



# CHICAGO ETHICAL HUMANIST

Newsletter of the ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

February 2010

## Welcome to Our Sunday Morning Programs in February

**FRED TSAO**, policy director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, speaks **Sunday, February 7th**, on “**What’s Next in Immigration Reform?**” An attorney and son of immigrants from China, Tsao will give a historical context of “the immigration conundrum we now face as a result of ill-advised and contradictory laws and policies.” He will discuss recent legislative efforts to pass immigration reform and prospects for the coming year.

**JASON MCINNES** and **MARIA MCCULLOUGH**, instructors at the Old Town School of Folk Music, present a program, “**Music for a Musical Life,**” on **Sunday, February 14th**. They will share their joy in developing music education as a step toward living a full life. People of all ages and experience are invited to bring our own musical instruments and to sing and play together as a community.

**BRUCE GANS**, professor of English at Wright Junior College, speaks on **Sunday, February 21st**. His topic is “**The Great Books Curriculum at the City Colleges of Chicago.**” Gans will describe his work in spreading the “Great Books” curriculum to community colleges across the nation. He will discuss how a liberal education calls for exposing students to the best in literature.

**D. J. GROTHE**, new president of the James Randi Educational Foundation, speaks on **Sunday, February 28th**. His topic is “**Secular Ethics: Darwin Made Me Do It.**” Former vice president of the Center for Inquiry and associate editor of *Free Inquiry* magazine, Grothe will discuss how secular ethical systems can replace outmoded, even destructive, religious beliefs about right and wrong. He will explore what Darwin’s theory of evolution tells us about morality.

## Coming Society Events

• **Sunday Morning Colloquy** topics this month are *Gifts* on **February 7th**, *Patience* on **February 14th**, *Forgiving* on **February 21st**, and *Courage* on **February 28th**. Led by Ken Novak, our small, nonjudgmental group meets in the library at 9:30 a.m. to examine how we feel about our lives.

• Our **Ethical Humanities** nonfiction group meets next on **Sunday, February 7th**, at 12:15 p.m. We’ll discuss Jill Bolte Taylor’s *My Stroke of Insight*. Taylor, a brain researcher, suffered a stroke that philosophically influenced how she has faced life since then. A 20-minute précis of her story can be easily accessed at <http://bit.ly/5NtoSu>.

• Our **Second Saturday Coffee House** is on **February 13th**, at 8 p.m. We’ll welcome back “**A Prairie State Companion,**” in a special benefit for member *Brian Barnes*. Written and directed by *Ken Novak*, the program will feature satire, songs, and sketches by Ken, *Mary Bachman*, *Lisa Crowe*, *Vicki Elberfeld*, and *David and Gail Hardesty*. There is a \$10 cover, which is for coffee, hot chocolate, and other refreshments. Bring your friends for another great time.

• Our **Film Discussion Group**, led by John Ungashick, meets on **Monday, February 15th**, at 7:15 p.m. We’ve again chosen two current films. *White Ribbon* depicts the cruelty of small-town German life before World War I. Directed by Michael Haneke, it stars Christian Friedel and Leonie Benesch. *Crazy Heart* is the story of a wayward but charming country singer. It was directed by Scott Cooper and stars

Jeff Bridges, Maggie Gyllenhaal, and Robert Duvall.

• Our annual **Family Potluck Supper** is on **Saturday, February 20th**, at 5 p.m. We’re bringing back the ever-popular karaoke featuring master of ceremonies Ken Novak. Ed Thompson will be in charge of games and activities suitable for all ages. The main course will be tender spaghetti and tasty meat and vegetarian sauces. We’re asked to provide bread, salads, desserts, and adult beverages for six people. Those without potluck dishes will pay \$10. For what to bring and how you can help, please contact Sue Walton (847-475-0391) or Katie Wokosin (847-361-5642) by February 19th.

• A special interactive **AEU Workshop** is planned for **Saturday, February 27th**, beginning with a soup-and-sandwich lunch at 11:45 a.m. and ending at 2:30 p.m. All members and friends of the Society are invited to a discussion with Mary Wittry, president of the American Ethical Union, Ron Solomon, treasurer of the AEU, and recent presidents of our Society—Matt Cole, Scott Walton, Susan Burck, Ken Novak, and Tom Hoepfner. Mary and Ron will also meet with us in a Q/A session after the Sunday morning platform.

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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.

(Coming Society Events continued from page 1)

- Our **Creative Writers** group, led by John Taylor, meets on the fourth **Sunday** this month, **February 28th**, at 12:15 p.m. Newcomers are welcome to come and share their short, original works with us.

- Our bimonthly **Fiction Circle**, led by Ken Novak, meets on **Sunday, March 7th**, at 12:15 p.m. We'll discuss *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, by Michael Chabon, author of *Kavalier and Clay*. This detective story is set in an alternative world in which the world's Jews resettle in Alaska. The book is available in bookstores. For an audio copy, contact Ken Novak at kennovak@gmail.com. or 847-414-4314.

## Recent Sunday Programs

- **William Hirstein**, professor of philosophy at Elmhurst Junior College, ended 2009 on **December 20th** with a talk on "**Confabulation: Why People Don't Say 'I Don't Know'**" The meeting was moderated by Vicki Elberfeld.

