



ETHICAL CULTURE

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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JANUARY 2008

Dear Members and Friends, Some Good and Bad News for the Coming Year

I wish you and your families all a joyous and fruitful New Year. May your goals be achieved, your wishes be fulfilled, and all that is now dear to you continued and enhanced in the coming year.

My personal wishes are for the renewal of our beloved fellowship. We have many challenges ahead of us. But I do believe that with good planning, new approaches, and renewed commitment we shall prevail. Some good grounds for hope are the fact that we are now attracting new and active members. Some have already joined us and others are in process. And so I offer a special New Year's welcome to our new members Gladys Smith and Barry and Joanne Sack into our fellowship. And I offer a special welcome to those who are about to become members and will be so by the time this newsletter article is in print: Sabri Taha as well as Karen and Edwin Bokert. Each of them has already begun to bring their enthusiasms, volunteerism and unique gifts and abilities to our community. Gladys has brought her friend Sabri to us and shared her insights during our discussions. Sabri has given us greater understanding of Darfur. The Bokerts have already begun a project to help returning Iraqi war veterans receive help which the Social Action committee has accepted. Barry Zack has already volunteered to help us with publicity. We are happy to welcome them and grateful for their ethical commitments.



On a sadder note however, I must

mention a most distressing development in New Orleans. I read in the NY Times that FEMA has begun to give eviction notices to those who were made homeless by Katrina and who now occupy small trailers provided by FEMA in a trailer park. These people are among the poorest in New Orleans. FEMA claims that they have been given counselors to assist them in relocation. However, few have received such services and many face imminent eviction without ever having seen a counselor. New Orleans is facing a severe housing shortage at this time. The costs of apartments and houses have nearly doubled. The bald truth is that the vast majority really have nowhere to go. It is unconscionable that at this juncture FEMA has taken this draconian policy. This is the same mismanaged, clueless Bureaucracy which was so incredibly inefficient during the aftermath of the Hurricane. It is the same federal government which failed to protect the city with adequate designs of the failed levees and other structures. Have they no shame? How many times do they need to victimize these people? We have billions to pour into a fruitless foreign war and nothing to give to continue to sustain our own people made homeless not only by Katrina but by those in the Federal government (Army Corp of Engineers and others) who had and those who continue to have (FEMA) the responsibility to protect these people. I URGE YOU ALL TO HOLD OUR GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CARE AND RESTORATION!

Despite this troubling news, I urge you all to welcome the New Year with renewed courage, commitment, and joy.

— Boe Meyerson

FUND RAISER NEWS



Pat Thompson will host a **DINNER** at her home, on the 19th of January at 4:00 PM. Hearty winter fare, with warm company. \$25 donation. Please sign up on Sundays at Ethical or call the office, Jeanine Rosh (973-258-9395).



CONCERT NEWS We're in the process of putting together a "Sterling Duo" Event early in 2008 – our own Mary Babiarz and Joe Gluck, back by popular demand. Keep watching and reading for exciting details.

SOUP AND SONDHEIM March 2nd, Sunday afternoon date is set for the Strollers' musical, Stephen Sondheim's *Anyone Can Whistle*, an absurdist social satire about insanity and conformity – among a dozen other things.

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Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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Jim White, Leader Emeritus

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Editor's note

The newsletter invites you to submit articles, announcements, commentary, etc. for publication. ITEMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE FIRST OF THE MONTH FOR INCLUSION IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH'S EDITION. Items should be no more than 150 words, preferably submitted via email to the editor (gilman.howard@gmail.com). Items can also be delivered to: Editor, Ethical Society Newsletter, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Please call the office, 973-763-1905, and leave word especially if your item is time-sensitive.

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

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Our web site: www.essexethical.org

**"... act so
as to elicit
the best
in others
and in
ourselves"**

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to ethicalesssex@netscape.com to receive the newsletter and other special event notices.



President's Letter

As we launch our new year, I keep thinking about the outstanding American Ethical Union workshop I attended this past season about "Becoming a Generous Congregation", not just about money but generous as an attitude of helpfulness, caring, empathy to the concerns of others and the needs of our community. Not just the practical but the spiritual as well. Spiritual? Attention to the sacred. And what is sacred in Ethical Culture? Bringing out the best in others; creating a more humane world.

