Fifty Years of History:
The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island

Introduction

* In The Beginning: A brief retrospective of the Ethical Movement in the United States to the beginnings of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island.

* 1950s – America Grows Up – Bricks And Ideas, The Ethical Culture Movement Comes To Long Island: We have built well. We have found that there is a strong need for an Ethical Society on Long Island, and we know that there is opportunity ahead of us. We see Long Island growing bigger and we want to help it grow better. We think we can do this by making our Meeting House that in spirit as well as name—a place where men meet to seek the highest together. —Sheldon Ackley, Leader 1950-1959, Ethical Culture Society of Long Island

* 1960s – Innocence Lost – Beginning The Battle: Today, when democracy is more aware how vast is its program of unfinished business, the call to increase the knowledge, the love, the practice of the best human relationships is still, we believe, the call to take part in the sublimest and most needed of [people's] endeavors. Responding to it by lives which add their gift, howsoever small, to the world's treasure of good and lovable living, lives which reanimate in others hope, trust, courage to keep moving ahead, can give people their most rewarding satisfaction and their truest title to the name human. —Henry Neumann, Leader, Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

* 1970s – America At The Doorstep Of Self-Destruction – A Light In The Dark: Nature is a source of strength. We know the sunshine and touch the earth. We have ears to listen to the secrets. We need only to learn how. —Arthur Dobrin

* 1980s – The Rise Of The Right – Secular Humanism On The Defense: Humanism asserts the value of reason joined with passion. It places human values squarely at the center of life and judges ethics in human terms. Values worthy of our loyalty must be human values fit to the needs of people
and nature. It is together with all people, regardless of theological considerations, who hold such values that the evils of the modern world must be fought. This common ground must transcend narrower concerns. — Arthur Dobrin

1990s – A Brave New World – One Foot In The Past, The Other In The Future:

The Ethical Movement stands in the tradition of the prophetic, never shying away from contemporary problems or rushing to be involved with current affairs. Prophetic religions, however, must contend with the application of ethics in the broader world, the world of competing claims, contrasting interests and the necessary compromises... sometimes there is a heavy price to pay for this worldly involvement.

— Arthur Dobrin
In the Beginning

From the beginning, the Ethical Movement has been defined by the way it challenges our society at large. Instead of a focus on a supreme being, there is a focus on people’s deeds. As Felix Adler, the founder of the Ethical Movement so aptly put it, “In the beginning there was not the word but the act.”

There is no sacred book or ritual to follow. Our Leader has no sacramental sanctions and our Sunday School does not offer our children a prescribed way of living. The movement leaves aside the issues of deism and the after-life in favor of the theme of the human dilemma. While some religions set themselves apart, the Ethical Movement has worked to be a part of daily life.

But in some ways we are like other religions. People are married here and buried here. We live and rejoice together. We comfort one another. And, like other religious movements, members of the Ethical Movement hold true to a central core of values.

In a 1951 pamphlet, published by the American Ethical Union, the Ethical Movement is described as a “non-sectarian religious and educational fellowship, without formal creed or dogma, uniting [people] in the belief that the greatest spiritual values are to be found in improving the quality of human relationships. Members are convinced that there is worth in every human being, and they are persuaded that this worth in [people] can be developed and made effective by the way in which they are treated. Thus, their practical rule for conduct was stated by Dr. Felix Adler...: “Act so as to bring out the best in others and thereby in yourself.”

Ethical Culture is a mere babe of a religion at 124 less than 150 years old. The religion was founded in May of 1876 by Dr. Felix Adler as a response to a newly industrialized urban society here in America. According to Howard B. Radest, author of Toward Common Ground, Adler’s new religion was radical in that the religion proposed to “eliminate all theological considerations, to bring into one fellowship the freethinker and the theist, the agnostic and the deist, the religionist and the secularist. Its conservatism lay in the call back to the central value of an ethical humanism.”

And so on February 21, 1877 a certificate of incorporation was filed in New York for the Society of Ethical Culture, led by Dr. Felix Adler. Since that time the Ethical Culture Movement has been at the forefront of political and social change as well as a number of pioneering community service activities. Some of those programs include the Hudson Guild, Visiting Nurses Association, the Needlework Guild of America, Blythedale Home for
Crippled Children, the Free Kindergarten Association, the Child Study Association of America, Madison House, the Legal Aid Society and the Working Boys Club.

Our leaders have been at the forefront of community leadership. Felix Adler was the first Chairman of the National Child Labor Committee, a pioneer in labor legislation and tenement house reform. Other leaders have been involved in the founding of organizations such as the ACLU, NAACP and Urban League.

Educational projects have helped to set up the Work Camps for America, which led to the Encampment for Citizenship which taught young men and women to be thoughtful and responsive citizens in a democratic society, and camps for impoverished children such as Camp Felicia.

This brief history of the Long Island Society does not set out to mythologize our group nor is it an attempt to give a detailed dry histography. Instead what is attempted here is to capture the essence of who we are—the people who have come through our doors and the contributions they have made to our society, to our lives and to the larger community. Think of this history as a rendering or a piece of music in which the voices swell and recede, each having a moment to speak.

Fifty years may seem like an important landmark but it is merely a drop in the bucket. Hopefully, the ethical movement will be around for thousands of years. When George E. O’Dell retired from his post as AEU Executive Secretary and Editor of the Standard in 1954, he was asked, "In light of your many years experience in our movement, what do you think about its future?" "It's its future depends on its Leaders and members preserving the sincerity and freshness which has characterized the Ethical Movement so far as well as its members eagerness both to grow in moral insight and character, with due humility, and to get progressive things done," said Mr. O’Dell. "I see no reason to fear it will be otherwise. We shall surely continue to stand for underlying principles which experience and the perception of wise and disinterested seers show to be essential to the life of humanity."
1950s – America Grows Up Bricks And Ideals, The Ethical Culture Movement Comes to Long Island

We have built well. We have found that there is a strong need for an Ethical Society on Long Island, and we know that there is opportunity ahead of us. We see Long Island growing bigger and we want to help it grow better. We think we can do this by making our Meeting House that in spirit as well as name—a place where men meet to seek the highest together. Sheldon Ackley, Leader 1950-1959, Ethical Culture Society of Long Island

Rumblings of a Long Island Society began long before 1950. In a 1937 issue of The Standard, issued by the American Ethical Union, a notice appeared stating that AEU office has "been helping organize a Children’s Sunday Assembly which meets at the Child Play-Grow School, 486 Albermarle Avenue in Cedarhurst, Long Island. A group of parents residing in that and neighboring communities has taken financial responsibility for premises and teachers, and the latter have been secured from the Normal Department of the New York Ethical Culture School. The school went on to become the Woodmere Academy. No more was heard from a Long Island contingent until 1946. Then, in a letter to members of the New York Society, Mrs. Joyce D. Maerlander, said that a Long Island group was being formed. "If you have not found it convenient to attend any of our meetings, you might be interested to know that the Long Island Unit of the Ethical Culture Society has shown marked progress. We are proud to say that we seem to fill a definite need here on the Island, that is an opportunity for us who are all members of the New York Society and therefore share a common interest to become better acquainted and discuss different problems which concern us all."

