



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 33 NUMBER 10

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JUNE 2014

June 1 *To be announced*

June 8 Dale McGowan, “Launching a Relevant Ethical Education Program in Maplewood”

Dale McGowan, author, former university educator and parent, and now National Director of Ethical Education for the American Ethical Union, will speak on the core elements of an effective, relevant and fun ethical education program. Having visited several societies throughout the movement, he can share his findings on what success looks like in this area.

In addition to his current work at the AEU, Dale teaches nonreligious parenting seminars across the United States. In 2008, Dale was named Harvard Humanist of the Year for his work in nonreligious parenting education. He is founding Executive Director of Foundation Beyond Belief, an organization based in Atlanta that facilitates charitable giving and volunteering in the humanist and atheist community. He edited and coauthored *Parenting Beyond Belief* and *Raising Freethinkers*, the first comprehensive resources for nonreligious parents.

Dale and his wife Becca, a second grade teacher, live near Atlanta with their three children.

June 15 Martha Gallahue will facilitate a colloquy for our last official Platform.

She hopes to cover the joys and sorrows of the season, welcome a new member, review the 99th American Ethical Union Assembly in May and schedule a summer retreat. One thing on her mind is to reflect upon humanist spirituality and identify which practices are most helpful to

our members. Martha seeks to discover whether anyone is interested in a small group practice at the Society. All members and friends are invited to participate.

Folk Friday, June 13, 7:30 p.m.

Sing-along and jam with friends second Friday of each month through June, at Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood. Bring acoustic string and rhythm instruments, join in playing, singing or listening. Bring some refreshments to share. Folk Fridays have expanded to include crafts people to come and listen to music while doing crafts. Open to all comers, all ages, everyone is invited! — Lisa [lnovemsky@comcast.net or (973) 763-8293]

3rd Saturday Arts, June 21, 7 p.m. “E. Betty Levin, Peace Advocate Extraordinaire”

E. Betty Levin will read from her memoirs and discuss her new found role of Peace Advocate from 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday, June 21st at the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, for a special 3rd Saturday Arts program.

Having passed the 85-year milestone and actively pursuing the role of Peace Advocate — giving presentations as far away as California — while writing her memoirs and continuing her professional career as psychotherapist, Betty is indeed an extraordinary human being.

Coming out of retirement, 3rd Saturday Arts coordinator, Hilding “Gus” Lindquist, remarked, “It’s an honor and privilege to host this special 3rd Saturday Arts program for Betty.”

So Why Do We Go to Annual National Assemblies of the American Ethical Union

Returning from the 99th Annual Assembly of the AEU, called this year “Revitalizing Democracy: Money, Power and Politics,” included a surprising conversation from Chicago O’Hare all the way to New York LaGuardia airports. Three of us from three different Societies shared our sense of where the AEU is trending.

One of us hoped the movement might trend toward the emerging group of global citizens that is the outgrowth of globalization. True, attracting this group may appear complex and challenging. Yet, in the US today, families often speak more than one language. Further, from the beginning of ethical culture, we espoused pluralism — diversity of creed and unanimity of deed, in Adler’s terms.

Another was just as high on attracting the “noners” — those folks who consider themselves “spiritual but not religious” — the group who are also known as the non-joiners. He was thrilled that within the movement serious research is going on to learn more about them ... that within this group, we were primed to attract around 18% who were enlightened atheists. This group might be described as those atheists who had no axe to grind, but who might be more aptly described as humanists where human relationship is considered central. One exciting model is The Sunday Assembly founded by two comedians. Their original goal was to have a “fun home” to go to and found themselves at the axis of a worldwide movement.

The increasingly popular feature

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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

Andrew Weinberger, *President*
Zia Durrani, *Vice President*
H. "Gus" Lindquist, *Treasurer*
Rosalie Sussman, *Secretary*

Trustees:

Karen Bokert
Elaine Durbach
E. Betty Levin
Allen Parmet
Mira Stillman

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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973-763-1905

Our web site:
www.essexethical.org

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

of this group is that they are apolitical. This group would move us into an essentially Adlerless group according to my friend.