In recent days, Frank Manus came to my home to help me organize some materials that my bum foot wouldn't allow; our new member Dr. Ed Bokert continues to help move along our "Heal the Warrior" Project on responding to traumatized vets from both Vietnam and Iraq wars; Freda Fink's interesting Coffee and Conversation idea resulted in a sparkling event at Mira Stillman's home with more to follow; Janet Mangano volunteering to provide piano music as a prelude to our Platforms for 15 years now; Anya Moen planning a Pledge Dinner at our Society to reinvent our former joyous Pledge Parties; Gigi Goldstein continues to monitor our telephone answering machine and provides other phone services, all from her nursing home; and so it goes. My granddaughter Stephanie marvels at my optimism; many of you give me good reason. Thank you all and have a fulfilling New Year.

— Betty Levin, President

Fund Raisers (continued from page 1)



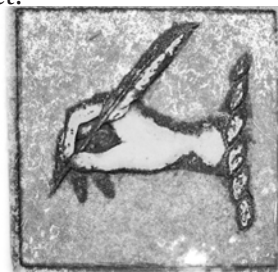
Any opportunity to experience his genius is an event not to be missed. Add to that, lunch and camaraderie, and you've got a fun afternoon. Call the office to reserve a ticket.

The spring date of the ever popular **POETRY EVENING** will be announced by Sylvia Kramer. A rare experience. Stay tuned for specifics.

TRIVIAL PURSUITS (or a reasonable facsimile) IS ALIVE AND WELL and will be held this year on March 14th, Friday evening at 7 PM. Some warm grog (or beverage of your choice), healthy snacks, and the challenge of the game will start out your weekend with a bang. Room for 9; \$15 donation.

MORE CONCERT NEWS

— Marjorie Berg and friends return on May 31st in a concert of romance and passion. Please keep the date open; this will be a lovely evening of music



and meeting old friends and new. Updates and details to follow shortly.

Nancy Bohn came up with a great new idea for raising some funds every Sunday: Why not have a **MINI MARKET** after the Sunday Platform offering good, useful items for re-sale. If you would like to participate, bring your clean, saleable items on Sunday, we will sort and ticket those that are marketable and you take them back home if not sold. We'll run a pilot program in December to see if it catches on. Pick up some interesting holiday gifts.



— Jeanine M Rosh

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL
IMPACT OF DISASTERS**

The last decade has seen a large increase in the occurrence of both natural and man-made disasters. The numbers are staggering. In 2003, in natural disasters alone, 200 million people were exposed to loss of life, damage to property and the trauma of survival. The United Nations works to meet these needs through its numerous agencies concerned with the welfare of children, prevention and treatment of disease, food relief and care for refugees.

Because of the changing nature of conflict in man-made disasters, civilians are being directly targeted. In 2003, 45 million were in need of life saving assistance. In the past, the UN has been primarily concerned with physical survival. But it has become clear that although victims may recover from financial and material loss and physical disabilities, the psychological impact may also have serious and sometimes long-lasting effects. Because they are less obvious, these needs are often neglected.

In recent years the UN has begun to respond to the psychological effects of disasters. A relatively new concept, the idea of "Psychological First Aid", is now being used in humanitarian relief work. Everyone knows that if someone is bleeding, the first effort is to stop the bleeding, and then, if needed, take them to a specialist. Similarly, if a person is in immediate need of psychological assistance it is not necessary to take them to a psychotherapist. Rescue workers are being trained to provide preliminary psychological first aid. The UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee has developed guidelines for the important initial responses to traumatic situations. These guidelines have been shared with and agreed

upon by international humanitarian organizations.

Many of these detailed guidelines may seem obvious, but they are sometimes overlooked. To note only a few: it is important in the aftermath of high stress situations to promote calm and treat people with dignity; to give practical suggestions; to help people to help themselves; to offer accurate information about the disaster or trauma; and perhaps most importantly, never to make promises that may not be kept.

In the occurrence of both natural and man-made disasters, the numbers are staggering.

Psychological first aid can be very valuable because individuals often view their own traumatic stress response as a personal weakness rather than a natural and appropriate response. It is very important for the person who is helping to give the victim a realistic view to promote the empowerment which can be invaluable in recovery.