Hirstein defined confabulation as giving false answers while not necessarily intending to lie or deceive. He described "protective denials," in which we confuse intentions with actions. He described how we try to separate reality from fantasy. He noted the different functions of each hemisphere of the brain.

Hirstein discussed how we impart knowledge to each other. He asked, "How do we know what we don't know?" "How do we feel doubt?" He stressed the importance of emotional reactions as well as thoughts. "The truth is depressing," he said. But we "try to make sense of the world" and ponder "the meaning of our lives." In confabulation, he concluded, "the brain tries to fill in the blank spots."

- **William Irons**, professor of anthropology at Northwestern University, opened our Living Ethics series on **January 3rd**. He spoke on "**The Evolutionary Foundation of Morality**." The meeting was moderated by David Hardesty.

Irons observed, "Every culture has a belief in and argues about what is right and what is wrong." While "moral systems have evolved for achieving cooperation among people," he noted that "evolution explains what has happened but not what should happen." He pointed to increasing numbers of people engaging in the moral argument but also to a persisting "power differential" among them.

Irons discussed the "evolution of behavior," using game theory to illustrate cooperation among social animals like ourselves. He talked about reciprocity, punishment, and commitment, and how the development of morality was facilitated by language. "We move from science to ethics when we argue about what we should do," he concluded."

- **Alec Klein**, professor of journalism at Northwestern University, continued our Living Ethics series on **January 10th**. He spoke on "**The Ethics of Compassionate Journalism**." The meeting was moderated by Ed McManus.

Klein, a former investigative reporter at *The Washington*

*Post*, told the story of his work in uncovering the deceptive practices of AOL in its 1990s merger with TimeWarner. He described his successful efforts both to protect his sources and "to keep them in the story." He said "I not only fact check but fair check." He contended that "The facts are not as important as peoples' lives."

"I always incorporate ethics in my teaching at Northwestern," Klein said. "Young people want to change the world. They are incredibly idealistic. But they need guidance." He pointed to both the power and the competitiveness of the media. He said reporters "must be incredibly careful." In the end, he said, "the stories are about the people."

- **Lainie Ross**, professor of pediatrics and medical ethics at the University of Chicago, continued our Living Ethics series on **January 17th**. She spoke on "**Ethical and Policy Issues in Pediatric and Genetic Testing**." The meeting was moderated by Katie Merrell.

Ross began by saying that unlike originally posited by Mendelian genetics, "There is no single gene for each physical characteristic" we inherit from our parents. Illustrated by several case studies, she then discussed ethical questions arising from decisions to intervene medically in problems arising from inherited genetic defects in children.

"We each have the right to accept or refuse medical intervention" for ourselves, Ross said. "I talk with parents over the risks and benefits of genetic testing." But, she said, the state claims it may intervene in medical decisions for children if it can show "abuse or neglect" or "a threat to the community." The question is, "Who makes the choice?"

## Our People . . .

- **Mark and Karen Kurowski** are new members of the Society. They live in Schaumburg. Mark is an attorney and Karen is a veterinarian. In us they found a secular Sunday School for their 5-year-old son and a related community for themselves. Welcome, Mark and Karen!

- **Louise Cromer** is also a new member. She lives in Evanston and is a retired public high school English teacher. Not only did our name attract her to the Society but also the "lovely, intelligent, and thoughtful people." Thank you and welcome, Louise!

- New members **Tiffany Hoecker** and **Phil Ziegler** were married on December 31st at the Society. Officiating at the New Year's Eve ceremony was Tom Hoepfner. We wish Tiffany and Phil great happiness in sharing their lives.

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** soared to 83 percent of its \$57,000 goal by mid-January. Pledges of \$47,512 were received from 81 members, of which 44 are sustaining. For the 63 members who haven't yet pledged, please send in your pledge even if you can't make the full payment right now. If your present economic situation makes you unable to pledge at least the minimum, contact treasurer John Ungashick at 847-492-9459 for a hardship dispensation.
- Our **Ethical Action** group is serving an early evening soup kitchen meal at St. Paul's Church in Evanston (Maple and Greenwood) on Sunday, February 21st. To take part, sign up on the Ethical Action bulletin board or contact Svetlana Bekman at svetbek@yahoo.com or 847-491-1358.
- **Haitian earthquake relief** efforts will receive the full \$602 collected at our Sunday program on January 17th. Thank you to a very generous crowd!
- Our **Women's Group** meets next on Thursday, February 4th, 7-9 p.m. in the library. We'll again be sharing thoughts about ourselves and our lives.
- Our **YES (Youth of Ethical Societies)** group is having a bagel sale during coffee hour on Sunday, February 28th. Next month they're organizing a ping-pong tournament.
- A **symposium on "Ethics in the 21st Century"** is scheduled for Saturday, May 1st. Jim Kenney will be the leadoff speaker. More details next month—save the date!
- **Getting married? Planning a memorial?** Our Ethical Officiants—Marne Glaser, JoAnn Hoepfner, Tom Hoepfner, and Ken Novak—are authorized by the American Ethical Union to perform marriages, baby namings, and memorial services, just like ministers and rabbis of traditional religious congregations. For a caring, secular ceremony, inquire at our office.
- **Become a member of the Society**—if you've enjoyed our Sunday programs or 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 with any questions at 847-256-3622. Or come to the next Membership Orientation, on Sunday, February 21st, at 12:15 p.m.
- The **Board of Trustees** has set up a committee to propose revisions of the Society bylaws at our Membership Meeting on May 23rd. Scott Walton was named convenor. Ed McManus was named to replace Carolyn Welch, who has resigned from the Board because of her work schedule. Named as Secretary of the Society was Sue Walton, replacing Paul Ozarowski.
- 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.

