

# BESpeak

JUNE–AUGUST 2013

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

## Growing Pains and the Joy of Growing

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Over the past year the Baltimore Ethical Society has grown and signs are that it will continue to grow. From June 2012–May 2013, BES has added 24 new members to our roster, increasing membership total to 74. Our Sunday attendance is growing steadily making the room feel almost crowded some Sunday mornings! Sunday School is bustling (you can even hear the drums beating during platform, literally.) We are networking with more and more local groups and working on many social justice issues. The energy is good, so what's not to like?

Well, when I went through Leadership training with the American Ethical Union, the unit devoted to Congregational Development opened my eyes to the challenges of growth. While every Ethical Society I know of is eager to attract new members, there is a consensus amongst experts in OD (that's "organizational development") that it can be one of the hardest things to handle, especially for small organizations with limited resources.

At BES, one of the challenges on our horizon is space limitation. Occasionally during platforms the room almost feels crowded – although I admit that personally I like that feeling! The board does have this issue on their radar screen, however, since we want to have plenty of time to consider a wide variety of options should we be lucky enough to continue growing. A more immediate space issue concerns our Sunday School. Thanks to the Yonushonis family and other volunteers, we now have a toddler space, but soon we might have to use the library for some of the older students. This, of course, brings along with it the need for more teachers and assistance. Linda Joy is pretty amazing, but I have yet to see her clone herself!

Another challenge to BES is recruiting volunteers to support our programs and outreach efforts. As I shared at the membership meeting, much of my work focuses on producing content for our adult education program including two separate four-part discussion groups reading Ed Ericson's *The Humanist Way*, a four part *Constitution Series* discussing the overlap of law and ethics, four *Fun with Western*



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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 2

### “An Introduction to Humanism”

Jennifer Hancock

#### JUNE 9

### “Being Queer and Secular in the Gender and Sexuality Minority Community”

Lucas McCahill

#### JUNE 16

### “Life Is Not A Jigsaw Puzzle”

Joseph Chuman

#### JUNE 23

### “The 99 Percent”

Ironweed Film Club

#### JUNE 30

### “Alzheimer’s: Disease and Discovery”

Kate LaClair

#### JULY 7

### “State of the Ethical Culture Movement”

Hugh Taft-Morales,  
Emil Volcheck and Others

#### JULY 14

### “Power to the People – Unplugged!”

Stuart Hirsch

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# BESpeak

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**Fritz Williams** *Leader Emeritus*

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Baking Night..... Lisa Alderson  
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**On the web at bmorethical.org**

# Reflecting and Rejoicing

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*



The Baltimore Ethical Society has increased our membership and level of activity over the past year. At our annual membership meeting on April 28th, we reflected on what we've achieved and celebrated our progress. I'd like to thank the members who attended. If you missed it, let me fill you in on the highlights.

Our membership increased significantly over the past year. We added 24 new members since June 2012, reaching a total of 74 members. Average attendance at Sunday meetings has increased, as well as attendance at Sunday School, which now peaks at ten students.

We expect to raise \$41,000 from pledges by the end of our fiscal year in June. This exceeds our budget assumption of \$40,000 but falls short of our pledge goal to raise \$45,000. The distribution of non-zero pledges ranged from \$25 to \$5000, with a median of \$400 and two modes of \$50 and \$500. We planned to spend about \$11,000 from our endowment but should finish the year spending just under \$9000. The membership approved a budget for the 2013-2014 fiscal year that maintains our Leader's compensation at the same level, offers a slight raise to the Sunday School teacher, and increases our spending on advertising, printing, and outreach. We expect to draw down our endowment by another \$9,000. Our endowment has about \$80,000, which will allow us to sustain this level of deficit spending for at least a few more years.

The membership approved two changes to the Constitution and Bylaws. The first makes the language more gender inclusive, changing "he" to "he/she" and "chairman" to "chair." The second updates the name of the Ethical Action Committee, which is listed in the Bylaws as the Public Affairs Committee. Changes require approval at two consecutive membership meetings.

Our ethical action increased significantly this year, driven in large measure by our participation in the successful campaign for marriage equality in Maryland. Over 40 members and friends joined this effort. The Ethical Action Committee (EAC) gained approval from the membership for six positions on public policy relating to marriage equality, affirmative youth opportunity, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), ending the death penalty, protecting gender identity, and gun safety.

