

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

Dialogue Winter 2016

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Long Island Honors Young Activist Grant Winner (From *Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island* newsletter)

We had seven worthy applicants for the Young Activist Grant which awards up to \$500 to a middle school or high school student in Nassau County who designs a social action project for the betterment of humankind. Our grant is "seed money" to get the project underway. The Young Activist Grant committee has chosen Matthew Berman, a 10th grader from Roslyn High School, for his project called "M.E.D. Rx—Medication, Education and Disposal. Repurpose." Matthew will be working with the Town of North Hempstead STOP program to collect medicine bottles, have them professionally washed, and shipped to Malawi (via the Malawi Project) where they have few pill bottles. He will also be working with East Williston / Roslyn Community Coalition for Drug-Free Youth to have an educational component to the problem of expired meds and substance abuse. We were intrigued with Matthew's project because it addresses multiple issues: substance abuse (kids getting into medicine cabinets), pollution (medicines and pill bottles in the waste stream), education about abuse, and helping an impoverished nation get a basic necessity in medicine containers. Matthew was awarded at our Winter Festival and will attend the Social Justice Leadership Award Dinner to describe his work. Thanks to committee members Tina Keane, Sylvia Silberger, and Alison Pratt for making this difficult decision!



Matthew Berman (right), with his parents Russell and Susan, and his sister Talia

IHEU Freethought Report is Available



The Freedom of Thought Report is an annual survey on discrimination and persecution against non-religious people in countries around the world. The report is produced by the International Humanist and Ethical Union and published each year on 10 December, International Human Rights Day. Download the latest report at <http://freethoughtreport.com/download-the-report>.

Letter from Executive Director Bart Worden



In this time of growing secularism there are exciting opportunities for the growth of the Ethical Movement. Increasingly, people in the United States report not being members of any religious organization. Also on the rise are the numbers of people who say they do not believe in a god. Put the two trends together and you have a lot of prospects!

But most people who are leaving their churches, temples, and mosques are probably not looking for a replacement group. It's a tough time for congregations to attract new people as members when there are so many options for entertainment and enrichment that don't require joining a group, making a commitment, or even leaving home. As a congregational movement, these trends affect us, too.

To meet the challenges and realize the benefits of the opportunities, the American Ethical Union is looking to deploy available resources effectively to reach more people in more places and also to support the efforts of our current member Societies. These available resources are financial, personnel, and relational.

Financially we are aiming to expand our base of support without increasing Society apportionments. The 100 x 100 campaign is already doing just that. We haven't yet reached our target of 100 individuals pledging \$100 per month for three years but we have raised enough to get a good head start toward the five goals: funding the Executive Director position, scholarships for lay leader training, more support for Ethical Education, expanded outreach efforts, and engaging on the national stage. Our

Annual Appeal has again brought in more in donations than the prior year, and the generosity of our larger donors continues to provide significant support our programs.

On the personnel side, our Outreach Team has been communicating with about twenty people who have expressed interest in having an Ethical Society near them. The inquiries have come in from Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah as well as from Canada and Nigeria. We are still in the beginning stages but are hopeful that in the next year we will help some of these individuals form leadership groups with others in their areas and start holding meetings.

To help these groups get going, we are making support materials available with guidance on ways to get organized and program materials that can be used for facilitating meetings. These materials will also be available for use by existing Ethical Societies. As our new Program Exchange grows with ideas and program materials collected from across the country, we hope people spend less time "recreating the wheel" and more time implementing well-regarded programs used by other Societies.

I expect to have more time and energy to support this effort as the board has approved the expansion of my time from about 10 hours per week to about 17 hours. In addition to supporting the outreach effort I will use these added hours to work on our fundraising efforts, enhance our communication capacity, and connect with other

organizations with which we have common interests.

Funding from the 100 x 100 Campaign will also support a new venture offered by the National Leaders Council, the Visiting Leaders Bureau. The goal of the bureau is to make it possible to send more leaders to more Societies more frequently. Participating Leaders can provide workshops as well as speak at Platform Meetings, and the AEU office will help with arranging the visits. A fund has been set up by the board to help with expenses and the Societies are responsible for \$75 per Leader per day and for providing hospitality, if needed. You will soon be able to view the participating Leaders list on the AEU website from the NLC page.

Lay Leadership Summer School will be offered in August this summer, and scholarship money will be available. We hope every Society will be sending at least one—and up to three—people for this very rich and rewarding week of learning and engagement with Ethical Culture people from across the country.

On the Ethical Education front, we are thankful to Dale McGowan for his efforts to re-energize ethical education. Dale visited a good number of Ethical Societies and offered very helpful ideas and recommendations. Unfortunately, Dale experienced some health problems along the way and realized that he needed to restructure his work in order to address those concerns, and he has felt the need to resign his position with the AEU. We are currently inviting applications for the National Director for Ethical Education position and hope to begin interviews very soon.

We are increasingly recognized as a significant player in the humanist/freethought/atheist world and can expect to have some interesting opportunities for collaborations in the near future. All in all things look positive for the AEU as we head into 2016 and I expect we'll have some exciting days ahead!

Opening Doors and Hearts: The Art of Welcome

Laura Steele, Washington Ethical Society

How's your Ethical Culture elevator speech? Do you begin with, "Have you heard of Ethical Culture?" Do you use terms like "Humanist" and "Community"? Do you tell your own story of finding your Ethical Society and how much it means to you?

In October 2015 folks representing eleven Societies gathered for the annual AEU Membership and Growth Conference to hear about and practice our elevator speech—and much more. Big thanks to the Ethical Society of Bergen County, which beautifully hosted the conference, with a special shout out to Linda Bennett, their administrator. Here are some incredible gifts our workshop presenters shared.

Terri Karp (Bergen) and Emily Newman (NYSEC/Brooklyn) presented "Making your Society More Clickable," an almost dizzying array of smart, usable ways to use technology through our websites, social media, etc. They included many ways to use searches that will give our Society more visibility, placement of buttons on our website to get the highest interest, and using keywords and graphics. The key idea is that the main way people are finding us now is online, so having something to click on that is appealing and raises visibility is essential.