The Long Island group was formed of members of the living in Queens and Nassau Counties. The group was known as the Long Island Unit and Dr. Joseph Blau, who became a noted professor of religion at Columbia University, who was leading the group at the time, said the "unit has a real esprit de corps, a fellowship and a program. Its members created a regular study and discussion program, working with later sections of Adler’s Ethical Philosophy of Life. In pursuance of this end, they engage in a certain amount of community action in Queens, took an especial interest in Camp Felicia and participated as a group in many of the functions of the New York Society.

By 1948 it became evident to the group that there was a need on Long Island for a children’s Sunday Assembly. "This was started experimentally in the Spring of 1948 with a
volunteer staff under the financial sponsorship of the Unit," Dr. Blau reported to the American Ethical Union. The experiment proved to be successful and by 1950 they had over 50 children from ages 4 to 12 enrolled.

The children, along with the adults, first met informally in one another's homes. Rebecca Goldblum, first president of the Society said in a letter to the American Ethical Union that the group met anywhere they could. She wrote “we sometimes met in a dance studio partitioned by home-made screens and used home-made equipment. We next lived in borrowed quarters which were dingy and dreary by comparison with our first Meeting House but again we were grateful for the improvement we had achieved.”

By 1950 the Long Island Unit believed they were ready to become autonomous from the New York Society. They had found temporary quarters in a house owned by a member on Fulton Avenue in Hempstead and applied for independent status as an associate society. In May of 1950 The Ethical Culture Society of Long Island was born. It was the 10th society under the umbrella of the American Ethical Union. There were 75 members. Dr. Sheldon Ackley was appointed by the Board of Directors and installed by Dr. David B. Muzzey, the great American historian and Leader of the Westchester Society for Ethical Culture, as the Society's first Leader.

During the first season a building fund was established and in 1952 the Society bought a rambling old house on Hempstead Turnpike in Hempstead. The building had a Platform room with a capacity of 100 people, a study, lounge, kitchen, office, caretaker's room and six Sunday School classrooms. A dedication ceremony, led by Dr. Henry Neumann, took place on November 11, 1951. At the time of the purchase the average attendance at Platform meetings had been 40 persons. But membership continued to increase. In 1951 there were 108 members; in 1952, 158 and by the fall of 1954, 242 members.
In an internal memo of the American Ethical Union it stated that the key to the Long Island Society's success has been "found in the Sunday School. The majority of new members have had children enrolled in the Sunday School, and regularity of Sunday attendance may also be insured by the fact that parents must bring their children to Sunday School regularly. In fact, only in the third year of the Society’s existence did people without children already in the Sunday School join in appreciable numbers."

Throughout the 1950s the Society continued to grow and by 1954 the Society knew they would need to move again. Plans were made to find land in order to build a new meeting house. In 1957 a building fund of $110,000 was pledged and the land was bought in Garden City. The groundbreaking ceremony took place in June, 1958 but it took two more years and plenty of aggravation before the new meeting house was finished. The board of trustees had hoped to be in the building in December of 1958, then in April of 1959. Board of Trustee minutes reflect the myriad problems the Society had with various contractors. But in March of 1960 the Society moved into its new home.

Perhaps the most important events during this decade were related to the Society's commitment to social reform and education. The Public Affairs Committee tackled many important issues, including the issue of racism. The very first issue addressed by the Public Affairs Committee in 1951 dealt with a "Negro" family that had moved to Levittown. Dr. Ackley told the group how the family was being ostracized by white children and their parents and that the black family was very frightened of being harmed. The Public Affairs Committee spearheaded a letter writing campaign to the New York State Housing Committee to End Discrimination in Housing but when their efforts met with little success they began meeting with other local groups. In December 1954 the public affairs committee began meeting with representatives of other local groups to organize an attack upon discrimination in the community.

As a result a program was offered to various groups in Nassau County on the facts about "Housing Segregation on Long Island". The group feels that, of all the forms of discrimination practiced in the county, the most important was that which prevents Negroes from living in many of the communities on the Island,” said a memo made to the Board of Trustees. That same year they had helped to organize the Nassau County Council
on Interracial Affairs and the Society supported the decision by the US Supreme Court to end segregation in public schools.

Civil rights —— the right of individual belief —— was strongly supported by the Society in its earliest years. The Long Island Society strongly supported these beliefs and signed a statement issued by the American Ethical Union Eastern Vice President, Sidney H. Schuer, which said "there is a tendency to regard all people who are not committed to one of the three great religious faiths as being disloyal to American principles and traditions. In many quarters their position is suspect. This new attitude burdens an effective democracy and weakens its foundations. If all our fundamental concepts are to be diverged because of the challenge of Communism, if people are to be driven into conformity because it is less troublesome or safer or pays better or makes things easier we have lost something vital in America."

Dr. Ackley also defended the rights of "communists" to teach in our universities. He also testified on January 29, 1959 before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee as a representative of the American Ethical Union. He said that the AEU Board opposed "the requirement of belief in a Supreme Being as the sole basis for lawful exemption from military service as a conscientious objector."

Members of the Long Island Society contributed money, along with members from other societies to the Washington D.C. Tax case. In this case the United States Court of Appeals unanimously overruled a Washington Tax Court and held that an Ethical Society should be considered as religious for tax purposes.

Toward the end of the decade the society began to conduct discussions on the practice of testing atomic bombs and the public affairs committee assisted the Board of Trustees in preparing a statement protesting the continuation of the tests by the United States government. The committee also took a stand against the inclusion of a question on religion in the upcoming 1960 census and conducted forums on church-state relations.

By the end of the decade many things had changed for the society. It was no longer a fledgling group, but a full member of the American Ethical Union with 458 members. As the decade closed Dr. Sheldon Ackley resigned and Dr. Henry Austin became the society's second leader. The next decade would bring many changes and surprises to both the Long Island society and America.
1960s – Innocence Lost ------- Beginning The Battle

Today, when democracy is more aware how vast is its program of unfinished business, the call to increase the knowledge, the love, the practice of the best human relationships is still, we believe, the call to take part in the sublimest and most needed of [people's] endeavors. Responding to it by lives which add their gift, howsoever small, to the world's treasure of good and lovable living, lives which reanimate in others hope, trust, courage to keep moving ahead, can give people their most rewarding satisfaction and their truest title to the name human. ---Henry Neumann, Leader, Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

The 1960s proved to be tumultuous times for the Society as well as for our country. During this period the Society had three Leaders, Mr. Henry Austin 1959 to 1963, Ross Weston 1964 to 1967 and our present Leader Emeritus Dr. Arthur Dobrin. Each man brought his own sensibilities to the job as leader and thus the society grew in different ways. We can say that in a sense, that during the 1960s, the society had three distinct periods under the leadership of each man. Mr. Henry Austin, described as a "absent minded philosopher" brought the society into a new decade that began as the same sleepy 50s but soon turned raucous.

By 1961 membership jumped to 510 people; the Long Island Society was now the second largest in the nation., with an Eastern branch. People who lived in Suffolk county found it too inconvenient to come to Garden City and met in homes for fellowship. Here in Nassau, the new meeting house was overcrowded. It simply couldn't accommodate all of its members. Mr. Austin told the Board of Trustees that "we are either too small or too large" and the Board agreed. As a temporary measure, the board voted to split the Sunday School (and the Sunday morning platform) into two sessions. They also decided to build an additional 10 classrooms. "We will be able to enroll 400 youngsters," Arnold Sylvester told the Board of Trustees in 1962.

