

BESpeak

NOVEMBER 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Thinking Outside the Box

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

The last couple of talks I have offered at the Baltimore Ethical Society were in a new physical space. As many of you know, for a few months we've moved our Sunday morning program to a larger, more ornate room in the front of the Old Congress Hotel. With high pillars and lots of windows, the room invites my eyes to wander and imagine new possibilities before, during, and after my talks.



It has not come, however, without a price tag, literally and figuratively. This experiment in expanded space requires time and money. We offset our expenses by subletting the space for limited events. And it was wonderful to offer the Sunday Assembly a grand spot for their first Baltimore event. But we are challenged by more than finances. Just adjusting to a new space requires some effort. We are, for example, trying to improve the acoustics given the echoes the room creates.

If BES is to flourish, however, we need to take such calculated risks. To meet the future creatively and passionately, we need new approaches even if they bring some sense of loss. As Pablo Picasso himself said, "Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction." For artists and organizations, the dynamics are similar. Organizational consultant Margaret J. Wheatley says, "The things we fear most in organizations - fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances - are the primary sources of creativity."

I know that some members miss our old cozier box, with its familiar blue curtain and Ethical Culture logo. Even incorporating new members with new ideas can challenge group dynamics. But new perspectives and diversity are fundamental to a vibrant, flourishing community. We just have to give the change we are inviting the time and space to be negotiated fruitfully.

Six years ago, at the American Ethical Union Assembly in Austin, Texas, I offered a workshop entitled, "Out of the Box: Brainstorming to Reinvigorate Ethical Culture." It contained fun "blue-sky" brainstorming free of the burden of having to be realistic. I'll admit, however, that I was a bit disappointed at the conservative nature of many of the ideas gathered.

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

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NOVEMBER 2

"Brewing in Baltimore: An Alternative to Mainstream Media"

Fern Shen

Founder and Editor of Baltimore Brew

NOVEMBER 9

"Reclaiming Armistice Day"

Ellen Barfield

Veterans for Peace

NOVEMBER 16

"Fostering Economic Justice In An Unjust World"

Jeff Dicken

Founder and Chair, Baltimore Green Currency Association

NOVEMBER 23

"Hunger of Body and Conscience"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

NOVEMBER 30

"Stone Salad & Soup Fall Festival"

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday, 10:30 a.m. – Noon
Children of all ages are welcomed.

Separate supervision provided for preschoolers between the ages of one and four.

BESpeak

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Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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On the web at bmorethical.org

A View From St. Louis

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*

The last weekend in September, I had the opportunity to visit the Ethical Society of Saint Louis. I returned with several good ideas that we might use at BES. I contributed one idea that I hope will help the St. Louis Society with their outreach.

The Ethical Society of Saint Louis is the largest in the Ethical Culture Movement, with around 360 members. The society was founded in 1886. Their building features a distinctive spire whose elegant curves draw the eyes upward for anyone sitting in the meeting hall. This distinctive work of architecture was completed in 1965, the same year as the St. Louis Gateway Arch.

Saturday afternoon, David Brown, the St. Louis Society president, shared some Schlafly ale with me at his home near Forest Park. He told me about a number of events and activities they conduct. The society makes good use of their space by hosting a variety of events, such as, book signings, public forums, and concerts. The society gets new members every month so they take care to welcome them and make them feel part of the society. They hold "ambassador dinners" where a few new members are invited to dinner at the home of a more senior member. They also hold new member parties to help all new members get to know each other and the society leadership better. The society holds mixers called "Ethicurean dinners," where diners are randomly assigned to hosts. The St. Louis Society pickets and demonstrates in front of their building on Clayton Road, which provides significant visibility to rush hour traffic. (So does Franklin Street!)

