

## Some Roots in the North Country

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

It was a nice coincidence to be traveling from Montreal back home this summer after having just received a copy of "Life in the Adirondacks," an essay by Ruth Adler Friess. An easy detour to visit the high peaks region brought me to the summer home of the founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler.

While you might have thought it a bit intimidating to be the daughter of the famous ethical leader and intellectual force, Felix Adler, Ruth recalls with fondness the summer months with her father. It was in the Adirondacks that Adler refueled himself for the coming rigorous year of speaking and activism.

He sought out this refuge after having climbed through the Alps prior to entering graduate school. He was so rejuvenated – physically and spiritually – that he vowed to nurture similar experiences closer to his New York home. After he found "a lovely valley over the mountain ranges from Lake Champlain" Adler began bringing his family and friends there on a regular basis. Soon the valley was known for hosting summer colonies of artists and philosophers, such as Winslow Homer, Mark Twain, and



John Dewey. I particularly enjoyed imagining the scenes described by Friess of long walks during which her father and William James would "lengthily discuss the 'ego and the me', or the categorical imperatives of Kant, while bees buzzed around us," and James would counter a quizzical expression from his

(continued on page 6)



Hugh in the headquarters of the Adirondack Trail Improvement Society, a nonprofit organization founded in 1897 by Felix Adler and friends to ensure regular maintenance and consistent marking of the trails.

### SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

#### SEPTEMBER 4

##### "Celebrate National Recovery Month"

Thomas Higdon  
BES member

#### SEPTEMBER 11

##### "John Lovejoy Elliott and a Ministry to Man"

Hugh Taft-Morales  
Ethical Leader

#### SEPTEMBER 18

##### "Evolution of Community Organizing"

Jason Alinsky  
Chief of Staff for Del. Will Smith

#### SEPTEMBER 25

##### "Legalization of Marijuana in Maryland"

John Mello  
Director, Maryland Chapter of NORML

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Every Sunday  
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10:30 a.m. – Noon

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# BESpeak

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**Hugh Taft-Morales** *Leader*  
**Fritz Williams** *Leader Emeritus*

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# Impermanence and Humanism

by *Paul Furth, BES President*

This summer, your Society underwent a few changes. In a bit of “Back to the Future,” we moved back to room 102 for our Sunday Plat-forms. While I’m going to miss the larger space, our summer gatherings nonetheless have been a success, both in content and reacquaintance of our previous meeting area. We knew that the larger space was temporary. This move was inevitable.

We also had a great time at this year’s Baltimore Pride Parade and Festival in July. Your Society offered LGBT and friends a humanist and Ethical Culture option for those seeking community in an inclusive and nonjudgmental environment, with ethics based on reason and the freedom to question dogma in a safe and encouraging setting. In spite of the hot and humid weather, we had several exceptional members who gave of their time and sweat (quite literally) to come out and represent BES. I was reminded of the hard-fought battle for marriage equality we shared a few years back, the many acquaintances made with some having slowly faded away. Those opposing marriage equality also fought hard, sometimes with sincerity in their fear, at watching the institution of “traditional” (albeit, only secular) marriage dramatically change to include same-sex couples, whose relationships were condemned by most theological religions as sinful (as it was with interracial marriage some 50 years prior). This change, through the progress of LGBT rights and acceptance, as well as social evolution towards greater freedom for all people, was inevitable.

We’ll miss our Sunday School teacher, Linda Joy Burke. For the past many years, she has been with us, helping to teach our youth in the ways of ethics and critical thinking. Her departure was somewhat expected. For several years, her time has become scarcer as she invested more in her work and art. We wish her the best and hope that we’ll see her again soon.

Another big change for me: I’ve a new address, with the help of my BES family, moving out of the house where I cared for my mom for the past six years. While this move was itself emotionally painful, staying there after her death was also painful.

And just recently, I was with Mary Beth one evening when she saved her elderly neighbor, who had fallen down the outside steps while walking her small dog. We found her unconscious, unresponsive and bleeding from her head for most of the 15 or so minutes we waited for the paramedics. Although we were very concerned for her life and health, she only received broken ribs, a broken collar bone and stitches, and was discharged from the hospital in less than 24 hours.

These and the many changes recently experienced have reminded me not only of the preciousness of life, but also how difficult it is for us humans to struggle with mortality, and often the difficulties of facing change. As it is in science, which accepts that matter and everything in the universe are in constant flux, humanism accepts that the only thing that doesn’t change is change itself.



