearing up for its kick-off event – and we want you to join us! On Saturday, June 9 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., we will be partnering with Blue Water Baltimore for a morning of environmental restoration at Overlook Park (just north of Baltimore City at 1300 Overbrook Road, Towson, MD 21239).

We will be doing both invasive species removal and rain garden maintenance, so there will be something that people of any age and ability can do to participate. Wear comfortable clothes that you do not mind getting dirty, and bring gardening gloves if you have them. Bring a bagged lunch and a blanket/chair, and we can have a picnic afterward and celebrate our work together!

Invasive species are generally non-native plants that because of their abil-

ity to swiftly reproduce and intrusively advance are considered to be a type of biological pollution. Oriental bitter-sweet, Japanese honeysuckle, English ivy, and exotic wisteria are some of Maryland's parasitic plants that Blue Water Baltimore through its Community Greening program seeks to control and eradicate.

Rain gardens are shallow, site-specific, dugout areas that capture water runoff from rain and storms, allowing it to be slowly absorbed into soil and pervious rocks. Rain gardens require regular maintenance such as trash and debris removal, mulch replacement, weeding and pruning.

Please RSVP to me at katherine.laclair@gmail.com or 201-978-3191. When you do, let me know 1] if you need a ride or have space in your car and 2] what area of town you live in as BES-YA will need to arrange car-pools.

Glimpses into the Newsworthy

Our Sunday school teacher **Linda Joy Burke** was one of nine female artists honored by the Patapsco River Chapter of The Links, Incorporated in a beautiful ceremony where talent reigned supreme. From start to finish each artist – playing the piano, singing opera, dancing, reciting poetry, singing R&B and standards – truly provided inspiration in the March 17 ceremony held in the Recital Hall of Morgan State University’s Murphy Fine Arts Center. The honoring organization has “a strong and rich record of support for the performing, literary, and visual arts.”

Brian England – from his perspective as a small business owner – had some pretty illuminating things to say about health care insurance in an April op-ed piece in the *Baltimore Sun*.

Acknowledging the “real struggle” he and his wife have encountered due to their commitment to providing employee health insurance coverage despite its rising cost, he confessed that speculations regarding how health care reform was going to push rates up further were alarming.

He was in for a surprise that he would take pains to understand: the coverage rates for his business had decreased by 6 percent and the pol-

icy now included access to more preventive care with no deductibles.

Could he and his wife who had been committed through the years to providing their customers with good value, finally be receiving the same from the health insurance company? Yes – because the Affordable Care Act stipulates that at minimum 80% of insurance company premiums collected must be for actual health care costs, rather than for salary, management, and advertising costs.

That’s why Brian can state with confidence “It passes my inspection test with flying colors. There’s no good reason to take it off the road.”

Jan Seiden, while not a member, has enlivened BES with a program and entertainment. She attended a recent BES platform and talked to us about her music (Native American flutes). From July 5 to 8 the Chickasaw play *Te Ata* will be performed at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. With help from a Ford Foundation Grant, Seiden has created the music for the play. Seiden feels certain that the story of *Te Ata*, a trailblazer for not only Indian women but all women, would be of interest to BES members. Learn more about her music at www.janseiden.com.

ELECTION RESULTS

We announced election results at the annual membership meeting on Sunday, May 13th:

President: Emil Volcheck

**Vice President:
Kathryn Sloboda**

Secretary: Lisa Alderson

Treasurer: Stephen Meskin

**Board members
(two-year terms):**

**Ben Busby
Karen Elliott**

Continuing for the second year of their term on the board are **Ken Brenneman** and **Bernie Brown**. **Rosemary Klein** will serve on the board as Past President for one year.

We express our appreciation to the Nominating Committee for their work finding candidates.



Reporting on Baltimore CoR

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of the Theocrats!, a Darwin Day lecture by Mike Reid, president of Washington Area Secular Humanists, on “Foundations of Evolution,” and a concert by singer-songwriter and political satirist Roy Zimmerman.

I got to meet most of the Baltimore CoR Leaders at a meeting this past January at First Unitarian. Putting faces to names enhanced our mutual commitment to the Coalition. It is my

hope that member organizations will be able to learn more about each other – both what we share and where we differ. This will help us reach out to Baltimoreans to support reason, toleration, compassion, ethics, and the separation of church and state. For more information, check out the CoR website (BaltimoreCoR.org) and Facebook (fb.com/BaltimoreCoR).

*(*Hugh wants to acknowledge Emil Volcheck for both his good work as Coordinator of Baltimore Coalition of Reason and for his help with this article!)*

BESpeak

BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

306 W. Franklin Street, Suite 102, Baltimore, MD 21201-4661

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

THANK YOU!

There are jobs, big and small, that require volunteers. From putting together the programs to cleaning up our space. Thank you to all who made this a great season!

NEWCOMERS MEETING

June 24, July 29, & August 26, 12:00 p.m.

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. See Karen Elliott or Hugh Taft-Morales for more information.

SUPPORT MOVEABLE FEAST AND MOVEABLE TREATS

Baked Goods – June 10, July 8, & August 12

Other Items – Every Sunday

Support Moveable Feast in its work to feed people with AIDS, blood cancer, or breast cancer and their families. Guidelines for donations can be obtained at the Society. For more information about Moveable Feast and their many additional programs, visit them on the web at www.mfeast.org.



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