



American Ethical Union

Inspiring Ethical Communities

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ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT

Society Report for Baltimore Ethical Society

Leader(s): Hugh Taft-Morales

President(s): Thomas Higdon

Administrative Director/Office Contact: None

Please provide brief updates on the following areas of your Society that occurred or developed in 2018:

Ethical Action:

- Actively participated in numerous community events, including Barbecue for Homeless, MLK Parade, Spaghetti Lunch for Homeless, and Fair Housing Roundtable.
- Actively participated in Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) a city-wide coalition working on jobs/employment, crime/safety, youth opportunities, and schools/education.

Ethical Education (children ages 2-13):

- We have 5-7 children.
- Retained three talented Sunday School teachers, updated their contracts, and clarified our policies.
- Operated Sunday School every week (except summer months) and tracked weekly attendance.
- Updated the website, flyer, registration forms, and brought in new visiting families through family-focused outreach.

Youth of Ethical Societies (teens ages 14-18): N/A.

Future of Ethical Societies (young adults ages 18-35): N/A

Communications:

- Kathryn greatly improved the BES newsletter with input from the PRC.
- Posts on Facebook and Meetup have brought newcomers to our events.

Finances:

- Improved transparency, including better documentation of donations and contracts, and migrated to QuickBooks Online, thereby providing both an online backup and greater accessibility for our accounting.
- Submitted several policy recommendations to the Board, including recommendations on our investment in the Fonkoze Fund, on directed donations, and on procedures for entering contracts.
- Planned and executed a successful pledge drive, including mailers, luncheon, and phone bank. Notably, FY19 was the first year in some time to have a budget surplus.

Membership:

- Staffed welcome table every Sunday, maintained visitor log, and sent follow-up emails to first-time visitors.
- Held eight Newcomers Meetings, brought five new members on board, and coordinated two Welcoming Ceremonies.
- Began recording member attendance at Sunday Platforms.

New Developments:

- Successfully moved to our new temporary space at the Village Learning Place.
- After years of deficit spending, BES passed two balanced budgets in a row.
- For the first time in recent memory every committee has at least one chairperson, no one is chairing more than one committee, and the President is not chairing any committee.
- Filled calendar with inspiring speakers through end of May. Platforms are now planned more than three months in advance. This has been an aspiration of the committee for some time. In fact, just this past summer the committee felt that it was an unrealistic goal. So this is a huge accomplishment!

Goals for 2019:

- Society-wide
 - Increase weekly Sunday School attendance.
 - Increase and improve volunteer engagement and satisfaction.
 - Grow and diversify BES membership along lines of age, race/ethnicity, gender, orientation, and economic status.
- Ethical Action
 - Increase and improve volunteer engagement.
 - Engage in 1:1 strategy to surface members willing to participate in EAC events.
 - Diversity BES membership.
 - When participating in ethical actions, solicit interest in BES.
 - Increase Sunday School attendance.
 - Create activities either in Sunday School sessions and/or find ways to include Sunday School students to participate in ethical actions.
- Ethical Education
 - Hold one family-friendly event this spring to showcase Sunday School and attract new families.
 - Set a date, pick a theme, recruit volunteers, promote event, execute event
 - Hold April & May second Sunday family meetups.

- Plan activity and dates for remaining meetups, write-up in BES newsletter and this week at BES, promote to Village Parents and Nextdoor and friends, execute meetups.
 - Setup Sunday School for a successful fall start.
 - Line up teachers and contracts, plan a Sunday School open house, promote broadly, arrange coverage for committee while Chair is away (Aug-Nov).
- Finance
 - Increase transparency/capacity of the committee.
 - Recruit and train an assistant treasurer.
 - Send a mid-year letter to members on the status of pledges.
 - Conduct an internal audit.
 - Improve communication with other committees
 - Make a "handbook" available to other committee chairs for how to make spending requests against their budgets.
 - Check in with committees that are projected to go under- or over-spend their budgets.
- Membership
 - Increase membership by 10 percent (nine members).
 - Meet with PRC to identify ways to reach out to diverse communities.
 - Send Newcomers Meeting invitations to guests who have visited BES multiple times in recent weeks.
 - Add 15 Member Profiles to the website.
 - Urge members to add their profiles through announcements during Platform.
 - Place reminders in the newsletter, and targeted emails.
 - Consider including each member's committee and volunteer activities in their profile.
 - Streamline the process of applying for BES membership.
 - Create an online membership form, which populates a spreadsheet that maintains pending applications.
- Program
 - Attract more families to BES.
 - Designate a Program Committee member to connect with Education Committee for family-oriented speaker and event ideas
 - Schedule one family-oriented speaker/event per quarter.
 - Offer childcare for Program Committee meetings.
 - Increase and improve volunteer engagement and satisfaction.
 - Honor Volunteers during Volunteer Appreciation Week with a "Champagne" toast.
 - Honor Committee Chairs at the Annual Meeting.
 - Highlight one committee or volunteer each quarter in the Newsletter.
 - Highlight and honor one committee a month at a Platform meeting.
 - Grow and diversify BES membership along lines of age, race/ethnicity, gender, orientation, and economic status.
 - Identify and invite speakers who reflect the diversity mentioned above.
- Public Relations
 - Build relationships with the community.
 - Work with the ethical action committee to publicize community events.

- Reach out to other groups such as the Unitarian church and Charles Village organizations.
- Create a new BES Brochure.
 - Take new photographs of our members at VLP.
 - Update the text from the original brochure.
 - Get input from members about our draft before printing and distributing.