Jone Johnson Lewis (Riverdale-Yonkers/Brooklyn) brought us "First Impressions," asking how we remember our first-ever experience walking into our Society. Did we feel welcomed or invisible? Were people friendly or cliqueish? Those first moments are SO important in creating an environment that says, "We hope you'll come back, we're really happy to see you"—from the moment you walk in the door straight through the whole platform experience.

Continuing with our "welcome" theme James Croft (St. Louis) took us through "Lasting Impressions: Engaging and Connecting Newcomers." Every newcomer is a potential new member. Is there a clear path to membership and maintaining an effective outreach program? How are newcomers recognized and engaged during platform? Is there a built-in way for newcomers to get connected, such as colloquy or a deepening circle, a meditation or mindfulness group? Are there regular newcomer meetings with a Leader or your president? Do you have membership cards? Are there activities that appeal to different ages? These and many more topics were covered in a lively interchange.

While we all want to foster an environment that is welcoming all of the time, once in a while every organization, even Ethical Societies, will experience internal conflict. Diane Kirschner (Brooklyn) approached conflict from the viewpoint of "Learning from Conflict: Creating an Intentional Process for Conflict." What can we learn about our Society and ourselves when conflict shows up? If we ignore it—pretend everything is all right—that only makes it worse because the negative energy inevitably is still going to be felt. Diane led the group through a productive series of experiential exercises such as practicing reflective listening, engaging empathetically, and discussing what our shared values are when there's conflict.

At the end of an incredibly rich day of learning, sharing, laughing, and finding new friends, it was time to say our goodbyes. The AEU Membership Committee thanks all those who joined together to further strengthen and grow our Societies and the Ethical Culture Movement. See you next year!

Save These Dates

For details visit www.aeu.org

AEU Board Meetings
Individual members of Societies are welcome to attend. (Usually held at New York Society for Ethical Culture)
Sat. March 19 – NYSEC
Sat. May 21 – NYSEC
Thu. July 14 – Sun. July 17 – Assembly in St. Louis

Democracy Spring (see pg 8)
Sat. April 2 – Mon. April 18
– Philadelphia to DC

Future of Ethical Societies Conference (see pg 5)
Fri. May 27 – Mon. May 30
– Brooklyn, NY

AEU 101st Annual Assembly (see pg 9)
Thu. July 14 – Sun. July 17 – St. Louis, MO

Lay Leadership Summer School (see pg 9)
Sat. August 13 – Sat. August 20 – The Mountain Retreat & Learning Center, Highlands, NC

AEU Membership Conference left to right: Sandi Sacks, James Croft, Jan Broughton, Bart Worden, Elinore Kaplan, Laura Steele, Liz Singer, Liz Collier, Emily Newman



Letter from AEU Board President Jan Broughton



As I write this it is the time of the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year—the most hours of darkness. It would be easy to concentrate on the terrible events that have recently occurred and we do take them seriously, advocating for gun control and better mental health care or working for better representation in Congress to stop the logjam that prevents progressive legislation from being passed.

However, I am a glass-half-full person and tend to see this time of year when the days lengthen and bring more light into our lives as an opportunity to feel hope for the future.

At the Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle we had as speaker Prof. Barbara Frederickson. A world-renowned professor in the Psychology Department at UNC Chapel Hill, Dr. Frederickson spoke on Positivity. In her first book, she asserts that positivity is more important than happiness. According to her research positive emotions lead to creative actions

and ideas, broadening minds and opening up new possibilities. Conversely, negative emotions cause the mind to constrict and limit the ability to consider new ideas and build relationships.

Needless to say, this concept appeals to me. The thought that being positive actually strengthens the ability to develop new solutions to problems and to create new friendships is one I would embrace. So I will continue in my optimistic way, tempering it with realism and acknowledging challenges.

I find a lot to be positive about in the work being done by our AEU committees and staff. The Ethical Action committee, under the leadership of Chair Kate LaClair, is reaching out to the Society EACs to encourage the sharing of ideas and projects. The anticipation is that any Society can find an idea that fits its members in scope and purpose. And, of course, support each other's common efforts to give more effective strength to the cause. Kate

is currently looking for an intern to help with social media to organize and enhance collaboration.

I find hope for the future of Ethical Culture in the number of inquiries coming from around the country by people interested in learning more about Ethical Culture and how to start a Society of their own. Packets of information created by an Outreach Team were sent out to answer basic questions and maintain a connection. 'How To' packs on setting up Colloquies and Community Circles are being prepared for use by Societies and others looking to enrich their programming. With adequate funding a paid leader or other staff person could provide on-site assistance and support.

In working with groups of people within the Ethical Humanist community, I am often struck by the spirit of cooperation present along with a desire to bring a positive change to the world. It is this outlook that lifts up my spirits and makes me glad that I found this organization that resonates so perfectly with my beliefs and needs. Together we can ensure the continuing presence of Ethical Culture.

Here's to a happy and productive New Year.

Wall of Remembrance

Compiled from Societies' newsletters and websites, and newspaper obituaries

Barb Barnum (*St. Louis*) – Barb died on December 15.

We are fortunate to have lost few Ethical Culture members this season. However, we do mourn the many we have lost nationally and internationally due to violence. May we have a more peaceful 2016.

FES Question Gender Equality & Sexuality

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



Future of Ethical Societies (FES) is planning an awesome conference in Brooklyn, NY May 27-30. Our theme is “Gender Equality & Sexuality.” We are developing workshops and a service project that focus on education and awareness of personal, national, and global concerns. The Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture will host our Friday opening potluck and game night—members and friends are welcome to join—and the FES Platform on Sunday. Details and registration will be available on the AEU website soon.

Teens Explore Racism at YES Conference

Trish Cowan, YES Conference Coordinator

The teens of Ethical Culture held a powerful and relevant conference on Race in Modern America this November. Sabrina E., Reid H., Hazel H., and our Society reps planned a full weekend of dialogue, presentations, games, and critical thinking for this year’s Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) Conference in St. Louis. Recognizing that race is a heavy subject—and one that requires deep insight and experience—the teens decided to invite community leaders to speak with them, which is a first for this teen-driven conference.

