



The Ethical Humanist

The Newsletter of The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island

Vol. 62, No. 6 -- February 2012



From Our Religious Director



Calvin Dame
Religious Director, EHSIJ

At the time I write this column, I already feel inundated by the onrush of Valentine's Day commercialization. I swear I spied the first heart-shaped chocolate boxes being stacked in the aisle of a drugstore the week before New Year's. Seems a bit overdone, to me.

I have nothing against Valentine's Day. In fact, I have fond memories of swapping corny Valentine's Day cards in second grade and chewing on little heart shaped candies that said things like "Be Mine"! And there is something to be said for the opportunity and prompt to tell the person who is most special in your life that you are thinking of them and that you cherish the love you share. It is a good thing to do and human beings have been inclined to do so ever since we invented poetry.

And each can be a difficult day for some, a reminder of what has been lost or what has been a disappointment in their lives.

Maybe what we need is another, broader and more encompassing day. An "I Am So Glad You Are A Part Of My Life!" Day. A day to remember and appreciate all those we love, all those who weave the tapestry of our days, whose presence enriches, whose company enhances, whose thoughtfulness encourages, whose friendship grounds us. Maybe we'll work up some cards or some slogans for sugar candy, but most importantly, we'd take the time to appreciate and savor the rich fabric our lives.

— Calvin Dame



IN THIS ISSUE

From The Religious Director	1
Events with Calvin	1
Sharon Stanley's Blog	2
Sunday Meeting Schedule	3
Goings on at EHSIJ	3
Kids In Deed	4
YES	5
Darwin Day Information	6
From the Editor	6
Board Minutes	7

HAVE YOU MAILED IN YOUR 2012 PLEDGE TO EHSIJ? OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON YOU!

The problems lie in proportion and focus, I think. A friend summed it up recently, she wrote, "One thing I think would be helpful, especially in the coming month when all sorts of Valentine's Day stuff is battering at us, is to think about all the different and beautiful kinds of love that bolster us, rather that focus on the frills and flowers and candy. People often bemoan that they don't have a girlfriend or husband or whatever, but meanwhile there are those truly life-sustaining relationships that help us keep our perspective, our sense of humor, etc., whether it is a neighbor or a coworker or a family member or children or a friend! Are we really seeing what is right in front of us?"

So, we have Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day. All trivialized, perhaps, by commercial interests, but each still offering an opportunity to express our appreciation and love.

Events with Calvin

Wednesday Lunch Discussion Group
February 8: Winter poems

Lunch discussions are at noon.

Ethics Café

February 8: What's money got to do with it?

The Ethics Café begins at 6:30 PM

Community Singing

February 15: Anyone interested in helping to plan for our Sunday Meeting Community Singing, or anyone just interested in singing, is invited to this music session.

Community Singing begins at 6:30 PM

Sharon Stanley's Blog

Darwin as Humanist

In order to prepare for our annual Darwin Day event, I had the lofty plan of reading Darwin's masterpiece, *Origin of Species* to learn more about his theories. To my surprise, it was a very boring and tedious task. It was recommended to me that I might want to read Stephen Ray Gould's work about Darwin and evolution. Not only were Gould's books decipherable, he also included and cited personal quotes that illustrated Charles Darwin as the man as well as the scientist. Through this research, I discovered that he was a Humanist as well. He just did not know it. There are many hints in his words and behavior that lead me to believe that this is true.



Sharon and son Gabriel

Darwin initially described himself as a theist as well as a biologist and naturalist. His family attended the local church on a regular basis. He changed his mind, after his voyages on "The Beagle" and began to describe himself as an agnostic. His studies reluctantly brought him to the conclusion that there did not appear to be any "higher power" governing the natural world. One of the reasons he came to this conclusion was the cruelty he observed in the natural world. He was a gentle and soft-spoken man, sympathetic to all living beings. When he saw the suffering of a caterpillar eaten alive by wasp larvae, or a mouse being played with by a cat, he felt this disproved the existence of a benevolent God. He continued to help out in his local church most of his life, being a good neighbor and citizen, but after returning from his Beagle journeys (during which he appears to have lost his traditional religious views) he would take a walk while his family attended church services on Sundays.

