

BESpeak

MAY 2018

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Transitioning to Our New Home

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

1.9 miles. Just 1.9 miles is the distance between our community home *at the beginning* of the month of May to our community home *at the end* of May. Although it is not great distance geographically, in the life of an institution such a journey can be very hard. During the month covered by this newsletter, we will pack up our BES belongings and move north to Charles Village.

Although I felt very much at home at 306 W. Franklin Street, I look forward to feeling at home once again, this time at the Village Learning Place (VLP). After all, there's no place like home, as Dorothy said in *The Wizard of Oz*. In our situation, however, it took more than the clicking of some ruby slippers to find our new home. Many BES volunteers put in some very long hours, and we will all benefit from their efforts.

Facilitated by the Chair of the Relocation Exploratory Committee, Joanna Brandt, committee members and supporters spent months exploring potential short-term and long-term options that fit into the parameters set by the BES Board. Our community stepped up and proved that by using Ethical principles you can create your reality. They managed to select our new home without the rancor that can engulf small organizations. We avoided the trap of creeping authoritarianism during times of stress, and chose instead the way of inclusion and cooperation. As Joanna stated

at the outset of this effort, she saw this process as "more as a circle and not as a pyramid." So while we are leaving home, we will soon circle back round and find ourselves at home once again.

Perhaps Joanna's experience as a yoga instructor

(continued on page 7)



SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

MAY 6

"Verisimilitude in Living History Portrayals"

Bill Grimmette
Actor, Storyteller and
Living History Portrait Artist

MAY 13

"Are we Owners, Stewards, or Children of the Earth?"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

MAY 20

"Bye Bye Congress Hotel, Hello VLP!"

Community Brunch with the
Village Learning Place

MAY 27

"Remembrance Sunday"

Hosted by Karen Elliott
and Hugh-Taft Morales

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday
10:30 a.m. – Noon

Individualized programs for preschool
children and school aged students.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided
for children up to age two.

Unexpected Teachers

by Max Romano, Ethical Education Committee

“Dad, where were the people when no one was there?”

“What do you mean?”

“When no one was here in Maryland, where were they?”

“I don’t understand. I guess, before you were here, your parents were here, and before we were here, your grandparents were there, and before them, your great-grandparents were there. Is that what you mean?”

“No, I mean, before no one was even out of their mommy’s tummy anywhere in the whole world, where were they?”

I was at a bit of a loss. I knew the answer wasn’t God, at least not for me, but how to explain to a four year-old? Or was that even what she was getting at? Sometimes I think I’m teaching my children one thing, and they prove to me they’re learning something way more important. One moment I’m reading Corduroy and the next she’s asking me about the origins of the universe, at least I think that’s what she’s asking about.

One of the things I like most about being a parent (so far) is being chal-

lenged to think differently about the world around me. This month’s core ethical value is: “every person is important and unique,” and I encourage every one of you to learn a lesson from an unexpected, important, unique teacher this month. When my daughters ask me a strange question, I try my best to treat them as important and answer them seriously, yet in a devel-

opmentally appropriate way. They’re learning faster than I ever will, and I’m trying my best to honor their uniqueness and genuine concerns about the big unfamiliar world around them. In the process, they’re probably teaching me as much as I’m teaching them.

“I guess, before there were all the people, there were just animals. And before there were animals, there were just plants. And before there were plants, there were just rocks and things. And a long, long time ago, everything everywhere was just squeezed into a little tiny space the size of a marble, and then it exploded and made everything in our world today.”

“Oh, I have just one more question, dad: what is the first state?”



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, contact our Officiant Team Coordinator at weddings@bmoreethical.org.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, May 6, 9:30 a.m.

NCR Trail Hike

Saturday, May 12, 2:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, May 13, 9:30 a.m.

Second Sunday Family Meet-Up

Sunday, May 13, 12:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, May 13, 12:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, May 20, 12:30 p.m.

Baltimore Museum of Art Visit

Wednesday, May 23, 10:00 a.m.

Morning Coffee and Book Discussion

Saturday, May 26, 10:00 a.m.

