



CHICAGO ETHICAL HUMANIST

Newsletter of the ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

December 2009

Welcome to Our Sunday Morning Programs in December

JOSEPH PERSKY, professor of economics at the University of Illinois at Chicago, speaks **Sunday, December 6th**, on “**A Permanent Jobs Program to Meet Human Needs.**”

In light of the current economic crisis, Persky will discuss “long-standing structural problems” in the U.S. economy. He will emphasize investment in the public sector and “meaningful progressive taxation” to finance it.

Our **ANNUAL WINTER FESTIVAL** is on **Sunday, December 13th**. Guided by Tom Hoepfner and Sunday School director Sharon Appelquist, we’ll again have our traditional celebration of the winter solstice, with a candle-lighting ceremony and decoration of a “mitten tree.” There will be readings, music, group singing, and refreshments. Your donations

of new winter clothing and non-perishable food items will adorn the tree and be passed on to those in need.

WILLIAM HIRSTEIN, professor of philosophy at Elmhurst College, speaks **Sunday, December 20th**, on “**Con-fabulation: Why People Don’t Say ‘I Don’t Know.’**”

Hirstein will discuss how neurological patients sometimes give false answers to questions, even without intending to deceive. He will try to explain why normal people sometimes give false answers rather than admitting ignorance.

NOTE: There is no regular Sunday morning program on December 27th. Programs will resume in the new year with our annual Living Ethics series, beginning January 3rd.

Coming Society Events

- Our **Sunday Morning Colloquy** topics this month are *Strangers* on **December 6th**, *Humor* on **December 13th**, and *Wonder* on **December 20th**. Led by Ken Novak, our small, nonjudgmental group meets in the library at 9:30 a.m. to share and examine how we feel about our lives.
- Our bimonthly **Ethical Humanities** nonfiction group meets on **Sunday, December 6th**, at 12:15 p.m. We will discuss Robert Wright’s *The Evolution of God*. Recently featured on Bill Moyers’ Journal, Wright examines the notions of gods from earliest history to modern times, how those ideas have grown with civilization, and their meaning for today.
- Our **Film Discussion Group**, led by John Ungashick, meets on **December 14th**, the *second* Monday of the month, at 7:15 p.m. We’ve again chosen two current films. *Precious* is the almost unendurable but life-affirming story of an abused, obese teenage girl. It stars Gabourey Sidibe and was directed by Lee Daniels. *The Messenger* is about an Iraqi war veteran with the wrenching task of notifying the families of those killed in action. It was directed by Oren Moverman and stars Ben Foster and Woody Harrelson.
- Our **Second Saturday Coffee House**, hosted by Vicki Elberfeld, is on **December 19th**—the *third* Saturday of the month. The **Bittersweet Christmas Band** is featured, with singer/songwriter musicians Phil Cooper, Kate Early, Margaret Nelson, and Susan Urban performing songs from many traditions, including Solstice and Hanukkah. Because of the longer performance, there will be no open mike. We start at 8 p.m. The \$7 minimum donation includes refreshments.

- Our **Creative Writers** group, led by John Taylor, meets on the *third* Sunday this month, **December 20th**, at 12:15 p.m. Newcomers are invited to come and share their short, original works with us.
- Our bimonthly **Fiction Circle**, led by Ken Novak, meets on **Sunday, January 3rd**, at 12:15 p.m. We’ll discuss Anne Tyler’s 2001 novel *Back When We Were Grownups*. “Once upon a time,” the novel begins, “there was a woman who discovered she had turned into the wrong person.” The book is in paperback and at libraries.

Recent Sunday Programs

- **Ellen Estrada**, principal of Walter Payton College Prep. high school in Chicago, spoke on **October 25th**. Her topic was “**Creating Excellence in Urban Public High Schools.**” The moderator was Katie Merrell.

Estrada declared, “excellence in education is the issue of the 21st Century.” Noting that “globalization is changing our economy” she said “we are being outpaced by schools in India and China” and called for teaching “respect for a diverse world.” She stressed the teaching of critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.

(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)

Estrada called for better leadership in our schools and more support for the principals. Citing the success of her own efforts at Payton, she said we need to give incentives for teachers “to be creative and to take risks.” Let’s ask, she said, “Who made the best mistakes?”

• **Charlie Shields** and **Trey Waters**, former Peace Corps volunteers, spoke **November 1st** on “**The Peace Corps in the 21st Century.**” The moderator was Tom Hoepfner.

Shields said the stated purpose of the Peace Corps is to help people in other countries and to improve understanding between them and Americans. He noted that today there are 7,000 volunteers in 76 countries, working mostly in education, health, and business and environmental development.

Shields described his two years in Azerbaijan, where he helped form English language clubs, a sports league, and a summer youth camp. Waters described his work in Ghana, where he helped people manage tourist attractions, develop a weaving co-op, organize a radio show, and help in HIV/AIDS prevention. “We met some amazing people,” Shields said. “We learned that people have different ways of living,” Waters added. They noted their work was often difficult and not always fun, but was an invaluable experience.