Dr. J.B. Kwon, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Webster University, presented a history of race in St. Louis and the US. He

led a fascinating discussion about the issue of race and how it affects opportunities and expectations. Billie Teneau, a member of the Ethical Society of St. Louis and longtime activist, shared her experiences from the Civil Rights Movement of the 40s, 60s, and into today. James Croft, Outreach Director for the Ethical Society of St. Louis, told us about his involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement and encouraged the teens to think about the changes they would like to see happen and the differences—no matter how small—they can begin to make now.

Believe it or not, we still had time for group discussions, zip lining, hiking (it was a sunny weekend with 70-degree temperatures!), a campfire, sight-seeing at Forest Park and the Delmar Loop, ceremonies, skits, and elections. The plans were ambitious and everything worked out fantastically!

We had 32 teens and 9 adults for the weekend and we thank all of the chaperones who came to support their teens. Attendees traveled from Bergen, Long Island, Mid Rivers, New York, St. Louis, Washington, and Westchester. We also want to thank our speakers and our 17 drivers from the St. Louis Society who took shifts transporting us between the airport, the Ethical Society, and Camp Sunnyhill. Congratulations to our teens for planning such a full and memorable weekend. We look forward to YES 2016 in DC!



Notes from Your AEU Board

Karen Elliott, AEU Board Member

The American Ethical Union Board met on Saturday November 21, 2015 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

Executive Director Bart Worden reported that the new Outreach Team has created “Starter Packs” to help those interested in beginning new Ethical groups. Ideally, an Ethical Culture Leader would be hired to work on this project on a part-time basis. Board members shared ideas on ways the team would help new groups as well as where to find funding for this work.

Bart also talked about the continuing development of the AEU’s new Visiting Leaders Bureau. This is intended primarily to help Societies without Leaders but can also be used by those who have Leaders in order to obtain additional support. Details are still being developed, and the Board discussed specifics about how it could work and where funding could be obtained to help smaller and starting Societies get the professional Leadership that can make a positive difference without the expense being prohibitive. We will begin with a limited pilot program and then adjust the processes of the Visiting Leaders Bureau based on experience before opening it up to all.

Another pilot is a 7-hour a week increase in the Executive Director position. The recent fundraising efforts have been sufficiently successful that this and some other expansion of the AEU’s work have been made possible. A task force has been formed to determine the uses of the funds provided by the 100x100 campaign, which is still running. Additional fundraising opportunities were discussed and plans are underway.

AEU Communications Coordinator Emily Newman reported on plans for the 2016 Assembly, which will have the theme “Bending the Arc of History” focusing on social justice work. The Assembly will be held in St. Louis July 14-17, 2016 and the Committee is making some format changes to provide for more opportunities for interaction among those attending. Staff is also developing an Assembly App to help those attending. Meeting planner Sue Walton reported that the Harrisburg location did not work out for the 2017 Assembly and the Assembly Committee is busy lining up a different mid-Atlantic location.

Bart continues to make connections with other groups, but the AEU doesn’t always have formal ways to define the different types of relationships we are developing. Emily created a grid to show the types of relationships we currently have and those relationships defined in the AEU’s Bylaws. It was suggested that a group work on a rewrite of the By Laws, with the possibility that they will both better define the possible types of relationships and make some other changes that will more clearly reflect the way the Union currently functions. Members have been recruited from the Board and various AEU Committees and the group is expected to present a preliminary report to the Board at its January 2016 meeting.

Treasurer Tom Weishaar had continued good news to report—all Societies are paid up to date, funds from the 100x100 campaign are beginning to come in, we are getting ready to conduct our regular annual fundraising campaign, and the Union continues to keep its spending within its budget (and within its income). But there are things we can do better financially, and we discussed some of them supported by detailed information provided by Tom and a representative of the

accounting firm that audits the AEU’s books and processes. The Board is now considering having an annual review done rather than a full audit. Reviews contain most of what audits do but with less investigation of fraud risk, internal controls, examination of source documents, etc. A review is what a lender would typically want, and provides most of the assurances of an audit. The savings gained from this change would then be used to further enhance our accounting practices and help us develop additional ways of monitoring our financial situation, which would benefit the Union long-term. The Board had many questions about this since fiscal responsibility is a high priority for us, and we will continue to explore what changes will help us best handle that responsibility, with additional input from advisors and member Societies.

Although much time was spent talking about financial issues, the Board was also brought up to date with all upcoming planned activities of the AEU and its Committees. We continue to work on formalizing processes, and re-emphasized our desire to maintain a strong connection to the IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union), of which we are founding members. Several officiants had additional terms approved along with one new officiant. We also discussed how we could best support member Societies, particularly those dealing with difficult situations. We briefly reviewed what is needed to do outreach at events and plan to discuss that more fully in the future.

The next AEU Board meeting will be held on Saturday, January 16, 2016 starting at 9 am at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Members of member Societies are always welcome to attend.

EE Conference and Family Weekend Focuses on Interdependence

Dale McGowan

Stony Point, New York in the gorgeous Hudson River Valley was the site of the annual Ethical Education Conference and Family Weekend November 6-8.

AEU kids and parents joined EE teachers and directors from across the country for a weekend devoted to a single theme: how our individual Ethical Education programs can become more connected and mutually supportive.

The metaphor for the gathering was barn-raising—an inspired solution to a very real problem in early American farm communities. Every family in a given community needed a barn for their livelihood, but building an entire barn was beyond the abilities of one family. So the whole community would come together to raise one strong barn after another, doing collectively what each family could only dream of accomplishing.

Too often we toil in isolation, hammering feverishly on our own programs in our individual Societies, often re-inventing the wheel, while the talent and ideas we need to flourish and grow are readily available in another Society. The goal of the weekend was to move the EE program closer to the barn-raising model, learning to more effectively match needs and offerings throughout the Ethical movement.

To this end, the conference was built more around brainstorming and discussion than structured presentations. A spirit of cooperation and a desire to help—and a willingness to be helped—permeated the event.

But it wasn't all seriousness and hard work! Evening bonfires, storytelling, joke sharing, and a children's talent show helped to bring us together as friends and family united for a common purpose—building a better Ethical Education program and helping to grow the Ethical movement into a greater cultural presence.

We hope to see you all next year in Stony Point!