Unfortunately the split sessions caused problems for the society including complaints by speakers that they did not wish to give their lecture twice. Attendance at the Sunday School dropped. Financial problems plagued the Society. After their initial growth, the Society found that they were in need of more money. Problems also existed with regard to mortgage financing and members were not willing to pledge more funds for the addition. In 1964 the plans for the addition were abandoned. However the Society was back on its feet by 1964.
because of strong leadership by the Board of Trustees. Board memos, in particular, mention the contributions made by Joe Weil for his ability, during difficult financial times, to keep the Society up and running. When Mr. Weil tried to resign from the Board in 1962 the Board refused his resignation stating that "his hard work and dedication are much too valuable."

1964 was a good year for the Long Island Society. The Board came up with a solution for their lack of space. The problem was overcome by renting additional classrooms for the nursery-school-aged children. In the Ethical Record for 1964 President Richard Lynn writes, "With one session and the resumption of the coffee hour, we have happier platform speakers, happier teachers, happier parents, and certainly a greater feeling of fellowship and warmth which had been missed." Mr. Lynn also notes that Sunday School enrollment is 317.

Members Monroe and Julia Lerner helped to initiate a nation-wide discussion on School prayer. In 1962 the United States Supreme Court said that prayer in schools violated one of the two parts of the freedom of religion of the First Amendment. The Lerners were one of five couples in New Hyde Park who brought the Herricks School District to court citing a violation of First Amendment rights. Newspaper clippings from the time said that people were furious. The Lerners were bombarded with crank and obscene and threatening phone calls but they stood their ground.

Mr. Austin acted as coordinator of the Mineola Public hearing conducted by Senator George Metcalf and Assemblyman Bertram Baker on extensions of the State’s Anti-Discrimination Law on Housing in 1962. He also gave a series of lectures on Ethics which aired on the radio station WNCN. The Society decided to join The Long Island Council for Integrated Housing, which had been initiated by the public affairs committee back in 1959. The Council coordinated activities for 20 civil rights groups in the Island and Queens. Society members of the council were Helen Ackley, Joel Becker, Ed Biow, Jo Dodson, Mark Dodson, Barbara Elias, Lila Peiton, William Rogers, Manuel Ruiz, Ethel Selden, Larry Smity, Jo Spanier, Bernard Turner and Esther Elkort. Their efforts helped to pass the Metcalf-Baker Law which outlawed the discrimination of 97% of Nassau County housing and 99% in Suffolk County. Operation Booklift, a Society sponsored and administered program that started in 1963, collected used textbooks from local schools to ship to needy school districts in the South and overseas. According to Board minutes,
several thousand books passed through the building during the two years the program was in existence.

The Actor’s Group, an interracial amateur theater group, was founded at the Society sometime between 1961 and 1962. The Society also sponsored a Young Artists Competition series to help talented young musicians. Ross Weston became the third Leader of the Long Island Society in 1965. Shortly after his tenure began, President Richard Lynn told Board members “Ross Weston has been with us just about three months and it’s a bit early to start thanking him. But I think we can all see that after many months of what we might call suspended animation without a professional leader, things are beginning to hum.”

Things certainly did hum for the next several years. The American Ethical Union approved the creation of a commission to give relief and aid to those involved in the Southern Civil Rights struggle and sent Walter Lawton down south. When Mr. Lawton came back North and made a presentation to the Long Island Society, four members of the Long Island Society went to Aberdeen, Mississippi, in the summer of 1965, as part of the Southern Freedom Project.

Ed Biow, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee and a supporter of the Freedom School Program, suggested that the society send supplies to the school. “The thought in my mind then and now, is that if kids can provide the guts and the imagination and the initiative to create a Freedom School Program surely we in the Long Island Ethical Society can provide the tools. Some of us have begun. Aberdeen now has a typewriter and a globe and some clothing and some books. The Society’s Public Affairs Committee would like to see Aberdeen have more. I believe there are many in our membership who would like to do something tangible themselves.”

During this time period, the Public Affairs committee was also very involved in an anti-poverty campaign in Nassau County as well as “The Neighborhood School”, a program which would help to achieve school integration.

The Board of Trustees also reacted strongly to the civil rights struggle. When members heard what happened on the famous march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, The Board of Trustees sent a telegram to President Johnson asking for immediate action. The conflict in Vietnam made
many members activists during this tumultuous time. The American Ethical Union passed two resolutions, one in 1965 and then again in 1966, against American military involvement in Vietnam. They urged their members to "not only take part in demonstrations but to work in related ways to arouse the conscience of the American people on the moral implications of our nation's role in this conflict, which we believe to threaten world peace and to be contrary to the ethical standards and civilized behavior of the democratic traditions of our nation." This statement, issued on November 16, 1965, was signed by a number of Ethical Culture Leaders including Ross Allen Weston.

The Long Island Society passed a resolution for a cease-fire in Vietnam and supported the recognition of non-theistic conscientious objectors. The Society began to offer workshops on peace problems entitled "Non-believers and the draft". By 1968 the Long Island Society was sponsoring and running, under the direction of Barbara Balaban, the Long Island Draft Information and Counseling Center. This was a place where draftees could learn their rights under the law. This became the largest draft off-campus counseling center anywhere in the country, providing information for thousands of young men.

In 1967 the Ethical Culture Society of Long Island created the Center for Ethical Studies, an ethical culture school which not only replaced the Sunday School program but also worked to broaden the horizons of young children through hands-on learning experiences and cultural activities. That year, the Society also lobbied against a New York State Constitutional Amendment that would help to support parochial schools with public funds. The following year the measure was defeated as was the Blaine Amendment. But one of the most important changes that took place in 1967 was that Ethical Culture Society changed its name to the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island. After much debate, the consensus of members agreed that Ethical Culture is a Humanist movement. A young leader-in-training, fresh from the Peace Corps in Kenya, was brought to the Long Island Society in the spring of 1967. A year later Mr. Weston would resign and Arthur Dobrin, at the age of 25, would be the fourth leader of The Long Island Society.

Those last years of the decade were marked by the increase of pressure on Washington to withdraw our troops from Vietnam. The Ethical Culture Society stood firm on its support of conscious objectors, keeping the Long Island Draft and Counseling Center open
seven days a week. In 1969, the Society passed a resolution calling for amnesty for all war resisters.

Under Arthur Dobrin's leadership the Society began to focus on eradicating racism. In 1968 a series of Saturday morning workshops offered at the Union Baptist Church in Hempstead gave black and white students the opportunity to work and play together. Members of the Public Affairs Committee began an ongoing dialogue with members of the Hempstead Economic Opportunity Commission and the Negro Ensemble Theater was invited to take residence at the Society. Under Arthur's tutelage workshops on sensitivity training were offered to members. There they could learn to interact with people of different colors and creeds. Forums on race and student violence were also common during this period.

Civil rights programs continued. In the summer of 1968 the Society sponsored 21 youngster from rural Alabama and Mississippi for a three week camping experience at Camp Madison-Felicia in Putnam Valley. Muriel Neufeld wrote "four of us drove to JFK to greet the children and found the happiest, most well behaved boys and girls, some who had been traveling since 5 am until 2 PM without food."