Our Communications Deliverables Committee kept our website up-to-date and produced the following: ten issues of our newsletter *BESpeak* in print and HTML; monthly advertisements in the City Paper; a membership directory; and various flyers and materials to promote events. Our Public Relations Committee got our message out by staffing tables at several community festivals and through social media, in particular, Meetup, Facebook, and Twitter. We increased our cooperation with other humanist organizations in the Baltimore Coalition of Reason. The Caring Committee continued to send cards, cakes, poems and flowers; to visit members at home or hos-

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## **ANNUAL CLEAN-UP DAY**

**Saturday, August 24,  
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

At BES we don't say that "cleanliness is next to godliness" but it sure is nice to see the building sparkle at the start of each season! Please volunteer for the Clean Team and help make the place shine! Cleaning supplies will be provided, along with breakfast treats and Kyro Pizza for lunch.

## **ETHICAL ADVOCACY DAY**

**Thursday, June 13,  
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Join humanists from around the region to get basic training in advocacy from the Secular Coalition for America (SCA). Then put your training into action meeting with Congressional staffers. Sign up at [SCAAAdvocacyDay2013@gmail.com](mailto:SCAAAdvocacyDay2013@gmail.com). No charge for participation. Read more at [secular.org/event/pre-assembly-sca-advocacy-day](http://secular.org/event/pre-assembly-sca-advocacy-day).

## **AND THE AEU ASSEMBLY June 13–16, Fairfax, Virginia**

Register for Ethical Culture's Annual Assembly in nearby Fairfax, Virginia. The theme of the Assembly is Inspiring Action: Making a Difference! For more information, go to [bmorethical.org/register-for-aeu-98th-annual-assembly](http://bmorethical.org/register-for-aeu-98th-annual-assembly).

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **Poetry Group**

June 2, July 7, Aug. 4, 9:30 a.m.

### **BES Eatery Social (B.E.S.)**

June 2, July 7, Aug. 4, 1:00 p.m.

### **Mindfulness Meditation**

June 9, July 14, Aug. 11, 9:30 a.m.

### **Board Meeting**

June 9, July 14, Aug. 11, 12:00 p.m.

### **Ethical Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill**

Thursday, June 13, 10:00 a.m.

### **Baking Night at Moveable Feast**

June 13, July 11, Aug. 8, 5:45 p.m.

### **AEU 98th Annual Assembly**

June 13–16, Fairfax, Virginia

### **Ethical Action Meeting**

June 16, July 21, Aug. 18, 9:15 a.m.

### **Baltimore TimeBank General Meeting and Potluck Dinner**

June 20, July 18, Aug. 15, 7:00 p.m.

### **World Humanist Day Celebration**

Friday, June 21, 7:00 p.m.

### **BES Ironweed Film Club**

June 26, July 24, Aug. 28, 7:30 p.m.

### **Newcomers Meeting**

June 30, July 28, Aug. 25, 12:00 p.m.

### **Annual Summer Clean-Up Day**

Saturday, Aug. 24, 10:00 a.m.

## **SUMMER SUNDAYS**

*(continued from page 1)*

### **JULY 21**

#### **"Yoga, Humanism, and You!"**

Hugh Taft-Morales

### **JULY 28**

#### **"Master Gardening and the 'Grow It, Eat It' Project"**

Rosalie Donatelli

### **AUGUST 4**

#### **"Esperanto: A Language with an Ethical Vision"**

Emil Volcheck

### **AUGUST 11**

#### **"AHA Annual Conference Report"**

Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach

### **AUGUST 18**

#### **"Discussing *The Price of Inequality*"**

Chris Nare

### **AUGUST 25**

#### **"Multiple Perspectives on the Baltimore Ethical Society"**

Solana Craig

## **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!

## **BALTIMORE TIMEBANK GENERAL MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER**

**Thursday, June 20, July 18, August 15, 7:00 p.m.**

The Baltimore TimeBank is holding a general meeting and potluck dinner at BES on the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm. Meet people who are using the time bank to exchange services and build community in Baltimore. For more information, ask Lisa Alderson or visit [letsbmore.org](http://letsbmore.org).