Top: Dale McGowan enjoying campfire with children attendees

Bottom: Participants recreate a famous image as part of photo challenge



Notes from National Leaders Council (NLC)

In February 2015 the NLC decided to emphasize a different purpose for each of their three annual in-person meetings. The Summer NLC meeting will emphasize continuing education—for the Leaders, Leaders-in-Training, and the Movement as a whole as it would immediately precede the AEU Assembly. The Fall NLC meeting will focus on planning for the Movement, with an emphasis on planning the next Assembly and supporting the priorities and projects of the AEU Board and the Executive Director. The Winter/Spring NLC meeting will focus on Leader retreat and renewal. This new plan will

be facilitated by virtual NLC business meetings via Podio a couple of times during the year.

During the Fall 2015 meeting the NLC crafted elements of the 2016 Assembly in St. Louis. Following the Assembly theme “the arc of history that bends toward justice,” the NLC recommended that the first day of the Assembly be internally focused on capacity building, while the second day is outwardly directed on social justice issues, especially racial justice. The NLC suggested that invitations be made to encourage attendance by people in the larger community. The NLC hopes to facilitate creation of a racial justice resolution addressing the concerns of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Leaders are working to improve connections within and outside of the Ethical Culture network. They are responding to an initiative suggested by Executive Director Bart Worden to create a Visiting Leaders Program to facilitate greater connections across the Movement. They are also exploring national affiliation and partnering with other organizations leading progressive work, especially in areas of prime concern to the AEU, including racial justice, reproductive justice, environmentalism, and LGBTQ rights. Finally, the NLC plans to support the work of Communications Coordinator Emily Newman by creating more content for the AEU website.

Ethical Action Feature: Democracy Spring

Dan Hanson, New York Society for Ethical Culture

Note: Details on Democracy Spring are available on AEU website under Events. If you would like to be involved please contact Kate LaClair, Chair AEU Ethical Action Committee at katherine.laclair@gmail.com.

The American Ethical Union, 99Rise, Food & Water Watch, along with a growing coalition of over 50 organizations, are organizing Democracy Spring—the largest American civil disobedience action in a generation planned for next April in Washington, DC.

Now is the time! The 2016 election will be the most big money-dominated, secret-money-drenched, voter-suppression-marred contest in modern American history. If the status quo goes unchallenged, this election may well yield a President and a Congress more bound to the “masters of big money” than ever before—crushing hopes for progress on climate change, economic inequality, mass incarceration, and more. Our planet and people simply cannot afford that. But there is another possibility. If we intervene in the business-as-usual of this election cycle in a way that no one can ignore, we can make it a turning point toward reform.

Here’s the plan: On April 2nd, in the heart of the primary season as the national election takes center stage, a pioneering group of Americans will gather at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia and embark on a 10-day march to the U.S. Capitol. I plan to walk the whole route and I hope other AEU members will join me for some or all of the way. Before setting out, we will present a simple choice to Congress: take immediate action to end the corruption of big money in politics and

make the 2016 elections free and fair for all people as equal citizens, or be prepared to send thousands of patriotic Americans to jail simply for demanding an equal voice.

When we arrive at the Capitol on April 11th, thousands who’ve come from across the country to make a stand for our freedom will join us. At that point, either Congress will have miraculously come to its senses and passed the perfectly viable reform bills now pending before it, or those who protect corruption will leave us no choice but to reclaim the “People’s House” in massive, disruptive, nonviolent sit-ins.

Beneath the dome of the rotunda, on the steps outside the Capitol, and in the offices of our supposed representatives, we will engage in peaceful civil disobedience for at least a week. Day after day, with millions of people watching an unprecedented



drama unfold, Congress will probably put thousands of disciplined, dignified democracy defenders in handcuffs instead of simply doing its job: listening to the people and fixing this problem. Whether Congress acts or not, we will win by focusing the nation’s attention—as never before—on the urgency of this crisis, the existence of solutions to it, and the strength of the popular demand to enact them.

With leaders like Lawrence Lessig, Zephyr Teachout, Cenk Uygur, and Mark Ruffalo already pledged to risk arrest, and over 50 organizations signed on to help, we can create a watershed moment in America that will force this issue into the spotlight and make the election a referendum on whether our democracy

should belong to the People as a whole or to the billionaire class alone.

While I plan to take part in the civil disobedience and risk arrest, I know there are many of you who cannot. I invite you to come to Washington in April to support the sit in through legal protest and let our leaders know that the government belongs to the people, not the dark money and large corporations. I hope to see many members of Ethical Societies from around the country involved in Democracy Spring. That’s a referendum we will win, creating a powerful mandate—backed by a surging movement—for the fundamental reform that will give us real democracy.

We are ready to take this bold step, and will provide the necessary training and legal support to all who join us. But to do it successfully, we need to know we can do it on an historic scale. We need to know that enough people who believe as we do and love our country are ready to join us.

The moment is ripe for this escalation. Poll after poll shows transpartisan public frustration with the corrupt status quo. Voters in Maine and Seattle just passed bold new anti-corruption laws enacting citizen-funded elections. A growing democracy movement has lifted this issue into the public debate. Yet Congress refuses to act. The stage is set for our historic intervention to turn the tinder of passive public frustration into a fire that transforms the political climate in America.

From Selma to Occupy Wall Street, from Tar Sands Action to Black Lives Matter, everyday people have proven that mass nonviolent action can rapidly shift the political weather and open the door to reforms previously considered unwinnable. Now it’s our turn.

This is no ordinary task. But these are not ordinary times. This is the hour to stand tall, to dream big, and to challenge

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ourselves. It is our duty to honor the legacy of generations of Americans who have demanded a better world. With love, and with courageous hope invested not in any one leader but in each other, we must act with a determination matching the urgency of this crisis.

Together we can change the course of history and open the door to a bright, beautiful future. For further information and to pledge your support, visit www.DemocracySpring.org.

2016 AEU Assembly will be “Bending the Arc of History”

Ethical Humanists believe that the arc of history is shaped by our collective actions. Together we can bend the arc of history toward justice. At the 2016 Annual Assembly of the American Ethical Union, the Ethical Society of St. Louis and Ethical Society Mid Rivers invite you to engage with critical contemporary issues of justice and learn how we can be part of creating a more just future for all humanity. The Assembly is an opportunity for Ethical Society members and activists from across the nation to build relationships, strengthen communication, and experience the Ethical Movement in a larger context.