In 1968 the Society sponsored the Nassau Suffolk Suburban Coalition, which called upon groups to accept the responsibility of providing all citizens with the opportunity to earn an adequate income. Under the leadership of Mort Goldsen the Community Action Committee, worked on a transportation project to help poor black men get to places where there were jobs. The Society was also sponsoring another organization called "The Preschoolers Workshop." This program helped autistic children get a head start in school. By 1969 our assistance helped make it possible to expand their program and offer their services to developmentally challenged three year olds. This school, fully independent and in its own quarters, is now one of the major schools for developmentally challenged children.

In September of 1968 the Community Action Committee, a branch of the Public Affairs Committee, had begun to look at poverty here on Long Island. What they found were slums in Hempstead in an apartment complex called Wilklow apartments. Members Al Wegener and Morton Goldsen began to work on an almost daily basis with the Tenants Union to make repairs and provide decent housing. The Society opened a storefront art gallery in Hempstead to feature local artists. The Society's project led to the Union Baptist Church sponsoring the Wilklow apartments as a co-operative housing.

In the summer of 1969, Arthur Dobrin was chosen to be the Director for the Encampment for Citizenship program in Montana. In subsequent years he led the Encampment in Arizona and worked with it in Colorado.
As the decade closed the society passed a resolution vowing to make the war against hunger their top priority. But like other societies there would be fewer people to fight "the good fight." Newsletters say that enrollment in Sunday School was down to 100 children. Board notes mention that "our membership has fallen and like other societies we are having trouble attracting new members."
1970s – America At The Doorstep Of Self-Destruction

Nature is a source of strength. We know the sunshine and touch the earth. We have ears to listen to the secrets. We need only to learn how.

~ Arthur Dobrin

The spirit of the sixties was at the forefront of the collective consciousness during the early 1970s at the Long Island Society. The Vietnam War raged on. Society members continued to lobby against American policies in Vietnam. In February of 1970 the Long Island Society took part in a Valentine’s Day Vigil in Manhattan. Along with other New York metropolitan societies, members marched up Broadway calling for an end to the war. That year Arthur Dobrin wrote about the My Lai incident asking members "Is there an ethical difference between shooting a mother and baby to death and dropping hundreds of tons of bombs on occupied villages?" Arthur, quoting from Felix Adler, went on to say "Does not moral progress lie in the direction of extending the sense of responsibility so as to cover the indirect taking of life?"

That year the Public Affairs committee sponsored a lecture from Ralph Schoenman and Jeremy Rifkin of the American Foundation for Society Justice and Dr. Howard Levy, formerly of the Green Berets in a public forum to discuss the My Lai massacre. The forum was entitled "The Crisis of Conscience: War Crimes in Vietnam US Policy."

Members continued to volunteer their time at The Long Island Draft Counseling Center. When the war ended in 1974 and military conscription was suspended, Arthur Dobrin wrote in favor of its reinstatement as a means of doing good works in society. "We need a restoration of a sense of larger purpose to a common good. And it is reasonable to say that the government has a right to enforce that in the same way that it has the right to collect taxes for the common good. We need to restore the draft and this time make it a service of men and women in the line of constructive social work. Everyone would serve in some capacity and everyone would be working towards building a better society."
Throughout the 1970s the society kept these conscientious objectors in mind. In 1976 the public affairs committee designated December "Unconditional Amnesty Month" for the 13,000 draft resisters, 30,000 deserters at large, 792,000 veterans with less than honorable discharges and the one million non-registrants and tens of thousands of civil resisters with criminal records.

Nor did the society forget the people who were left homeless by the Vietnam War. In 1974 Friends for Children, a project under the auspices of the Society, sponsored a Vietnamese foster child, an infant girl named Ng Thank Thuy. Unfortunately, the society was

In the 1970s the Women's Liberation movement came to the forefront. NOW's (National Organization of Women) divorce counseling center was housed at the Society in 1974 and in 1978 the Rape Counsel Center (staffed by members of the society) also took up residence at 38 Old Country Road.

The Society worked with the Nassau County Committee for Abortion law repeal and supported the Cook-Leichter Abortion Law. In 1972 Arthur writes that abortion "is an ethical issue. How we decide the question of abortion will rest on how we value life. The courts cannot finally decide such a matter. And would we really want them to?" By 1975 the public affairs committee made the abortion issue a priority and called for the insurance of safe legal abortion as well as voluntary sterilization.

That same year the public affairs committee also endorsed the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Arthur Dobrin wrote in Newsday's Letter to the Editor in 1971 that "the blood of Attica stains us all. We are both the victims and the perpetrators of the crime that forces us to create institutions to insulate us from those people who threaten us because we have not been fair, equitable and decent. It is one thing to accuse others of creating the conditions. It is another for us to do something to change them."
Society members agreed and throughout the 1970s members participated in a number of jail reform programs, including the Friends of the Fortune Society, the Long Island Bail Commission, the Court Advocacy Program and a program to help prevent juvenile delinquency called Walkabout. Friends of the Fortune Society was a prison reform group of ex-cons. During this time period, they used the society's facilities in order to hold their board meetings. With the help of members, an annual Christmas party was given for children of convicts. The society was a co-sponsor of the Long Island Bail Commission in 1973. This advocacy group worked for the release of prisoners. Muriel Neufeld wrote in 1973 that "volunteers are trained in prisoner interviewing, court appearances and to become involved in the day to day working of the office." Also, during this period Arthur Dobrin taught a poetry writing workshop in the Nassau County Jail and published a book to help couples create their own wedding ceremonies, Getting Married the Way You Want.

Member Bea Weiner urges members in the May 1974 newsletter to become more involved in the Walkabout Project. "We have been supporting this program as one of our All Together Now projects. Walkabout is designed for boys 16 - 19 who need temporary living quarters. This is not a program for drug abuse or other problems. Its goals are preventative," writes Mrs. Weiner. Members heard Mrs. Weiner's pleas and through the Halfway House Committee raised $750.

During the 1970s there was a world wide food crisis and members pledged to try and alleviate the problem. In 1974 the Society formed a group known as ASFAM, Americans Against Famine. The group, through a personal pledge, resolved to cut back on meat consumption by at least 10 percent. In a letter to Newsday, Arthur Dobrin writes that "Jean Mayer, Harvard nutritionist, estimates that if Americans ate 10 percent less meat, it would release enough grain to feed an additional 60,000,000 people. There is enough food to feed the world. The problem is that we choose to feed our cattle instead of feeding the grain directly to people." By 1975 the Society formed a food cooperative run by Toby and Al Shatkin. Society members were also key in the founding of Harry Chapin's World Hunger Year. Jerry Barr was its executive director, Lyn Dobrin was its journal editor, Joan Beder was its unpaid staff photographer. WHY'S was first housed at the Society.
Members also formed the Infant Nutrition Committee and helped support the boycott of the Nestle Company. Lyn Dobrin met with the president of the Nestle Corporation in the U.S. to protest the selling of infant formula to children in the Third World.

Members spoke out for human rights throughout the 1970s. In 1976, under the leadership of Arthur and Lyn Dobrin, an Amnesty International group was formed. By 1977 the Society became co-sponsors of the Long Island Chile Project that helped obtain the release of Eduardo Becerra from house arrest and brought he and his family to Long Island. The public affairs committee also helped to support the coffee boycott in 1977. While the coffee companies made millions on rising coffee prices, most of the farmers were living in poverty.

