

ETHICAL OUTLOOK

TWO WEST 64TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10023 TEL.212 874-5210 E-MAIL OFFICE@NYSEC.ORG

August Sunday Programs **10:30 AM—Ceremonial Hall**

August 7

**Stories from the Fieldston Ethics
Reader**

Patricia Brudner Debrovner,
Society Member
John Kreuttner Presides

August 14

**Ramifications of “The Kite
Runner”**

Joseph Marvel, Society Member
Frank Prescod Presides

August 21

**Compassion, the Root of All
Ethics**

Dr. Larry Yates, Society Member
Elaine Berman Presides

August 28

**Ethics and the Theater, “The
Price”**

Patricia Bruder Debrovner,
Society Member
Carol Nadell Presides

September 4

**The Working Class Exodus from
the Roosevelt Coalition**

Abe Markman, Society Member
Andra Miller Presides

Annual Report

Senior Leader

Dr. Khoren Arisian

“The bond which connects us is holy because the things we try to do in common are holy.”

—Felix Adler

“Like Michael Jordan but not like Jesus, Dr. Khoren Arisian just had to come back.”

—Nate Schweber

(Interview with Khoren Arisian in *West Side Spirit*, April 28, 2005)

Mr. Schweber, an enthusiastic young reporter for the above weekly publication, was apparently much taken with the very idea of Ethical Culture and its contemporary humanist incarnation in the NY Society when he and I engaged in a lively hour-long interview. Although he took copious notes, he didn't show me the final result, which was personally flattering; however, he was mistaken in some of his equations of Society statistics with some of our present institutional programmatic undertakings. Most egregiously perhaps, Nate innocently confused the cumulative attendances at our five Advocacy Forums and Cultured Comedy audiences that over the past year attracted close to 3,000 mostly newer folks to those midweek events, equating that figure with the number of people who come to the Society for our regular Sunday morning platform meetings! Would it were the case, as it probably was during much of the period from 1890 to 1910—a golden age, our very own *la belle epoch* when members and friends of the Society eagerly anticipated Dr. Adler's every word at Carnegie Hall. Our splendid Austrian succession edifice, even when packed to the rafters, cannot hold more than 850-900

people at a single sitting. Be all this as it may, the opening sentence in Nate Schweber's article is quirkily inspired, apropos, and amazingly accurate.

For assuredly I finally did decide to accept the Society's leadership invitation “to come back,” though not until I had

overcome a barrage of serious doubts about the wisdom of returning 20 years later at an age when most Americans look forward to ambling about as amiably as possible in retirement. I had to convince myself that I could summon up the institutionally required burst of useful professional leadership energy for a limited number of years while I still had good health and most of my wits about me.

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Emerson, let's recall, virtually liberated 19th century Unitarianism from its thralldom to Protestant Christianity while predicting as well the prospective emergence of “a new church founded on moral science” that Adler in fact invented.

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Staff

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 Kate Lovelady, Leader Intern
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 Susanna Frazer, Membership Director
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Senior Leader
(Continued from page 1)

To have been a successor, twice removed, as Principal Minister to the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, where John Dietrich had fashioned and introduced a fully developed non-theistic humanism into the inhospitable environment of a national association of liberal churches whose clergy and lay leaders believed they together represented the Boston acme of Protestant modernity, and now, to have occupied as well the post of Senior Leader, in this instance several times removed,

I happen to believe we are at an authentically exciting and critical juncture in our Society's long, rich and distinguished history.

from Felix Adler, Ethical Culture's founding Leader, is to feel doubly blessed, honored, and thankful as I enter upon the final quarter of my life in retirement, which may turn out to be the best period yet. Isn't it amazing that Ralph Waldo Emerson, that eternal fount of radical spiritual inspiration who has remained the foremost shaping influence in my own career and in that of numerous colleagues, exercised a historically transforming effect upon both Adler and Dietrich that led to lasting changes in the very conception and practice of humanistic liberal religion in America? Emerson, let's recall, virtually liberated 19th century Unitarianism from its thralldom to Protestant Christianity while predicting as well the prospective emergence of "a new church founded on moral science" that Adler in fact invented.

In light of these musings, I happen to believe we are at an authentically exciting and critical juncture in our

Society's long, rich, and distinguished history. We've become so energized across the board by several new initiatives that we appear at once enthused and exhausted by all the changes so far put in place in regard to much of our sharply focused and original programming, staff and board reorganization, and shared activist outreach into the wider community of the West side in particular. A minor negative to this largely positive development has begun to manifest itself when it seems we're competing against ourselves in scheduling events large and small without our committees and recent proliferat-

ing groups adequately informing one another of their differing activities and purposes. When we learn how to take an abiding interest in one another, not

just in our preferred realms of activity, a clearer view of the whole as being more than the sum of its parts may well ignite a synergistic reaction that will at once lift our spirits and increase our numbers significantly in the years ahead. In thus helping one another contribute to the common good within these walls and without, we shall keep ourselves alive to the degree we vigorously respond to the Founder's challenging ethical imperative, "What is it right to do now?"

