



# American Ethical Union

## Inspiring Ethical Communities

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## ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT

### Society Report for: Mid Rivers Ethical Society

Leader(s): N/A

President(s): Craig Buehler

Administrative Director/Office Contact: Jill Aul

**Please provide brief updates on the following areas of your Society that occurred or developed in 2020:**

#### **Ethical Action:**

- **Climate:** Platform about Native MO Gardening
- **Racial Justice:** Platform about Archer Alexander, a local activist slave, Bart Worden's Platform about Repairing the Harms of Structural Racism, Platform by Ryan Staples, local black activist, TED Talk/discussion about "The Culture of Hate," Hugh Taft-Morales' recorded Platform about institutional racism.
- **Economic Justice:** Platform speaker from "Hack the Senate"
- **Development and Peace:** Platform about Social Media and Media Literacy, Platform by local representative from Veterans for Peace, Kate Lovelady's Platform about Humanist schools in Uganda
- **Other:** Platform about voter suppression and the initiative for a national popular vote, first annual Darwin Day interactive celebration, Panel discussion about Ethical Non-monogamy, Platform about cannabis legalization, Dying Out Loud, a Platform by Dave Warnock, about euthanasia, Paul Halpern, author of Synchronicity, ESMR FES member Cicely Berzack's Platform about studying in Ghana, annual Help your Neighbor day of service, launched a Colloquy committee after a workshop with Leader Intern Christian Hayden, and held a 3-night class about Ethical Culture and Philosophy, led by Christian Hayden. We hosted 9 Platforms led by EC Leaders (or Leaders in Training) thanks to the ability to ZOOM. Kate Lovelady (twice), Bart Worden, Sarah Tielemans, Hugh Taft-Morales, Anne Klaysen and Christian Hayden three times.



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**Ethical Education (children ages 2-13) & Youth of Ethical Societies (teens ages 14-18) & Future of Ethical Societies (young adults ages 18-35):** Our Sunday Ethical Education for Kids program (SEEK) reached 19 enrollees in 2020, with an additional baby born in the summer. Because of our rapid growth, especially among young families, we faced the issue of outgrowing our meeting space. Fortunately, we recently learned that council that runs the facility we rent has agreed to make modifications to the building. That will create an additional classroom for our program, so we won't need to relocate. Our SEEK program was robust in the early part of the year, participating in high quality lessons and activities. Since the COVID quarantine, there have been some online activities, a socially distanced family campout weekend, participation in our "Helping Our Neighbors" day of service, and an adopt-a-family project.

**Communications:** We've come to rely on technology more than we ever imagined, of course! All of our Sunday programs have been virtual, via the ZOOM program, but we managed to meet outdoors in a park for 3 of our monthly Living Ethics Discussion Platforms, as well as a few outdoor social gatherings. We use Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter, and of course rely on our web site for communication with the outer world. We also send out a weekly e-newsletter that reaches about 250 people.

**Finances:** We are in a unique position, whereby we have not had to pay rent for all of the Sundays we did not meet in person throughout the lockdown. We do not pay a Leader or any other employees. Therefore, our financial situation is very secure. We closed our savings account and moved all of our investments to an ethically run E-Trade account, and they are doing well. Compared to so many Societies who struggled financially this past year, we are fortunate and grateful that we did not.

**Membership:** Sadly, we lost 4 members in 2020. Two moved out of state, and two died. Two others, however, officially joined after engaging with us virtually, which was delightful. After several years of enjoying a 33%+ annual rate of growth, things came to a grinding halt in terms of membership. Average Sunday Platform attendance nosedived from 50 to 25, due to factors related to sudden switch to virtual programming.

**New Developments:** We have begun monthly Colloquies, as well as virtual social events that have been popular among our members. These include parties, game nights, movies, etc. for adults and families, alike.

**Goals for 2021: TO MEET IN PERSON AGAIN!** We look forward to a post-COVID future full of new energy, restored membership engagement and growth!