Concern for the environment and the abuses of nuclear energy were also important issues for members. In 1977 the Society supported the African Reforestation Program and member Bob Horn wrote about the controversy over nuclear power and by 1978 the Public Affairs Committee made the dangers and issues of nuclear power a top priority. In 1979 the Public Affairs Committee also endorsed the AEU’s support of the Senate ratification of the SALT II on grounds that it was “a moral imperative.”

Closer to home, the Society opposed the banning of books by the Island Trees School District. The district had removed the books because of alleged obscenities or derogatory presentations of certain minority groups. In 1977 the Society filed an amicus brief in support of a suit brought by the New York Civil Liberties Union and its Nassau County chapter in which it sued the Island Trees Board of Education in the name of four public school students and their parents. Arthur Dobrin wrote in a Newsday Letter to the Editor that “Free speech and liberal education necessitate free access to reading material, even if, and perhaps especially if, it is controversial... Free, open inquiry is the best sort of education. This means that liberals need to be as open to more conservative theory as conservatives need to be to that which is more radical.”

In 1979 the Public Affairs Committee joined a brand new activist group called the Long Island Progressive Coalition, founded by member David Sprintzen. The Society continued its fight to help lower
and middle income people find affordable housing. In the spring of 1976 Lyn and Arthur Dobrin joined the Greater Westbury Community Coalition and participated in a program to uncover racial steering by real estate agents.

Milt Rosenblitt played a key role in the Society during these years, first as chairman of the Public Affairs Committee and as the organizer of International Nights, huge parties opened to the public in which various nationalities were celebrated in food, story, song and dance.

Membership fell in the 1970s. Muriel Davies, who was the Religious Education Director for the AEU in 1975, wrote that "the picture I see everywhere I go is of small groups of dedicated, competent and creative teachers and directors struggling to maintain enthusiasm in the face of shrinking numbers, irregular attendance, often little support and parents." By 1978 Sunday School enrollment was 22 youngsters from age 22 months to 16 years. In 1979 Society President Larry Feldman writes that "less than one percent of our membership is black."

During this decade the Society began its role as the publications arm of the Ethical Movement. It published Lyn Dobrin’s book of daily quotations, Look to This Day and Arthur Dobrin’s history of humanism for Sunday School children, The God Within.

Arthur Dobrin’s words sum up the Ethical movement of the 1970s this way - "Ethical Humanism, far from being the perfect TV religion, remains small because it demands much. We have never shied away from conflict when we felt we were in the right."
1980s – The Rise Of The Right Secular Humanism On The Defense

Humanism asserts the value of reason joined with passion. It places human values squarely at the center of life and judges ethics in human terms. Values worthy of our loyalty must be human values fit to the needs of people and nature... It is together with all people, regardless of theological considerations, who hold such values that the evils of the modern world must be fought. This common ground must transcend narrower concerns.

Arthur Dobrin

In 1981 The National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union signed a statement opposing the extreme right wing religious forces. They believed that such a program "threatens values rooted in our Constitution, which have sustained the open and democratic character of American society...We believe that government should be secular and neutral in accordance with the principle of separation of church and state. We are therefore opposed to all efforts to impose religious doctrine and practice upon American government."

The Long Island Society's Public Affairs Committee supported this view and sponsored a letter writing campaign that year to oppose the 85 constitutional amendments that were proposed including bills to limit jurisdiction of the Federal courts; six bills on school prayers, seven could have stripped the courts of authority over abortion and school busing.

In December of that year the Long Island Society sent out a notice to members calling for a "congress of action coalition, opposed to the evangelical right." Interested members are urged to attend. By the middle of 1982 the Society joins a group of other concerned citizens to form "Moral Democracy". Member Hans Günzenhasuer is picked to represent the Society.

1983 was proclaimed "the Year of the Bible" and Leader Arthur Dobrin writes a Letter to the Editor in Newsday that "Religious freedom meant to them [the founding fathers] that no one should tell them what to believe or how to worship. Those who wrote the constitution came to accept that only by making it illegal for the state to impose religious doctrine upon its citizenry could religion remain free. Religion and government have stood apart for more than 200 years. It is a sensible position that needs protection despite presidential proclamations."
The Society's priorities continued to be in the area of social reform and action. Poverty, homelessness and hunger were some of the concerns members addressed during the 1980s.

The Jones Institute, a home for the destitute and mentally handicapped was closed in 1980 and the land sold. Although trustees promised to relocate the people, advocates found out that no plans had been made to help the residents of the Jones Institute. The only interest was money. Under Arthur Dobrin's and Joan Beder's leadership, the Society, along with other groups, formed a coalition to sue the Trustees of the Institute. A fund was set aside and by February 1983 land was purchased to build another home. In November of 1983, the home opened in Bayville, under a new name. The November newsletter states that "a victory of sorts, since without our several lawsuits to rescind the sale of the original property, in all likelihood there would been facility at all."

The Public Affairs committee also examined the availability of shelters for homeless teenagers, often runaways. In 1986 - 1987 Middle Earth asked members to participate in a new program called "host home." Families volunteered to provide emergency housing to young runaway girls for one night or throughout a weekend.

Throughout the 1980s the Society made donations of money and food to food banks here on Long Island as well as overseas. In 1985 the Society collected several thousand dollars worth of goods and sent it to the World Vision Relief in Ethiopia. Even the children in the Sunday School helped out. They raised $80, during their annual carnival, to help Ethiopians in a development project.

One of the biggest projects for members of the Society during the 1980s was the Center for Social Change. This advocacy group was founded in 1988 and included several projects sponsored by the Long Island Society. Those projects were Friends for the Homeless, The Bereavement Center, Aids Action Network and the Suicide Outreach Project. Each organization was founded to answer a specific need in the community.

In 1985 Friends for the Homeless was founded to help provide clothing and equipment to homeless and needy children. Harry Allen and Emily Lewis were the first coordinators of this project. At the end of the decade, Adelphi University social work intern and later member Letitia Bollon was assigned to work at the Society under the supervision of Arthur Dobrin. She helped organize the Friends for the Homeless started by members Emily Nowinski and Harry Allen. The project is still in existence as Friends for Homeless Children, under Diana Vecchione's leadership. The Women and Aids Project, a support network for caregivers and others working in AIDS prevention and policy. The Bereavement Center offered support groups for those whose had experienced a recent death and the Suicide Outreach Project provided support to family and friends following a suicide.
The 1980s raised issues about the suitability of some people to be parents and asked us to re-examine the nature of family. When adoption agencies refused to place black children with white families the Society formed a committee on transracial adoption. The threat of nuclear destruction hung over our heads throughout the 1980s. In 1981 the society sponsored a community discussion on the arms race and the importance of a nuclear freeze. "We need to comprehend the great loss that death represents," urged Arthur Dobrin. "Without that, we cannot accept life as the great gift we have been given. For if we are indifferent to death, we are also indifferent to life." Arthur Dobrin published a book to help mourners, *Love Is Stronger Than Death*.

