



The Ethical Humanist

The Newsletter of The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island



Vol. 62, No. 7 -- March 2012

From Our Religious Director



Calvin Dame
Religious Director, EHSLI

This is a blog was recently posted on our website.

I've found myself exasperated with the people in Cranston, Rhode Island this past month or so. Not all of them, of course, but many of them. The School Board that ignored fifty years of rulings on prayer in school and religious displays in public places, for instance. The civics teachers who seem to have left several generations of Cranston High School graduates ignorant both of the founding of Rhode Island as a place of religious freedom, or of the Constitutional position on the establishment of religion. Also, the religious leaders who have not spoken up for tolerance. Then, local state representative, Paul Palumbo, who used a local radio broadcast to call Jessica Ahlquist "an evil little thing". The Cranston florists who refused to deliver roses to Jessica ordered by an atheist group. And, not surprisingly in a situation like this but disheartening none-the-less, those who have vilified a 16 year old for standing up for her rights, and those who have issued death threats.

Once we get to the death threats, exasperated is hardly a strong enough word. Alarmed and concerned, at the very least.

Of course, there are many in Cranston who have spoken up for tolerance or done the right thing. At issue is an eight foot high school banner hanging in the school gym, displaying a prayer that begins with Our Heavenly Father and ends with Amen. The controversy began as community members asked the

school board to rule the prayer inappropriate and have it removed. Three board members agreed, four did not. Jessica Ahlquist who became an atheist at ten, spoke at the meetings about how unwelcome the publicly displayed prayer made her feel, and then later agreed to serve as a plaintiff in a lawsuit brought by the Rhode Island chapter of the A.C.L.U. In January a federal judge

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Events with Calvin

Wednesday Lunch Discussion Group

March 7: Bring a lunch and join us for a discussion of Bill Moyer's 2/16/2012 article *Freedom of and from Religion*, which one can download from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-moyers/obama-contraception-compromise-freedom-of-and-from-religion_b_1281942.html or pick up at the EHS office.

Lunch discussions begin at noon.

Ethics Café

March 14: The Challenge of Forgiveness

The Ethics Café begins at 6:30 PM

Community Singing

March 21: For those who would just like to sing a bit, and want to help plan the Sunday Community Song.

Community Singing begins at 6:30 PM

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Calvin will lead three sessions on Ethical Humanism, as an introduction for new folks and a review for long time participants. Please sign up with Phyllis at the office.

March 11: An Introduction to Ethical Humanism

March 18: Philosophical Foundations of Ethical Humanism

March 25: Ethical Humanism: A Practical Guide

Sessions begin at 1:00 PM

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

Sharon Stanley's Blog

Fourth Annual Darwin Day / Stand Up for Science Day

Once again our annual *Darwin Day / Stand Up For Science Day*, our festival of science and scientific fun, was a monumental success. This year, we celebrated on Darwin's actual birth date; Sunday, February 12, 2012.



Sharon and son Gabriel

The day began at 11:00 AM with Dr. Victor Schuster. He hosted an intriguing and interactive platform talk, discussing the mechanisms of evolution. His talks are engaging for both young and old alike. He makes a point of including the children in his dialogue as they "helped" his visual presentation about evolution take shape. Dr. Schuster is an extraordinary presenter and teacher. His visits are greeted with great enthusiasm and anticipation.

After lunch, the Amateur Observers' Society discussed "Astronomy and the Night Sky," which included many projected photos of the celestial objects that can be seen during this time of year. Linda Prince and volunteers from AOS (www.aosny.org) also presented an activity called, "Meteorite/Meteor Wrong." All participants enjoyed the hands on opportunity to learn how scientists discriminate between a rock from outer space and a rock that has earthly origins.

Throughout the day, Chris Agostino of Agostino Arts painted faces with stunning scientific themes and the youth group YES supervised a "Graffiti Wall of Science" where adults and children wrote and drew the many ideas and impression that science creates.

