

BESpeak

FEBRUARY 2013

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Preparing for the '13 AEU Assembly!

Inspiring Action: Making a Difference

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

The American Ethical Union 2013 AEU Assembly is coming to our region from June 13 to 16. Ethical Culturists from around the country will gather at the Mason Inn Conference Center & Hotel in Fairfax, Virginia. Local Ethical Culture Leaders – Mary Herman and Amanda Poppei from WES, Jone Johnson Lewis from NoVES, and I – have the opportunity to coordinate the program end of things. I Miller, Sue Walton, Donna Pang, and other staff and volunteers from the AEU office will continue their wonderful work by handling the daunting logistical and practical arrangements.

Here's a sneak peak at a couple of reasons why you should put this AEU Assembly on your calendar:

Let's start with our own Emil Volcheck, who is working with me to coordinate an optional pre-conference Capital Hill day with the Secular Coalition for America (SCA). Emil was impressed by SCA staffers when he attended a lobby day they hosted last year. The event we are planning for this summer will enable Ethical Culturists and members of other SCA groups to join together for a training session and a trip to the Capitol to speak with legislators about our shared humanist concerns. We could discuss Ethical Culture's position on separation of church and state, and the importance of defending the constitutional rights of all Americans regardless of theistic perspective. If you would like to help shape this day of political activism, or work to help choose the issues we bring to the Hill, contact me or Emil *now*.

The AEU Conference itself will include a host of intriguing workshops, great music, the National Ethical Service luncheon, the Elliott-Black Award dinner, an inspirational platform, and more! Given our 2012 Assembly in Albany that focused on criminal justice reform, many 2013 workshop sessions will follow up with more *practical* strategies for humanizing the justice system on a local and regional basis.

And this just in: one of my favorite political activists – Maryland State Senator Jamie Raskin – will speak on “One Nation under the Constitution: Defending the



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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

FEBRUARY 3

“Common Misconceptions About Evolution”

Roger D. Sloboda

Ira Allen Eastman Professor of Biological Sciences, Dartmouth College

FEBRUARY 10

“People, Animals, and Beasts: Ethical Evolution”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

FEBRUARY 17

“A Transsexual's Journey”

Donna S. Plamondon

Transgender Activist

FEBRUARY 24

“Juvenile Justice: Baltimore and Beyond”

Carrie E. Williamson

Research Associate, National Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (NJJEC)

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday

10:30 a.m. – Noon

Children of all ages are welcomed.

For those between the ages of one and three, separate supervised activities are offered.

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On the web at bmorethical.org

The Inspiring Example of “Partners in Care”

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*



Partners in Care Maryland (PIC) is a community nonprofit organization that provides support services to older adults to allow them to remain independent in their homes. Members of PIC exchange services with each other through a time bank. Three years ago, PIC’s president Barbara Huston gave a platform address at BES describing their success in organizing seniors to help each other and themselves. Her story was an inspiration to our society and sparked my interest in how time banking could benefit BES.

A time bank is a group whose members share their time and talents with each other through acts of giving and receiving that are accounted for based on the time spent rather than on commercial value. When one member helps another, they earn time credit that they can redeem for services from any member of the time bank. PIC – established as the first time bank in Maryland in 1993 – is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. More than 2600 PIC members yearly give or receive services about 15,000 times, amounting to about 30,000 hours. The kinds of services offered to each other are mostly everyday tasks of the type that neighbors, friends, or relatives might do for one another such as giving a ride, changing a light bulb, or painting a room.

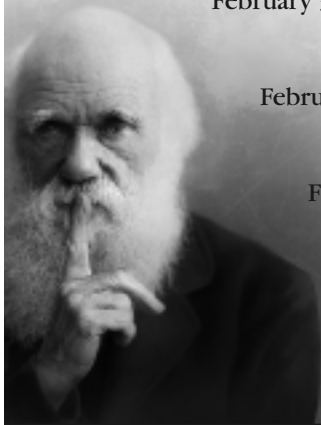
Huston believes that the time bank is essential to PIC’s success. She has said “We believe that everyone has something to give and everyone has something they need. Older adults have gifts and talents that are often overlooked in the community. We offer ways for people to ask for what they need and a place to use their gifts and talents – and those gifts are affirmed as to their value in the community. It makes it very easy for them to ask for help and not feel like they are a little old lady and a charity case.” What distinguishes a time bank from simple volunteering is its reciprocity. The member who provides a service through a time bank has the right to ask for service in return. Volunteering is a one-way relationship that is charitable, but not necessarily reciprocal. An economist might say that a time bank creates liquidity in a market for day-to-day tasks that might not be commercially available or affordable to members.