## From the President . . .

The NFL playoffs are on TV, it's a sunny day, and my dogs want to go to the beach. But I sit typing this column. Why? Answer: Our newsletter editor and chief noodge won't give me a time extension. How can I be so ungrateful? Because it's Presidents Day this month.

OK, January was stupendous: My wife, Marilee, and longtime member Hadassah Dolgoff led us in "Tippity Tip," Hadassah's childhood song. We had our Living Ethics programs on morality, journalism, genetic testing, and the Constitution. We toured the Holocaust Museum, shared an ethnic dinner, discussed films and a book, and raised money for Haiti. Environmental documentary film night debuted along with the Hardestys' new grandbaby. Adult members, YES kids, and Sunday Schoolers all worked on feeding the hungry. Evan Kane helped us see the faces of our beautiful children. To top it off we'll be getting a new officiant and new members have joined the Society.

Forget Presidents Day. January was enough!—**Matt Cole**

## Sunday School Scoop . . .

Thanks so much to Tom Hoepfner for leading our Coming of Age group in a unit on "The Mind That's Mine." Thanks also to those who donated items for our Winter Care Packages. We delivered four boxes of goodies for the homeless clients of Lincoln Park Community Shelter along with our monthly lunches.

Our spring intergenerational program is on February 14th. Bring an instrument or your voice and join in this celebration of music. Afterwards, we'll have a bake sale during coffee hour. We're hoping for a snowy Sunday afternoon soon so we can enjoy a sledding trip to a nearby park. Keep an eye on the weather channel and, as they say—let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!

—**Sharon Appelquist**, Director

### *Tribute Fund*

- *Our condolences, Joe. Goldie was special!*  
—from SUSAN AND GORDON ANDERSON
- *Our condolences, Joe. We're thinking about you.*  
—from FRANK AND MARSHA KOZAK
- *To Joe Wosk. In memory of Goldie.* —from BERNICE LEWE
- *Thanks to Sharon Appelquist, our wonderful office administrator, for two years of efficient, creative, dedicated, and patient work.*  
—from the BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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; Sue Walton, Secretary; John Ungashick, Treasurer; Lisa Crowe, Sheila Caplan Curren, Steven Freedman, David Hardesty, Ed McManus, Paul Ozarowski, Oliver Pergams, and Renee Sullivan.

**Sunday School Director:** Sharon Appelquist

**Newsletter Editor:** Alan Kimmel

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

# ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY

## FEBRUARY 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
10:30 <b>SEAN FAIRCLOTH</b> JAN 31 "One Nation Under the Constitution"	1	2	3	4 <b>WOMEN'S GROUP</b> 7:00 p.m.	5	6
10:30 <b>FRED TSAO</b> 7 "What's Next in Immigration Reform?" 12:15 - Ethical Humanities discussion	8	9	10 <b>BOARD OF TRUSTEES</b> 7:15 p.m.	11	12	13 <b>2ND SATURDAY COFFEE HOUSE</b> 8:00 p.m.
10:30 <b>JASON MCINNES/ MARIA McCULLOUGH</b> 14 "Music for a Musical Life" 12:30 - Environmental Committee	15 <b>FILM DISCUSSION GROUP</b> 7:15 p.m.	16	17	18	19	20 <b>FAMILY POTLUCK SUPPER</b> 5:00 p.m.
10:30 <b>BRUCE GANS</b> 21 "Great Books Curriculum at City Colleges of Chicago" 9:30 - Sunday School Committee 12:15 - Membership Orientation	22	23	24	25	26	27 <b>AEU WORKSHOP</b> 11:45 a.m.
10:30 <b>D.J. GROTHE</b> 28 "Secular Ethics: Darwin Made Me Do It" 12:15 - Creative Writers	29	30	<b>Sunday Colloquies (9:30-10:00 a.m.)</b> <i>"Gifts" 2/7; "Patience" 2/14; "Forgiving" 2/21; "Courage" 2/28</i>  <b>Golden Rule Sunday School:</b> Sundays, 10:30 a.m. to Noon			

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OF CHICAGO

7574 N. Lincoln Avenue, Skokie, IL 60077-3335  
 Phone: (847) 677-3334; Fax: (847) 677-3335  
 Web Site: [www.ethicalhuman.org](http://www.ethicalhuman.org)  
 E-mail: [office@ethicalhuman.org](mailto:office@ethicalhuman.org)



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