Our children embraced this opportunity to proudly exhibit their scientific interests and run experiments for interested visitors. Kristen M.'s project "Dough on the Rise" revealed how temperature effects how dough rises in the baking project. She also joined her brother, Eric M. with a pH activity and showed her nature collection. Jordan S.'s project was "Bridge Suspension." He built an elaborate suspension bridge. He eagerly discussed how it worked and enthusiastically explained how he built his model. Gabriel S.'s project was called "Carbon Dioxide." He used a mixture of vinegar and baking soda to create enough carbon dioxide to blow up balloons in an exciting way. Reid H.'s project "Which Way of Learning is Most Effective?" compared three types of instruction—visual, auditory and written. He invited people use different modalities to change a transformer toy from one version to another and found that visual instruction of watching a video model of someone do the task worked the best.

Our annual "Survival of the Fittest" game proved to be not only a rousing way to exhibit the evolution of a species' appendages, but the groups of "animals" instinctively began working together to gather food. This turned out to be a powerful validation of the strength of community and working in groups. When we work together, our accomplishments increase tenfold and enhance our own lives and each other's. This was the perfect visual exhibition of the Ethical Culture axiom; by focusing on the inherent worth of all, we bring out the best in ourselves and others.

The KID "Garbage Dig" experiment was the most exciting event of the day. Dr. Alison Pratt, our Director of Religious Education, and her students had buried a chicken bone, a potato skin, a tea bag, a crayon, a pencil, pieces of chalk, an apple, a banana, a plastic bag, a Styrofoam plate and other items in a large bin last October. This bin was covered with a screen and left outside for 3 months. The students and adults made predictions about which items might have biodegraded and which would have not. It was surprising to see that almost everything they had buried had survived. It was startling to note that the apple was well-preserved and had not begun to deteriorate at all. Only the potato skin had completely vanished.

This intergenerational event is unique because children's events are rarely planned for Darwin Day. Darwin Day is usually commemorated in colleges and by adult organizations. This trend is beginning to change, thanks to the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island. Children are naturally attracted to science; they are curious about how the world works and how living things grow and thrive.

I want to take the opportunity to thank all the members of the Ethical Humanist Society, particularly the Board of Trustees and the Parents of the KID program. Without their support, enthusiasm and participation, this event would not be a reality. Alison Pratt, in particular, was instrumental in the planning and implementation of this event. She worked closely with me, helping me to negotiate the Garden City guidelines, preparing the sign, reminding me when I had forgotten anything and encouraging me in every possible way. Her passion and encouragement is an asset to our society. In addition, special thanks go to Calvin Dame, our Religious Director for presiding and Steve Hetzel for performing "The Big Bang Theory." Lyn Dobrin, Liz Seegert and Alison Pratt, our publicity mavens, got the word out and brought the public in. Kori and Dan Schroeder operated the food court and bake sale. Our bake sale brought in



Sharon Stanley's Blog, Continued

Article continued from Pg. 2

\$70 that we donated to the Sema Academy in Kenya. Christopher Agostino and Agostino Arts donated their time and artistry. Chloe Agostino and Sara McCaffrey volunteered as babysitters who took care of the children who were too young to participate in Dr. Schuster's talk. Tara Klein's enthusiasm always engages the YES group who were there to help out any way they could. Joan Beder, Deborah Strube and Alice Sprintzen staffed the Welcome Table and acted as greeters who answered questions from curious first-time visitors. Linda Joe and Liz Seegert took photographs. Don and Kristen Morgenstern, Christopher and Gabriel Stanley, Lorraine Agostino, and Tara Klein helped decorate the auditorium to create a festival atmosphere.

Darwin Day began as an inclusive way to bring children and adults from the community together over the love and fascination of science. It was never meant as a discussion of theism vs. atheism. Our goal is not motivated by the need to substantiate that "Intelligent Design" is an unrealistic theory.

Our intent is to emphasize that no matter what your spiritual beliefs are, Ethical Humanism promotes values that all can believe in. Through ethical relationships and social action we can create a caring world together.