There were two things that struck me as being examples of Ethical Humanism's core beliefs. Darwin actually had a difficult, ethical dilemma during his scientific research. In 1839 Charles Darwin was a theist when he arrived at his theory of Evolution. He waited 20 years before releasing this book, *The Origin of Species*. He feared that the public was not ready to hear that conditions other than those stated in the Bible created our natural world. He was also afraid of retribution for such

shocking insights. He did not publish his book until 1859. His bravery took 20 years, but he finally did the right thing.

This reminds me of one of the core beliefs in Ethical Humanism: "Deed before Creed."

Gould points out that Darwinian Evolution dispelled some of the myths that were at the roots of racism. His theory eventually proved that there is no inferior race, so therefore there is no master race. Genetically, all come from the same place. Here was the second core belief illuminated: "Ethical Humanism believes in the inherent worth of every one." Our common humanity brings us together.

Darwin is a great example of someone who overcame his own discomfort in order to help humanity. Apparently, Darwin was an ethical humanist and he didn't even know it. Had there been an Ethical Culture society near him, it seems clear to me that would have attracted both his wife and him.

Here are some quotes I found on the internet, attributed to Charles Darwin, which struck me as particularly humanistic.

From Brainy Quote.com:

"A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life."

"A moral being is one who is capable of reflecting on his past actions and their motives-of approving of some and disapproving of others."

"Animals, whom we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equal."

"How paramount the future is to the present when one is surrounded by children."

And my particular favorite:

"A man's friendships are one of the best measures of his worth."

— Sharon Stanley



Goings on at EHSLI and Around

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. Bring light weights, stretch bands (are available from instructor), wear comfortable clothing and sneakers. Suggested contribution: \$5 per class.

Reason Rally: the largest secular event in world history. It is sponsored by many of the country's largest and most influential secular organizations. It is free to attend and will take place in Washington DC on **March 24th**, 2012 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. More info at <http://www.americanhumanist.org/HNN/details/2011-09-save-the-date-reason-rally-to-be-held-march-24-2012>. Bus information at <http://reasonrally.dcrallybus.com/Travel/From/NewYorkCity>.

Teen Art, Music, Poetry Festival: on March 31, 1—5 PM. You've never been? Come! It's a joyful experience. Read a review of last year's festival at <http://gardencity.patch.com/articles/teen-arts-festival-at-the-ethical-humanist-society>.

A Volunteer is needed: to help secure sponsorships and advertisers for the Teen Art, Music, and Poetry Festival. It involves contacting last year's sponsors and reaching out to a few new ones. This is an opportunity to raise a lot of money for EHSLI. Please let Phyllis know or contact Alison Pratt or Tara Klein directly.

Meet EHSLI Online!

EHSLI Website: <http://www.ehsl.org>

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

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 meet up member.

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

Photos — picasaweb.google.com/LIEthical

Darwin Day! February 12th. See page 6 for more information.

Free Yoga Classes: led by Sylvia Silberger, Gentle/Restorative Wed's 5:30-6:30 PM and a Vinyasa-style yoga Weds 7-8:15 PM. Email Sylvia at matsbs@yahoo.com if you are interested in attending so that she can inform you of changes and cancellations.

The Caring Connection: our commitment 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.

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

Movie Group: will not meet in February.

Translation Help Needed: Patricia Spencer is looking for someone who can translate notices from English to Spanish. Email Pat at PatriciaSpencer@gmail.com for more information.

Our Times Coffee House: *Chasing June* will be playing at Our Times Coffee House on February 17th at the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island. *Chasing June* is the folk rock collaboration of two New Jersey singers and songwriters, Judy Aron and Steve Coleman. Doors open at 7:15 PM. Suggested donations: adults \$15, seniors (65 & Up) & students (w/ school I.D.) \$12, children under 12 \$6 (*very* young children free). Visit www.ourtimescoffeehouse.org/ for more information.

Sponsor a Coffee Hour: for \$15 and, with advanced notice, have your name and message added to the Sunday Meeting bulletin! Please contact Phyllis at ethicalsociety@optonline.net.

Sunday Meetings

February 5: Calvin Dame
The Dimensions of Forgiveness

February 12: Darwin Day - Dr. Victor Schuster

February 19: Patricia Wood, Environmentalist

February 26: Calvin Dame
Are Our Dreams Big Enough?

