



CHICAGO ETHICAL HUMANIST

Newsletter of the ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

September 2010

Welcome to Our Season-Opening Sunday Morning Programs

ROBERT PRICE, professor of theology at Coleman Theological Seminary and the Center for Inquiry Institute, opens our new season on **Sunday, September 12th**. His topic is “**The Gospels: History or Literature?**” Price will dissect the biblical myths about Jesus, suggesting that the Christian Gospels, though of valuable help, weren’t meant as factual accounts. He will refer to the science fiction TV comedy *Galaxy Quest*, in which intercepted adventure tales were mistakenly assumed to be historical documents.

TRICIA VAN ECK, Associate Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, speaks on **Sunday, September 19th**. Her topic is “**Socially Engaged Artwork—The Potential**

of Culture.” Van Eck will highlight a range of artists whose work fosters conversations and questions about culture and art and encourages people to address their social, political, and humanitarian concerns.

RICHARD GOLDWASSER, an attorney and the Chicago Steering Committee/Advocacy Chair for J Street, speaks on **Sunday, September 26th**. His topic is “**Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace: The J Street Story.**” Goldwasser will discuss this 2-year-old organization’s history of giving a voice to those who believe a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to Israel’s survival as a democratic, national home for the Jewish people.

Coming Society Events

- Our **Sunday Morning Colloquies** are back. Led by Ken Novak, our small, nonjudgmental group examines how we feel about our lives. The topics this month: *Pride* on September 12th, *Heart* on September 19th, and *Community* on September 26th. We meet in the library, 9:30–10 a.m.
- Our **Second Saturday Coffee House**, hosted by Vicki Elberfeld, is on **September 11th**. Featured performers will be storyteller/actor **Judith Heineman** and bard **Dan Marcotte**, in the darkly humorous “*Grimm’s Grimmest: The Darker Side of Fairytales.*” The program starts at 8 p.m., with open-mike (any genre, acoustic-only) signup at 7:30 p.m. The \$5 minimum charge includes refreshments.
- Our **Fiction Circle**, led by Ken Novak, is on **Sunday, September 12th**, at 12:15 p.m. The subject is Elizabeth Strout’s *Olive Kitteridge*, several stories about a free-thinking but ornery Maine woman. To buy the book on Amazon, use the link on the Society’s home page at www.ethicalhuman.org.
- Our **Film Discussion Group**, led by John Ungashick, meets on **Monday, September 20th**, at 7:15 p.m.. We’ve again chosen two currently playing movies. *Get Low* is the tale of a backwoods hermit’s plans to organize his own funeral party. It was directed by Aaron Schneider and stars Robert Duvall, Sissy Spacek, and Bill Murray. *The Switch* is a romantic comedy about a man and woman dealing with the complications of a sperm-donor child. It was directed by Josh Gordon and Will Speck, and stars Jennifer Aniston and Jason Bateman. Last month we discussed *The Kids Are All Right* and *Life During Wartime*.

- Our **Creative Writers** group, led by John Taylor, meets on **Sunday, September 26th**, at 12:15 p.m. Come and share your short, original works with us.
- Our next **Ethical Humanities** discussion is on **Sunday, October 10th**, at 12:30 p.m. We will use Edith Grossman’s brief 2010 tract *Why Translation Matters*. Especially valuable will be the perspectives of those who have read both native and English versions of literature.

Recent Sunday Programs

- The **2010 American Ethical Union Assembly**, held early in June in Scranton, Pennsylvania, was the subject of our first summer program, on **June 27th**. We heard from our four delegates, *Sue Walton*, *Ken Novak*, *JoAnn Hoepfner*, and *Sheila Caplan Curren*, and from AEU Board member *Scott Walton* and AEU Religious Education director *Aimee Neumann*. They reported that the annual Elliott/Black award was given to Thomas Warfield, of PeaceArt International, and that the Assembly’s Ethical Action involved raising funds for the LGBT-linked Rainbow Foundation. They noted that Katherine Archibald has left as AEU executive director. Our delegates led and participated in several workshops, including on nonviolent communication and wedding cere-

(Recent Sunday Programs continued on page 2)

The meetinghouse of the Society is at 7574 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie. Our Sunday programs and Sunday School start at 10:30 a.m. Childcare is available. A social hour follows. There is parking in our lot, on Jerome or Howard St., and at the nearby Albany Bank. If you need transportation, call the office by 1 p.m. Friday—we’ll try to get a ride for you.

(Recent Sunday Programs continued from page 1)

monies for same-sex couples. They were enthusiastic about exchanging ideas with other Societies, including fundraising, attracting new members by providing a welcoming atmosphere to visitors, and designing Sunday programs.

• **To Kill a Mockingbird**, the prize-winning 1960 novel by Harper Lee, was the subject of our special Fiction Circle program on **July 11th**, led by *Ken Novak*. We recounted the events in a story set in 1930s rural Alabama, as seen through the eyes of a 6-year-old girl, Scout. We discussed the warm relationship she had with her lawyer-father Atticus Finch and on his principled but nuanced defense of a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman.