Thursday, July 14 - Sunday, July 17, 2016 at St. Louis City Center Hotel
Schedule, speakers, registration details, and more will be available early 2016.
Check our event page for updates: aeu.org/event/aeu-101st-annual-assembly.



Make Your 2016 Summer Plans Now!

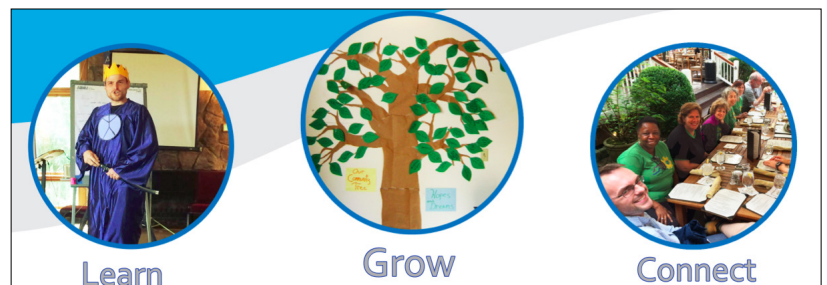
Attend the Lay Leadership Summer School (LLSS) sponsored by the American Ethical Union August 13-20 at The Mountain Retreat Center near Highlands, NC.

“Summer School was an energizing experience that brought clearer focus to what I was looking for in my community, and ways to begin creating it. How can we go beyond the words of what we ‘should’ do and cultivate the skills that bring our ideals toward reality? How can we guide our communities to address our needs? Summer School provides tools to begin answering these questions, and empowers participants to be our best selves. Take advantage of this unique experience!” - Kate LaClair, 2014 LLSS Grad; Chair, AEU Ethical Action Committee & member of Baltimore Ethical Society

Our week-long journey offers presentations and activities that will:

- Build connections and a shared sense of purpose
- Expand our understanding of Ethical Culture history, philosophy, and future
- Explore and take risks to connect to life's potential
- Stimulate reflection on communication practices
- Improve as a leader, decision maker, problem solver, and celebrations creator

Be part of this exciting week where we come together to create, nurture, and inspire ethical communities! The 2016 LLSS staff looking forward to seeing you there include Diane Kirschner, Jan Broughton, Mary Herman, Paulo Ribeiro, Ken Novak, and Hugh Taft-Morales. To receive information and registration materials, please contact L Miller in the AEU Office, 212-873-6500 or lmiller@aeu.org.



Televisiting Services at NYSEC

Frank J. Corligliano,
Ph.D., Director, Supportive Televisiting Services, Social Service Board

A National Ethical Dilemma for Children

Most Americans think of February as a time for love, togetherness, and sharing joy. However, this year, in the United States, over two million children will be separated from their mom or dad due to policies that have contributed to an epidemic of imprisonment and the phenomena of mass incarceration. In New York City, on Rikers Island alone, there are between 9,000 and 13,000 people jailed on any given day.

An Ethical Home to Empowering Healthy Connections

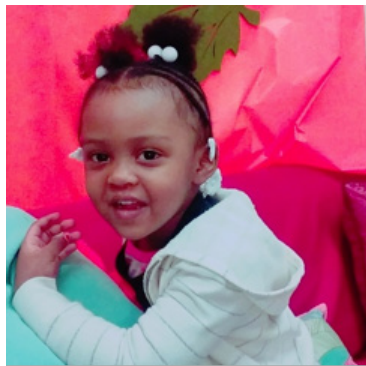
For over 130 years, the New York Society for Ethical Culture (NYSEC) and its affiliate United Social Services, Inc., affectionately known as the Social Service Board (SSB), have consistently served the New York area community with programs and public service initiatives to help uplift the lives of the underserved. The Social Service Board has developed Supportive Televisiting Services, an innovative community-based program that enables children to video-visit with their incarcerated parent on a television screen, similar to video-chat. The Social Service Board provides a child-friendly televisiting room conveniently located on Central Park West and 64th Street in Manhattan. Each visit is 45 minutes long, and they typically occur every two weeks. The program is run by Dr. Frank J. Corigliano, a psychologist with expertise in “leveraging technology to address clinical and social issues,” and an active member of the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

Televisiting Keeps Families Connected

Separation from a supportive, loving parent can be devastating to children. Visits with mom or dad at the jail are often all-to-infrequent and come with many restrictions and limitations on how a child can interact with their parent. In addition to contact-visits where a child can touch, hold, and smell their mother or father, families who participate in Supportive Televisiting Services can increase the number and quality of contacts that a child has with their parent. A psychologist and



Children in televisiting room



a social work intern, who are able to support the child, the family, and the parent before, during, and after the visit support Televisits at NYSEC. “Incarcerated parents can still parent from behind bars by being involved with their child’s development and growth,” says Will Iverson, a 2015 Social Work Intern. The social work intern is supervised by a licensed clinical social worker, Susan Needles, who is also a member of the New York Society. Televisits are enriched with books from the New York and Brooklyn Public Libraries. For example, children are able to select a book from

a library specifically chosen to address the needs of children with incarcerated parents. We can also arrange for the parent to have a copy of the same book, which means mom and daughter can read the same book together, page-by-page, line-by-line.

Ethical and Inclusive Approach to Program Development

The televisiting program was designed with direct input from children and parents, as well as professionals and researchers in clinical psychology, social work, and psychiatry, who integrate knowledge about attachment theory, developmental stages, resilience, and strengths-based research. With resources from our collaborative organizations such as the New York and Brooklyn Public Libraries, and Sesame Workshop, our televisits are enriched with books, toys, games, and art materials. Our families are supported before, during, and after the visits by caring professionals, specifically trained in cultural-competence with children and families involve in the justice system. While participating in Supportive Televisiting Services, parents build collaborative-parenting skills, and use a child-first approach, which prioritizes the children’s needs.