In November 2011, a group led by co-organizers Tam Kelley and Ian Schlakman called a meeting to propose organizing a time bank. Tam learned about BES from Barbara and invited us. I was delighted to hear this news and attended that meeting along with Lisa Alderson and Richard Lewis, who both joined the Baltimore TimeBank organizing committee. Since then, the Baltimore TimeBank has become a member of TimeBanks USA, a nonprofit umbrella group for over 300 time banks worldwide and has obtained nonprofit status through Fusion Partnerships. Over 90 members have registered at their website letsbmore.org. Last month, Tam and Dr.

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Celebrate Darwin Month with Baltimore CoR!

Celebrate evolution and the achievements of Charles Darwin with BES and the Baltimore Coalition of Reason! Read in this issue about four events you can join:



February 3: "Common Misconceptions About Evolution"
Platform Address at BES

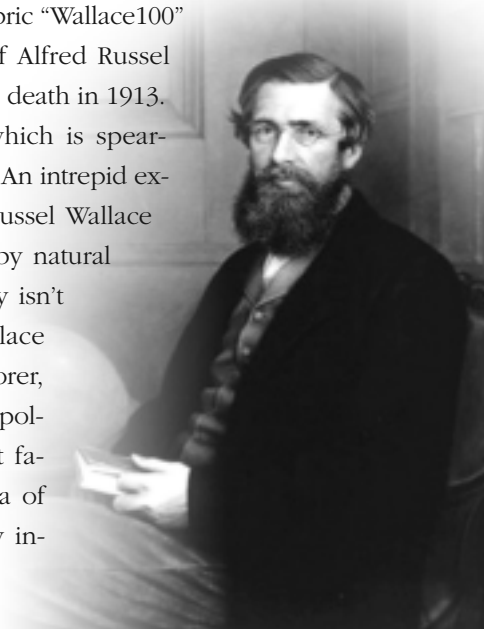
February 10: "People, Animals and Beasts: Ethical
Evolution" Platform Address at BES

February 11: "No Dinosaurs in Heaven" Film
Screening, by Secular Student Alliance,
Towson University

February 27: "Darwin's Extra Sense"
Ironweed Film Club at BES

And Don't Forget Wallace!

As we once again celebrate the achievements of Charles Darwin, it behooves us to also note for the record that this is the year in which events are being organized around the world under the rubric "Wallace100" to commemorate the life and work of Alfred Russel Wallace on the 100th anniversary of his death in 1913. London's Natural History Museum, which is spearheading such commemorations, notes "An intrepid explorer and brilliant naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace co-published the theory of evolution by natural selection with Charles Darwin. So why isn't he as well known? Alfred Russel Wallace was a man of many talents – an explorer, collector, naturalist, geographer, anthropologist and political commentator. Most famously, he had the revolutionary idea of evolution by natural selection entirely independently of Charles Darwin."



SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

BES has a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, same sex commitments, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information email weddings@bmorethical.org.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, February 3, 9:30 a.m.

BES Eating Social (B.E.S.)

Sunday, February 3, 1:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, February 10, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, February 10, 12:30 p.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, February 14, 5:45 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, February 17, 9:15 a.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, February 24, 12:30 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club

Wednesday, February 27, 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

All are invited to bring snacks for our coffee hour following platform. Snacks are especially welcome from those whose last names start with:

A to F	Feb. 3
G to L	Feb. 10
M to R	Feb. 17
S to Z	Feb. 24

NATIONAL EVENTS – HOLD THE DATES!

April 24–26

Secular Coalition for America (SCA)
Summit, Washington, DC, secular.org

May 30–June 2

American Humanist Association
Annual Conference, San Diego, CA

June 13

SCA Advocacy Day, Washington, DC

June 14–16

AEU Assembly, George Mason
University, Fairfax, VA

FEBRUARY 3

“Common Misconceptions About Evolution”

Roger D. Sloboda

*Ira Allen Eastman Professor of
Biological Sciences, Dartmouth College*

Approximately 85% of the adult population in the U. S., according to CBS News polling, either does not believe evolution occurs or has some doubt about the process. This indicates an alarming ignorance of science in our country. As well, such an attitude influences much – from economics to health care legislation – that shapes our society. Examples of how such scientific illiteracy negatively affects us all will be dealt with in today’s talk reviewing some of the misconceptions existing about evolution and the process of science in general.