(continued on page 7)

# As We Begin Anew... Renewed

The September sessions of the BES Ethical Education “Tots-to-Teens” open on September 11, at 10:30 a.m. for ages one to seventeen – guided by the Ethical Culture core value: *I am a member of the world community which depends on the cooperation of all people for peace and justice. Every person is important and unique. Every person deserves to be treated fairly and kindly. I can learn from everyone* – under the September theme of friendship.

The teaching/facilitating staff of the Tots-to-Teens Ethical Education Program are:

- Ruth Schoonover (assisted by BES member/parent): Toddler Care (ages 1-2)
- Jill Gordon: Pre-K teacher (ages 3-5)

- Ethical Education Committee\*: Pre-Teens (ages 6-12) and Teens (ages 13-17)

Many stimulating exploratory activities and planned events will occur during this month, including a family

“Game Day and Potluck Meeting” with Navigators USA (an inclusive, co-ed, secular, all-ages scouting group) on Saturday, September 17, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the Baltimore Ethical Society. If interested, please sign up at: [www.signupgenius.com/go/4090b45a5a62b0-game](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090b45a5a62b0-game).

All of the above are coordinated by members of \*Ethical Education Committee: Argentine Craig, Brian Dorsey, Susan Henley, Kim Knox, Maya Kosok, Matthew Minstead, Max Romano, Mark Schechter, Monique Stins, Tevis Tsai, and ex-officio: Paul Furth (President) and Hugh Taft-Morales (Leader).



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Poetry Group

Sunday, September 4, 9:30 a.m.

### Annual Labor Day Sunday Picnic

Sunday, September 4, 12:00 p.m.

### Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, September 11, 9:30 a.m.

### Board Meeting

Sunday, September 11, 12:30 p.m.

### Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, September 18, 12:45 p.m.

### Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, September 25, 12:30 p.m.

### Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, September 25, 12:30 p.m.

### Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, September 25, 2:00 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	September 4
G to L	September 11
M to R	September 18
S to Z	September 25

## ANNUAL BALTIMORE PRIDE PARADE

For the second year in a row, the Ethical Society marched in the annual Baltimore Pride Parade. The parade is just one event in the week-long Pride festivities celebrating the city's LGBTQ community. BES joined community organizations, religious congregations, marching bands, and politicians in the march, which attracted over 10,000 supporters of love, equality, and diversity.





## SEPTEMBER 4

### “Celebrate National Recovery Month”

Thomas Higdon  
*BES member*

September is National Recovery Month, when organizations across the country work to increase awareness and understanding of mental health and substance use disorders. Join BES as we celebrate recovery with a panel of society members who will share their experiences with mental health and substance use disorders and their different pathways to recovery.

**Thomas Higdon** is an active member of the Society and person in recovery from substance use disorder. He is also a volunteer with SMART Recovery ([smartrecovery.org](http://smartrecovery.org)) – a free science based peer support group for individuals struggling with addiction.

## SEPTEMBER 11

### “John Lovejoy Elliott and a Ministry to Man”

Hugh Taft-Morales  
*Ethical Leader*

Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, chose as his first lieutenant someone quite different from himself. John Lovejoy Elliott did not display the academic precision or vigor of his mentor Adler. Instead Elliott was best known for building caring relationships and friendships that served the marginalized for New York and other urban centers. Elliott’s focus on developing the skills and confidence of young people was particularly legendary. As the Ethical Society strives to grow our mission, what can we learn from one of our most beloved Ethical Culture Leaders. Hugh Taft-Morales explores this at a time that we strive to help our own children’s program flourish.

**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.

## SEPTEMBER 18

### “Evolution of Community Organizing”

Jason Alinsky  
*Chief of Staff for Del. Will Smith*

*Rules for Radicals* is deemed the response to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. How to take power from those who seek to retain it. Saul Alinsky was not the first person to organize a rebellion. Organizing has been the cornerstone of human movement and development since the days of Moses. As the days of technology and digital organizing play a larger role in building coalitions we must be able to adapt with the movement. I look to engage in a discussion of how to continue organizing with new challenges our society will face.

**Jason Alinsky** is the grandson of Community Organizer Saul Alinsky. After graduating from the University of Cincinnati, Jason moved to Washington, D.C. Soon after arriving, he was named Campaign Manager for William Smith. He currently works in the Maryland General Assembly as Delegate Smith’s Chief of Staff. For the last year, Jason has worked on Jamie Raskin’s campaign for U.S. House of Representatives. Jason also works for the Maryland Democratic Party organizing Montgomery, Frederick, Carroll Counties along with Western Maryland.