The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island is located on 38 Old Country Road in Garden City, NY. The phone number is 516-741-7304. Visit us on the web at www.ehsli.org.

Read about our 2011 event in the January/February issue of *The Humanist* magazine: <http://thehumanist.org/january-february-2012/why-aren%e2%80%99t-more-kids-celebrating-darwin-day/>.

— Sharon Stanley
Darwin Day Coordinator



Left: Jordan S. on Dino Dig
Above: Survival of the fittest game
More pictures on page 6

Correction for last month's newsletter: In February's newsletter, Sharon's article referred to author Stephen Ray Gould, who wrote about Darwin That author should have been Stephen Jay Gould.

From Our Religious Director, Continued



Article Continued from Pg. 1

ordered the banner removed. The school board is considering an appeal.

At the center of this storm is an admirable young woman, Jessica Ahlquist, with the pluck and courage to take this on. "I was really taken aback and a little bit hurt by it because it is entitled 'School Prayer,'" she is quoted as saying, "It really does make you feel like you don't belong if you don't believe you have a heavenly father."

Seems pretty straightforward to me. And so much more adult than, well, than pretty much everyone else that is quoted, like, "You have your opinions, keep them to yourself," or, "It's not religious in any way at all."

At the heart of this is yet another skirmish in our cultural wars, which I find disheartening. I appreciate Jessica

Ahlquist's courage, I appreciate the ACLU, I appreciate all those in Cranston who have stood with Ahlquist, I appreciate the Cranston police who until recently have escorted her to school. But what I yearn for are community leaders who say, "Of course it is time to take this banner down, and here is why..." and religious leaders who leap to protect this young woman's freedom from religious coercion because they know it is their own freedom, too.

As Ethical Humanists it is important to remember that we are not anti-religious or against religious freedom. But we are anti-coercion. And we understand that religious freedom includes the freedom from religion, particularly in the middle of a public school.

— Calvin O. Dame
Religious Director

Goings on at EHSLI and Around

Spice Event (Fundraiser): The High Line is now one of the most popular touring places in N.Y.C. & we are so fortunate to have Alan Cohen to lead us. Stroll the High Line and Chelsea **Saturday, April 21**. Meet at the 30th Street entrance, on the High Line (between 10th and 11th Avenues) at 10:30 AM (go upstairs to the High Line itself). **Hosts: Marianne and Alan Cohen.**

The High Line is New York City's newest and hippest park. This former elevated freight railroad line has been converted into a 1.4 mile or so walkway with interesting views, meadows, water features, beautiful plantings and numerous opportunities to people watch. We can stroll the High Line, stop to take pictures and admire the plantings, perhaps buy an ice cream or other snack. While part of the old rail bed (from 30th to 34th Streets) still awaits reconstruction as a park, we will walk from 30th Street to Gansevoort Street. When we are done strolling (we can stop and sit and ogle if we like) you may choose to spend the family fortune in a trendy fashion boutique, or we can all go out and get a burger. For those who want to spend more of the day in Manhattan, we can visit several art galleries in Chelsea.

The High Line is wheelchair accessible. It's a great family outing! The High Line is open to the elements, so please be prepared with a hat or sunscreen if you use them. There are water fountains (at least one musical one), or bring your own water; restroom facilities are available. If it is raining we will need to reschedule. Donation---\$15, Number of participants---unlimited. Contact Phyllis in the office to sign up for this exciting event. Contact Marianne and Alan at (212) 717-8332 or Marianne.Cohen@hholt.com with questions or concerns.

The SPICE Committee is Pat Spencer, Alice Sprintzen & Lorraine Abrams

Visit EHSLI Online!

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

EHSLI on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ehsli

EHSLI on Meet-up: <http://www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanist-Society-of-Long-Island/>. This site lists a full schedule of our events. Support us by becoming an EHSLI meet up member.

Leader emeritus Arthur Dobrin is blogging weekdays at arthurdobrin.wordpress.com

Photos — picasaweb.google.com/LIEthical

Sunday Meetings

March 4: YES Platform

March 11: Bob Berson, Leader Northern Westchester Society
First thoughts on criminal justice: Does any of this make sense?