• **William McNary**, president of USAction and co-Executive Director of Citizen Action/Illinois, spoke **November 8th** on “**Winning Quality, Affordable Health Care for All.**” The moderator was Alan Kimmel.

McNary’s spirited talk came the morning after the U.S. House of Representatives had passed a health care bill. He proudly described how his and other groups had joined to build support for the legislation. He applauded the inclusion of a public option and said “We must no longer be held hostage by the insurance companies.” He quoted Sen. Ted Kennedy’s condemnation of the current system for “quality that is unbelievably poor and cost that is unbelievably high.”

McNary pointed out that the taxpayers currently provide excellent health insurance for members of Congress. “If it’s good enough for them, it’s good enough for us,” he thundered. He urged the audience to thank our Representatives who voted yes and to call Senators Durbin and Burris to support a strong health insurance bill in the Senate.

• **Julie Wosk**, author and professor of art and English at the Maritime College of the State University of New York, spoke **November 15th** on “**Women and the Machine.**” The moderator was Ellen McManus.

The movement of large numbers of women into the industrial workforce in the last century has “transformed their lives,” Wosk declared. She recounted how women were ridiculed in the media with jokes about women drivers and routinely denied access to many professions.

Wosk said the biggest advances for women came during

World War II, when they replaced the men who had left for the armed forces. Although many left the work force when the men returned, she pointed out that women have now come to work on all jobs. She noted, however, that women themselves continued to be “treated as machines,” both as sex objects and as “the perfect woman” in the home. Wosk illustrated her remarks with slides of humorous caricatures of women in historical cartoons, posters, and photos.

From the President . . .

This is a difficult message to compose. Usually I thank members for tasks well done, wish them happy holidays, or request support for those struggling with loss. The last few weeks have been painful for our Society. Nasty, untrue things have appeared on blogs and in letters. Some of us feel less secure. We will learn from our experience, we will heal, and the Society will thrive. It is too good not to.

For me most importantly it is not that we have blind allegiance to each other. My dad said, “If we both always agree, then one of us ain’t necessary.” But it is imperative that we protect our democratic underpinnings.

Our committees do their best. They debate, cast votes, and reach decisions. Not all will agree with those decisions, whether a decision involves the color of a couch or the choice of a speaker. If one disagrees there are ways to protest and appeal. Our bylaws and committees are open to all. Loyalty may not be due to committees or individuals, but it is due to our democratic process.

Be well, thanks, and enjoy the holidays.

—Matt Cole

Sunday School Scoop . . .

A special thanks to Marilee Cole and Nina Weiss for working with our children to construct some amazing wood sculptures. Look for the display in the garden soon. Thanks also to Jan Kuhn, Hadassah Dolgoff, and Gail Hardesty for sharing a special day of music and stories, while JoAnn Hoepfner, Aimee Neumann, and I were in New York for the AEU Religious Education conference last month. On November 1st we all enjoyed a day exploring at Emily Oaks.

For our Winter Festival this month we’re encouraging our kids to share their talents, and hoping everyone will bring in some items to decorate our mitten tree. We’re partnering with the YES group in a holiday toy drive. We hope you’ll help us in this effort to brighten the holidays for kids who need some extra cheer. The Sunday School will be closed on the 20th and 27th, but back in session on January 3rd.

—Sharon Appelquist, Director

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 believe in deed beyond creed and in working for a better world.

Activities and Announcements

• Our **Annual Pledge Drive** is off to a great start. By mid-November, we had pledges of \$18,742 from 20 members, 13 of them sustaining. This is 33 percent of our \$57,000 goal. Your generous responses will go a long way in meeting our financial commitments for the coming year. Questions can be directed to John Ungashick at 847-492-9459.

• Our **Ethical Action** group is again sponsoring its Rice Children's Center Holiday Store. Our donations of new or like-new items are for the children at Rice to wrap and give as holiday gifts. Donations can be left in the auditorium balcony until December 13th.

Members and friends of the Society marched in an International Day of Climate Action parade last month protesting the CO₂ emissions at a coal-burning electric power plant in Pilsen. They carried the Society's Ethical Action banner.

• Our **Women's Group** meets on Thursday, December 3rd, 7–9 p.m. The topic for discussion and personal reflection is women's poetry. Join us for inspiration and friendship.

• Our **YES (Youth of Ethical Societies)** group is selling fresh baked goods on Sunday, December 6th, during coffee hour. The used-media drive for the Alternative Community Training Program is continuing, with collection boxes in the atrium. A Holiday Toy Drive is planned with the Sunday School. The deadline for donations of new, unwrapped toys, to be distributed by the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation to needy children, is Sunday, December 13th.