The Sunday platform was wonderful, and I enjoyed it. Their music program is well developed and impressive, boosted that morning by James Croft, ethical leader in training, who led singing. They have assigned greeters and offer an information session for prospective members every Sunday. To help the members feel connected with the Ethical Culture Movement, the presider reads a statement each Sunday about how their society is one of many societies that belong to the American Ethical Union. Prior to the platform, early risers can choose to attend one of two events: a Colloquy or an Ethical Humanist Forum. I attended the forum because I wanted to hear Kate Lovelady, Leader of the St. Louis Society, speak on the day's theme, which was the rights of children. She discussed how an understanding and appreciation for the rights of children was growing in the early 1900s and read excerpts from platform addresses of that time. Her presentation was insightful and sparked lively discussion.

David invited me to sit in on a meeting of their pledge committee. The key event of their pledge campaign is a formal luncheon at a nearby hotel, following the Sunday platform. During the luncheon, the society provides child care (and pizza) for the kids. The focus of their campaign this year is to raise enough funds so that they can hire James Croft to be a second ethical leader for the society.



(continued on page 6)

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, November 13, 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.

Engaging Young Adults: Mossler Fellowship at BES

by Elizabeth Collier

BES will be embarking on an initiative to engage more young adults into the community through an AEU Fellowship. The Mossler Fellowship was created to fund projects that will help spread Ethical Culture. I am the recipient of the fellowship and I have chosen the topic of young adult outreach. Last year, I researched the needs and wants, likes and dislikes, amongst young adults and young families in terms of involvement in religious and philosophical congregations. I spoke at about my research at a few Ethical Societies, including at BES last November. I found that young adults are looking communities with a clear mission and identity, hands-on social action projects, discussions and programs related to their phase of life, and diversity in population, to name a few.

The second phase of my work has recently begun and will continue through next spring. I will be working directly with BES and the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture on young adult outreach strategies and ways to make both Societies more welcoming

and receptive to newcomers. At BES, we will be experimenting with outreach strategies such as: using more social media for publicity, co-sponsoring hands-on social justice events with other humanist and like-minded action groups, forming relationships with nearby colleges and chapters of the Secular Student Alliance, organizing and publicizing social events for younger adults, and doing more publicity to the public for Sunday platforms that would most likely appeal to young adults. I'm looking forward to experimenting with all of these approaches and seeing how we are successful! I will also be speaking at a BES Sunday platform in December, and I will be making more visits to Baltimore throughout the coming months of my project. Next spring, as I complete my project, I will compare and analyze all of the young adult outreach strategies we had implemented. I will write a report for the AEU, discussing the implications of our efforts at BES and making recommendations for all of our Ethical Societies to become more attractive to young adults.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Volunteer Day with Real Food Farm

Saturday, November 1, 9:00 a.m.

Poetry Group

Sunday, November 2, 9:30 a.m.

Colloquy: Humanist Spiritual Discussion Group

Wednesday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, November 9, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, November 9, 12:30 p.m.

Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, November 9, 3:00 p.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, November 13, 5:45 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, November 16, 9:15 a.m.

Sunday Assembly Baltimore: Gratitude

Sunday, November 23, 2:00 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, November 30, 12:30 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	November 2
G to L	November 9
M to R	November 16
S to Z	November 23
Everyone!	November 30

SAVE THE DATE!

HumanLight is Tuesday,
December 23, at 7:00 p.m.

NOVEMBER 2

“Brewing in Baltimore: An Alternative to Mainstream Media”

Fern Shen

Founder and Editor of Baltimore Brew

Fern Shen is a veteran journalist, who worked at *The Hartford Courant*, *The Evening Sun* and at *The Washington Post* for 17 years. In 2009 – with mainstream media here and across the country suddenly cutting back, laying off and shutting down - she struck off into somewhat uncharted territory. Shen started *Baltimore Brew* – an online-only news website with reported news stories, culture and community dialogue. Since then, she’s found the response to the *Brew*’s unique blend of highly-professional but dogged accountability reporting and community coverage enlightening and uplifting. She’ll talk about what the experience has taught her about the challenges and opportunities faced by the city and the Fourth Estate.