## SEPTEMBER 25

### “Legalization of Marijuana in Maryland”

John Mello  
*Director, Maryland Chapter of NORML*

The Maryland state chapter of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) educates the public and grows the movement toward marijuana legalization in the state of Maryland. They provide education and resources to empower the citizens of Maryland to work with the General Assembly to ensure proper cannabis legalization for adults. Maryland NORML is a member of the Marijuana Policy Coalition of Maryland.

**John Mello** is a director with the Maryland chapter of the National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws (NORML). Maryland NORML is working with a coalition of cannabis advocates to legalize cannabis in Maryland. John served as deputy director of Housing and Building Energy Programs at

the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. His term at the state was preceded by nine years with the non profit Civic Works as founder and director of the Baltimore Center for Green Careers (BCGC). John has served in the Greater Baltimore Grassroots Criminal Justice Network, Baltimore's Green and Healthy Homes Learning Network, among others. He is also the owner of 'Headspace Baltimore' – a glassware boutique on N. Charles St. in Station North.



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## Deed Before Creed



BES members and friends joined BUILD and Port<sup>3</sup> labor groups to successfully delay the Taxation and Finance Committee vote on the Port Covington TIF. Hundreds packed the War Memorial Building room holding signs that read "Stand Up," "BUILD One Baltimore," "Protect OUR House," and "Build It Together," BES members cheered BUILD speakers' demands for a community agreement that benefits the entire city, not just a portion, as well commitments (not just goals) for affordable housing, 51% local hiring (for all the project's jobs), profit sharing with the city, and protection of education funding threatened by the project.

### RESEARCH PROJECT SEEKING SUBJECTS

Dear BES members,

Violence against women in our society and on our college campuses concerns us all deeply. The physical and psychological damage done by this violence lasts a lifetime. Victims often feel unable to speak out. Relationships with their parents can suffer from the shame and secrets such violence causes.

Recently I had a conversation with Susan Sorenson, a director of a center on violence against women in Philadelphia. She has done clinical work around the country on the topic for over 25 years. I am impressed with her current project and urge you to share the information below, which was reviewed and approved by a Research Institutional Review Board, with those you know.

Thank you, Hugh

*Do you have a 19-23 year old daughter who was a victim of campus sexual assault? (The college need not be in the Philadelphia area; it can be anywhere in the U.S.) If so, you might be eligible to participate in a University of Pennsylvania research study about survivors and their parents.*

*The study consists of one in-person interview of about 90 minutes. All information will be kept confidential. You will be compensated for your time with a \$40 gift card. The researcher is interested in speaking with fathers as well as mothers. Daughters will not be interviewed. Both parents do not need to participate.*

*If interested please contact Susan B. Sorenson at 215-573-1169 or [sorenson@upenn.edu](mailto:sorenson@upenn.edu). She is the only one who accesses the messages. Again, all information will be kept confidential.*

# Some Roots in the North Country

(continued from page 1)

friend by saying, “Ah, Adler, I believe I have you there.”

My visit was personally meaningful to me as I was returning from my own summer escape in Charlevoix, seven hours away on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. Friess’s descriptions were full of activities and images that mirrored my own – hikes in the mountains, cold cleansing dips in dark streams, songs and stories around a roaring campfire. Friess even echoed regret for the “modern conveniences” that slowly eroded the rustic charm that isolated you from the rest of the world. She bemoaned the paved roads that made for easier access, much as my wife disapproved of my installing

WiFi where we rest for a couple of weeks.

Of crucial importance to Adler, of course, was time to read and write. To assure some peace and quiet, he built a small study, a “five minute scramble up a steep spruce-covered cliff behind the cottage.” He established a strict rule that he was not to be disturbed. His daughter Ruth was given the duty to bring him a cold pitcher of water at 11:00AM where she would watch him smoke a cigar while dictating addresses and letters to his secretary.

While I don’t have such a study, I do manage some time to sit back, think of broader horizons, and scribble some platform notes before the

rest of my family awakens. When they do come down for breakfast, a friend or relative might drop by, and we sit on the front porch eating wild Canadian blueberries and drinking coffee. Friess’s description of their relaxed breakfasts were eerily familiar: “Then, with my father relaxed and tranquil at the head of the table, a guest or two, leaning across the fruit, honey, and coffee, to challenge him in some argument, a mowing machine whirling in the distance, the sunny, spicy mountain air about us. Life seemed very good indeed.”

