



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 4

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

DECEMBER 2012

DECEMBER PLATFORMS

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, call 973-763-1905. Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

December 2 Jennifer Moses, "Word and Image: Channelling the World's Creativity" (rescheduled from November 4)

Writer and painter Jennifer Anne Moses talks about her experiences working among full-Gospel African-American Christians in the Deep South, where she lived for years and



how those experiences opened her up to her own best artistic intuitions. She is the author, most recently, of *Visiting Hours* (Fomite Press), a novel in stories. Her earlier books are *Bagels And Grits: A Jew On The Bayou* and *Food and Whine*. She's also a painter and her work has been widely shown in the South. More info on her at <http://www.jenniferannemosarts.com/>

December 9 Bart Worden, "What We Live For"

In 1876 the founder of the first Society for Ethical Culture, Felix Adler, said the following in his inaugural address: "There is a great and crying evil in modern society. It is want of purpose. It is that narrowness of vision which shuts out the wider vistas of the soul. It is the absence of those sublime emotions which, wherever they arise, do not fail to exalt and consecrate existence." Adler's hope was that Ethical Societies would inspire people to experience profound purposefulness, coupled with an expansive vision of humanity and a passion for realizing each person's worth and dignity—and that would lead us toward a richly humane

and just society. How well does Adler's concern reflect our concerns today?

Bart Worden, a longtime member of the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester, was recently named Executive Director for the American Ethical Union, and continues to serve the Westchester Society as their Leader. He has been an active participant with a number of AEU committees and task forces, has served on the AEU board as a National Leaders Council representative, and is a faculty member for the AEU Lay Leadership Summer School.

Bart obtained his bachelor's degree from Hope College in 1978 majoring in Philosophy of Religion. In 1983, he obtained a masters degree in social work from NYU and then worked as a social worker and psychotherapist for adults with psychiatric disabilities. He currently serves The Guidance Center of Westchester as the organization's Associate Executive Director. Bart graduated from the Humanist Institute in 1997 and worked as a leader-intern at the New York Society for Ethical Cul-



ture prior to his appointment as Leader for the Westchester Society in 1998.

Bart's wife, Ruthanne, introduced him to the Westchester Ethical Society twenty-seven years ago and their sons, Gary and Jeff, are graduates of the Sunday school.

December 16 Mathilde Benveniste, David Brancaccio and Mary Olive Smith, "Time Banking, or the Dynamics of Exchanging Skills and Services"

Mathilde Benveniste, the lead organizer of the local Time Bank, will de-

scribe the concept of non-monetary sharing of skills and services, its growing international popularity and the way it is taking shape in our community. (See "Essex Time



Exchange" on page 2.) A portion of the documentary, "Fixing the Future," will be screened, showing how the Portland Hour Exchange with its 1,000 active members operates. Mathilde will be joined by finance journalist and broadcaster David Brancaccio, host in the documentary, and Emmy-award winning producer/director Mary Olive Smith.

Mathilde Benveniste has worked on wireless systems, including cellular systems and wireless LANs, for the past nineteen years. She holds 94 patents. She has held research positions, has been active in standards task groups and has published numerous technical papers. She is a resident of South Orange.

December 23 Martha Gallahue, "Spirituality in the New Age"

Martha Gallahue will review the recent publication of the new book, *Interspirituality in the New Age*, co-authored by a fellow ethical culturalist and colleague, Dr. Kurt Johnson. (See "About Dr. Kurt Johnson" on page 2.)

Martha will invite reflection upon the distinction between spirituality and religion and about the cultural landscape of the world of believers. Kurt in his book alludes to the original message of Felix Adler who aspired to the realization of a universal religion that could change with the times. His view of radical social engagement as the proper replacement (*continues*)

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Martha Gallahue, *Interim Leader*
Boe Meyerson, *Leader Emerita*

Andrew Weinberger, *President*
Zia Durrani, *Vice President*
Martin Cotler, *Treasurer*
Rosalie Sussman, *Secretary*

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EC Monthly Platforms Editor
Elaine Durbach
Editor/graphics: Howard Gilman

Editor's Note

Newsletter articles, announcements, etc., not to exceed 150 words in length, must be received by the FIRST of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition. Submit items to: Howard Gilman, newsletter editor, preferably via email at: gilman.howard@gmail.com. Items can also be dropped off at 15 So. Pierson Rd., Maplewood; or, if you put something for the newsletter in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please give me a call at (973) 763-3914 to be sure I know about it, especially if your item is time-sensitive. — *Editor*

