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HAVE YOU MAILED IN YOUR 2011 PLEDGE TO EHSLI? OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON YOU!

From Our Religious Director

Muriel Neufeld shared with me this email that she recently sent to her family, and I want to share it with you:

"In the past I have asked you to select a gift for yourself from a catalog. This year with so many charities hard pressed for money, I am asking each of you to give me the name of one that you would like me to send a contribution to in your honor. If you have no choice trust me to make one for you. I don't think you will miss a new shirt. I love you all and will still give you some token that I think you will enjoy!"

So far, she tells me, it is all thumbs up, with two naming charities and two willing to let her choose.

I think this is a great idea, a reminder that an ethical life is a life grounded in generosity, and that all around us there are those dedicated to good work. Our contributions, in whatever measure, can both support the work and encourage the workers.

Not all of us have given enough shirts yet, of course, and our gifts to those we love is also a practice of generosity. But I am going to rethink my seasonal giving and consider, again, what generosity can mean. Thank you, Muriel, for this nudge.

Darwin Day

It's time to start planning for our annual "Darwin Day/Stand Up For Science" event, sponsored by the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island. This year, our 4th annual "Darwin Day" will be celebrated on Sunday, February 12, 2012, the actual date of Darwin’s birthday. This event is intergenerational and guaranteed fun for all ages! Beginning at 11:00 AM, our guest speaker will be Dr. Victor Schuster, who will speak on the topic of "How Science Works." Afterwards lunch, beverages and snacks will be available for purchase. After lunch, we will be mesmerized by Linda Prince, from the Amateur Observer’s Society www.aosny.org, who will present two programs:

- "Astronomy and the Night Sky"
- "Meteorite / Meteor Wrong - How Do You Know that a Rock is a Meteorite?"

There will be a wonderful display of science related activities provided by our “Kids In Deed” Sunday children’s program. Other activities will include a graffiti wall, face painting courtesy of Agostino Arts and the ever popular "Survival of the Fittest" game.

Volunteers are needed to help out, run events, oversee the Welcome table and participants of all ages are encouraged to come out and enjoy this great day. "Darwin Day" is one of only two events where the Ethical Humanist Society does outreach to the general public in order to raise awareness of our organization and attract new members. It is very important that the congregation come out and support this event. To find out how you can help out and for further information, please speak to Sharon Stanley at 516-333-1968 or lhumanist@hotmail.com.

— Sharon Stanley
Sharon Stanley’s Blog

Member Sharon Stanley recently began blogging for the Foundation Beyond Belief website.

Handling Discussions

A teacher and parent describes how she handles some difficult questions.

Being an early childhood public school teacher, I am required to follow state standards and guidelines. I am not required to teach subjects relating to sex and religion. That does not mean the children do not ask me questions on these subjects. These questions present a challenge; rather than brush off these questions, I like to address them gently. If adults refuse to answer questions that children ask, or tell them they are too young to ask these questions, it will only increase their curiosity, and the children might perceive these as “taboo” subjects. I try to find a way to answer their questions without seeming uncomfortable. It’s so important for children to feel encouraged or brave enough to ask questions of trusted adults.

It’s a relief that I don’t have to be responsible for sex education. For my first, second and third graders, that includes teaching them about good hygiene and cleanliness habits. If they want to know more, I tell them that this is not a discussion for school; this is discussion for you to have with your parents. Of course, if a child appears to be very knowledgeable about sex in ways that are not within the usual elementary child’s experience, that is a red light to teachers that either there may be sexual abuse or too much sexual activity being shown or modeled to my young ones. It becomes necessary to schedule a conference and find out what is going on at home. Many adults are unaware that the movies or television shows they watch at home are inappropriate for their young children. At times I find myself in the position of reminding my student’s parents that “PG 13” means the child should only watch this movie or show in the company of their parent and at an age of 13 or above. From time to time, I have to engage in more uncomfortable conversations like reminding the parents of my students that bringing their dates home for the night is not a great idea when children are 6, 7, 8 and 9. It is difficult to gauge when this kind of relationship is good thing to expose young children too. Many situations are highly dependent on the degree to which the adults are engaging in sexual relationships when the children are home or able to accidentally interrupt or listen to. As an advocate for my students, their emotional and physical safety is my first concern.