March 18: Dr. Jan Witkowski, Executive Director, Danbury Center, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory

March 26: Dr. David Harmon

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

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>.

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: Due to unforeseen circumstances the movie group will not meet in March. The next movie group meeting will be Saturday, April 28, at 2:30 PM. The movies to be discussed TBA.

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.

Our Times Coffee House: David Roth & Anne Hills will be playing at Our Times Coffee House on March 16th at the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island. David Roth & Anne Hills have delighted the "Our Times" audience before - performing separately - but it's a special treat for you to hear these two stellar performers perform together as a dynamic duo. Expect stunning harmonies, poignant and funny and inspiring original songs, impeccable musicianship and a darn good time! Make sure to come early. Doors open at 7:15 PM. Suggested Donations For This Performance: Adults \$15, Seniors (65 & Up) & Students (w/school I.D.) \$12, Children (under 12) \$6. (very young children are free). Visit www.ourtimescoffeehouse.org/ for more information.

Goings on continued on Pg. 5

YES!**YES Update**

YES is ready for a busy Spring! We have been diligently planning for our Sunday meeting on March 4th, titled "YES We Can Be Equal," covering the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and issues involving the prison system, human trafficking, and free speech on the internet. We also participated in a highly successful Darwin Day in February! Here's what's coming up for YES in the next few weeks:

March 4

YES Sunday Meeting
"YES We Can Be Equal"

March 31

Teen Art, Music, and Poetry Festival

April 1-7

New Orleans Rebuilding trip

April 22

Bayside Marina Beach Clean-up with KID

April 29

Voter Registration Drive with KID



Tara, MacKenzie, Ryan, Dan, Reid, Sebastian, Priya, Tina, and Maggie on their way to the 2011 National YES Conference.

We are also getting excited about next year's National YES Conference in St. Louis! Stay tuned for fundraising activities in the coming months and consider supporting our trip!



Tara Klein

Tara Klein, YES Advisor

YES@EHSLI.org

More Goings on

Continued from page 4

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.

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>.

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.

Free Yoga Classes: led by Sylvia Silberger, Vinyasa-style yoga Wednesdays 5:30-6:30 PM and a Gentle/Restorative yoga Wednesdays 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. Please note that the times have been switched.

Darwin Day Photos!!



Alice Spritzen in face paint.



Sharon Stanley with banner



Calvin Dame presides



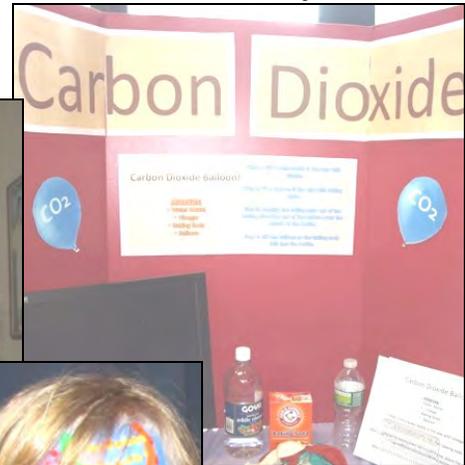
Christopher Agostino, the face painter



Christopher Stanley and Dan Schroder



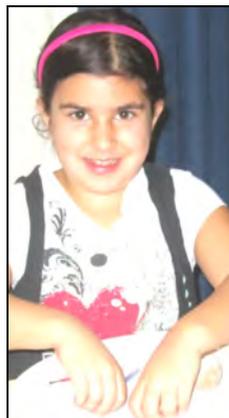
Dr. Sandy Mazur, Dr. Schuster and Gabriel S.



Gabriel S.'s Carbon Dioxide Science Project



Dr. Schuster kept all thoroughly engaged



Kira O.