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



Kids In Deed!



Global Friends,

As you may have heard, EHSLI supports Sema Academy in Kisii, Kenya. It occurred to me that I don't know enough about that program, and that the KIDS IN DEED children probably know nothing at all. Eric Dobrin, who recently visited Kenya with his family, gave our class a terrific presentation that described the country, the school and issues facing the students.

What a great presentation we had! Thank you so much, Eric!

Here are some of the facts he shared with us:

Schools in Kenya are both public and private and go through the 8th grade. Whether public or private, all 7th and 8th grade students live at their school (boarding school). Only select students are allowed to go to high school, determined by a country-wide exam. Because the private schools do a better job at preparing the students for the exam, parents who want their children to go on to high school send them to private school if they can.

The average annual income for a typical family in Kenya is \$500. Tuition at private schools is at least \$100 per year. All students of all schools must wear uniforms, and all books and school supplies must be purchased in addi-



Jordan Schroeder and Eric Dobrin



Where's Kenya?

tion to the tuition. Families tend to be large, often with six children— so imagine the financial hardship, or even impossibility, of sending your children to private school! Even public school is a financial hardship for many families.

Sema Academy was started in 2001 by Dr. Japheth Maranga, a friend of Arthur and Lyn Dobrin's from their days at the Peace Corps in the 1960s. At its peak, enrollment topped 350 students from age 4 or 5 through the 8th grade. The school is located in two buildings, one for classrooms and the other for the dining hall and boys' and girls' dormitories. Although the classrooms themselves are sparsely furnished with tables, benches, a chalkboard, no air conditioning or indoor plumbing, the school does have a computer lab! Thanks to wireless internet, the students are able to learn all that the internet has to offer. Classes are taught mostly in English, some in Swahili, and some in their native tribal languages. There are 25 to 40 students in per class.



Alison Pratt,
KIDS IN DEED Director

Kenya is located on the east coast of Africa. Although Kenya attracts many tourists to see the African animals and to go to its pristine beaches, tribal conflict still exists in Kenya. Sema Academy was deliberately built on a borderline between two tribes to foster peace between tribes, but in 2008 an election was held that sparked conflict between them that resulted in violence. Armed guards protected the school but it did close for awhile. Sadly, Dr. Maranga himself was targeted, perhaps because of his dedication to education, and was murdered in his home by a gang of assassins in December, 2008. The school has since reopened but enrollment has dropped to about 200 students.

YES!

YES is getting ready for a busy Spring! Here's just some of what we've got planned:

March 4 - YES presents the Sunday Meeting on Human Rights issues

March 25 - Voter registration drive with KID

March 31 - Teen Art, Music, and Poetry Festival

April 1-7 - New Orleans Rebuilding trip

April 22 - Bayside Marina Beach Clean-up with KID



We hope to see you at some of our events!

Tara Klein,
YES Advisor
YES@EHSLJ.org



MORE GOINGS ON . . .

Continued from page 3

Darwin Day Bake Sale : The KID program and the Darwin Day Committee request that everyone to bring in a home made or store bought treat that will be included in our Darwin Day Bake Sale. Proceeds donated to the Sema Academy in Kenya. Please contact Alison Pratt at apsychfp@optonline.net or Sharon Stanley at lihumanistt@hotmail.com for info.

Theater Trip : to see the musical "Once" is being arranged by Pat Spencer for Friday, 4/27/2012. Trailer watchable from <http://oncemusical.com>. It has received rave reviews and is moving from a sell out performance Off Broadway to Broadway. The box office ticket price is now \$60.00. If you are interested, contact Pat Spencer at (516) 433-5019 or patri-ciamspencer@gmail.com by February 5.

**EHSLI's 4th Annual
Darwin Day
Stand up for science!**

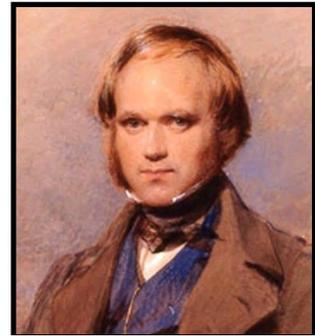
A family event to celebrate Darwin's birthday: February 12, 1809!