Memorial Day Weekend Picnic

Sunday, May 27, 12:00 p.m.

Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, May 27, 12:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, May 27, 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	May 6
G to L	May 13
M to R	May 20
S to Z	May 27



MAY 6

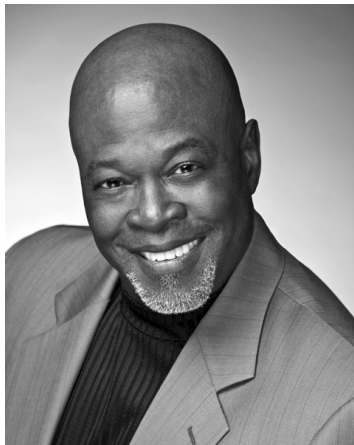
“Verisimilitude in Living History Portrayals: Challenging Perspectives, Perceptions and Beliefs Through Character Dramatizations”

Bill Grimmette

Actor, Storyteller and Living History Portrait Artist

Have you ever listened closely to the words people use that suggest how they perceive the concept of truth? As a portrait artist and actor, one of the central tenants of my craft is to find “the truth” in my character. Accordingly, it is presumed, or rather, I must present, as if I know what truth is. But our pursuit of truth tends to give short-shrift to concepts we encounter every day that are actual synonyms for truth: legitimacy, reality, fact, and news are but a few concepts whose understanding depend upon the shared belief of truth. In this presentation, we will use dramatizations of the “content of character” to examine the notion of truth with complete disregard for limitations.

Bill Grimmette began acting in 1968 in a conservatory in Indianapolis, Indiana. He was born in Alabama but fled, with his dignity nearly shattered from 17 years of Jim Crowism, to the comparative safety of military service. His discovery of classical Myths while attending Marian College (now Marian University) in Indiana, A liberal arts catholic college and his fascination with Method Acting helped to offset the religious dogma's that allowed cultural bigotry to masquerade as genetic distinctions. He earned both a BA and MA in Psychology at Marian and Catholic Universities respectively while serving 20 years in the Army. Retiring as a Major in 1982, Bill pursued his professional acting career full time which led eventually, to his living history portraits. He has performed in King Lear, Othello, Driving Miss Daisy, and some 1000 other plays over these 50 years of theater. Bill will be performing as Frederick Douglass for Maryland Humanities this July at the Chautauqua Living History performances.



MAY 13

“Are we Owners, Stewards, or Children of the Earth?”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

How should we relate to our planet? Ethical Culture, and humanism in general, has been criticized for being too human-centric. Some say that we too readily subordinate the earth to human projects, seeing ourselves as owners or stewards, when we are more like children utterly dependent on mother earth. How can we balance humanist emphasis on responsibility for our planet with the reality of our utter dependence? Is there room in Ethical Humanism for a transcendent environmentalism of awe and reverence? What kind of an environmental ethic should we embrace?

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.

MAY 20

“Bye Bye Congress Hotel, Hello VLP!”

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

2521 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD

The Baltimore Ethical Society is moving to our new home at the Village Learning Place (VLP). The Village Learning Place is an independent non-profit library that houses educational programs, enrichment opportunities, and informational resources for Charles Village and throughout Baltimore City.

The board and staff of the VLP have invited BES members and friends to join them and the residents of the neighborhood for the Annual Charles Village Brunch. This is an opportunity to enjoy good food while getting to know our new neighbors. Stick around after brunch for a tour of BES's new home. Note that VLP is located at 2521 St. Paul Street. If you arrive at the Congress Hotel, you will be disappointed. To learn more about the VLP, visit www.villagelearningplace.org.

MAY 27

“Remembrance Sunday”

Hosted by Karen Elliott and Hugh Taft-Morales

On Remembrance Sunday we gather to remember those who have died in the last year or before, and whose lives and work have made a positive impact. We may have known them personally and miss their living presence but take solace in the work, ideals, friendship, and love they offered to the world. We may never have met them, but been inspired by their words and actions. In our quest to live more meaningful and ethical lives, we can turn to those who have gone before for inspiration, guidance and strength. This interactive program will be led by Karen Elliott and Hugh Taft-Morales.