Fern Shen reported for *The Evening Sun* in the late 1980s and then for 17 years was a staff writer for *The Washington Post*. An award-winning writer on *The Post*’s Metro staff, she covered Maryland state government and the General Assembly, local government, education, crime, environment and social issues. On the Style staff, she helped create and wrote for *The Post*’s “KidsPost” section, a daily page of news and features for young readers. Since leaving the paper she has been a fellow at the Knight Digital Media Center, at the University of California Berkeley. She was proud to see *The Brew* mentioned in *The New York Times* as “a reason for cheer” – but moderately embarrassed that *Times* media blogger David Carr also said sites like *Brew* show “how far journalists will go to avoid getting a real job.”

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

The Baltimore Ethical Society has a Leader and a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, please contact our Officiant Team Coordinator at weddings@bmoreethical.org.

NOVEMBER 9

“Reclaiming Armistice Day”

Ellen Barfield

Veterans for Peace

Ellen Barfield will discuss the original intention of 11 November as a day to mourn the terrible bloodshed of World War I, and the frightening distortion of the day to “Veterans Day”, yet another official U.S. holiday to glorify war and militarism, and thereby facilitate subsequent wars.

Ellen Barfield is a co-founder of the Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter of Veterans for Peace. She served in the U.S. Army from 1977 to 1981 and was discharged with the rank of Sergeant. She is active with Veterans For Peace, War Resisters League, National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance, School of the Americas Watch, and the Plowshares movement. She has been a nonviolent activist for nearly 30 years, after leaving the U.S. Army with an unformed wish to challenge war-making, oppression, and environmental destruction, and having the very good fortune to meet and work with many amazing colleagues in the movement.

NOVEMBER 16

“Fostering Economic Justice In An Unjust World”

Jeff Dicken

Founder and Chair,

Baltimore Green Currency Association

In this time of rising inequality and the commercialization of human interaction, how can we recapture and defend our humanity? One step toward greater equality came when the Baltimore Green Currency Association established the BNote as a local, complementary currency that helps level the economic playing field between independent local businesses and national chains. Over 220 Baltimore businesses accept the Bnote, with over 35,000 BNotes in circulation. Can efforts at localization and the introduction of a neutral local currency, such as the BNote, help us take greater control of our own economy? We will explore the true nature of money and the high value of keeping our purchasing local to the greatest extent possible.

Jeff Dicken, Founder and Chair of the Baltimore Green Currency Association, is a Baltimore native and a graduate

of City College and Northwestern University. A big-picture idealist with a background in film production and IT systems development, he has always been interested in the dynamics of economic systems.

NOVEMBER 23

“Hunger of Body and Conscience”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Every day, almost one billion people go undernourished and 20,000 children die from hunger and hunger-related diseases. How can Humanists process such horror so that we act more consistently to change the situation? Hugh Taft-Morales suggests that those whose health allows should fast for one day, engendering empathy for those suffering from chronic hunger. It may help us act to feed the world. We might be surprised that connecting with what Jane Addams called the “starvation struggle” of half of humanity might ease the deep hunger we feel in our conscience.

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 also serves as Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. His presence in Ethical Culture has been termed “invigorating.” 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.

NOVEMBER 30

“Stone Salad & Soup Fall Festival”

Karen Elliott and Jayme Smith host our celebration of harvest and thanksgiving with stories, music, and poems! This Sunday we express gratitude for our harvest and the rich bounty that fills our life. Come ready to share what you are thankful for in your life! Those attending are encouraged to bring something ready to add to our tradition-based rendition of Stone Salad (lettuce, tomato, carrots, cucumbers, peppers, etc.). We’re also need a few contributions of soup or stew, as well as non-perishable food items to add to the collection for *TurnAround*, a local center that helps women, children, and families who are victims of abuse.