## SUMMER SUNDAY PROGRAMS

**JUNE 2**

### Video Presentation - “An Introduction to Humanism”

Jennifer Hancock

Jennifer Hancock says Humanism means “Be the best most ethical person you can be.” Hancock frames Humanism as a highly effective approach to human development. In fact it is the most humane and holistic approach to ethical philosophy humanity has ever devised. Humanism has arisen in every culture and in every time and yet very few people know what it is and why it has been so influential. For more about Hancock, visit her website at [jen-hancock.com](http://jen-hancock.com). (41 min.)

**JUNE 9**

### “Being Queer and Secular in the Gender and Sexuality Minority Community”

Lucas McCahill

Lucas McCahill will speak about coming into their identity as queer and atheist and what religion means in the Sexuality and Gender Minority Community. Lucas will talk about working on Equality For All in the Sexuality and Gender Minority Community; about the hypocrisy of religion in minorities; why moving towards a more secular presence in this civil rights movement benefits its authenticity; and about the importance of using science in explanations to the overall community and to the opposition.

**JUNE 16**

### Video Presentation - “Life Is Not A Jigsaw Puzzle”

Joseph Chuman

The human mind is organized in such a way that we want everything to fall neatly into place. We live in an imperfect world, and we can imagine a time when problems will be resolved, peace will be achieved, people will get along, and tranquility prevail. Such utopian visions, we might assume, are the end point of our struggles and aspirations, the result of our quest for knowledge and social progress. It is where, we hope, the human career, writ large, will end. But is this the way reality is constructed...wherein everything would fall into place if we could resolve all outstanding mysteries? (34 min.)

**JUNE 23**

### Video Presentation - “The 99 Percent”

Ironweed Film Club

The Occupy Movement has become the largest global social movement in recent history and shows no sign of slowing down. Using social media to coordinate efforts around the globe, the movement has sought to follow in the footsteps of the Arab Spring, replacing the Mubaraks and the Assads with the IMF and ECB. As the protests continue to develop what's next for the outraged citizens of the global economic crisis? (29 min. from ORF/Austrian Broadcasting)

**JUNE 30**

### “Alzheimer’s: Disease and Discovery”

Kate LaClair

Alzheimer’s disease has become more prominent in the last several decades as more people live longer than ever before. Despite several decades of research, we remain unable to treat or cure the disease effectively, but new research is bringing exciting developments that could change the future for patients and their families. Learn more about the research that is changing the way we approach this disease and what insights it can give us into the foundations that make us who we are.

**JULY 7**

### “State of the Ethical Culture Movement”

Hugh Taft-Morales, Emil Volcheck and Others

The American Ethical Union (AEU) hosts a national assembly each year that generates constructive dialogue between member societies and the staff and board of the AEU so we can agree on strategy and budget priorities for the coming year. It also provides members with workshops to improve internal governance and public ethical action projects. Those who attended this year’s conference will share insights into the state of the Ethical Culture movement nationwide.

**JULY 14**

### “Power to the People - Unplugged!”

Stuart Hirsch

Imagine a future where electric cars have unlimited range and never need to be plugged in to a charger, where downed

## SUMMER SUNDAY PROGRAMS

power lines never cause outages, where solar and wind power are available without need to construct a new power line grid, where solar power beams down from the moon or geostationary orbit, or is beamed to a spacecraft traveling to the stars. Imagine telling your local utility company, no thanks, I'll buy my electricity from someone else. Wireless transmission of electric power will make all this possible. Come explore the ways we can make this science fiction into a daily reality.

**JULY 21**

### “Yoga, Humanism, and You!”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader Hugh Taft-Morales offers insights into the benefits of yoga in a humanist context. He will share some of his experiences with yoga, lead some breathing and meditation activities, and facilitate some gentle yoga practice that you can do seated in your own chair. Audience members can participate in all or any of the program or simply observe – no pressure! For those doing some of the seated meditation, wear comfortable clothes.

**JULY 28**

### “Master Gardening and the ‘Grow It, Eat It’ Project”

Rosalie Donatelli

Member Rosalie Donatelli has always embraced the natural path believing that “you are what you eat.” She finds true solace and peace working the earth, planting the seed, nurturing the crops, and relishing the harvest. She will share her experience as a Master Gardener – her commitment to the work and the rewards it offers – as well as news about Maryland’s “Grow It, Eat It” project that aims to get 1 million Marylanders to grow edible plants to improve health.