I embrace the opportunity to discuss religious and cultural differences.

In the education field, we call this a “teachable moment.” Since New York City remains a melting pot of cultures and traditions, the subject of religion comes up, particularly during the winter holiday season. My Christian students are surprised to learn that everyone does not believe in Jesus as the Savior, and not all religions refer to their supreme being as “God.” My Muslim students insist that “Allah” is the way to go. Many are shocked to learn that some people do not believe in God at all. Whenever someone becomes adamant about their religious beliefs, I gently remind the children that everyone believes in different things and you should believe in the religion you were raised. (I say this because these children are all under the age of 12.)

People from all faiths, whether they believe in God or not, want the same things in life. Everyone wants a happy home with food on the table. Everyone wants their children to be safe and educated. Most importantly everyone wants to help make the world a better place. No one’s belief is more truthful than another. These discussions help me stress the importance of embracing differences and learning about other cultures. I enjoy the chance to emphasize ideas that will encourage my students to broaden their critical thinking ability and their views of the world.

Best wishes to all for a happy holiday season!

Meet EHSLI Online!

EHSLI Website: http://www.ehsli.org

EHSLI on Twitter — follow us at www.twitter.com/ehsli

EHSLI on Meet-up: Don Morgenstern has set up EHSLI on Meet Up, a great networking website. Follow the link to http://www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanist-Society-of-Long-Island. This site lists a full schedule of our events. Visit the site and support us by becoming an EHSLI meetup member.

Leader emeritus Arthur Dobrin is blogging weekdays. You can read his blog at arthurdobrin.wordpress.com
Goings on at EHSLI

Exercise Classes for Seniors: Classes for seniors are led by instructor, Sue Salko. Classes meet 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Classes are geared to the needs of participants while addressing flexibility, balance, strength and endurance. All are welcome!! Bring light weights, stretch bands (are available from instructor), wear comfortable clothing and sneakers. Suggested contribution: $5 per class.

Annual Food Drive: Members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island are collecting food items for INN (Interfaith Nutrition Network). Please bring in non-perishable food items to the basket in the lobby.

Winter Festival: The EHSLI Winter Festival will be on December 18th. Members are encouraged to bring new unwrapped toys and holiday necessities to the festival for the Ethical Friends of Children to donate to needy children and their families for the holidays. Please try to get all contributions to us before December 21, 2011.

YES Pasta Dinner: Saturday, December 10th from 6-10 PM — at the South Pole! The auditorium will be transformed into a penguin paradise as the teen group presents their annual dinner. Our featured speaker is Roy Klein of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) Nassau Chapter, who will present "Think Globally but Act Locally: How Your Grassroots Activism Can Change America." Roy has worked for over a decade as a cooperating attorney for the Nassau Chapter of the NYCLU, where he now serves as its President. Roy will cover human rights issues in Long Island schools and beyond, including free speech, prayer in schools and book banning. Also, the YES group will tell you about their recent National YES Conference in Frost Valley! Plus enjoy a delicious pasta meal and great entertainment by the teens and their friends. The cost is $8 students/$12 adults. Proceeds will be split between YES and the NYCLU. For questions email Tara at YES@ehsli.org.

Piano Fundraiser Off to a Great Start! Last month we launched a fundraiser for our beautiful 1916 Steinway piano, which is in need of expensive repairs: we are told it will run between $15,000 and $20,000 to bring it back to the proper concert condition. Help save our nearly 100-year old "lady" of the Ethical Humanist Society. Please buy a note to help her. Each notes is $100 and can be purchased with a check to EHSLI, earmarked "piano fund."