Finally, the third perspective offered was that of the need for revitalization to take place via awakened consciousness. As we enjoy the findings of genetics and neuroscience, we can ever more appreciate how relevant the message of ethical culture is in that as a movement, we joined early with evolutionary thinkers. Now, that such thinkers as Nicholas Wade (*Troublesome History*) and Stephen Pinker (*Better Angels of Our Nature*) are describing the evolutionary trek of humanity, we ought to stick with the program only do it better and more passionately. We were destined to transform civilization through an enlightened moral compass and we should continue to prioritize that.

As our conversation was friendly and non-combative, we were energizing each other. I left the conversation feeling all three perspectives had merit. All three tapped into the experience I live in. Most likely, ethical culture will be well served to distill the best from all three points of view. In the end, it may well be that it is up to us to shape our Society into some version of all three. What would that look like at ESEC? I wonder. So, my point is that sometimes it pays to meet with our national body to learn to ask the important questions. "Who are we and where are we going?" — *Martha Gallahue*

Ethical Culture is a Platypus

by *Jone Johnson Lewis, Leader,*
Northern Virginia Ethical Society

When Europeans first encountered the platypus in Australia, the first assumption was that it was a hoax. A duck's beak and webbed feet on the body of a beaver-like mammal? An aquatic mammal that gives birth by laying eggs?

Instead of trying to pigeonhole it into existing categories, science finally realized that it is, well, itself. One of only five species in the order called monotremes, it's the sole living representative of its family and genus.

Ethical Culture (and to a lesser extent, Unitarian Universalism also fits this description) is a platypus. That is, it's a religion [mam-], even though it has features that make it

look not like a religion. As with the platypus — that it's a [religion] is important for some purposes but ultimately, what's important is that it fills a niche successfully, and thrives in that niche.

It's easy to quickly assume that Ethical Culture [or a platypus] is a mishmash or contradiction, rather than something that evolved organically to serve a specific niche quite well. The fact that it exists serves to remind everyone that religion [mammal] is broader than the many other examples of religion [mammals] that are out there. The platypus doesn't give birth to live young, has what looks like a beak, but it's still a mammal. Ethical Culture is creedless, doesn't necessarily have anything to say about the supernatural — but it's still about finding meaning and purpose, and figuring out how to live, and doing so in community with fellow seekers.

From the U.N.

"Aging: A Celebration and a Challenge"

By the year 2050, for the first time in history, seniors over the age of 60 will outnumber children under the age of 15. We are living in the midst of a dramatic silent revolution, sometimes called the 'age quake'. According to a recent UN report, the world is aging so fast that many countries are not prepared to cope with the basic concerns of older people. For example, changes in income, health and physical disabilities. Only one-third of countries have a social protection scheme. This is particularly important in the rapidly aging population in the underdeveloped world. The aging phenomenon is bound to impact pensions, social security and housing. In addition and most importantly is the development of legal rights and laws against elder abuse which is becoming more and more frequent.

The contributing circumstances are clear: women are having fewer children and people are living longer. By 2050, demographers estimate that one-third of the world's population will be over 60 years of age. In less than 100 years, three decades have been added to the average lifespan. Increasing longevity is one of humanities greatest achievements. It must not become a handicap! People today are living longer because of improved nutri-

tion, medical advances, health care and most importantly, sanitation and public health measures. Since 1950, life expectancy has increased globally by approximately 22 years. That is, from 47 years old to 70 years old. In the developed world life expectancy is about 80 years.

In 1940, in the US, only 30% of people lived to the age of 65. Today, in the US, as well as in many countries, over 80% of people will live past 65. By 2050 there will be about 2 billion older persons on the earth.

Of great importance, is the question: Will societies have the resources and the will to cope with the increasing needs of older people?