**AUGUST 4**

### “Esperanto: A Language with an Ethical Vision”

Emil Volcheck

Esperanto is a language designed to enhance communication across cultures and to promote an ethical vision for humanity. The network of speakers of Esperanto has grown since its publication in 1887, and it ranks in the top tier of languages on Wikipedia. Emil Volcheck will introduce the lan-

guage by displaying short videos and websites. He will explain how Esperanto reflects core humanist values of reason, compassion, and hope. He believes the practicality and ethical vision of Esperanto explains why it has lasted over 125 years.

**AUGUST 11**

### “AHA Annual Conference Report”

Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach

Each year the American Humanist Association (AHA) meets to hear distinguished speakers, recognize humanists with awards, and inspire members to organize and promote Humanism. BES is an Affiliate of the AHA. Last year, Emil and Kathleen attended the AHA conference in New Orleans and really enjoyed it. They made valuable connections, and Kathleen got to meet Gloria Steinem! This year they are looking forward to seeing Dan Savage win “Humanist of the Year.” They will report on the conference and the latest news from the AHA.

**AUGUST 18**

### “Discussing *The Price of Inequality*”

Chris Nare

Member Chris Nare will present the main ideas of *The Price of Inequality*, by Joseph E. Stiglitz. Stiglitz argues that America has the most inequality and lowest chance of equal opportunity among the advanced countries. This is due, according to Stiglitz, to American business and politics and their interaction. American inequality affects our economy, our democracy and our justice system, and Stiglitz offers a way to change this and improve our nation.

**AUGUST 18**

### “Multiple Perspectives on the Baltimore Ethical Society”

Solana Craig

Solana Craig will report on a survey she conducted this year of members of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Her survey focused on the concepts discussed at Sunday meetings, reasons for joining the society, and the perceived cultural and political influence of the society on Baltimore. Solana is entering the 8th Grade and is the granddaughter of BES member Argentine Craig.

## IRONWEED

# film

## CLUB

Wednesday, June 26, July 24,  
August 28, 7:30 p.m.

In June we will screen *Red Cry*, a film that documents the historical and ongoing genocide of the Tetuwan Oglala Lakota people. Watch the trailer at [youtu.be/Q3L1MdkrB4c](http://youtu.be/Q3L1MdkrB4c).

In July we will screen *Occupy Love*. Join acclaimed director Velcrow Ripper (Scared Sacred, Fierce Light) on a journey deep inside the revolution of the heart that is erupting around the planet, as he asks the question, "How could the crisis we are facing become a love story?" Read more at <http://occupylove.org>.

In August we will screen *Patent Absurdity*, a film that explores the case of software patents and the history of judicial activism that led to their rise, and the harm being done to software developers and the wider economy. Read more at <http://patentabsurdity.com>.

Screenings are open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Ask Emil about free membership in the film club ([volcheck@acm.org](mailto:volcheck@acm.org), or 410-929-3399). Donations are requested for refreshments.

## BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, June 13, July 11, August 8, 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](http://www.mfeast.org). Let Lisa Alderson know you are coming ([lialderson@gmail.com](mailto: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.

## Growing Pains and the Joy of Growing

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*Philosophy* 2-hour classes and book discussions of the *New Jim Crow* both here at BES and at First Unitarian.

I also try to help do what is needed to create Sunday platforms, which is a lot – soliciting suggestions for programs, recruiting speakers and arranging details, presiding, set up and clean up, and producing copy for newsletter and social media distribution. Most of this work is done by others on our understaffed Program Committee, overwhelmed with all the pieces that have to fit together to produce a first rate event.

Getting people into the building to be a part of our platforms is the task spearheaded by Public Relations Committee co-chairs Ken Brenneman and Paul Furth, in addition to our whirling dervish of a Board President Emil and our many committee volunteers. They are scheduling BES presence at many street festivals and public event appearances. Reaching out to Baltimore to share what Ethical Culture as to offer also requires much help. I urge you to contact Ken or Paul and offer to spend some time at one or more of this summers events – it is an easy and relaxed way to serve BES.