Roger Sloboda has been a professor at Dartmouth College for the past 35 years (a fact he is finding more and more amazing of late). Prior to that he received a PhD in developmental biology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and conducted postdoctoral research at Yale. In addition to research and teaching duties, he has served Dartmouth as Dean of Graduate Studies and as Associate Provost for Research. Currently, he teaches introductory biology, cell biology, and biochemistry and conducts research funded by the National Science Foundation on the assembly of flagella in a green alga called *Chlamydomonas*. The fact that the flagella of this organism, which is separated from humans by several billion years of evolution, contains proteins identical to those in human flagella began his interest in the process of evolution.

FEBRUARY 10

“People, Animals, and Beasts: Ethical Evolution”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

For centuries, we human beings have competed with, cared for, eaten, used, and compared ourselves to other animals. We often see our animal side as “bad” and mark ourselves off as ethically distinct from the rest of life. After Charles Darwin, we appreciate more fully our place in an ever-changing stream of life. How has that changed our moral perspective? Do we see ourselves as more good or evil than

other animals? Hugh Taft-Morales thinks that the better Ethical Culturists understand our animal nature, the better we’ll behave. Join him as he explores ethical evolution through philosophy, sociobiology, and zoology.

Hugh Taft-Morales joined the Baltimore Ethical Society as its professional leader in 2010, the same year he was certified by the American Ethical Union as an Ethical Culture Leader. He taught philosophy and history for twenty-five years in Washington, D.C., after earning a Masters in philosophy from University of Kent at Canterbury, England (1986) and graduating from Yale University (1979). In 2009 he completed a three-year leadership certification program with the Humanist Institute. His presence in Ethical Culture has been termed “invigorating.” He has been active in the Washington Ethical Society, serving as director of its Coming-of-Age program (2009-2011), a Board member (2002-2005), and Board president (2006). He has also been engaged in American Ethical Union work, serving on the AEU planning committee for two years, as co-coordinator for the Presidents Council AEU for a year, and as secretary of the AEU National Leaders Council at present. He also serves as Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. Taft-Morales lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, with his wife Maureen, a Latin American Analyst with the Congressional Research Service, with whom he has three beloved children, Sean, Maya, and Justin. Singing and playing guitar, practicing yoga, and watching “way too much sports” are among his enjoyments.

FEBRUARY 17

“A Transsexual’s Journey”

Donna S. Plamondon

Transgender Activist

Donna S. Plamondon offers the Baltimore Ethical Society a narrative about the process a transsexual goes through after the realization that one is “different” at an early age. Should we take the “safe” road of living a lie or face our fears and live in truth? Either road can be full of potholes, landmines, and bridges to cross. Many of the bridges encountered will need to be burned and many people will wind up being hurt. There’s no GPS in navigating family, society, the psych, medical communities or legal system in search of spiritual peace.

PLATFORMS *(continued)*

Donna S. Plamondon is a 63-year-old transsexual woman. She's worked as a professional musician, pharmaceutical sales rep, cattle farmer, furniture salesperson, and waitress. She was married for 20 years and has two adult daughters. Currently Donna is with the Transgender Response Team and the Baltimore Peoples Assembly, addressing police abuse, racism, and misconduct. She also works with Occupy Baltimore as an administrator/moderator and a delegate to City Hall. She has engaged in lobbying and public education on many issues facing the state of Maryland, one example being the 2011 testimony she gave in Annapolis on the shortcomings of the Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Bill.

FEBRUARY 24

“Juvenile Justice: Baltimore and Beyond”

Carrie E. Williamson

*Research Associate, National Juvenile
Justice Evaluation Center (NJJEC)*

Many common practices employed in juvenile justice are ineffective as research and data show. They continue, however, to be used in response to youth offending, and they contribute to systemic problems. This talk will identify some of today's most pressing problems in juvenile justice such as the disproportionate representation of minority youth in the system and the overuse of residential confinement and will discuss Baltimore's current youth detention situation. Also to be addressed will be some of the practices that have shown success with justice-involved youth – and the issues facing state and local practitioners in the current funding climate as they balance public safety and rehabilitative ideals.