Investing in Empowering Children with Incarcerated Parents

If you are interested in learning more about televisiting, starting a televisiting program in your community, or supporting the Social Service Board’s televisiting efforts at NYSEC, then please visit us at www.SocialServiceBoard.org where you can also register for the Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross Public Service Award May 5th, 2016 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. You may also email Televisiting@SocialServiceBoard.org or call 212-874-5210 Ext. 143.

Dear Members and Friends,

The AEU had another great year in 2015—full of inspiring conferences including Future of Ethical Societies, our 100th Assembly, Membership, Ethical Education, and Youth of Ethical Societies. We expanded our outreach by sending representatives to or having tables at conferences such as Clearwater Festival, American Humanist Association, Common Ground, Parliament of the World's Religions, International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organization, and many local events. Thank you to all who participated. We look forward to joining more events in 2016 to celebrate our Movement's 140th anniversary.

We are proud of how close we are to our fundraising goals, which will enable us to offer Societies more services and grow our membership. Beginning in 2015, the American Ethical Union (AEU) will be offering a Visiting Leaders Bureau to provide Ethical Leaders to member Societies at discounted rates and free transportation. We also hope to share special webinars and develop live streaming opportunities in 2016.

"I contribute to the American Ethical Union because I see the impact the AEU has had on the lives of others and on my own life. For people like me, who are agnostic in regard to deity but passionate about building and cultivating Ethical Culture, the Union has long offered a place to gather, to plan, and to act. As a five-time participant with the Lay Leadership Summer School (first as a student then as faculty) I have experienced firsthand what we have to offer."

*Bart Worden, AEU Executive Director and
Leader of Westchester Society*

"As Chair of the National Leadership Committee, I have come to appreciate the support of our AEU staff. Without them, I don't think I could serve effectively as Chair. Without the financial support from the AEU, we could not train new Leaders for our Movement. AEU programs and events make me realize that our Ethical Culture Movement is larger than being a member of the St. Louis Society."

*Carol Bartell, AEU Board member,
committee chair, and member of St. Louis Society*

"This year I've had some amazing discussions with longtime members, new visitors, and people interested in joining us in growing ethical communities. I love the ideas people have shared about how we can connect with each other and make a positive, sustainable impact on our world. I look forward to putting these ideas into action with support from the whole Union."

*Emily Newman, AEU Communications Coordinator,
and member of FES, Brooklyn & New York Societies*

Your contributions help to support the Movement's current initiatives and grow the vision of Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanism. Please send a check to the AEU (2 West 64th Street, Suite 408, New York, NY 10023) or donate online at www.aeu.org. Your gift is tax deductible and will be recognized with an AEU acknowledgment for tax purposes. For planned giving and testamentary gifts, please contact the AEU office.

To learn more about the programs and activities of the American Ethical Union, please explore our website, www.aeu.org. From all of us at the American Ethical Union, thank you for your support, which is critical to advancing our mission.

Yours in Ethical Community,

Jan Broughton,
AEU Board President

Bart Worden
Executive Director



Ethical Action Social Media Intern Needed

The Ethical Action Committee (EAC) brings Ethical Societies together to strengthen Action, create alliances that make Actions more sustainable, and contribute to a sense of community and common purpose across the Ethical Culture Movement.

This position will provide extensive experience in social media communications and online community building for a national non-profit and will allow the intern to cultivate skills relevant for successful career advancement. Applicants should be tech-savvy, organized and self-motivated, and ideal candidates will have a passion for social justice. Intern will work closely with the Ethical Action Committee Chair and Communications Coordinator, and will be encouraged to employ their unique talents and creativity.

See full description and how to apply at www.aeu.org/2015/12/social-media-intern-for-ethical-action.

My View

Kay Dundorf, President of the National Ethical Service and Executive Team Member of Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture

This writing solely expresses Kay's personal view and not necessarily those of her associations.

I am regularly inspired by the view from my 12th floor apartment window overlooking the Hudson River and the Palisades. It is ever changing with the weather and the moon's pull on the tides of the river—sometime white caps, sometimes like a mirror of all that surrounds it.

That view provides a daily impulse for reflection. I am regularly in awe of the ever changing and somehow also constant aspect of the energies of the universe as it causes the tides to change, etc. There is so much written now about these changing times we are in, the need for a global perspective, inclusivity while acknowledging diversity. We cannot solve the problem in the same energy in which it was created. What is needed is transformation.

To me there is a mystery of life, a life force that permeates all sentient and non-sentient beings. Felix Adler talks about “the interconnectedness of all being.” Einstein has said everything is energy. I love the comparison to electricity—an unseen energy that we tap into when we plug a device into an electric outlet. I cannot explain it but I know that electricity exists. Similarly I have a deep “knowing” that Einstein is correct in saying everything is energy. Yet it and life is also a mystery. I don't hear this mystical, awe-inspiring aspect of being human expressed through the AEU.

It is that life force that I feel ever drawing me towards expansion, towards a fuller expression of this unique being that I am and each of you are. When I am in the fuller expression of “me” I am in alignment with the ever-expanding Universe. It's like I'm connecting to the electrical outlet - the energy that surrounds us all. And I cut myself off from that source when I get into a contraction of that expression—when I hold back.

The full expression of Ethical Culture is so needed at this time in our humanity's evolution. The gift

of Ethical Culture is the acceptance of ALL—humanist, atheist, theist, agnostic, etc., bringing out the best in each other and the call to grow morally and ethically. With so much emphasis on the secular humanist perspective, it seems to me that we are focusing on the head and leaving out the heart. We need to include all expressions of being human regardless of which dogma, creed or none that people embrace. Ethical Culture has long espoused that acceptance of all and the interconnectedness of all being. That is so needed now as we are moving to greater globalization.

That brings me to wonder whether there are others in the Movement who feel like I do. That the Humanist voice is so strong that the gift of Ethical Culture—accepting the other, bringing out the best in each other and the call to grow morally and ethically—is being left behind. It is not my goal to convince anyone else of my view. I just want to use this opportunity to open the conversation. I welcome your thoughts. I can be reached at kaydundorf@optimum.net.