2018 AEU ASSEMBLY “SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE”

June 7-10, 2018, Albuquerque, New Mexico

It's not too late to attend the 2018 American Ethical Union Assembly, “Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture,” taking place in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

You can register for this event at aeu.org/event/aeu-103rd-assembly. On that same webpage you can donate to the “Voices at the Table Fund” to help assure diverse representation. Whether you are attending or not, consider donating to this worthy cause!



CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE SOCIETY ON SUNDAY MORNINGS?

INTERESTED IN A PAST PLATFORM THAT YOU MISSED?

Watch them on our Vimeo page! Simply go to vimeo.com/user4409178 to see video recordings of many of our platforms from the last several years.

BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART: SACRED SPRING

Wednesday, May 23, 10:00 a.m.
10 Art Museum Drive, Baltimore

We'll meet in the lobby and set off at 10:10 a.m..

I love Art Nouveau! Please join me at the exhibit *Sacred Spring: Vienna Secession Posters from the Collection of LeRoy E. Hoffberger and Paula Gately Tillman Hoffberger*. It looks gorgeous! Perhaps we'll have lunch afterwards? More information at artbma.org/exhibitions/upcoming.html. Contact Mav at mav.vaughan@gmail.com with questions.

MEMBER PROFILES

Let's get to know each other a little better. For over a year now, we have been posting short biographies of our members in our website's Members Only section. Profiles of our newer members have been posted based on the text used in their welcoming ceremonies but we need to hear from our longer-time members. Go to the Directory or Member Profiles page and you will see a “Tell Us About Yourself” link in the sidebar that will take you to a form submission page. Type some details and attach a portrait-type photo. If you don't have a picture of yourself, our photographer can take one after a Sunday meeting. Use the published profiles as a guide. If you have any questions, contact Wayne Laufert (wlaufert@aol.com) or Janey Solwold (jlsolwold@gmail.com).

bmorethical t-shirts

bmorethical
THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

**GET YOURS
TODAY!**

Available in black,
purple, and green!

ONLY \$15

NCR TRAIL HIKE

Saturday, May 12, 2:00 p.m.
1235 Paper Mill Road,
Hunt Valley, MD 21030

We'll set off promptly at 2:10.

The trail is flat and paved, an easy 4 miles. We can go that far, or simply turn back whenever we care to, the trail goes much further. Bring water, and a snack if desired. Leashed dogs allowed.

Directions: From I695 take Rt 83 North towards Hunt Valley. Take exit 20 at Shawan Rd East, then make a Right at York Rd. Make a left at Ashland (1st Light) and go about 1-2 miles to left at parking lot. Note: Ashland turns into Paper Mill Rd.

Contact Mav at mav.vaughan@gmail.com with questions.



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, May 27, 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 just to listen. The Program Committee meets monthly on fourth Sundays.

SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UPS!

Sunday, May 13, 12:30 p.m.

Join other families with young children immediately following platform on the second Sunday of each month to have fun, build community, and let off steam. The activities will be selected with 2-6 year olds in mind, but all are welcome! If you have questions, email Maya at mayagk@gmail.com or Beth at emluginbill@gmail.com.



Oh, What a Year!

(continued from page 2)

Membership

Achievements

- Staffed welcome table every Sunday and sent 150+ follow-up emails to visitors
- Hosted monthly Newcomer's Meetings and welcomed 10 new members
- Prepared biographical narratives for six new members Welcoming Ceremonies
- Published profiles for new members to website

Goals

- Publish an online membership guide and application
- Increase follow-up with individual members who stop attending regularly
- Get branded pens to give away at the welcome table

Program

Achievements

- Organized a Platform speaker or special event (e.g. Colloquy, Stone Salad) every Sunday throughout the year
- Improved participation so that most

outside speakers are now suggested by committee members

- Average Sunday attendance for 2017 was 36.4 persons

Goals

- Continue to promote diversity in culture, gender, race and ideas
- Fill speaker calendar at least two months in advanced
- Involve our Sunday School students in a Sunday platform

Public Relations

Achievements

- Updated website on monthly basis
- Published ten issues of the *BESpeak* newsletter

Goals

- Develop PR plan for introducing BES to our new neighborhood
- Reimagine the *BESpeak* newsletter
- Get a Google Adwords grant

Building

Achievements

- Kept our supplies stocked
- Helped cleanup after platform

Goals

- Help coordinate setup/clean on Sundays

May is for Moving!