Carrie E. Williamson is a Research Associate with the National Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (NJJEC), a project of the Justice Research and Statistics Association funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). NJJEC improves the evaluation capacity of juvenile justice practitioners in states, localities, and tribes and additionally promotes the use of evidence-based practices. Dr. Williamson, who received her PhD in crime, law, and justice from Pennsylvania State University, has also been employed by the United States Sentencing Commission in Washington and the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing.

BES HOLIDAY FOOD AND CLOTHING DRIVES



During the holiday season, BES sponsored a food drive and a clothing drive. Shown here are three of our Sunday school students gleefully marking the final tally of donated food, which exceeded the 300 lbs. we aimed for. Both drives benefited TurnAround, a domestic violence and sexual assault center in Baltimore that helps women, children, and families who are victims of abuse.

BES EATING SOCIAL (B.E.S.)

Sunday, February 3, 1:00 p.m.

Members and friends are invited to come together on the first Sunday of the month to visit a local restaurant for an informal luncheon. At about 12:45 p.m., following the day's platform and social gathering, those interested in the lunch get together in the Congress Hotel lobby to decide which restaurant to visit. Wearing BES shirts or other items of visibility to help promote our organization are encouraged. If you have any questions, please contact Paul Furth at pdqblues@aol.com.

IRONWEED

Film

CLUB

Wednesday, February 27,
7:30 p.m.

Join us at the Film Club as we continue to celebrate “Darwin Month” with a screening of *Darwin's Extra Sense*.

Charles Darwin wrote that he wished he had worked harder at mathematics so as to possess the “extra sense” that he felt mathematicians can bring to understanding the world. This new documentary explores how twenty-first century mathematics is making many great new discoveries in the life sciences. Through an engaging style and informative animations, augmented by interviews with a diverse set of working mathematicians and scientists, *Darwin's Extra Sense* communicates the excitement and possibilities of twenty-first century applied mathematics. (45 min., Wendy Conquest, Bob Drake and Dan Rockmore)

Visit the film website at www.math.dartmouth.edu/publicity/general/extrasense/ and join the Film Club Meetup at meetu.ps/tyGNW.

Ask Emil about free club membership (volcheck@acm.org, or 410-929-3399).

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, February 14, 5:45–8:00 p.m.

Join BES members and others for this enjoyable outing at a great organization – check out their website at www.mfeast.org. Let Lisa Alderson know you are coming (lialderson@gmail.com) and show up at Moveable Feast, 901 N. Milton Ave., Baltimore, MD, at 5:45 p.m. Park in front of building and enter through the door closest to Ashland Street. Let Lisa know if you'd like to car-pool, and she'll try to match you up with another BES participant.

“No Dinosaurs in Heaven”

Join the Towson Secular Student Alliance and the Baltimore Coalition of Reason to celebrate Darwin Month with a serving of pizza and a screening of the documentary film *No Dinosaurs in Heaven*.

When: Monday, Feb. 11, 7:00 p.m.
(pizza starting 6:30 pm)

Where: Towson University,
Psychology Building (PY 304)

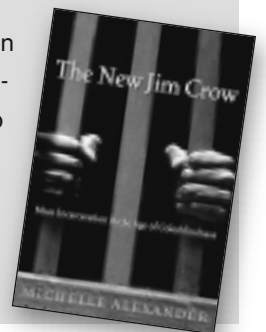
No Dinosaurs in Heaven is a film essay that examines the hijacking of science education by religious fundamentalists, threatening the separation of church and state and dangerously undermining scientific literacy. The documentary weaves together two strands: an examination of the problem posed by creationists who earn science education degrees only to ad-

vocate anti-scientific beliefs in the classroom and a visually stunning raft trip down the Grand Canyon that debunks creationist explanations for its formation. These two strands expose the fallacies in the “debate,” manufactured by anti-science forces, that creationism is a valid scientific alternative to evolution. *No Dinosaurs in Heaven* intelligently argues that public education must steadfastly resist the encroachment of religion in the form of anti-evolution creationism and that science literacy is crucial to a healthy democracy.

Parking is available in the Towson-town Garage and until 8:00 p.m. costs \$2 per hour. Visit the film's website at www.nodinos.com and join the Meetup at meetu.ps/tyTF8.