We discussed the interplay between the various characters, focusing on their family and class backgrounds. We examined the fear-generated, deep-seated prejudices of the local people and the predictability of the all-white-male jury's guilty verdict. The discussion was visually enhanced by excerpts from the award-winning film starring Gregory Peck.

• **Katie Merrell**, Society member and medical research analyst, spoke on **July 18th**. Her topic was **"Empirical Analysis in the News: What Critical Readers Should Know."** Svetlana Bekman was the moderator.

Katie described the use of statistics in news reports. "Statistical data don't give us the answers," she said, "It's what we do with them that does." She described measures of central tendency, or averages—the mean, median, and mode, which can be selectively used by advocacy groups. But she cautioned that advocacy itself "is not a bad thing." As an example of statistical data, she projected graphs of the numerical distribution of Society members' pledges.

Katie said social scientists infer, generalize, and set up hypotheses to test and explain data. They avoid confusing correlation with causation and try to predict the outcomes of possible interventions. She warned of "confirmation bias" and pointed to distortions in newspaper headlines.

• **John Ungashick**, Society member and history buff, spoke on **July 25th**. His topic was **"The Dreyfus Affair: France in Turmoil, 1894–1906."** Joe Burck was the moderator.

John pointed to a "total upheaval of French society" following the revolution of 1789 and a "readiness to blame the Jews" for economic failures. It was in this context, he said, that Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French army officer, was arrested for treason in 1894, without charges and with forged documents and imprisoned on the infamous Devil's Island.

John detailed a "long list of characters" in the Dreyfus affair, including novelist Emile Zola, who condemned the French government, the Jesuits, who prated about a "Jewish conspiracy," and Zionist Theodore Herzl, who agitated for a Jewish state in Palestine as the "solution" for French Jews. Dreyfus was finally pardoned in 1906, opening the

way, John said, for secularization of schools and separation of church and state in France. He warned, however, that people continue to look for scapegoats, and noted a resurgence of anti-immigrant attitudes in recent years.

• **Fred Malkinson**, another Society member and history buff, spoke **August 1st** on **"The History of the Statue of Liberty."** Matt Cole was the moderator.

Fred recounted the events leading to the dedication of the Statue of Liberty in 1886. He said the famous statue was conceived in the 1860s as a tribute to the "eternal friendship between France and the United States." He added that its sculptor, Frederic-August Bartholdi, was inspired by the Great Pyramids of Egypt and the "beauty of New York harbor." He described the recurring fund-raising campaigns for the "Liberty Project," vigorously promoted by Frenchmen Edouard de Laboulaye and Ferdinand de Lesseps.

Fred noted the placing of a plaque with Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus" on the statue's pedestal in 1904. Fred left us with its last lines: "Give me your tired, your poor, /Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. /Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, /I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

• **Ken Novak**, Adult Education co-chair, led a discussion on **"Friendship—According to Aristotle and Us"** on **August 8th**. Dick Whitaker was the moderator.

Ken opened with Greek philosopher Aristotle's observations in his work *The Neomachean Ethics* on the meaning of friendship and its ties with ethics and "what is good." He pointed to three variants of friendship listed by Aristotle—"utility, pleasure, and 'the perfect.'"

Our responses, based largely on personal anecdotes, included various definitions of friendship. Among our concerns were questions of equality, justice, trust, sharing, love, mutual obligation, and cultural differences.

Tribute Fund

• *In loving memory of Dorothy Lockhart, who gave so much devotion over many years to the Society.*

—from BETTYE SOLLMAN

• *To Susan & Joe Burck. Congratulations on your 50th wedding anniversary!*

—from JOHN UNGASHICK

The **Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago**, founded in 1882, is a member of the American Ethical Union and a chapter of the American Humanist Association.

Officers & Trustees: Steve Julstrom, President; Ed McManus, Vice President; Sue Walton, Secretary; Sheila Caplan-Curren, Treasurer; Yolanda Adler, Lisa Crowe, Laura Drower, Steven Freedman, David Hardesty, Evan Kane, Jan Kuhn, Oliver Pergams

Sunday School Director: Sharon Appelquist

Newsletter Editor: Alan Kimmel

Ethical Officers: Marne Glaser, JoAnn Hoepfner, Tom Hoepfner, Ken Novak

Activities and Announcements

• Our **All-Society Building Clean-up Day** is on *Saturday, September 4th*, beginning at 10 a.m. Building Co-Chairs Scott Walton and David Wokosin say there will be jobs for both young and old, including window washing, organizing the name tags, straightening the kitchen, library, and Sunday School rooms, and wallpaper stripping in the hallway. Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Scott at sns@swwalton.com or 847-475-0391. Help make our building shine for the new season!

• Our **Ethical Action** chair, Marne Glaser, has resigned, citing a very busy personal schedule. "I'm proud of the work we did on local service projects at WTTW, the Rice Center, the Night Ministry, and several soup kitchens," she says, also pointing to our participation in demonstrations at coal plants and for peace. Marne calls for some other interested member "to take the reins." Who out there can try matching Marne's dedication and energy?! Let's hear from you.