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

Essex Time Exchange

Our Ethical Culture society is an incubator for the time exchange under the auspices of the social action committee. The Essex Time Exchange (formerly "time bank") provides a reciprocal service exchange. Examples of services are mentoring children, helping neighbors with house improvements or caring for an ill neighbor. The time one spends providing services earns "time credit" that one can spend to receive services from fellow Time Exchange members. We expect that this practical exchange of services will build community. Let all who are interested, come and join us.

Via the Internet, we are ready to process membership applications and service exchange transactions. See <http://www.essextimeexchange.org/> for a description of the Essex Time Exchange. You will also find a link to this description on the application page: <http://www.hourworld.org/bank/Join.php?hw=1036>. To apply for membership to the Essex Time Exchange, we request that each person submit the names of two personal references to give us all an added level of safety and security. Once your application is processed, you will receive instructions on how to begin to use our system to give and receive services.

Please feel free to invite your friends to join us as well. We look forward to exchanging our hours with you! For more information contact: info@EssexTimeExchange.org

— *Steering committee members*

Mathilde Benveniste, Martha Gallahue, Jackie Herships, Lisa Novemsky

(continued from page 1)

for individual salvation was key to that message.

Martha will be available for more discussion of this Platform after the program.

December 30 A Musical Year-End/ Festive Season Gathering

We'll get together to review the past 12 months, set our sights on the next 12 and share our favorite festive songs.

Folk Arts Friday at Ethical, Dec. 14

Sing-along and jam with friends 7:30 p.m. second Friday of each month, September through June at the Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ. Bring acoustic string and rhythm instruments, join in playing, singing or listening. Bring some refreshments to share. Folk Fridays have expanded to invite all crafts people in the society to come and listen to music while doing crafts! Everyone is invited! Contact: lnovemsky@comcast.net or (973) 763-8293

About Dr. Kurt Johnson and *The Coming Interspiritual Age*

Dr. Kurt Johnson is co-author of *The Coming Interspiritual Age*, a book that grew out of his decade-long work with regard to intercultural and interreligious dialogue. He is vice president of the AEU-affiliated National Ethical Service; at the UN, he works with the Eco-Spirituality Working Group in association with the Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns. With a PhD in evolution, ecology, systematics and comparative biology, plus extensive training in comparative religion and philosophy, he was associated professionally for twenty years with the American Museum of Natural History and the One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in New York City. Ordained in three spiritual traditions, he is recognized as a close associate of Brother Wayne Teasdale, the founder of the modern "interspiritual movement" and works with the international Contemplative Alliance and Father Thomas Keating, founder of the Centering Prayer Movement. Teasdale, Johnson, Gallahue and others co-founded the international Interspiritual Dialogue association in 2002, which presented at the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions.



LEADER'S COLUMN

Relief, Recovery, Renewal

Martha Gallabue

Storm Sandy in conjunction with a full moon and nor'easter gave us pause. Those of us who were without power, heat, communications found ourselves with time and opportunity to think about what was important. Most of us reached out to others who were in distress. We shared our food, our spaces to family and friends who needed us. We waited patiently in line for gas. Truly it was a teaching moment that could serve to change our lives forever as we witnessed so many who suffered more than we did. Ethical Culture has for so many years been an advocate for sustainability.



Maybe, in a new way we will contribute to shifting consciousness from consumption to conservation. Maybe we will emerge more resilient in times of distress here in our community. I was preoccupied with how our social connections give us hope. I received messages of concern from South Sudan, Russia and from India, in addition to family and friends near and far. I was all too aware of how far my home in Cranbury seemed from you and how little I could do to make life easier here. I was also thinking that it is time to connect our determination to become a Peace Center with taking more leadership in the community as change agents. We together have so much collective intelligence, wisdom and experience.

Just before Sandy struck, the National Ethical Service (NES), the AEU's organization at the United Nations where I am Leader there as well, chose to focus upon supporting service initiatives that nurture creative community building. To accomplish their

goals, NES announced its campaign to increase the Rose L. Walker Fund. This fund was created to continue its work at the United Nations and to nurture those projects that reflect the mission and purpose of ethical culture.