This month BES will be moving into its new home at the Village Learning Place (VLP). We need all hands on deck to make this a smooth move. Please reserve some or all of the the following dates. If everyone pitches in a little we can get it done with ease. Sign-up sheets are posted at the Society.

- May 13, 12:30-5:00 p.m.: Final packing and take items to storage
- May 19, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.: Move in date
- May 20: First meeting at VLP
- May 20, 12:30-5:00 p.m.: More moving if needed
- May 26 or 27: Final move if needed, clean BES (TBD)

Also on the schedule but date/time TBD: Clean-up day at VLP.

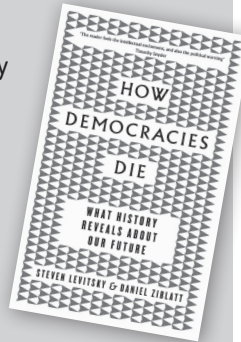
If you have a truck, handcarts, boxes, packing tape, please bring these on moving days. Thank you in advance.



MORNING COFFEE & BOOK DISCUSSION

Saturday, May 26, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

This month we will be discussing *How Democracies Die*, by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. This book is a warning about the fragility of our system of government. If we are going to change our political system, will it be to improve democracy so it functions better, or will we drift towards chaos or a more entrenched oligarchy? Come for this follow up to similar books discussed earlier this year: *On Tyranny*, by Timothy Snyder, and *The Common Good*, by Robert Reich. Given that BES is moving this month, the location for this program will be determined later. Contact Hugh Taft-Morales at leader@bmorethical.org to sign up and get location information.



MEMORIAL DAY SUNDAY PICNIC

Sunday, May 27, 12:00 p.m.

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship following the regular Sunday program. Our new home at the Village Learning Place has a lovely garden that is equipped with a gas grill so we will gather there for our annual picnic from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The picnic is potluck so please bring a dish to contribute.

Transitioning to Our New Home

(continued from page 1)

helped. In my yoga experience, good instructors helped me flow through fairly rigorous movements while maintaining a centered calmness. In going through this congregational space rigorous movement, our community found a flow of focused and loving attention so important to both yoga and, yes, to changing the place we call home.

Charles Dickens said, “Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to,…” I know I hoped anxiously that new home would offer us that strength to flourish in the next phase of our institutional life. With more room for our vibrant Sunday School to expand, we won’t be on top of each other anymore. Hopefully we’ll also be free of the floods and pestilence that made our last years at the Old Congress Hotel a bit of an ordeal!

As we settle into the Village Learning Space at 2521 St. Paul Street, all of us will have the opportunity to make this a great home for Ethical Humanism. We’ll have the opportunity to thank VLP for their hospitality in our new, shared space, while working to welcome new folks that never made it down to West Franklin Street. Hopefully BES members will find this transition relatively easy. After all, as important as the physical space is, a real home is made by good relationships. Home is less the walls and roof than it is the web of relationships that we nurture there. Thanks again to so many of you who are as I write thoughtfully guiding us from our home of yesterday to our home for tomorrow.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, May 20, 12:30 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, May 27, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Come to the Newcomers Meeting, held following the last Sunday Platform of 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, May 13, 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

Welcome to BESpeak, the newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Donations from readers like you help us keep it in production. Send checks payable to Baltimore Ethical Society to: BESpeak, 306 W. Franklin St., Ste. 102, Baltimore, MD 21201. If you would like to subscribe to the online version of this newsletter, sign up at bmorethical.org. Thank you.