VOLUNTEER DAY WITH REAL FOOD FARM

Saturday, November 1, 9:00 a.m.

Join BES members and our Sunday School for the first in this year’s series of volunteer events with the Real Food Urban Farm. Located in Baltimore City in Clifton Park (just off Harford Road near Lake Montebello), the Real Food Farm and volunteers participate in community empowerment by strengthening access to healthy food for all. As part of the Farm Alliance, Real Food Farm addresses the basic need for affordable, healthy food to combat food insecurity and food deserts, and provides jobs and training for youth and adults. These are cornerstones of honoring human dignity and worth in our city. Participating in this volunteer event is not merely an act of charity, but a contribution to a growing, vibrant and self-sustaining community.

Please sign up here: <http://goo.gl/forms/rBriLAJgrB> , or call Kate LaClair at 201-978-3191. Be sure to dress for the weather, wear sturdy shoes, and bring water and a snack. We will help out, rain or shine! If you wish, you can also bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch with Real Food Farm and their volunteers after the event at noon.

FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY

Sunday, November 9, 3:00-6:45 p.m.
at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic

Join members of the Baltimore Parenting Beyond Belief Meetup for a board and card games party at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic in Howard County. Feel free to bring a game or play one of the many there. Please bring a snack or drink to share (or a small monetary contribution for the host instead). Come when you can, while the party lasts. Ms. Cedilnic is the lead organizer of the Maryland Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Address and directions provided when you RSVP.

For questions, please call her at 301-642-1065. Join the Meetup at <http://meetu.ps/2BLf4M>.

BES
film
CLUB

The BES Film Club will recess for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, and will return in January.

If you would like to help select films or help run the club, please ask Emil.

A View from St. Louis

(continued from page 2)

Like BES, the St. Louis society is working to increase diversity in its membership. St. Louis has only a few African-American members. During the coffee hour after platform, I had the good fortune to meet Dean Smith, a long-time member of the society. When I told him how BES started the first racially integrated Sunday School in Baltimore, he told me the story of the first African-American members of the St. Louis society, who joined in 1947. I encouraged David to document that history and tell the story of how their society was so open over 65 years ago. I also recommended that the St. Louis society meet the public at a wider range of festivals, for example, the St. Louis Juneteenth festival.

Getting a view from the inside of the St. Louis society was valuable for me as president. I hope to apply some of what I learned and look forward to future opportunities to share ideas and best practices with other societies.

A Thank You to our Special Festival Volunteers

by Paul Furth, BES Vice President

In September, your Society made outreach efforts at two important festivals. Only with the help of our volunteers can we succeed in our outreach efforts. And it's those volunteers who gave of their time and talents for which I give thanks. We partnered at the Afro American Cultural Festival in Towson on the 20th with the African American Humanist Society. For that festival, a special shout out goes to Emil Volcheck who gave 120% of himself, Ken Brenneman & Jayme Smith, and Dedrick Samuels. And members of the AAHS who helped, Aaron Bishop, Khandra Sears and Ricardo Youngblood. And for the tremendous effort over the three-day Baltimore Book Festival from the 26th to the 28th at the Inner Harbor, a spe-

cial thank you goes to Karen Elliott without whom we could not have done this festival, Ken Brenneman & Jayme Smith for setting up the booth, Lane Berk, Daniel Blank, Ann & Richard Campbell, Frederick Compton, Argentine Craig, Adam Garst, Donald & Karen Helm, Judy Katz, David Korn, Wayne Laufert, Stephen Meskin, Khandra Sears, Alan Shapiro, Mary Beth Sodus, and Monique Stins, and to anyone whom I may have missed who contributed to these efforts. On behalf of the Society, I thank you all so very much.

We'll continue our outreach efforts at future festivals. Please volunteer to help (and have a good time) at our booth, and embrace the opportunity to bring out the best in others.

SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE: GRATITUDE

Sunday, November 23, 2:00 p.m.

Come to the next Sunday Assembly Baltimore for an inspirational event on the theme of "Gratitude." What happens at a Sunday Assembly? A Sunday Assembly service consists of songs (pop songs mainly) sung by the congregation, a reading (usually a poet), an interesting talk (that fits into live better, help often or wonder more), a moment of reflection and an address, which sums up the day and hopefully gives a take home message. Afterwards we have tea and cake (well, in Britain anyway!) to encourage people to stay and mingle with one another. Visit us on Facebook at <http://fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore>. The Sunday Assembly is a global movement for wonder and good. It is an international not-for-profit that helps people start and run their own godless congregations. Our motto: Live Better, Help Often and Wonder More. Our mission: to help everyone find and fulfill their full potential. Read more at <http://sundayassembly.com>.

**S
UN
DAY
ASSEMBLY**

COLLOQUY: HUMANIST SPIRITUAL DISCUSSION GROUP

Wednesday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.

Join us in a free-form discussion group for an interesting exploration of spirituality from the perspective of humanism. While BES has done exceptional work addressing and educating on issues of science, religion, cultural and social justice, this discussion group is intended to emphasize the issues more toward the emotional and the uncertainties within our lives. Whether you believe or disbelieve, identify as atheist or agnostic or questioning, or even accept the concept of spirituality or not or skeptical, we welcome everyone to participate who is interested to express their thoughts and ideas in a safe and welcoming gathering. Please join us on this experimental journey.

We meet on the first Wednesdays of the month at 7:00 p.m. For additional information, feel free to contact Paul at PDQBlues@aol.com or Mary Beth at marybethsodus@gmail.com.

People's Climate March

by Evelynne Stins (age 11)

I traveled to New York with my mom to participate in the People's Climate March. First we woke up very early and drove to the bus stop. The bus ride was very long and the bus driver got lost so my mom had to help. The people handed out noise makers. Although the trip was very long, I made a new friend. Her name was Natalie. When we finally got to New York we browsed around a little bit and then went to my moms friends house to sleep.

In the morning we took our time. We made signs that were important to us and expressing our thoughts that we could hold up in the March. Mine was doubly side, one side reading, "Stop Denying, the Polar Bears are Dying!" and the other side- "Wake Up and Clean Up CO2". Then we went and took the subway to the March. On the subway trip we met lots of people who were also going to the March.



When we got to the March we had to wait there for a long time for it to begin. The beginning of the March already started but there were so many people we had to wait for over 2 hours. Then, we had a moment of silence. After that we got to ring the Climate alarm by pulling out our noise makers and making A LOT of noise! We waited a little bit longer and then... the March started!

(Read the full article and see more photos at bmorethical.org.)

Thinking Outside the Box

(continued from page 1)

Thinking differently requires radical reorientation, which is why I applaud the BES Board's decision to get out of our physical box and relocate even if for just a test period. And I have long been impressed with our reaching out to new people and organizations through tabling at street festivals and partnering with groups that share our values. It helps our long-time members leverage their institutional knowledge by seeing BES in new ways.

This coming year, to help manage all this growth and change, I'll focus more on building community at the Baltimore Ethical Society. A relationship building class already underway

offers members a chance to learn about personality differences and communication styles. I hope to share more informal time together with social events and communal ethical action projects open to all, such as the November 1st at Real Food Farms (see separate announcement in this newsletter.)

Want to help build community? Contact Thomas Higdon if you would like to be a part of our rejuvenated Social Committee. Want to host a fun event? What parties might members enjoy? How can we combine social time with ethical action projects? Help bring us together as a group so we can better function when engaged in organizational development *within* BES and ethical action projects *outside* of our physical box at 306 W. Franklin Street!



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, November 16, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, November 30, 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 Judy Katz or Janey Solwold for more information.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, November 9, 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.

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

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