Sunday Meetings

December 4: Calvin Dame
"What To Do With A Billion Dollars" Andrew Carnegie said, "The man who dies, rich dies disgraced."

December 11: Amnesty International

December 18: Winter Festival
Please bring new, unwrapped toys for Ethical Friends of Children to distribute to needy kids.

December 25: Holiday Reception
with eggnog, cookies and cheer!

January 1: Open House

January 8: Remembrance Sunday

January 15: Calvin Dame

January 22: Mike Lyndon
From Street Plans Collaborative

January 29: Greg Bush
Prof. of Economics from SUNY Suffolk

Sunday Meetings begin at 11:00 AM
Sunday Colloquies begin at 9:30 AM

Events with Calvin

Wednesday Lunch Discussion Group
December 14: What makes a good life?
Lunch discussion groups begin at noon.

Ethics Café
December 14: How Wall Street Occupied America by Bill Moyers (copies available in EHSLI Office)
Ethics Café discussions begin at 6:30 PM

Movie Group: next meets on Saturday, Jan. 7th at 2:30 PM. The two movies that will be discussed are Descendants and A Dangerous Method. Led by Al Zeiger, filling in for Ken Schwartzman.

Free Yoga Classes: led by Sylvia Silberger on Tuesdays: Gentle and Restorative 6:45–7:45 PM and a Vinyasa-style yoga 8–9 PM. Email Sylvia at matsbs@yahoo.com if you are interested in attending so that she can inform you of changes and cancelations.

The Caring Connection: is a new approach to our dedication to taking care of those of us who are sick or in need. We encourage involvement from all, as this is core to who we are as Ethical Humanists.
Kids In Deed!

It's been a busy fall as our children are winding down their fall sports and moving toward the holiday season. We were so fortunate to have ASL teacher Barbara Woo and her daughter Kylie join our class on October 31. Barbara made us more aware of what it's like to adapt to a hearing world if you are deaf. Lights and vibrating pillows substitute for doorbells, fire alarms, and alarm clocks. In some ways, though, deaf and hearing people have no distance between them. When it comes to computers and technology, people who are deaf can learn, work, and communicate in the same way as hearing people. I learned, too, that people's names are not typically spelled out after the first time you meet them, but that a person's name is transformed into their own personal sign. To do this, you take the first letter of their name and combine it with some trait that they possess. Doesn't this sound like the following people? Gabe = G + the sign for happy; Eric = E + the sign for foo-ball, Reid = R + the sign for creativity, and Jordan = J + the sign for technology.

We incorporated what we learned from Barbara into a presentation for the Thanksgiving Festival, learning two phrases in ASL. The first phrase was "I'm grateful to people who taught me strength, wisdom, and kindness." Then the Kristen Morgenstern, Kira O'Boyle, and Ian O'Boyle read statements they had prepared describing people they are grateful to. Moms, Dads, and brothers topped the list—followed by Steve Jobs and the inventor of Xbox! If I were honest, I'd admit that I'm grateful to Philo T. Farnsworth—thef inventor of television! We are truly a blessed nation.

The children ended their presentation by signing another phrase, "create a caring world." I always hear from the adults how special it is to see the children participate on Sundays. We never forget that they are our best hope for the future.

Finally... November is not too early to start preparing for Darwin Day! Jordan Schroeder, Gabe Stanley, Kristen Morgenstern and I had a great time burying garbage in a bin, covering it with a screen and bricks, and leaving it out back. We'll dig up our "treasure" on Darwin Day. What was buried? Some bread, an apple, a banana, a tea bag, a Styrofoam plate, a baggie, a grocery bag, a crayon, a pencil, a chicken bone. What shape will it all be in in 3 months' time? We'll find out on Feb. 12!

