ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT

Society Report for Washington Ethical Society

Leader(s): Amanda Poppei

President(s): Lauren Strange

Administrative Director/Office Contact: Tom Hutton, Business Administrator

Please provide brief updates on the following areas of your Society that occurred or developed in 2019:

Ethical Action:
Climate: Our Earth Ethics Action Team continues to work on greening our own space and encouraging our Society members to invest in green choices themselves. This year, the solar panels on the WES roof were gifted to WES by Ethical Community Solar, the (WES member-led) LLC that purchased them a number of years ago. The solar panels will now be a source of income as well as energy for WES!

Racial Justice: WES has continued our commitment to anti-racism work, focusing on how we institutionalize that commitment. This includes hiring policies that require a certain percentage of the pool of candidates be POC before moving to the next step in the process; commitments to POC speakers on the platform monthly; and a newly passed Board policy which requires that white/non-BIPOC Board members participate in individual anti-racism work as part of and/or prior to assuming Board leadership.

Economic Justice: WES instituted a sliding scale for its Auction tickets this year, inviting people to pay as they were able. This came out of a recommendation from the Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Multicultural Audit Team which performed its audit last year and offered a series of recommendations in the fall of 2019.

Development and Peace:
Other: WES’ Immigration Support Team has worked with the Congregation Action Network (CAN) to support policies in the DC area and to connect
personally in support of an immigrant in sanctuary at a nearby congregation. WES is also involved in the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN), our local IAF affiliate, working on equitable housing, violence reduction, and other DC priorities.

Ethical Education (children ages 2-13) & Youth of Ethical Societies (teens ages 14-18) & Future of Ethical Societies (young adults ages 18-35): This year, WES has been without a Director of Lifelong Learning; however, we have been very ably served by Ndara Miles, our SEEK Assistant, and Andrea Perry Lerner, our Remote SEEK Consultant (who finished her service in June), as well as the incredible team of SEEK volunteer teachers. We have maintained programming for all ages, including running a Coming of Age program. It was challenging for that programming to be interrupted in March as we moved to virtual because of the pandemic. We continue to experiment with ways to reach children and youth, and their families, during this time. We hope to be welcoming a new Director of Lifelong Learning soon!

(ADDED) Music: In the fall of 2019 we said goodbye to our Music Director Bailey Whiteman, who had served in that position for more than eight years. After working with an interim Music Director for two months, we began a hiring process to bring in a new person to the position. However, the pandemic halted that process, and we are now exploring work with a Virtual Music Coordinator who can support the particular needs of music during virtual platforms. Lea Morris is currently working with us in this capacity, both providing her own music and also working with the WES Chorus and Band to create audio and video files mixing their sounds.

Communications: Robyn Kravitz continues to serve as our Communications Coordinator, maintaining our website and running our social media presence. We find that the majority of newcomers find us after driving by or coming across our name from a friend and then looking us up, so maintaining these virtual spaces well is of the utmost importance! Robyn also creates our weekly blog (written by the Leader, a Board member, a staff member, or another guest writer) and our weekly “News & Notes” which details the calendar for the coming week or so. We have also added an email on Saturday nights with all the links for Sunday since going 100% virtual.

Finances: The pandemic of course concerns all of us as we consider WES’ long term financial health. WES had a financially challenging 2018-19, and our budget in 2019-20
was balanced only because we had more than one staff position unfilled. As we move into the coming year, we are aware of the importance of increased stewardship in maintaining WES’ financial stability. The pandemic has also essentially eliminated most rentals, a significant source of income for WES. We were pleased to receive a PPP loan which we are in the process of turning into a grant, pending approval.

**Membership:** In the fall of 2019 we were lucky to bring on board Maceo Thomas as Membership Coordinator. This position is currently funded by a combination of a grant from the UU Chalice Lighter Program and an internal matching grant from members of WES. Maceo has significantly increased our ability to connect with newcomers, and to track those interested in WES. Maceo coordinates our Path to Membership work and has been running twice-weekly Zoom check-ins with members during the pandemic.

**New Developments:** The most significant new development is that Senior Leader Amanda Poppei is finishing her service to WES after 12 years. Amanda will be taking a position as Senior Minister at the UU Church of Arlington, VA. Joining WES on August 1 is Lyn Cox, who will serve as Interim Leader for (likely) two years. WES will be creating a Search Committee and beginning the search for a Leader for the next chapter in our history!

**Goals for 2020:** At the mid-year retreat in January 2020, goals for the 2020-21 program year were created:

1. Achieve long-term financial stability through increased pledge and rental income, and identification of new funding sources.

2. Deepen the WES connection as a humanist community with DC through Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Multicultural (ARAOMC) work.

3. Strengthen Sunday Ethical Education for Kids (SEEK) and Lifelong Education.