FIRST UNITARIAN BOOK DISCUSSION – THE NEW JIM CROW

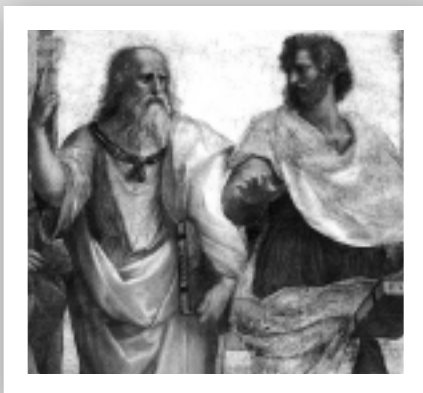
On Sunday February 24 at 5:00 p.m. at First Unitarian Church, a discussion about *The New Jim Crow* will be facilitated by Hugh Taft-Morales. Members who missed – or who wish to reprise – our BES book discussions about *The New Jim Crow* are invited to join our friends at First Unitarian for this event. To register, please send an email to Becky Brooks at redirector@firstunitarian.net.



COMING SOON:

Fun with Western Philosophy

Philosophers – and philosophical *wannabes* – mark your calendar for some Fun with Western Philosophy! Join Hugh Taft-Morales for four Sunday afternoons in an exploration of reality, mind, and meaning. This rigorous but rollicking study series will touch on Plato, Rene Descartes, Bishop Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, F. H. Bradley, William James, Henri Bergson, J. P. Sartre, and Albert Camus. Depending on the level of interest, a companion reading can be made available at cost. Come mix it up with friends of Red Emma's from 4:00–6:00 p.m. on March 10, March 31, April 14, and April 28 in this series, which is a Baltimore Free School offering. Register with the Free School and sign up for the free class on-line at freeschool.redemmas.org.



AEU Assembly

(continued from page 1)

Separation of Church and State and a new Constitutional Patriotism.” Senator Raskin, also a professor of law at American University, championed the victorious same-sex marriage crusade this year. Years ago when this effort began, he offered a religiously-motivated colleague a widely-circulated lesson: “People place their hand on the Bible and swear to uphold the Constitution; they don’t put their hand on the Constitution and swear to uphold the Bible.” Meet him in Fairfax this summer!

The AEU Assembly also affords Ethical Culturists from all over opportunities to socialize - we are, after all, a movement built on relationships. Let’s make the most of them! Personal connections help us all strategize about the future of Ethical Culture. Make new friends, and gain insight into how all of our local societies can flourish. I know that I’ve found that after each of the assemblies I have attended - in Northern Virginia, Austin, St. Louis, Scranton, Columbus, and Albany - I return home with renewed hope for our movement and important connections through which I’ve gained support in my development as a Leader.

More information about the Assembly will be coming to you soon. Consider offering your time, talent, or contacts so that our region’s gathering can be one of the best ever. Help with organization, workshop collaboration, and speaker invitations are our most immediate needs. Keep on the lookout for the Assembly program guide and registration form that should be available in a couple of months. Hope to see you there!

The Inspiring Example of “Partners in Care”

(continued from page 2)

Michael Marks gave a platform address on time banking that I hope you were able to attend (a podcast of their platform is available on our website).

In November 2012, several BES members attended an event at the Creative Alliance that featured a screening of David Brancaccio’s documentary film about creative economic alternatives titled “Fixing the Future.” The house was packed, in part because the film featured Baltimore’s alternative currency, the BNote. Afterward, a panel that included special guest Edgar Cahn, founder of the time banking movement, discussed exciting and creative economic initiatives in Baltimore. The event’s energy level and Edgar Cahn’s moving words about time banking convinced me that Baltimore is fertile

ground for a time bank.

As a humanist and member of the Ethical Culture movement, I appreciate the philosophy that underlies time banking. At its core, a time bank respects the value and uniqueness of every individual, and it affirms that we all have something to contribute. For our society, the Baltimore TimeBank has the potential to build connections among our members by fostering service exchanges. I see the potential to complement and extend the reach of our Caring committee to facilitate getting help for members whose needs are more than what the committee can offer. I encourage all BES members to look into the Baltimore TimeBank to see if it’s right for you. Feel free to contact Lisa, Richard, or myself if you have any questions.

BESpeak

BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, February 17, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

Come help plan the Ethical Action strategy for the Baltimore Ethical Society!

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, February 24, 12:30 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.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, February 10, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness is a tool we can use in our daily lives to act in a more ethical way. We practice mindfulness meditation so that it comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world's best-known teachers of mindfulness.

bmorethical

Visit bmorethical.org and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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