The Long Island Society rallied to the cause of nuclear disarmament and in 1982 members marched to the United Nations in protest to nuclear arms. In 1983 the Public Affairs Committee renewed its effort for support of a bilateral freeze of nuclear arms with a letter writing campaign and in 1984 declared December "Peace Month." In 1985 members attended a peace ribbon ceremony at the Pentagon. The ribbon sewn by Lyn Dobrin was included in a book commemorating the event. The building at 38 Old Country Road was dedicated as a "peace site location" and a Peace Site Committee was formed. The committee focused on the private and public meaning of peace through current events as well as from a historical perspective. In 1986 the Public Affairs Committee called for a cut back on military spending, initiating a letter writing campaign. The Society also participated with other peace advocates in the Long Island Alliance to Prevent Nuclear War, an organization headquartered in the Society's building.


Two Society members, Barbara Balaban and Lyn Dobrin, are founding members of 1-in-9, the organization that brought the issue of breast cancer to the forefront of the state and national political agendas.

In 1983 The Long Island Society supported the AEU’s resolution to end all military aid and intervention in Central America with a letter writing campaign. In 1986 a committee was
formed to help involuntary exiles and met with an exiled Soviet Union general living in
Queens and by 1987 members sent food to help those in Nicaragua. The Public Affairs
Committee also sponsored a series of workshops on "Shadow Government* and "Cocaine
and the Contras". The Contragate Project, (part of LIPC) also made arrangements with the
Society to hold meetings, show films and sponsor speakers about the Iran Contra scandal.

The Society also lost a few members. There was the untimely death of Hans Gunzenhauser
as well Stanely Neufeld and Saul Shaffer. Long time members Gloria and Ed Biow moved to
Oregon.

1990s – A Brave New World ——— One Foot In The Past, the Other in the Future

_The Ethical Movement stands in the tradition of the prophetic, never shying away
from contemporary problems or rushing to be involved with current affairs. Prophetic
religions, however, must contend with the application of ethics in the broader world,
the world of competing claims, contrasting interests and the necessary compromises...
sometimes there is a heavy price to pay for this worldly involvement._

——— Arthur Dobrin

The Long Island Society, now forty years old, was about to have a mid-life crisis. The
Society found it was in need of money - to pay its staff, run its programs and to care for its
home. In early 1994, the Board of Trustees voted to increase membership dues, hoping that
would solve the problem, but by October of 1995 the financial situation had not improved.
The board reduced personnel and formed a committee to investigate the possibility of
selling a parcel of land, west of the building, which was owned by the Society. Under the
leadership of the Board of Trustees, a series of fund-raising projects, a charitable bequest
program and vigorous pledge campaigns helped to pull the Society out of its financial
quagmire. By January of 1996 the land was sold and the proceeds were used to make
repairs on the Society's home.

Despite financial setbacks, society members pressed on, staying
involved in many social, political and cultural groups. Both Arthur (1990) and Lyn Dobrin
(1994) win the Linda Nadle Award for community activism. Friends of the Homeless
became Friends for Homeless Children continued to collect children’s clothing and infant
furniture. They distributed these items through requests made from over 40 social service
agencies - County, Town or community based - as well as through churches and temples. In
1990 Robert Sherman of the Nassau County Department of Social Services wrote and
praised the efforts of this group. "It is heartwarming to know we can call on such dedicated
members and receive such a generous response. Thank you. " More than 1,000 children in need are served each year.

Health care remained an important issue for members. Throughout the 1990s the society sponsored two projects directly related to AIDS - Women and AIDS, a project begun in the late 1980s as well as AIDS Family Support Group begun in October of 1994. The Bereavement Center continued as the Bereavement Group.

The Public Affairs Committee was also concerned about health care and in November 1993 Anne Sheraga asks members to support HR bill 1709 and S784 which will protect health food consumers and prevent the pharmaceutical industry lobbyists from gaining control of the health food industry. Several new social projects were initiated. In September of 1990 the Society sponsored the Nassau Support Advocacy Center, later to be known as the Off Center. This project, founded by members Grace Ann Inyard, Scott Allison and David Westerman, assisted people who had experienced prejudices due to mental health illnesses. The aim of the project was to help these individuals regain their status in society.

Prejudices come in all forms and color. In 1991 the Long Island Inter-racial Alliance for a Common Future was formed by members who had attended a series of workshops in which their attitudes about racism was explored. The concerns of this venture were equality, justice, particularly in the areas of education, the media and law enforcement practices. Their first decision as a new group is to support the new Civil Rights Legislation, a bill vetoed by President Bush. The new bill, also supported by the Society’s Public Affairs Committee, placed the burden of proof onto the employer who must show the need for a particular employment practice after an employee had demonstrated in court that discrimination exists. The Inter-racial Alliance then held a fund-raiser in support of Janet Morgan, a Malverne teacher who had lost her teaching position and held a community forum on affirmative action. Joe Weil and Arthur Dobrin met regularly with the Nassau County Police Department to discuss police abuse.

Arthur Dobrin initiated the colloquy as part of the Sunday mornings meetings. This program is adopted by many other Ethical Societies. His book, *Spelling God With Two O’s*, based on the program, is published.

In 1991 the American Ethical Union initiates an outreach effort to the lesbian and gay community and creates the Office of Lesbian and Gay concerns which is housed at the Philadelphia Society. That same year, P-FLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, under the direction of member Tony Pumo, began to meet at the Long Island Society. By 1992 the Society forms its own Gay and Lesbian Committee and in 1993 the committee begins to give platform addresses on concerns and rights of homosexuals. That same year a march on Washington is planned to address gay rights. Society members are invited to march with them.
The recession hit Long Islanders hard in the early 1990s. Many were unemployed. The Society tried to help its neighbors by forming a new group called Job Talk. Under the leadership of Lynn Romero the group met once a month to discuss employment issues from writing a resume to job training. Society members strongly opposed United States military intervention during Desert Storm and the Gulf war. On February 24, 1991 the Public Affairs Committee went on record with the following statement "We declare our opposition to the hurried rejection, on the part of the United States administration, of the Soviet initiative toward a possible peaceful settlement of the Persian Gulf War. We believe the UN should re-establish jurisdiction over what is considered an acceptable response to their resolutions, and there should be an immediate halt in the fighting. As a Committee, we are committed to a policy of peace."

By 1993 the Long Island Student Coalition for Peace and Justice are housed in the Society building. In 1997 The Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives, of which the EHA is a member organization, is also housed at the Society. Washington politics were of utmost concern to members and in 1993, the Public Affairs Committee had a long list of programs that needed immediate attention from the new President, William Clinton. Some of those concerns dealt with abortion, immigration and naturalization policies, AIDS, the environment, NAFTA and GATT.

Human rights issues remained at the forefront of concerns for the Society members. Amnesty International Group 74 continued to adopt political prisoners. They also became involved in having members of the Society send greeting cards during the holidays to Prisoners of Conscience around the world. In November of 1995 the group sponsored the fifth Annual Human Rights Campus Conference at the Society. A series of workshops and addresses were presented to high school and college students. Lyn Dobrin was successful in having Amnesty International USA adopt a nation-wide greeting card campaign on the behalf of prisoners of conscience to be used in Passover services.

Janet Rudolph in October of 1998 urges members to write or call their representative to pass HR 3553 which gives Haitian, Salvodorans, Guatemalans and Hondurans the same rights as political refugees of Cuba and Nicaragua. The infamous School of the Americas is another cause to which members rally. Public Affairs Committee Co-chairperson Janet Rudolph urges members to write or call representatives in support of two bills to close down the School of the Americas. Peggy Jacobs, the Society's representative to the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives, joins the protests in Georgia to close the school.