Assuring connection to visitors, as

well as easing the process of joining and maintaining connections in our community falls under the Membership Committee and the Caring Committee. We need volunteers to help put together membership packets, orient new members to our community, and support members in times of need. I am sure Chairs Karen Elliott and Kirk Mullen would appreciate some more volunteers on their respective committees. And it goes without saying that Karen Helm, Chair of the Religious Education, and Kate LaClair, Chair of Ethical Action, would be delighted if you offered to help out in these areas. If those options don't lure you in, don't forget that you can offer your time to the Building Committee, the Financial Committee, and the Pledge Committee!

Most of us want to see BES grow into a more robust and flourishing society. This doesn't happen on its own or by a wave of my Leadership wand. In the end, for the Baltimore Ethical Society to grow stronger, it will require the strength of all our members. Thanks for being a part of this incredible community and thanks for however you can support our shared hopes and dreams!

# Reflecting and Rejoicing

(continued from page 2)

pital; and to offer rides. We also heard reports from the Membership, Program, and Religious Education Committees. We increased the number and diversity of social events, which now include family game nights, "Drinking Ethically" meetups, Baltimore Time-Bank potluck dinners, and more.

Hugh reported on his work as Leader, which includes monthly platform addresses; special events, like the joint meeting of the three Chesapeake societies; four different series of adult education programs; monthly columns; music; and service to the Ethical Culture Movement at the national level. He contributes significantly to the Executive Board and several committees, including the Ethical Action, Membership, Pro-

gram, and Caring Committees.

Finally, Judy Katz announced the election results. The four officers were re-elected. I have the honor to continue serving as President along with Kathryn Sloboda as Vice President, Lisa Alderson as Secretary, and Stephen Meskin as Treasurer. We elected four members to serve on the BES Executive Board. Karen Helm and Ken Brenneman were re-elected to serve another two-year term. Fred Compton and Paul Furth were newly elected to the Board, serving for a one-year and two-year term, respectively. Our Board is fully staffed, with no vacancies. I'd like to thank the Nominating Committee for their work. I'd also like to thank the members who took the time to vote.

## **BES EATERY SOCIAL (B.E.S.)**

**June 2, July 7, August 4,  
1:00 p.m.**

Members and friends are invited to come together on the first Sunday each month for an informal luncheon social. Following the weekly platform, we will gather at about 12:45 p.m. in the Congress Hotel lobby. If you have any questions or restaurant suggestions, please contact Paul Furth at [pdqblues@aol.com](mailto:pdqblues@aol.com).

We are considering date changes for our social. If you prefer a different Sunday for future events, please voice your preference.

## **WORLD HUMANIST DAY CELEBRATION: IN GOD WE TEACH**

**With Special Guest Matthew LaClair – Friday, June 21, 7:00 p.m.**

BES joins the Baltimore Coalition of Reason to celebrate this day with a screening of the documentary *In God We Teach*. Filmmaker Vic Losick tells the story of Matthew LaClair, who rose to national prominence by challenging his history teacher who preached religious views in class. Matthew will take questions and read from his forthcoming book *The Preachin' Mr. P: Condemned in a Kearny Classroom*.

**About the film:** Are teachers allowed to express their personal opinions in the classroom? Can competing theories be taught alongside evolution in a public classroom? These and other questions are the focus of the full-length documentary, *In God We Teach*, which follows the "separation of church and state" controversy played out in a very public feud between a high school student and his history teacher in Kearny, NJ, a blue-collar, all-American town within sight of downtown New York. Learn more at <http://ingodweteach.com>.

**About Matthew LaClair:** Matthew LaClair started out as a student activist, challenging his U.S. History teacher for preaching his religious beliefs during class time and taking on an American Government textbook that contained inaccurate and biased information. He has appeared on and in numerous media outlets including *The New York Times*, Anderson Cooper 360 on CNN, and Brian Lehrer on NPR. Since 2009, Matthew has hosted a talk show called "Equal Time for Freethought" on WBAI 99.5 FM in NYC, interviewing authors, scientists and public figures including Neil deGrasse Tyson, Lawrence Krauss, Chris Mooney, and Ellery Schempp. He graduated from The New School in NYC with a B.A. in Culture and Media studies this past summer and will be attending Columbia Journalism School starting in late August to pursue an M.A. in Science Journalism. Matthew is the brother of BES member Kate LaClair.



**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 30, July 28, August 25, 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.

**MINDFULNESS**

meditation

**June 9, July 14, August 11, 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](http://bmorethical.org) and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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