AEU Seeks National Director for Ethical Education

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Work in cooperation with the Ethical Education Committee, the Executive Director, and with Ethical Education Directors of individual Ethical Societies to develop, promote, and implement Ethical Education programs for children and youth for the AEU.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Degree in education, religious studies or related field preferred
- Minimum of three years of experience in the area of ethical education, ethical development, program administration, and community development with the not-for-profit sector
- Knowledge of educational and developmental processes and

their applicability for program development

- Ability to communicate, organize, motivate and direct the efforts of others, both staff and volunteers
- Experience with computer databases, word processing, spreadsheets software a must
- Experience in the Ethical Movement or other humanist organizations preferred
- Position requires national travel

PRINCIPLE ACTIVITIES:

Work in cooperation with the Ethical Education Committee and the Ethical Education Directors of individual Ethical Societies, and under the oversight of the Executive Director to:

- Develop, promote and implement Ethical Education programs for children and youth
- Support the coordination

and dissemination of Ethical Education program materials

- Encourage communication among those working with Ethical Education programs in Societies
- Oversee or carry out other activities as deemed necessary by the Ethical Education Committee
- Keep current on new ideas in ethical education and pedagogy generally, as well as those related to the ongoing development of ethical philosophy of education

Part-time position can mostly be done remotely. Salary will be discussed at the interview.

Send resume and cover letter to executivedirector@aeu.org or mail to Bart Worden, Executive Director, American Ethical Union, 2 West 64th Street, New York, NY 10023.

Ethical Device Use *Audrey Kindred, Ethics for Children Director at New York Society for Ethical Culture*

**"Dear Families,
We are asking you to put away your phones. Please limit your time on your devices. You're using them too much. Please pay more attention to the outside world—including children.
Thank you."**

The Ethics For Children group at NYSEC met to honor Dr. King's birthday. In doing so, each child (ages 2-10), took "the Ethical Pulpit" to share their hopes for a fair future. From this

sharing, a surprising and noteworthy development took place. Some children expressed indignant feelings at having to limit their time on "devices," while looking up to adults who never put down their devices. Expanding upon that, they expressed how overwhelming it was to be around adults who are constantly using devices. From a mad complaint about wanting more video game time emerged a yearning for something unexpected. A yearning for fairness and attention. Some children can't pull themselves away from video games, and even when the machine is not there, they can't unlock their minds from video games. Others are already reeling with the device-over-dosing of their generation. Some are able to identify a kind of cultural peer pressure around device use that is either deeply

compelling or deeply uncomfortable to them. With help transcribing, and the prompt of "What request would you like to make of your families," they each chimed in to create the letter above.

It is poignant that this young generation is expressing gut-level fairness issues in the realm of technology. Fathers asked their computer-loving sons, "Are you being silly or serious?!" The boys stamped their feet and said, "We mean it!"

Children expressed so clearly the value of an age-old adage: that we teach by example. Let's limit device use! Make device-free commitments in your family's time together. Email ethicsforchildren@nysec.org to let me know how this goes down in each of your families.

From the United Nations: US Racism

**Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU
and National Ethical Service
representative to the UN
Dr. Reba Goodman, Ethical
Culture Society of Bergen
County**

*Watch United Nations briefings online at
<http://webtv.un.org>.*

Racial and ethnic divisions are global issues with a long and tortured history. During the Constitutional Convention (1787) in the US, black slaves were counted as three fifths of a person in a compromise that enabled Southern states to increase their representation in the House of Representatives in Congress, which is a cynical symbol of dehumanization.

Racism in the US was brutal, starting with the bitter Atlantic crossing, legal treatment of slaves as property and wealth, a savage Civil War, followed by lynching, Jim Crow laws, and the difficulties of the civil rights movement. Much later Civil Rights laws were passed including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights and Fair Housing Acts of 1968. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of integration of US public schools. However, long after official desegregation US public schools are actually more segregated today than they were in the 1960s. This is due, in part, to residential segregation. The Fair Housing Act has been only partially effective.

Barak Obama's election as the 44th president was met with pride by some, but has created a racial backlash in others and a significant increase in anti-black attitudes. In 2008, the Associated Press released the results of attitudes toward black showing that 48 percent of whites admitted having prejudices against blacks. Four years later in 2012

that very same poll showed the number increased to 51 percent.

The recent incidents of the killing of unarmed Black men—for example Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri by white police officers—has sparked a renewed look at racism in the US. In both cases, Grand Juries failed to indict the officers involved. This ruling, justifiably, provoked a wave of protests.

The current state of inequality of Blacks and others is stark. Blacks are nearly three times as likely as non Hispanic Whites to be poor, almost six times as likely to be in jail, and only half as likely to graduate from College. The average wealth of white households is 13 times higher than that of black households.

How does one explain these inequalities? One widespread approach is to attribute racial inequality to minorities themselves. This attitude is in tune with the American traditional focus on individuals. Whites often view Blacks as lazy and irresponsible. Everyone can succeed if they try and those who don't succeed just aren't trying and there is no use crying "racism." The failure of African Americans to prosper is seen as a personal failing. In a 2013 Gallop Poll, 83 percent of whites said factors other than discrimination are to blame for lower levels of employment, lower incomes and lower quality housing. A plurality of whites in a recent Pew survey said that the issue of race is getting more attention than it deserves. A common remark in the same vein is that Irish, Italians, and Jews overcame prejudice and worked their way up so Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

Another approach is to point out the powerful role that history plays. Blacks didn't come here voluntarily. They were treated brutally on the transatlantic trip. They were dehumanized and treated like animals. Often Black women were

bred since their children represented increased wealth to their owners, and their families could be broken up and sold for profit. They were not allowed to learn to read.

Generations of slavery, and after the Civil War, years of Jim Crow, have created conditions that make it difficult for them to make their way out. Furthermore kids are relegated to inferior schools, live in horrible neighborhoods, and often grow up in broken families. In more recent times, many of the jobs that were once available are gone due to Globalization and Automation. Only recently, the US Supreme Court revisited the Voting Right Act making it more difficult for Blacks to vote.

Of course, some Blacks succeed but overwhelmingly the odds are stacked against them. Many grow up without hope. Recently a telling interchange took place between Hillary Clinton and some leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement. The issue was promoting racial progress: Which comes first: changing hearts or changing laws? Clinton said, "I don't believe you change hearts. I believe you change laws and you change allocation of resources, you change the way the system works."