Steve Hetzel performed



Kristen M., the DNA molecule



Lorraine and Chloe Agostino and Sara McCaffrey

Note from the Editor

Newsletter Editor: Sylvia Silberger

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

Sylvia Silberger
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Hempstead, NY 11550
matsbs@yahoo.com



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



Sylvia Silberger and Bill Larsen
Yosemite National Park

Sylvia Silberger

January Board Meeting Minutes

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF LONG ISLAND MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 1, 2012 BOARD MEETING

PRESENT: Sue Feifer, Mel Haber, Tara Klein, Don Morgenstern, Wayne Outten, Alison Pratt, Liz Seegert, Pat Spenser, David Sprintzen, Deborah Strube

ABSENT: Jim LoPresti, Carol Pincus

GUESTS: Calvin Dame

1. **New Members:** Our new members are Beverly and Ronald Freestone, as well as Heidi and Jim Mann, with their two kids, Ryan and Maggie.

2. **Water Tower:** Wayne reported that Garden City deferred doing work on the water tower last year for budgetary reasons. They are reconsidering the project this month (February). In exchange for them using the unpaved area east of our parking lot, we hope to get them to expand our parking lot to the east and then resurface the existing and new parking areas without cost to our Society. The engineer Wayne is dealing with thinks we might be able to get that, but there is no guarantee. He will let Wayne know what they decide. If they decide to proceed with the work on the water tower, it would not be done this spring.

3. **Financials:** We have about \$35,000 in the bank, which is good. We have no major obligations. Rental income is fine and promises to improve in the future. So we can earn income, members suggested advertising some of the vacant rooms we have for rent on craigslist. Liz volunteered to write the ad.

4. **Lyn Dobrin's Proposal:** Lyn suggested we use money from the Weill fund for social action projects. The Board supported her proposal. She suggested we start by asking the YES Group teens to come up with ideas for social action. Whatever events our Society decides to do should not only result in good social action, but should also allow us to publicize the events and ultimately increase our membership.

5. **A Closet for Our New Audio Equipment:** We got a proposal of \$4,500 for a closet to enclose the new audio equipment we'll be getting. We'll get a second estimate.

6. **Alison's Report:** The KIDS group has seven kids attending. They are getting ready for Darwin Day. Alison has made up a new sign for the KIDS program. As to the

Weill grant, we have awarded three grants so far (since 2010), and now have 3 new applications to review. We are in good shape for the Teen Arts Festival; we have the musicians lined up, but still need all the talent. More students are expected to participate thanks to the article in last year's Garden City Patch and the networking with the author Suzy Alvey. The KID and YES voter registration drive will be on April 29 at the Hempstead Stop and Shop.

7. **YES Group:** A new teen has recently joined, and now there are 11 kids in the group. On March 4th, the group will put on a platform. They will also do voter registration along with the KIDS children, as well as the Spring festival and trip to New Orleans.

8. **PR and the Web:** Liz is trying to do outreach to local publications and she is publicizing our blogs. We need to work on establishing the image of our Society, she said. Regarding our Web site, visitors are staying on the site longer and we are getting both new and repeat visitors.

9. **Housekeeping:** Three issues need attention: First, the guard rails in the first-floor bathroom are coming out from the wall. Second, some gels and frames are missing from the lights in the auditorium. We should check to see the condition of the lights after a rental and charge renters who take or damage our equipment. Deb suggested that items be removed from the second floor conference room cabinet and be placed next door if the next door room is vacant. Finally, Don will buy a new computer for Phyllis.

10. **On Moving EHS LI to Another Building:** Pat reported on a building for sale, but we could not financially afford the move because we could not get a loan from a bank.

11. **Calvin's Appointment as and Officiant:** Calvin has been approved by the AEU Board as an officiant, meaning he can officiate at functions such as weddings and memorial services.

12. **Members with concerns or suggestions:** Anyone with concerns or suggestions about our Society is welcome to come to a Board meeting to discuss them.

The meeting ended at 9:00 PM

Submitted by Mel Haber, Board Secretary

Opt-Out of Paper Newsletter Mailings

To save 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

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<http://www.ehsli.org>

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



*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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