Annual Society Report to AEU June 2020

Society Report for: The Ethical Society of Essex County
Leader: None
President: Zia Durrani
Administrative Director/Office Contact: Jeanine Rosh, Office Supervisor/Treasurer

2020

Ethical Action:

Climate & Environment:

The Bee Project: Committee did some self-education about importance and endangered status of bees. Jackie Herships organized and Martha Howlett designed and produced lawn signs that we are distributing at cost in the community: BEE FRIENDLY!!

We chose our sixth annual local hero for an award highlighting work for justice, in this case, Nancy Zak’s for her many years fighting for open space and the clean up of environmental toxins in the Ironbound Section of Newark

Racial and Immigrant Justice:

Financial and organizational support of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race.

Our committee is also joining the AEU’s “Reclaim Our Vote” project. Over the summer we will be hand-writing post cards to send to people around the country deemed unlikely to vote.

We also continued work on gathering signatures for our immigration letter and petition during the fall, but were slowed by the Coronarius crisis. The letter was published in the SO/Ma News-Record, and we collected several more sign ups for the letter from Ethical societies and other organizations and from individuals like NJ Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey; then-Mayor Victor De Luca, Mayor, Maplewood Township, NJ; and Village President Sheena Collum, South Orange Village, NJ.

Economic Justice:

We again collected winter outerwear for distribution and built alliances with other organizations: Valley Settlement House and the Eglise Baptiste Nouvelle Jerusalem in Irvington. We have an ongoing food collection and distribution.

Other:

In response to being a “leaderless society, the platform chair and several members decided to devote our theme for the year to “Living Ethical Culture in Our World”. Consequently, once a month we had a platform or workshop given by visiting Leaders or colloquies facilitated by Society members.
The events were:

- Introducing the topic of the year by way of an interview of Alice Robinson-Gilman by Meredith Sue Willis on Alice’s concerns about the Society’s lack of focus on Ethical Culture.
- Calvin Chatlos’s platform on “Faith and Spirituality and Felix Adler and Ethical Culture.”
- Workshop by Jim White “Helping Each Other Change for a World of Justice and Peace”.
- Follow-up Colloquy “Discussion of Faith and Spirituality” by Alice Robinson-Gilman & Meredith Sue Willis in response to Calvin’s platform.
- Follow-up Colloquy to Bart’s platform by Sue and Alice on “What is the Ethical Manifold?”
- “Our Growing Family Ethical Education Program” by Aidan Cunningham and Evelyn Chu.
- Jone Johnson’s talk had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus sheltering in place.
- Workshop by Bart Worden on “Leaderless Society” for our new Board and others likewise had to be cancelled and we hope to reschedule it as soon as possible.

Other platform speakers addressed treatment of immigrants in detention centers at the borders and in New Jersey; purposeful living; healthy eating; emergency preparedness; police/community relations, and various aspects of art and literature.

- In June and July zoom meetings were planned for the community to maintain contact with each other.

**Ethical Education for Children:**

Our Family Ethical Education program continues to grow with 12-14 children from 6-8 families attending twice monthly, with a different theme each week. The mission continues to be to enable children to discover who they are to themselves, the community, and the world around them as they become global citizens. The program focuses on developing a robust moral compass in relation to self, others and the world at large. As part of a caring community, children will explore and develop relationships and humanist values.

Youth and young adults programs: At present we have no programs in place.

**Communications:** We use all available social media, with local ads appearing each week with special emphasis on individual programs. The momentum program of the AEU was not utilized, other than 2 profiles we submitted. The communications seems lacking.

We mail out some 250 newsletters each month, and utilize a large emailing list. Members have participated in various community fairs, showcasing information about the society.

Our building is used by various groups, with about 200 people passing through each week.

Attendance at platforms has increased this year.

**Finances:** We operate in the black with investment totaling $60,000. plus.

**Membership:** We have gained 2 new members this year, with another 2 individuals interested in membership. We ask visitors to complete a form, then we follow up with a call and email.
New Developments:

This year, once a month, pianist Birgit Matzerath gave the audience a guided tour through two Preludes and Fugues from J.S. Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier. In the course of one year the project would cover all 24 Preludes and Fugues of Book 1, beginning with an introduction on September 15, 2019 and ending with a performance of the entire book on September 11, 2020.

With her project, the artist intends to create a space where people can take a break, refuel and be inspired through the music. There is a great need for this in a time where the struggle for justice, human rights and the preservation of the planet has become more urgent than ever. "Bach’s compositional technique of counterpoint represents in music what we encounter in life: a network where everything hangs together," explains Matzerath. "What happens in one voice has an impact on the entire system of independent, but not self-sufficient voices that share responsibilities in a common task." The live performances were interrupted in March, after which performances were presented on U Tube. The project drew over 30 attendees per performances, and the donations were shared with The Interfaith Hospitality Network of Essex County.

Goals for 2020:

To continue to support social action causes, with personal involvement in the “Save the Bees” project (selling signs for lawns), and the personal outreach to attract like minded humanists, as well as to adding names to the Immigration letter.

To continue to develop and expand the Ethical Education program

Increase membership through public relations, programs and personal outreach to visitors.

Replace the roof on the building

Find new PR paths (hopefully with the help of the AEU and the Momentum program) to get the word out as to who we are, and that we exist in Maplewood, NJ. As part of a larger movement.