Here at home, members were involved in the Coalition for a Representative Nassau County. In 1994 and 1995 this grassroots organization monitored the work of the Commission on Government Revision, a group that was ordered by the courts to replace the County Board of Supervisors with a County Legislature.
In 1996 and 1997, the Republican sponsored Contract with America had members protesting the government’s replacement of federal food programs with a block grant to states. Members responded by sending empty paper plates with a message written on it to their representatives.

Members rallied to protect women’s rights. In addition to the Women and AIDS Project, the Society sponsored an abortion forum in 1993 called "Politics of God, Government and Sex" with Bill Baird and in 1995 the YES group (Youth of Ethical Society) marched in Washington for the "March for Women’s Lives" sponsored by NOW to stop violence against women and to defeat the Contract with America.

A women’s group, under the guidance of Amy Antoniazzi, is also started in 1996. This group of more than twenty women meets regularly throughout the year and organizes an annual week-end retreat.

Throughout this decade members had the opportunity to participate in educational and cultural activities. Adult education classes were available as was a film discussion group, a book discussion group, an acting workshop and Our Times Coffeehouse, founded in 1989, which offered folk music for the soul. The coffee house, under the guidance of David Fersh and Barbara Gray, group some of America’s leading folk singers to the Society. And under Ken Schwartman’s direction, the Society produced more than 10 plays and staged readings, from Inherit the Wind and The Zoo Story and to two plays by Arthur Dobrin, In addition to platforms, each Sunday morning members could attend a colloquy to ponder questions of the heart or "Ethical Issues in the News," which pondered current events.

The 1990s brought many new members to the society but the society lost some, too. Eleanor Blau, Frances and Jack Greenbaum, Jack Nessin, Beatrice Weiner, Lynn Shapiro, Will Baum, Lottie Schuchman, Margaret Borsdorf, Morris Oslyn and Joe Kaufman are a few of the members that died.

The Long Island Society was also the host for the 1991 America Ethical Union National Assembly held at C.W. Post College. Arthur Dobrin publishes a book on the psychology of morality, Ethical People and How They Get to be That Way, and a collection of stories for children, Love Your Neighbor: Stories of Values and Virtues. The latter book is used in schools throughout the country.

In closing, the words of the past President of the Long Island Society come to mind. Richard Rapp in the December 1999 newsletter told members that "it seems to me, as the current custodian of the presidency of the Board of Trustees of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island, that the new century must be one where dreams are dreamed and dreams are
fulfilled; where goals are set and goals are met; where the community of shared beliefs and ideas remains the cement that holds us together and the bonds of our humanity are the true strength of who and what we are. Together, as one society with many voices, we can make the 21st century one which ... will contain a list of accomplishment that runs all the way into the 22nd century and beyond.”
History of The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island—2000-2010

Early in the decade, our longtime leader, Arthur Dobrin, resigned. He had served as leader from 1967 to 2001, almost 35 years. He and his wife Lyn remained members of the Society, with Arthur accepting the title "Leader Emeritus."

Though he was sorely missed, our members worked together to find a new Leader. Unable to find a permanent one, we chose to have Richard Kiniry, the Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, serve as an interim Leader. He was extremely helpful in providing a transition until we found a new, permanent Leader, Anne Klaeysen, a year later. She served us well from 2002-2008. Members found her talks to be inspiring and informative. Anne also led various discussion groups and workshops that were well received, such as one on nonviolent communication. In addition, she represented us well in the community, serving as the Humanist Chaplain of Adelphi University, which is also located in Garden City, and being an active member of the interfaith Garden City Clergy Fellowship.

Then, in 2008, Anne resigned to seek other opportunities within the Ethical Culture movement. The Society was once again without a Leader. For two years, our Society relied on the services of Arthur Dobrin and David Harmon who shared the position of interim Leader while we reexamined our direction and discussed what we wanted for our future as a Society. Could we be a "leaderless" group like some other Societies? Could we use the funds in other productive ways? What does a leader bring to the group as opposed to functioning without one? Ultimately, it was decided that most of the membership wanted the cohesiveness that a leader provides, and the search was on.

Meanwhile, the years 2007-2008 saw major efforts to bring financial and management aspects of the Society into more effective and productive practices. This included many initiatives such as combining multiple bank accounts into a
single bank, cleaning up the accounting records, bringing the entire building into compliance with building codes, fixing heating and cooling equipment, and replacing rugs and lighting. To increase public visibility, advertising was increased, internet media such as meetup.com and a Facebook page were started, and external signs in the front windows were put up with our telephone number and Web site. We wrote new promotional materials to get the word out about EHSLI and our programs. Our website, which had been pioneered, designed and tended to by Ivo Antoniazzi for many years, got a new look in keeping with the visual emphasis of modern marketing materials. Liz Seegert, a recent member, headed this committee and the website redesign was launched in early 2011.

In 2010, thanks to efforts of our Board of Directors and Search Committee members, we were able to find a new part-time Humanist Religion Director, Calvin Dame, a former Unitarian minister. Calvin and the Society spent three months getting acquainted to be sure that we had a good match. Ultimately, the Board unanimously voted to recommend him to the membership, and the membership unanimously agreed to hire him. It is fitting that at the beginning of our sixth decade (2010 being our 60th anniversary), we have a new Humanist Religion Director with a fresh perspective. We have entered into a new phase of renewal as we move forward with our commitment to creating a more just and ethical world.

Social Action
During the 2000 to 2010 decade, many of our committees continued their worthwhile activities, including The Ethical Action Committee. Janet Rudolph, a co-leader of that committee, did much work to save the environment and, in particular, the oceans. Amy Antoniazzi, who led the Committee for most of the decade, continued the draft resistance work (mandatory draft registration for 18 year-old males) that our Society has done in the past. She organized members’ participation in marches in the city and in the Jones Beach march against militarism on one
particular Memorial Day. She organized "Ribbons for Peace" to remember those killed in combat. She promoted our Society by forming coalitions with several anti-war organizations. In addition, she collaborated with Deborah Strube to have Movies of Conscience one Friday per month. Amy has also worked on environmental issues, bringing an issue per week that related to the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*; for example, selling energy-efficient light bulbs. Other activities the Committee promoted were actions in support of Darfur, as well as rallies and marches against war.

Ethical Friends of Children celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2010. EFC continued its very necessary work of providing clothing and cribs for people in need. Ethical Friends of Children serves approximately 2500 families per year, all at no cost to them. Its work became even more necessary late in the decade because of the weak economy. The leadership of this committee shifted smoothly from Diana Vecchione, who stepped down due to illness, to Jim LoPresti, a dedicated member who also runs our bereavement group along with member Dorothea Hays.

Thanks to Alison Pratt, we started the Weill Student Social Action Grant in the spring of 2010 to encourage Long Island middle and high school students to conduct social action projects on topics they care about. The grant was named for Joe Weill, who was so active in our Society in earlier years, and who left us a bequest to be used for social action. One requirement is that winners of the grant cannot be members of the Society. The goal is to spread our philosophy, Deed before Creed, beyond our own members and into the community at large by helping young people get their own projects off the ground.

