



# American Ethical Union

## Inspiring Ethical Communities

2 West 64<sup>th</sup> Street • New York, NY 10023 • [www.aeu.org](http://www.aeu.org)  
Phone 212.873.6500 • Fax 212-624-0203 • [office@aeu.org](mailto:office@aeu.org)

## ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT 2018

### Society Report for Ethical Society of Saint Louis

Leader(s): Kate Lovelady and James Croft

President(s): Krystal White (President), Amanda Verbeck (President-Elect), Carole Beere (Past President)

Administrative Director/Office Contact: Nancy Jelinek

### Ethics in Action

Monthly Ethical Actions: The Society started something new in October 2018: a suggested ethical action for each month. In 2018, the suggested ethical actions were 1. Support the Operation Food Search food drive, 2. Donate for the Thanksgiving service platform, and 3. Support the Ugandan School fundraiser.

Hosting Blood Drives: The Ethical Society hosted four blood drives, one per quarter, to benefit the American Red Cross.

Highway Clean Up: The Ethical Society clean-up team is part of the Missouri Department of Transportation's Adopt-a-Highway program. The team volunteered four times in the past year.

Faces Not Forgotten: The Faces Not Forgotten exhibit hung at the Ethical Society from November 2 through December 10. Faces Not Forgotten is a not-for-profit organization in which artists paint portraits of children killed by gun violence (with the permission of the families). The paintings are given to the families, and images of the paintings are printed over images of vintage handkerchiefs by Andrew Dobson, forming quilts—8 portraits for the 8 children that die each day from gun violence. The quilts are exhibited to commemorate the victims and raise awareness of gun violence. The quilts in our exhibit were of images of child gun-violence victims from St. Louis and Chicago.





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International Institute: Ethical Society volunteers supported recent immigrants and refugees, primarily by providing food for and attending monthly community luncheons.

Khaki pants drive: The Ethical Society adopted the St. Louis City magnet high school Gateway STEM and collected and donated 260 pairs of khaki pants for the students at the school.

Split Collections: In 2018, the Society had 13 split collections on Sunday morning, raising over \$2500 to support many local organizations, including Interfaith Partnership, Planned Parenthood, Jamaa Birth Village, PROMO, Lydia's House, and Beyond Housing.

Uganda Humanist Schools Trust: The Trust promotes education and encourages the development of ethical values in Uganda by providing scholarships to students, primarily girls, in humanist secondary schools. Additional funds meet general needs of the schools and students. Sufficient funds were raised from our members and the Ethical Society of Austin to support 36 full-board scholarships for girls at the humanist secondary schools. In addition, our donations meet other school needs and provide female students with feminine pads.

STL Pride Parade: James Croft spoke at the Interfaith program and many members marched in the Pride parade.





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Operation Food Search food drives: The Society had an ongoing food drive to benefit Operation Food Search. In 2017 – 18 the Society collected over 800 pounds of food. The goal for 2018 – 19 is to double that number.



Thanksgiving Service Assembly: Each November, the entire Society participates in a morning of service. This year, members made blankets, sorted books, cleaned windows, made seed packets, and created dog treats.

Black Lives Matter Vigils: The vigils occurred every second Sunday after platform. On average, 20 members, friends, and visitors participated in the monthly BLM vigils outside the Ethical Society.



Concordance Academy Teams: The Ethical Society had two teams, each of which was committed to supporting, for a year, one individual returning to society from prison. This support took many forms, including but not limited to: becoming a friend and confidante, offering advice and assistance (clothes, furniture/household supplies, monetary, etc.), communicating with the partner once a week at minimum, and meeting in person once a month.



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**Ethics in Action Award:** Each year we recognize an individual or group in the St. Louis community that has provided courageous and dedicated service to maintaining the rights and dignity of their fellow human beings in some aspect of life – religious, social, political, economic, medical, educational, ecological, recreational, or artistic. This year’s award was given to Jorge Riopedre, CEO of Casa de Salud. Casa de Salud is a clinic providing high-quality, low-cost clinical and mental healthcare to the uninsured, focusing on the new immigrant community. Additionally, Jorge was the executive director of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, a 2015 Eisenhower Fellow, and co-founder of the St. Louis New American Alliance, which provides referral services to foreign-born individuals throughout the region.

## Ethical Education (SEEK)

The SEEK enrollment as of December 2018 is 105 students: 16 pre-K students, 55 K – 6 students, 12 Coming of Age students, and 22 Youth Group students. Each week our students in nursery school through sixth grade attend the initial portions of the Sunday Platform. They remain for the welcome, which is followed by one individual student, generally a student in grades 2-4, coming onto the stage and reading SEEK’s core values aloud for everyone in the auditorium. It is most impressive to see the poise of these youngsters. The core values are followed by a musical number, after which the children are dismissed for their classes. About six times a year, the Coming of Age and Youth Group members stay for the entire Platform. Age appropriate activities that reflect our ethical values and often deal with current topics are planned for each group. In May, two platforms are scripted and conducted by the Coming of Age and Youth Group students.