Of course it’s easier for life to be good if you’re privileged. Obviously, both Adler and I were lucky enough to have such a summer escape. Most do not have an opportunity for rejuvenation through communion with the natural world. Many young people in Baltimore find little relief from the summer heat in neighborhoods with few camp programs or summer jobs. As I turn my attention to another program year at the Baltimore Ethical Society, I am reminded that we all need sources of rest and inspiration. In gratitude for my own sources, and the sources that fueled the founder of Ethical Culture, I dedicate myself again to the work before us of bringing out the best in a world full of need.



The Ausable Club in St. Huberts, NY, Felix Adler’s summer home ([www.ausableclub.org](http://www.ausableclub.org)).

## ANNUAL LABOR DAY SUNDAY PICNIC

Sunday, September 4, 12:00 p.m.

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship following the Sunday Platform. Members Dianne and Stuart Hirsch have graciously agreed to open their home (and yard) to us once again and so we will gather for our annual Labor Day Sunday picnic from noon to 4:00 p.m. The picnic is potluck so please bring a dish to contribute. This is a great opportunity to relax, enjoy great eats, and get to know new people and reacquaint with old friends. Directions will be handed out and/or provided on request.



## SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE

Sunday, September 25, 2:00 p.m.

Come to the next Sunday Assembly Baltimore! 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 [fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore](https://fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore).

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## Impermanence and Humanism

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Most, if not all, theologically based religions are predicated on a never-changing guide or parental figure with never-changing parameters on morality, faith and behavior. I suspect many of the followers find great comfort in the stability that these religions offer, something permanent to anchor their faith, secure with a belief in some kind of permanent afterlife that awaits those with a particular kind of faith. However, history has shown that the interpretation of these parameters are subjected to change quite considerably.

Humanism, and particularly Ethical Culture, cannot so easily offer such permanence. We can offer only impermanence. As it is with science and knowledge based on empirical observation, we must accept the inevitability of change. Even the field of science has undergone changes many times, rejecting ideas that fail to meet rigorous criteria and accepting new ideas to encompass additional observations and information. And yet, the practitioners of science often are resistant to that very change demanded by

their field. I'm reminded of the uproar and outrage many astronomers voiced when Pluto was "demoted" from planet status, as if Pluto actually cared. And scientists from 125 years ago rejected the basic structure of the atom that we all were taught in elementary school – a notion back then deemed too radical. Change inevitably takes hold even with those most resistant.

As difficult as change is to accept by many of us, it's perhaps our greatest asset. Change forces us to open our minds and eyes, to look at the world for what it is and as it is, rather than forcing our beliefs onto the world. It also gives us the opportunity for greater humility, accepting that what we take as "scientific truth" will inevitably be changed or overturned. It's the very core for the rejection of dogma. It's why I believe, as history has demonstrated, humanism is the best opportunity for humanity, offering real solutions to problems of poverty, disease, hunger and inequality that will give us all the best chance for peace and a more ethical world.

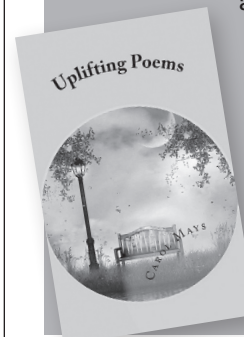
## UPLIFTING POEMS

BES member Carol Mays has just published a book entitled *Uplifting Poems*. It is available on Amazon as a paperback and as an ebook.

Carol's mission in life is to give away thousands of copies of this book to rest homes, group homes, schools, hospitals, libraries, and individuals.

As stated on the back cover, the book offers a respite from a world in which stress and negative images abound. She has compiled the poems from many sources, including the work of classical poets, musicians, and her own prior publications

and recent writings. The poems range from fanciful to sublime, simple to sophisticated, and gentle to passionate.



## PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, September 25,  
12:30 p.m.

Join the Program Committee and help choose speakers for our Sunday morning meetings! Visitors are also welcome to provide thoughts and speaker suggestions, or to just listen. The Program Committee meets monthly on fourth Sundays.



**BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY**

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

**NEWSLETTER**

Please do not delay!

**TIME VALUE**

**ETHICAL ACTION MEETING**

**Sunday, September 18, 12:45 p.m.**

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

**NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, September 25, 12:30 p.m.**

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Come to the Newcomers Meeting, held following the last Sunday platform every month, and find out more about Ethical Culture and our Society its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and are recommended for anyone who's curious about membership. Please attend at least one platform before going to a Newcomers Meeting. Contact Wayne Laufert or Janey Solwold for more information.

**MINDFULNESS**

meditation

**Sunday, September 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.

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