The UN's humanitarian tasks have grown enormously. Its many agencies work closely with international humanitarian organizations. To strengthen the response to emergencies and disasters, in 1991, the General Assembly created an office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In addition to fundraising, coordinating the work of many UN agencies and international humanitarian groups, OCHA's role is to provide leadership through effective and systematic crisis management, while placing humanitarian issues in the forefront.

Another new and innovative program just getting off the ground uses space technology (SPIDER) for information services on disaster management with universal access offered to all countries and interested organizations. A US program of psychological first

aid has been developed by the American Psychological Association--the Disaster Response Network. This is an innovative program creating a national network of psychologists with training in disaster response, who volunteer assistance to relief workers, victims and victims' families after disasters of all kinds, both natural and man-made. More than 2,500 members nationwide volunteer through their relationship with the American Red Cross. Members who receive some training have volunteered more than 24,000 days in the past 14 years helping the Red Cross. Want to volunteer? Contact Public Relations and Communications Practice Directorate at 202-336-5898.



— *Phyllis Ehrenfeld, President, National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union and Representative to the UN; Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Representative to the UN*

Platforms *(continued from page 4)*

ets of ethical eating, describe the views of prominent individuals and groups, and then offer his own solution, one which seeks to balance moral concerns with feasibility.

Christopher Geissler is currently a junior at Oratory Preparatory School in Summit, and has attended the Sunday Platforms of the Ethical Culture Society since the Spring of 2007. While not working for school or researching colleges, he throws pottery and reads about science and history. Christopher officially became a vegetarian in October, 2007, and lives in Maplewood with his family.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

January, 2008

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information about our Sunday School, 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m., and our Youth of Ethical Societies (YES), contact the Society office, 973-763-1905.

Jan 6 Boe Meyerson, Leader “*The Ethical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant in the Twenty First Century*”

Boe will explore the relevance and value of the Ethical theory of one of the world’s greatest thinkers who, in the late 18th century, awakened many of his philosophical contemporaries from their dogmatic slumbers. She will discuss his influence on our founder, Felix Adler, and comment on his contemporary relevance in ethical theory.

Boe is the Leader of our Ethical Society and is also the Ethical Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University from which she holds a Masters Degree in Philosophy.

Jan 13 Gladys Smith “*The Ethics of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*”

Gladys Smith will explore the principles and priorities that guided Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his fight for equality and justice for everyone through his writings as well as through his actions. Where do we stand now in terms of realizing his vision — the successes, failures, and lessons learned?

Gladys Smith, who joined the Society earlier this year, is a social worker,

community activist, and mother who recently spent several weeks visiting Egypt.

Jan 20 Lawrence Bush “*The Spiritual Explorations of a Reluctant Atheist*”

Lawrence Bush will talk about and read from his new book, *Waiting for God: The Spiritual Explorations of a Reluctant Atheist*, which explores the factors that turned so much of the



“Woodstock generation” towards spiritual practices and the renewal of religious life. Dr. Joseph Chuman, leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, has described *Waiting for God* as “deeply personal, searingly honest, wise and witty. Seldom has ‘waiting’ been so dynamic, fascinating and insightful.” The book includes chapters on growing up with the Bomb, psychedelic drugs, synchronicity and quantum physics, and whether or not atheism has its own unique spirituality. Bush also offers a working definition of “spirituality” and “writes about non-belief with an empathy for believers missing from the works of the New Atheists” (*New Jersey Jewish News*).

Lawrence Bush is the editor of *Jewish Currents*, a 61-year-old bimonthly

published by the Workmen’s Circle. He served as editor and commentator for the millennial edition of Leo Rosten’s *The Joys of Yiddish*. Bush’s own books include *Bessie*, a novel republished this year in paperback, *American Torah Toons: 54 Illustrated Commentaries* (1997), *Jews, Money and Social Responsibility* (1993, co-authored with Jeffrey Dekro), and two works of fiction for adolescents. He has also contributed fiction and essays to the *New York Times*, *Village Voice*, *MAD Magazine*, *Tikkun*, *Moment*, and numerous other publications.

Jan 27 Chris Geissler “*The Ethics of Vegetarianism*”

Christopher Geissler, a new member of the Essex County Ethical Culture Society, will present a lecture and discussion exploring the ethical dilemmas of eating, particularly regarding animal-based food. Vegetarianism has a long history stretching back for thousands of years, and the question of what is acceptable to eat is still being asked today. Christopher will outline the history of vegetarian movements, explain the different fac-

(continued on page 3)