Poverty among the increasing number of elderly must be put on the front burner and attacked ASAP. Worldwide more than 46% of people over 60 years have disabilities and 53% find it difficult to pay for basic services. Even in rich countries like the US, it is a scandal that over 23 million Americans aged 60+ are economically insecure. Almost 75% of age 65+ depend on social security for all or most of their monthly income. Let's look at real cases which illustrate what we have been talking about:

Truong Thao, runs a small tea shop on the sidewalk in Hanoi, Vietnam. He is 65 years old and acutely aware that he, like millions of others, are plunging into old age without a safety net.

Abdul Wasay in Afghanistan is struggling to survive. At 75 he spends most of his day trying to sell toothbrushes and toothpaste on a busy street corner in Kabul.

With the help of the World Bank, the World Health Organization and other UN agencies, an index was constructed, the Global Age Watch Index, a composite of income, health, education, employment and age-friendly environment.

Wealthy nations are in general better prepared for aging than poorer ones. The data is interesting: Sweden

is prepared for aging; they are number one, followed by Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada. Prosperity in itself does not guarantee protection for the old. For example, rising economic powers like Brazil, Russia, India and China rank lower than some poorer countries like Uruguay and Panama. We encourage our readers to see the specific data for each country by Googeling global age watch index.

We have added years to our lives. But what kind of life will we add to these years? Income and health are major preoccupations of the elderly. Equally important is the concern and need to remain connected, relevant and useful. As we get older and become seniors we need family and friends. There is also diminished mental and physical functioning, and all these changes can lead to loneliness and/or depression.

During our middle years we worked and raised families and our life was structured and felt complete in many respects. After retirement we often lose these anchors. There are several routes that can be taken.

Questions of meaning and usefulness arise. We are more and more aware of our mortality. Some of us shift more from doing to being and are given to thinking of our interior life. Others reach out to contribute our years of doing and learning to others who are younger and who we hope will welcome our learning. But when we reach out to younger people we are often met head on by ageism. This is extremely prevalent in the US where TV and movies set the standard for how we look and treat each other. There is no role for the elderly. Our presence does not make money.

The transition to retirement is often difficult but must be met head on and with optimism. It isn't the end, it is the beginning of something new and there are many years available for us to see what the new is going to be.

The institutions in our society make it difficult for seniors to contribute

their time, talent and experience. A change in these ways of doing things would lead to a better quality of life for everyone.

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, the IHEU and National Ethical Service Representative to the UN, and Dr. Reba Goodman, member of ECSBC.

Volunteers Needed for Kids' Percussion/Music at Maplewood July 4th

Help Essex Ethical's Lisa Novemsky and the Children's Music Network run the Maplewood July 4th Kids' Percussion/Music, noon-3 p.m. [*Auspices of the July 4 Committee of the Maplewood Civic Association*]. It will be a fun activity for young children to take place in Maplewood Memorial Park (off Oakview Ave. near Valley St., Maplewood) as one part of day-long family-friendly July 4th activities. Volunteers are needed for setting up, overseeing activity (with vigilance for safety) and packing up. Contact Lisa Novemsky at lnovemsky@comcast.net or (973) 763-8293.

Secular Summit and Lobby Day

A major secular conference on science and secularism in politics, the 2014 Public Policy Summit and Lobby Day, will take place in Washington, DC, June 12-14.

Politicians can be inclusive toward religion and ignore atheists because we don't demand the attention and respect our numbers warrant. Learn how to raise your voice for secularism and make a real impact. Join hundreds of people as we walk into the US Capitol building and speak directly with members of Congress. This conference, run by our ally, the Secular Coalition for America, can prove that atheists, humanists and fans of science form a voting block that will no longer be ignored. For more information and registration, visit: http://www.richarddawkins.net/foundation_articles/2014/4/11/learn-how-to-be-heard-by-politicians-at-lobby-day-and-secular-summit

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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We continue to collect children's books, canned and boxed foods, and toys for distribution by the Parenting Center in Maplewood.



ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · JUNE 2014

SUNDAY 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



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