• A special **Flu Shot Clinic** is being hosted at the Society by member and Walgreen's pharmacist Tiffany Ziegler after the program on *Sunday, September 19th*. The cost for the flu vaccination is \$29.99 and you must be at least 14 years old. Mandatory application forms are available in our information racks. For more information, please contact Tiffany at 847-675-4724 or tiffnoecker@live.com.

• Our **Weekly Program Reminder** is emailed to anyone who wants to be regularly informed of the coming week's meetings and activities. To be on the list, simply sign up on our web site at www.ethicalhuman.org or call the office.

• **Get our free electronic newsletter.** It comes sooner and saves postage. You can subscribe from our web site at www.ethicalhuman.org. A subscription to the printed newsletter is \$20 per year if you're not a member, a contributing friend, or new on the mailing list.

• Our **Ethnic Dinner Out**, organized by Richard Curren, resumes next month. So does our **Women's Group**, led by Ellen Rae. See announcements in the October newsletter.

Sunday School Scoop . . .

It is my pleasure to again welcome all our new and returning families to the Golden Rule Sunday School. We'll be back in session on September 12th, with new curriculum and activities, as well as many of our fond traditions. Registration materials went out in August, and our Back-to-Sunday-School potluck picnic will be on Saturday, September 11th, at the home of Carolyn Welch and Raam Jani.

We encourage all our families to participate at whatever level they feel comfortable—coming to our Sunday School committee meetings on the 3rd Sunday of the month, volunteering to teach or to lead activities, supporting our Ethical Action projects, or bringing snacks for the kids. We're all looking forward to another great year!

—Sharon Appelquist, Director

From the President . . .

Chicago summers are too short. It seems as though Memorial Day was just a few weeks ago—and now Labor Day is already upon us. But looking back, Society members enjoyed a summer of good platforms, social get-togethers, and, hopefully for most, some relaxing getaways. Some of us will end the summer by joining, appropriately enough, in a Labor Day weekend workday, to address those nagging tasks around the building that don't otherwise get done.

As has become their habit, the Sunday Program committee has been lining up some excellent speakers for the fall season. Our many other vital committees have been hard at work too, but more help is always welcome. The Society runs on volunteers, and there are many ways to get involved. As mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter, a particular need at the moment is an energetic individual to head up the important Ethical Action committee.

So enjoy the remaining warm days and cool nights—and the thought-provoking community found here at the Ethical Society. Welcome!

—Steve Julstrom

Our People . . .

• **Dorothy Lockhart**, longtime Society member, historian, and office administrator, who died in June, will be honored at a special memorial at the Society on Thursday, September 9th, at 6:30 p.m. Dorothy's son David invites all who knew her to come and share their memories. JoAnn Hoepfner will officiate. Refreshments will be served afterward.

• **Mae and Morris Nessenson**, longtime friends of the Society, have become members. Mae, a retired public school teacher, and Morris, a retired restaurant supply manager, live in Lincolnwood. They enjoy our "intelligent people and interesting lectures." Welcome, Mae and Morris!

• **Sylvia Porter**, a veteran of our Film Discussion Group, has also joined the Society. Sylvia lives in West Rogers Park and is a retired ESL teacher. "I enjoy associating with people who question things," she says. A warm welcome, Sylvia!

• **Jan Kuhn** has been named to fill a one-year vacancy on the Board of Trustees. Jan is a dentist and lives in Skokie with her husband, Jeff Kramer. Daughters Jessica and Jill are Sunday School graduates. A member since 1989, Jan is a past Board member, vice president, YES advisor, and Sunday School teacher, and has served on several committees.

The **Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago** is a democratic fellowship and spiritual home for those who seek a rational, compassionate philosophy of life without regard to belief in a supreme being.

Like traditional religious communities, we celebrate births, conduct wedding ceremonies, host memorial services, and provide for the caring, ethical education of our children. We cherish human diversity and focus on what we have in common, not on what keeps us apart. We believe in deed beyond creed and in working for a better world

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2010 CALENDAR

The office of the Society is open every weekday - 10 am to 2 pm.
Call 847-677-3334 with any questions.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Sunday Colloquies (9:30–10:00 a.m.) “Pride” 9/12; “Heart” 9/19; “Community” 9/26	Golden Rule Sunday School: Sundays, 10:30 a.m. to Noon	1	2	3	4	BUILDING CLEAN-UP 10:00 a.m.
5 NO PROGRAM	6	7	8 BOARD OF TRUSTEES 7:15 p.m.	9 DOROTHY LOCKHART MEMORIAL 6:30 p.m.	10	11 2ND SATURDAY COFFEEHOUSE 8:00 p.m.
10:30 ROBERT PRICE “The Gospels: History or Literature?” 12:15 - Fiction Circle	12	13	14	15	16	17
10:30 TRICIA VAN ECK “Socially Engaged Artwork—the Potential of Culture” 12:15 - Flu Shot Clinic - Sunday Program Committee	18	19 FILM DISCUSSION GROUP 7:15 p.m.	20	21	22	23
10:30 RICHARD GOLDWASSER “Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace: The J Street Story” 12:15 - Membership Orientation - Creative Writers	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

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