We continue to look forward to more days of service to others. In the coming months we will be learning more about Felix Adler and other religions, helping needy children at holiday time, writing holiday cards for Amnesty International, and learning more about Sema Academy in Kenya.

Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!
2011 YES Conference

The Long Island Youth of Ethical Societies group had an incredible weekend at the National YES Conference, which took place November 10-13 in New York City and Frost Valley in the Catskills. Nearly 50 teens and 10 advisors participated, representing St. Louis, Washington DC, Bergen, Brooklyn, Westchester, Northern Westchester and Long Island. Our participants included Dan, MacKenzie, Maggie, Priya, Reid, Ryan, Sebastian, Tina, and advisor Tara.

As one of this year’s host Societies, LI helped the out-of-towners feel welcome and comfortable in our city. Brooklyn Ethical member Otis Cotton made a special appearance to musically perform the language from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which helped kick off our weekend’s theme of “Instinctive Human Rights: What are we entitled to?” We survived sleeping on the New York Society’s floor the first night, and Friday took off for a day of sightseeing. We walked through Central Park on a beautiful autumn day, then headed downtown to check out Occupy Wall Street, just 3 days before the park was shut down by the city. The teens enjoyed walking through the park and feeling part of such an important social movement!

Friday afternoon we jumped in the bus to Frost Valley. The weekend was a nice combination of games, get-to-know-you activities, discussions, organized activities and unorganized fun. Many YES members were highlighted in a community service recognition session, where teens shared some of the great work they are doing in their lives. Small group discussions on human rights issues included topics ranging from abortion to the death penalty to banning student-teacher relationships on Facebook and much more. There were human rights-themed skits, and a contest to design next year’s t-shirt won by our own Tina! Seniors gathered to hear about life after YES, known as the FES (Future of Ethical Societies) group. The teens were able to enjoy Frost Valley’s beautiful grounds: many took hikes while some ventured to the rock wall and the low ropes course.

After doing a tremendous job planning and leading this year’s conference, Dan passed the baton to our own MacKenzie, who was elected National YES President! Congrats to MacKenzie! Ryan will serve as our Long Island representative next year. We enjoyed the traditional warm fuzzy activity, plus an outdoor campfire with s’mores. Sunday’s closing ceremonies included a special recognition for all of the graduating seniors. LI’s senior Dan will be deeply missed next year!

The YES conference provides a safe space where teens can open up about personal issues, find common ground with other Ethical Humanists, and think about important societal issues. The great thing about the YES Conference is that it is planned and run by the teens, while the advisors take a step back. The result is a life-changing experience that the teens will never forget. They have all made close new friendships, and are already planning trips to visit friends in other cities. Next year’s conference will take place in St. Louis. We can’t wait!

Tara Klein,
YES Advisor
YES@EHSLL.org
MORE EHS LI NEWS . . .

STONE SOUP AND INN DONATIONS!

During the EHS LI Thanksgiving Celebration members contributed fresh fruit and vegetables to help make “Stone Soup”, while enacting a classic tale of a starving community being tricked into sharing resources. Pat Spencer later took these donations to INN (the Interfaith Nutrition Network) who were grateful for the bounty.

Many thanks to Pat for taking the food to INN and to everyone who contributed!

Remember, we are still collecting non-perishables for INN.

EHS LI BACKYARD CLEANUP!

Heidi Mann organized a backyard clean up with the YES group and did a wonderful job.

Many thanks to Heidi and all involved for really sprucing the place up!