Youngsters from our Society attended the national YES conference at the Washington (DC) Ethical Society last month. It was a time to have fun and share experiences with other Ethical teenagers. Next year they'll meet in Chicago.

• Our **End-of-the-Year Clean-up** is on Sunday, December 27th, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided for helpers. Children are welcome. Last year over 25 members and friends helped out. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Scott and Sue Walton at 847-475-0391 before 7 p.m. Saturday. Thanks.

• At our **Sustainable Energy Forum**, hosted by the Environmental Footprint Committee on Sunday, November 1st, David Wokosin and Steve Freedman described various transportation, heating, and electricity options. A highlight were demos of two electric and vegetable-oil-powered cars. The committee meets next on Sunday, December 13th.

• Our tour of the **Illinois Holocaust Museum** in Skokie is scheduled for Sunday, January 24th, at 2:00 p.m. The full price is only \$10 (\$8 for seniors). To make or confirm a reservation, please contact Marilee Cole at 847-853-8050 or at Marileesgarden@comcast.net.

• Hosting our **Sunday coffee hours** is one of the shared responsibilities of members. Hospitality Committee chairs Sue Walton and Judy Carney point to their carefully-worked-out assignments and are very pleased and grateful for the positive responses they've received.

• The **Society's website** is being redesigned. Volunteers are needed to write, design, and edit it. For information, contact Ken Novak at 847-380-4314 or kennovak@gmail.com.

• Our **Tribute Fund** is a way we honor each other—such as condolences on the loss of a loved one and congratulations on a birthday, anniversary, graduation, or personal achievement. Each tribute is printed in the newsletter. Forms are on the literature tables.

• **Getting married?** Our Ethical Officiants—Marne Glaser, JoAnn Hoepfner, Tom Hoepfner, and Ken Novak—serve just like ministers and rabbis of traditional religious congregations in officiating at important life events. Authorized by the American Ethical Union, they perform marriages, baby namings, and memorial services. For a caring, secular ceremony, inquire at our office.

• **Become a member of the Society**—if you have enjoyed our varied Sunday morning programs or have exchanged ideas and made new friends at our activities and discussions—and if you share our ethical humanist outlook and are looking for a caring community. Membership Chair Tom Hoepfner invites you to call him at 847-256-3622 with any questions. Or come to the next Membership Orientation on Sunday, December 20th, at 12:15 p.m.

Our People . . .

• **Roz Lund**, longtime member of the Society and wife of member Van Lund, died in Evanston on October 28th at the age of 96. Roz was a gifted writer and actor and a fighter for peace and social justice. We will miss her very much. Our condolences to Van and her sons Marc and George.

• **Ken Novak** has lost his father, John Novak, who died in October in Saratoga Springs, NY, at the age of 88. Ken's dad was one of the first American soldiers to walk into the Dachau concentration camp at the end of World War II. We're deeply sorry for your loss, Ken.

Tribute Fund

• *Condolences to **Ken Novak** on the death of his father. Our hearts are with you, Ken* —from **THE MEN'S GROUP**

• *Get well wishes to **Brian Barnes**.*

• *Condolences to **Ken Novak** on the loss of his dad.*

• *Condolences to the **Kashyap/Merrell** family on the loss of **Mahalo**.* —from **MATT AND MARILEE COLE**

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: Matt Cole, President; Yolanda Adler, Vice President; Paul Ozarowski, Secretary; John Ungashick, Treasurer; Lisa Crowe, Sheila Caplan Curren, Steven Freedman, David Hardesty, Oliver Pergams, Renee Sullivan, Sue Walton, Carolyn Welch

Sunday School Director: Sharon Appelquist

Newsletter Editor: Alan Kimmel

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

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY

DECEMBER 2009 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		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> Sunday Colloquies (9:30–10:00 a.m.) “Strangers” 12/6; “Humor” 12/13; “Wonder” 12/20 </div>		1	2	3 WOMEN’S GROUP 7:00 p.m.	4	5		
10:30 JOSEPH PERSKY “A Permanent Jobs Program To Meet Human Needs” 12:15 - Ethical Humanities discussion	6	7	8	9 BOARD OF TRUSTEES 7:15 p.m.	10	11	12	
10:30 WINTER FESTIVAL 12:30 - Environmental Committee	13	FILM DISCUSSION GROUP 7:15 p.m.	14	15	16	17	18	19 2ND SATURDAY COFFEE HOUSE 8:00 p.m.
10:30 WILLIAM HIRSTEIN “Confabulation: Why People Don’t Say ‘I Don’t Know’” 12:15 - Creative Writers - Membership Orientation	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
NO PROGRAM End of Year Clean-up	27	28	29	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> Golden Rule Sunday School: Sundays, 10:30 a.m. to Noon Sundays next month: Jan. 3: William Irons; Jan. 10: Alec Klein; Jan. 17: Lainie Ross; Jan. 24: Steve Tammelleo; Jan. 31: Sean Faircloth </div>				

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OF CHICAGO

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