## Young Ethicals

The Young Ethicals group provides a wide variety of activities for 18 to 40 years-old members and non-members. Their goal is to have at least one event – social or service oriented – each month. In 2018, they have hosted happy hours, board game nights, movie outings, regular lunch outings, and First Sunday Lunch following Platform. A spin-off group, Young Ethical Ladies, also formed in 2018 with the purpose of developing relationships and building community around female or feminine experiences, in the context of ethical humanism. They also have social events each month, and take turns volunteering for each other's favorite causes. Using an inclusive definition of “ladies,” they welcome trans women, genderqueer women, and non-binary people who are female-identified.

## Communications

The Saint Louis Society had an outstanding year in communication. Our Social Media Manager Louise Jett continued to grow our online presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our Facebook fans increased to over 3300 and the 212 Ethical Society Facebook events reached over 260,000 people in 2018. WOW! Our presence in the local press (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis American, and Patch.com) has grown this year with a mention in the press nearly every month,



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sometimes multiple mentions in a month. Outreach Director James Croft dabbled in making videos in 2018 and making a series of videos is a goal for 2019 – 2020. We continue to reach our members through a weekly email blast that gives the schedule for the week along with other bits of information of interest to our members. We also have a monthly newsletter distributed via email and sent in hard copy to members who do not use email. The monthly newsletter is also sent electronically to prospective members.

## Finances

The Society's finances are very healthy and our investments continue to grow. Each spring, the Board reviews the next year's budget that is prepared by Leader Kate Lovelady. After the Board approves the budget, it is considered by the membership at our Annual Meeting. Significant deviations from the budget, which would be caused by unanticipated expenditures, must be approved by the Board. For the 2018 – 19 year, 241 of the 282 pledging units committed a total of \$345,646 in pledges. Of the 41 who did not pledge, 24 were granted elderly or hardship waivers. The Ministry Team is working with individuals who did not pledge to determine their intentions regarding Society membership.

## Membership

The Ethical Society of Saint Louis strives to increase and diversify our membership. The total membership at the end of 2018 was 359 members. Demographically, the Society's membership is getting younger; however, we are not satisfied with the racial or ethnic diversity of our membership. The Society is working to connect with folks from all throughout the Saint Louis area community through outreach and programming.

## New Developments

The End Racism team organized the "One Book, One Ethical Society" initiative, in which all members were encouraged to read and discuss *Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women*. Member feedback was very positive and the team is organizing for One Book 2019.

Starting in the fall, the Society had a suggested ethical action for each month. Thus far, the suggested ethical actions were 1. Support the Operation Food Search food drive, 2. Donate for the Thanksgiving service platform, and 3. Support the Ugandan School fundraiser.

The membership provided feedback and direction regarding strategic planning, revenue generation, and the two-leader model. Task Forces crafted a multiple-year Strategic Plan and a multiple-year Increase Revenue Plan.

Multiple changes were made to the programming and the building itself to increase accessibility.



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### **Goals for 2019**

The Ethical Society of Saint Louis has two sets of goals each year: one set for the Board and the other for the Ministry Team.

For 2018 – 19, the Board goals were as follows:

1. Complete the Strategic Planning and Discernment review tasks as outlined in the Policy Manual Sections 5 and 6.5.
2. Develop and implement a plan to evaluate the two-leader model and its long-term sustainability.
3. Increase revenue and legacy giving to benefit the Society, both short- and long-term. In 2018-2019, develop a multiple-year plan to achieve this goal.
4. Adopt and disseminate a comprehensive employee handbook.
5. Consider the relationship between the ESSL and AEU.

The Board has accomplished goals #1, 2, 3, and 5. Goal #4 is in process; the employee handbook has been revamped and will be shared out with employees beginning in 2019.

The Ministry Team goals for 2018 – 19 are as follows:

1. Create programs to develop leadership skills within the Society membership.
2. Develop and implement strategies to increase membership retention among people who have been members for less than five years.
3. Make the Ethical Society's building and programs fully accessible for adults and children with disabilities.
4. Develop and implement two plans that relate to the safety and protection of our Ethical Society community: an Emergency Preparedness Plan and a Child Protection and Abuse Response Plan.
5. Increase SEEK enrollment, attendance, and satisfaction

The Board monitors progress on the Ministry Goals quarterly, with special attention at the mid-year retreat and at the end of the fiscal year. Progress has been made on some of the Ministry Goals – the lay leadership development and accessibility goals are particularly worthy of shout-out – but more work needs to be done before they are concluded. Each of the 2018 – 19 goals will continue in 2019 – 2020.