Sunday, Feb. 12, 2012

11:00 to 2:00

The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island

38 Old Country Road • Garden City • 741-7304 • www.ehsli.org



Schedule:

11:00 – 12:00

Victor Schuster, M.D., Albert Einstein College of Medicine

"How Science Works"

(suitable for children ages 10 to adult; childcare available during presentation)

12:00 – 2:00

• The Amateur Observers' Society: Astronomy and the Night Sky •

• Transformation Face painting by Agostino Arts •

Children's science games and demonstrations.

Lunch for sale. No admission fee; donations welcomed.



Note from the Editor

Newsletter Editor: Sylvia Silberger

Please send suggestions for additions to future EHSLI newsletters and comments to

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Hempstead, NY 11550

matsbs@yahoo.com



Sylvia Silberger and Bill Larsen
Yosemite National Park

Submissions due by the 15th of the month for the next month's newsletter.

Sylvia Silberger

January Board Meeting Minutes

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF LONG ISLAND MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 4, 2012 BOARD MEETING

PRESENT: Don Morgenstern, Sue Feifer, Pat Spencer, Jim LoPresti, Mel Haber, Liz Seegert, Alison Pratt, David Sprintzen

ABSENT: Carol Pincus, Deborah Strube, Tara Klein

GUESTS: Calvin Dame

1. **Sunday School Report:** Alison amplified what is in the December newsletter. She said attendance is not great, but not terrible either. A new kid is coming this Sunday. The KIDS group, along with some YES members, are planning a voter registration drive on Sunday, March 25, at the Stop and Shop in Hempstead. On a future Sunday, Alison will have someone connected with the Sema Academy speak to the kids. Alison has written a four-paragraph blog on our Web site. She plans to get a sign made for the KIDS group. Recently, Russell Weill contacted her in connection with the recent Weill grant we gave to a young man. Russell was interested in learning more about how we publicize and award Weill grants, and so Alison will make sure he gets such information, as well as a copy of our newsletter.

2. **Website report:** Liz did not have statistics because Google wasn't able to provide numbers. She prepared and distributed a handout on blogging. The blogs on our web site are difficult to locate, and so our web site needs to be revamped. Also, we need to be better at using social media.

3. **The newsletter:** The Board wants to have Sylvia move up the deadline for information sent to her to mid-month instead of the third week of a month. Doing so should help members receive the newsletter earlier, as well as ensure that upcoming Society events will be available for people to see. Don will need to contact Sylvia about the change.

4. **Financial report:** Salaries are going up a bit for our employees. Fortunately, we can expect increases in rental income, particularly from Princeton Review and a hiking group. The Coalition for the Homeless, in spite of financial difficulties, is paying us \$1,000 per month. The Board approved the budget.

The meeting ended at 9:30 PM

Submitted by Mel Haber, Board Secretary

K.I.D. CONTINUED

Continued from Pg. 4

The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island has supported Sema Academy since it first opened, with donations that sponsor student tuition or allows the school to buy what it needs. For example, money was sent to supply mosquito nets for the dormitory beds, since protecting the students from malaria is a prime concern.

Getting back to KIDS IN DEED... What can we do to extend a hand in friendship to students so far from us? As a class, we decided on two things. One, we would like to send them letters to say "hello" and hope for pen

pals. We will each write a letter describing who we are and send photos of ourselves. Two, we would like to raise money to allow them to buy some books for their school. We will have a bake sale during Darwin Day with proceeds to go to buying those books. Lyn Dobrin's book, *The Magic Stone*, is a compilation of Kenyan folktales that is widely read in Kenyan schools. Published by Phoenix Press in Nairobi, the book has sold 70,000 copies with all proceeds going to Sema Academy. Come to Darwin Day and buy a treat... and purchase a book for a child in Kenya.

Alison Pratt

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.



Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island

Phone: 516-741-7304

Ethicalsociety@optonline.net

Meet- Up: <http://www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanist-Society-of-Long-Island>

Fax: 516-741-7305

<http://www.chsli.org>



*An Ethical Culture Society
Affiliated with
The American Ethical Union*

Create a Caring World

The Ethical Humanist

The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island
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