**Youth Education**

The Children’s Ethics Program had several paid and volunteer instructors lead the program during the decade. It was a challenge to find a teacher outside of our Society who understood the philosophy of a "religion without a deity." Many of our
member parents, including Sharon Stanley, Joan Petersen, and Kori Schroeder, stepped up to teach the children until an appropriate applicant could be hired. Finally, in 2010, we found our Director of Religious Education, Ellen Braunstein, who is doing wonderful work in teaching ethics to the children of seven families. Ellen's career background as a teacher at the Midtown Ethical Cultural School makes her an excellent addition to our Ethical Society family.

Our children were involved in many activities including a voter registration drive in 2008. They recycled cans and bottles, raised funds for breast cancer research, made science projects for Darwin Day, and participated in a beach clean-up, as well as getting together for fun. Our small group formed bonds of friendship that will last for years as they move into the YES group and beyond.

Eric Alexander had led our YES group (Youth of Ethical Societies, for teens) for several years but stepped down in 2010 after becoming a father himself. Tara Klein, a graduate of this program, became its new leader. The group is functioning well, with a good handful of active members. The YES teens give a platform annually on an ethical topic of their choice, such as gay rights or hunger. They have travelled to Washington, D. C. to attend an anti-war rally and have been to Chicago for the national YES conference. They also plan an annual pasta dinner in which an invited guest talks about a current-events issue of concern, followed by a musical jam session that goes late into the evening.

Events
There have been many cultural and educational events during the past ten years. In 2008, we started the Teen Art, Music, and Poetry Festival to have a day of the arts for middle and high school students that is not a contest, but a chance for teens to share in the arts without the pressure of competition. The event is also a fundraiser for our EHS LI projects, and an opportunity to showcase the social actions of our youth.
In 2009, Sharon Stanley, our Children’s Ethics Program instructor, started a new annual event called Darwin Day, which coincided with Charles Darwin’s 200th birthday. This intergenerational event allows the Society to "stand up for science" with a science-themed platform and activities for both adults and children. Why does an Ethical Society need to stand up for science? We do so as a reflection in our belief in scientific explanations of the natural world, as opposed to supernatural ones, and to reinforce the idea that we have an ethical responsibility to care for our planet for future generations.

Because Ethical Humanists are so few in number in comparison to people of other faiths, it is good for our children and teens to see that there are others who share our values. In 2009 we began another new annual event: Ethical Identity Day. On this day we invite the children and teens from our neighboring Societies to join us for a day that helps members of all ages explore what it means to be an Ethical Humanist. We have special discussion groups for each age group, and then have a fun activity for kids to get to know their "Ethical" neighbors.

SPICE events— an acronym for SPlendid Events In Congenial Environments— are members-only functions that allow members to get to know one another by enjoying fun cultural events. Thanks to the efforts of Lorraine Abrams, the SPICE committee has been successful in getting volunteers to offer events that many of our members have attended and enjoyed. SPICE events also function as fundraisers as members pay a ticket price that covers the event as well as a donation to the Society.

**Member Contributions**

So many of our members made contributions to the health, functioning, and growth of the Society that it is worth noting. Without our member involvement, we could not exist. The list below will not be exhaustive as so many people worked quietly behind the scenes without fanfare, with the only goal being to serve.
Ken Schwartzman has been head of several of our Ethical Society groups. He is head of the Colloquy, a meditation and discussion group that meets on Sunday mornings before the platform. In addition, he presides over the Movie Discussion Group, as well as directing and acting in plays at our Society. During the decade, members have been treated to performances of *Copenhagen*, *The Retreat from Moscow*, *The Boor*, and *The Marriage Proposal*. In addition, he has offered acting workshops to our members. Lorraine Agostino and Judy Rosemarin often acted in those performances.

Amy Antoniazzi is also the organizer of the Women’s Group, which meets several times a year. One of its meetings is a yearly weekend retreat at St. Josaphat’s Retreat House in Glen Cove, N. Y.

Various members, including Carol Smith Pincas, headed our Wednesday brown bag lunch discussion when we were without a leader. Calvin Dame became the discussion leader when he came on board. Calvin also began the Ethics Café for evening discussion.

David and Alice Sprintzen are the current leaders of the Our Times Coffeehouse bringing folk music to our Society and community. Mel Haber continues to lead the Opera Group, which began in 1999 and has since provided members and their friends with a place to listen to and enjoy opera.

Richard Rapp, Lee Smalley, Richard Rapp (again), David Alexander, and Don Morgenstern served as Board Presidents throughout the decade. Sue Feifer organized and produced the monthly newsletter with articles from the Board president and others about our Society. Ivo Antoniazzi maintained the website, and Liz Seegert worked on its redesign starting in 2010. Linda Napoli selected our weekly platform poems, while Jerry Abrams selected the platform music.
Many members gave platforms or participated in them and served on our Board of Directors. Muriel Neufeld scheduled our guest platform speakers, who were an amazing array of people dedicated to social service, politics, law, or education. Judy Rosemarin, Pat Spencer, Arthur Dobrin, Joan Beder, Don Morgenstern, David Alexander, Lyn Dobrin, David Harmon and others served as platform presiders. Eric Alexander, Tara Klein, Sharon Stanley, Joan Petersen, Kori Schroeder, and Amanda Leibenhaut taught in our educational programs. Vinnie Drzewucki ran a men’s group. Alan Cohen headed the Founder’s Day dinner committee. Joan Beder, Arthur Dobrin, and David Harmon were available to conduct weddings and memorial services. Lyn Dobrin handled press releases and headed committees. Ken Feifer assisted with financial reports. Wayne Outten provided legal advice. Pat Spencer recorded platforms for the website. Pat Spencer and Deborah Strube organized the "food" part of our fundraisers. Eric Alexander, Tara Klein and others coordinated the YES Pasta Dinner. Felicia Majedi delivered our food drive collections each week to the Interfaith Nutrition Network in Hempstead. Alice Sprintzen, Lyn Dobrin and others worked on our platform festivals. Carol Smith Pincas headed the Caring Committee.

Arthur and Lyn Dobrin continued to lead Group 74 of Amnesty International, while their son Eric and his wife Maria were the Long Island administrators of fundraising for Sema Academy in Kenya. Diana Vecchione and Jim LoPresti directed Ethical Friends of Children and coordinated the volunteers. Linda Joe provided beautiful photography of our events and started an online "photo album" to share them, as well as starting and maintaining our Facebook page. Don Morgenstern got us on meet-up.com and maintained that link. Liz Seegert got us on Twitter and sends the "tweets." Alison Pratt wrote press releases, designed advertising, began the Teen Art, Music, and Poetry Festival, and devised the Weill Student Social Action Grant. Jeanne and Andrew Brunson, Keith Foley, Sharon Stanley, Steve Hetzel, Calvin Dame, Richard Rapp, Jerry Abrams and others provided live musical performances during our platforms. Alison Pratt wrote and designed the printed brochures. Sharon Stanley started Darwin Day. Chris Stanley was always available to help us with
"technical difficulties" in electronics or structural difficulties. Various members hosted SPICE events. George Roemer, Dorothea Hays, Felecia Majedi, Amalia Aviles and Jorge Meza all set up the coffee hour after each platform. Our office manager, Phyllis Herschlag, though not technically a member, is a beloved part of our group and keeps us organized. As we look forward to our seventh decade, we are grateful for our bonds with each other and optimistic about continuing to demonstrate our love of ethics and hope for a world of peace, justice, and love.