We applaud the Black Lives Matter movement for they correctly have put the lives of Blacks on the agenda. Laws are, of course, important as long as they are funded and implemented. The allocation of resources seems hopeless given the increasing skewness of the income distribution favoring the rich. Given the current divisions in Congress passing and funding laws reducing poverty and fixing broken neighborhoods is not in the cards.

To quote the historian Doris Kearns Goodwin "Hearts can change and it's often social movements that create it."

Refugees

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU and National Ethical Service representative to the UN
Dr. Reba Goodman, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County

It is heartbreaking watching the stream of refugees fleeing the war in Syria on TV. It has awakened in me (Sylvain Ehrenfeld) the memory of being a refugee coming to the US from Belgium a few months before the Germans invaded and saved me from being a candidate for extermination.

This crisis in Europe has promoted and provoked a range of responses from Germany's decision to accept many refugees to the anti-immigration attitude in Hungary sealing their borders. The crisis has been going on for a number of years. However, attention is focused on Europe. Yet, most of the Syrian refugees have been taken in not by Western countries but by Syria's neighboring states: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Lebanon has about one million, Jordan 630,000 and Turkey two million. The refugees mostly live in camps. The capacity of these countries has been overwhelmed. This situation has been written about but not covered as dramatically as the situation in Europe. WHY?

The recent Annual Global Trends Report by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) states that the worldwide human displacement is at an all time high. The number of forcibly displaced persons at the end of 2014 (and maybe more now) was a staggering 60 million, half of whom are children. The report indicates the flow of refugees results from 15 conflicts: eight in Africa (Libya, Mali, South Sudan), three in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq and Yemen), one in Europe (Ukraine), and three in Asia. The worst currently is Syria. Throughout history, people have moved fleeing persecution, war, famine,

or natural disasters. Some massive examples:

- Half a million Irish came to the US to escape starvation and disease (1845-1850) with millions more by the end of the century. Many Italians came to the US to escape poverty and natural disasters in southern Italy. About two million Jews from Central and Eastern Europe arrived in the US between 1880 and 1920. Later the number skyrocketed after Russia erupted into deadly anti-Jewish riots and systematic discrimination against the Jewish population.
- A particularly horrible example of mass migration stemmed from is the partition in India upon independence from Britain. Violent divisions between the subcontinent's Hindu and Moslem communities led to the partition plan dividing the area into India and Pakistan. Many millions were eventually displaced and one million killed in the sectarian violence that followed partition. In total, as many as 9 million Moslems migrated from India to Pakistan and over 5 million, Hindus and Sikhs, migrated to India.
- Another example is the Great Migration of 6 million African Americans from the rural South in the US to the cities in the North from 1916 to 1970. They were driven from their homes by a lack of economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws. They took advantage of the need for industrial workers in the North. While they found work in the North they also experienced widespread racism and prejudice in the North as well.

The media has created confusion in the use of the words refugee and migrant. Refugees are people forced to flee their home countries because of armed conflict or persecution. Migrants are people who choose to resettle to another country in search of a better life. Refugees are protected by

International Law. The 1951 refugee convention defines who is a refugee and outlines their basic rights.

Absorbing many refugees in European countries will be difficult and produce a backlash—fueling the rise of Europe's right wing. The anti-immigrant sentiment is in many ways anti-Islam. Often this religion is associated with terrorism. The recent terrorist attack in Paris will probably increase the support of the right wing. Poland has elected one of Europe's most right wing parliaments. The Danish People's party and the Swedish Democrats—both anti European Union and anti-immigration—have gained huge support.

In spite of the difficulties of the refugee crisis does Europe benefit or lose? The World Bank in a major new report claims that the current flow of refugees will ultimately, if handled properly, have a positive effect on the economy. If countries with ageing populations and declining numbers of people of working age can create a path for refugees to participate in the economy, everyone will benefit.

Many of the refugees are young and educated and will work hard and contribute more in taxes than they consume in social services. Money for social services is important with rising numbers of older people.

Not everyone agrees. The British home secretary in a speech at the Conservative party conference said that mass migration has close to zero economic upside. The effect of refugees will vary from country to country. For example, in Greece 25% of the population are out of a job, whereas Germany needs workers.

Refugees will also contribute to the culture. Genetically, refugees will create families within the countries leading to a more varied and stronger gene pool, known as hybrid vigor. The transition will be difficult but it is the right thing—as well the smart thing—to do.

Write for the Dialogue

We are accepting submissions for Spring 2016!

Send submissions to communications@aeu.org
by Wednesday, March 25, 2016.

Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission.

Humanist Television

Emily Newman, AEU Communications Coordinator

In Ethical Culture, we often discuss our beliefs. Sometimes we explain to believers why we don't follow a traditional religion or believe in their god. Sometimes we talk to unaffiliated people about why we value being part of our Society and living ethically. It is often difficult to find the right words, especially when facing family members with different views. I recommend watching these episodes to see how humanist fictional characters handle it:

The Carmichael Show – Prayer (NBC: Season 1, Episode 5)

When the reverend visits the Carmichael family for dinner, discussion turns to the importance of prayer and they learn how much they disagree.

Truth Be Told – Psychic Chicken (NBC: Season 1, Episode 4)

When their daughter's favorite chicken at school dies, Mitch and Tracy struggle with what to say to her because they are a mixed-faith couple. Their friends Angie and Russell get into a fight when they discover they're not on the same page about God.

The Mindy Project – My Cool Christian Boyfriend (originally Fox, now Hulu: Season 1, Episode 19)

A young Christian minister takes an interest in Mindy until he realizes they value different things in life.

Black-ish – Churchd (ABC: Season 2, Episode 5)

When the family is invited to church by the neighbors, Dre goes against his instinct of always saying "no" and agrees. When the whole family ends up enjoying it, they begin to consider going regularly and compare "white church" to "black church" or lazy Sundays.

Watch on your own or with others and consider these questions:

- Do you relate to any of these characters?
- Have you had discussions about religion, church, beliefs, and God with loved ones similar to these situations?
- Do you think these shows represent humanists/freethinkers/atheists in a positive and realistic way? If not, what would you change?
- What other issues do you hope television shows will address?

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