Note from the Editor

Newsletter Editor: Sylvia Silber ger

Please send suggestions for additions to future EHS LI newsletters and comments to

Sylvia Silberger
96 Vermont Avenue
Hempstead, NY 11550
matsbs@yahoo.com

Submissions due by the 22nd of the month for the next month’s newsletter.
November Board Meeting Minutes

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF LONG ISLAND
MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 2, 2011 BOARD

PRESENT: Pat Spencer, Sue Feifer, Deborah Strube, Carol Pincus-Smith, Tara Klein, David Sprintzen, Don Morgenstern, Liz Seegert, Jim LoPresti, Mel Haber, Alison Pratt

GUESTS: Calvin Dame, Chris Stanley, Dan Harding

1. A/V equipment report: Chris Stanley described a new audio system to upgrade our current system, as well as prevent equipment theft. It includes a new LCD projector mounted on the ceiling, a new screen, a secure audio cabinet placed in back of the auditorium, new microphone outlets, new speakers, an HD antenna, and a new DVD player. The cost is approximately $10,000 to purchase and install the new system.

2. Piano repair: Alice Sprintzen got a lower-cost estimate for repairing our piano; however, her person would trade in our piano for a rebuilt one. The cost would be cheaper than the estimate we currently have for repairing our piano. We will discuss the matter in a future meeting.

3. The AEU: Don recently sent a letter to the AEU regarding our debt to them. He hasn't received a response yet.

4. Calvin's petition for membership: Although some leaders have not requested becoming members of their Society, others have. Calvin has requested membership in our Society, and the Board voted at tonight's meeting to accept him as a member. We won't ask him to pay dues.

5. Pictures of new members: We agreed to put pictures of new members on the back wall of the auditorium. Pat Spenser will take charge of this project.

6. YES conference: The YES Conference will take place during the week of November 7. On the first day, members will join the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators, sleep at the New York City Ethical Society, and then go up to Locust Valley, NY. There will be nine of our YES members going to the Conference. This year's Pasta Dinner will be on Saturday, December 10, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. There will be a speaker from the Civil Liberties Union. We discussed whether to charge dues for YES members, and decided not to. Finally, Bethpage High School students who recently came here to make a presentation at a Sunday platform will be invited to come to the next Teen Arts Festival.

7. Financial reports: We are doing well financially, including rentals. We're renting to Kaplan, as well as Princeton Review. Kaplan's business is growing, and they'll need to add rental space from us.

8. Pledge drive letter: By the end of the month, Don and Alison will have completed a new pledge letter.

9. KIDS program: The kids raised $641 from the recent walk-a-thon. Alison wrote to the Garden City News and sent them photos and an article about the walk-a-thon. The article and photos just appeared in that newspaper. There are two new children in the KIDS program.

10. Our website: Liz said we need more modern equipment to upload our recordings of Sunday platforms to our website. We aren't getting as many people viewing our website as we used to. However, Jim LoPresti is still getting two to three people a month who see the Ethical Friends of Children part of our site and offer to donate clothing and other things to Ethical Friends.

11. The Caring Connection: Every Sunday, we are publicizing the Caring Connection, formerly known as the Caring Committee, inside the program brochure. In addition, the will be an announcement about it in the monthly newsletter.

12. Member behavior: The Board went into Executive Session. Following the Executive session the Board decided to have Calvin, Sue, and Don draw up rules of acceptable behavior that apply to all members of our Society.

13. Founder's Day: We will honor Chris and Sharon Stanley at our next Founder's Day.

14. Scheduling events with Phyllis: To avoid having several meetings scheduled at the same time, Don requested that if you have an event you want to schedule, please schedule it with Phyllis.

15. Correction for last month’s minutes: The wording of the October 2011 EHSLI Board Meeting Minutes implied that the EHSLI board discussion about donating to Foundations Beyond Belief was linked to the fact that Sharon Stanley is now blogging for them. This is not the case. Although all were happy Sharon was now blogging for FBB, the board had considered donating to FBB because their work paralleled our values and not because of Sharon’s connection with them. However, as noted in last month’s minutes, that discussion was tabled.

The meeting ended at 9:20 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Mel Haber
Opt-Out of Paper Newsletter Mailings

To save both resources and postage costs, we encourage you to email Sylvia at matsbs@yahoo.com if you would be satisfied with an email-only version of this newsletter rather than a paper copy.