Along with the campaign to increase funds, NES will begin in the new year to offer seed grants that promote the cause of peace. Part of the NES Mission Statement reads, "Our purpose is to promote a consciousness shift toward our comprehensive interconnectedness as we affirm our identity in ethical culture. We support all humanitarian work that is based in reciprocity and mutuality. We understand humanitarian work as vital not only to the relief of suffering but as essential to building a peaceful world."

One success occurred when Haiti was devastated by an earthquake, NES contributed \$2000 to start a giving campaign. From that start, the entire AEU community contributed nearly \$9000 more to alleviate the suffering. While we were proud of this effort, we learned that since our Funds are limited, we would prefer to contribute to any educational initiatives that would go beyond the alleviation of suffering and more toward those programs that may be designed to bring about longer lasting shifts. We are open to skill building, training, projects. We are eager to assist local Societies who have such projects in mind. We encourage that monies we distribute will be matched by the grantee. We have learned the value of inter-cooperation and success of coalitions.

We want you to know about this first because you may have a creative idea that meets needs in our community and could use some financial support to be implemented. If so, please contact me through the Society email or phone number and I will help you with your application.

In Gratitude

I put my memoir-writing aside to record my immense gratitude regarding Hurricane Sandy:

1. It was not a nuclear disaster — my house and body are intact; also our civilization.

I marvel as dawn emerges, without failure, each day. Early man's awe is even more understandable.

3. My loved ones are safe.

4. I have food and hot water, also sufficient meds and toilet paper.

5. My LED illuminated lantern includes an FM radio with connection to WQXR, classical music 24/7.

6. President Obama has been endorsed for reelection by Mayor Bloomberg, from Democrat to Republican to Independent, stating: "Obama is the candidate who understands the environment and climate change which contributed to this violent storm."

7. My cell phone works often and my car has gasoline.

8. Most important of all — the human dimension. Many neighbors came to check on me. A complete stranger informed me I could light my gas stove with a match, enabling me to enjoy hot soup and tea in my frigid house.

Trying to enjoy frivolity in an otherwise grim situation, I arranged a "candlelight" supper with neighbors who brought wine. Complete with a tablecloth on my usually bare table, we enjoyed some special soup and salad from leftover greens. "When you get a lemon, you make lemonade."

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P.S. Sharing the vigil of the presidential election with Zia Durrani, our Society's vice president at her home, I offered to bring some goodies which she declined. Instead, I brought a still-blooming cheerful geranium, originally gifted by our immediate past president Anya Moen at our final Membership Meeting last May. "What goes around, comes around..." — *E. Betty Levin*

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · DECEMBER 2012

Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture

These *Commitments* were written in collaboration with Leaders and members of the American Ethical Union, coordinated by Lois Kathleen Kellerman, Leader Emeritus of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture.

- **Ethics Is Central.** The most central human issue in our lives is creating a more humane environment.
- **Ethics Begins with Choice.** Creating a more humane environment begins by affirming the need to make significant choices in our lives.
- **We Choose to Treat Each Other as Ends, not Means.** To enable us to be whole in a fragmented world, we choose to treat each other as unique individuals having intrinsic worth.
- **We Seek to Act with Integrity.** Treating one another as ends requires that we learn to act with integrity. This includes keeping commitments, and being honest, open, caring and responsive.
- **We Are Committed to Educate Ourselves.** Personal progress is possible, both in wisdom and social life.

Learning how to build ethical relationships and cultivate a humane community is a life-long endeavor.

- **Self Reflection and Our Social Nature Require Us to Shape a More Humane World.** Growth of the human spirit is rooted in self-reflection, but can only come to full flower in community. This is because people are social, needing both primary relationships and larger supportive groups to become fully human. Our social nature requires that we reach beyond ourselves to decrease suffering and increase creativity in the world.
- **Democratic Process is Essential to Our Task.** The democratic process is essential to a humane social order because respect for the worth of persons requires democratic process, which elicits and allows a greater expression of human capacities.
- **Life Itself Inspires a Natural “Religious” Response.** Although awareness of impending death intensifies the human quest, the mystery of life itself, and the need to belong, are the primary factors motivating human religious response.

From: Ethical Society Without Walls, <http://www.eswow.org/what-is-ethical-culture>