For whenever diagnosis and therapy match, we suddenly discover a common purpose of unifying consequence; fulfilling it becomes the practical measure of its potency and meaningfulness. Determination and persistence in doing individually and together what it is "right to do now" can only energize us to forge fresh levels of rewarding relationships. In short: putting key ethical ideals to work by joining our hearts, hopes, and heads, linking the

resultant values to the ends of social reform, raises the eternal quest for justice to its deserved lofty place in the shared work of democracy.

President

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh

Overview:

The last year has been a time of significant change at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. In that time, we have:

- Completed refurbishing our landmark auditorium;
- Reconfigured our staff;
- Developed provocative and informative programming that has brought thousands of people through our doors;
- Significantly increased our presence and name recognition in New York City;
- Begun to make progress in addressing budget deficits that have plagued the Society for years;
- Addressed the issue of determining our true membership numbers so that we now have an honest basis for assessing growth;
- And have arguably positioned the Society for a very positive future.

While the above suggests that we are doing quite well, and I believe that we are, there remain significant challenges. In particular, while the financial situation of the Society is stabilizing, we still operate at a deficit, and we have some hard work to do to fully balance our operating budget and to secure the Society's future by beginning to re-grow the Society's endowments, which are at an all time low as a result of years of deficit spending and the need to repair and refurbish our building. Most of us believe that a balanced budget should be achievable within one to one and a half years, but it is clear that hard work and a few hard choices will be needed to make it a reality.

Additionally, while there are some encouraging signs, we have yet to experience real growth in membership in spite of the new audiences to whom we have begun to reach out. What I think we can say is that it appears we are beginning to recruit members with a broader range of talents and communal connections than has been the case in the recent past. We are actively working on membership recruitment and retention, and I look forward to sharing ideas on this at the upcoming AEU Assembly.

Some things of which to be proud:

As part of a strategy I like to describe as "increasing our sphere of contact," we have moved strongly to develop noteworthy programming that will attract people through our doors.

There are two purposes to this. First, I strongly believe that if we are going to occupy this prime piece of real estate, we must make it a resource to the community, one that invites people through our doors for significant programming on the issues of our time and consistently presents an ethical perspective to them. Secondly, in doing so, we are seeking to enlarge our sphere of contact as much as possible. Ethical Humanism is a particular choice that only a small portion of the population has exhibited any interest in making. It seems clear that if we are going to generate significant membership growth, we have to get to know a lot of people. Furthermore, we have come to the conclusion that we will find additional strength in having a lot of people related to us who believe in what we do, but who are not necessarily interested in full membership.

Programming:

In 2004 and 2005 we presented a number of significant programs that filled the auditorium, sometimes to overflowing.

• **February 1, 2004:** Paul Krugman spoke on "The Present National Crisis and America's Future" before a crowd of approximately 750 on Sunday morning;

• **February 4, 2004:** Hosted an event sponsored by **Americans Coming Together** and organized by **Laurie and Larry David** to educate New Yorkers on a strategy to change the leadership in America in 2004, an invitation-only event that had most of Hollywood East, as well as many other notable personalities, in the building;

• **March 24, 2004:** Co-sponsored, with **The Nation Institute**, a conversation between **Cornell West** and the Nobel Prize Laureate, **Toni Morrison**, on the current political climate;

• **March 31, 2004:** Presented a forum, "**The Unholy Alliance Between Politics and Religion**," featuring **Lewis Lapham**, author and editor of *Harper's* magazine, and **Barry Lynn**, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State;

• **April 13, 2004:** Presented a forum, "**The Dynastic Presidency 2004 and the Religious Right**," featuring **Kevin Phillips**, radio/tv commentator and author, and **Charles Lewis**, author;

• **April 27, 2004:** Co-sponsored with **American Place Theater**, *Secret Life of the Bees*, by **Sue Monk Kidd**, hosted by **Nathan Lane**;

• **June 30, 2004:** Presented a forum, "**Can America be a Democracy and an Empire Too?**" featuring **Ambassador Joseph Wilson**, **Todd Gitlin**, and **Benjamin Barber**;

• **September 8, 2004:** Presented a forum, "**The Fear Factor: The Political Use and Abuse of 9/11**," featuring **Craig Unger**, **Nadine Strossen**, and **Peter Singer**;

- **November 11, 2004:** Co-sponsored with **American Place Theater**, *The Things They Carried*, by **Tim O'Brien**;
- **December 7, 2004:** Presented a forum, “**One Nation Divisible: Where Do We Go From Here?**” featuring **Richard Clarke, Amy Goodman, Greg Palast, and Esther Kaplan**;
- **March 10, 2005:** Co-sponsored a presentation on Global Warming by **Al Gore**;
- **March 15, 2005:** Presented a forum, “**Social Security: Is It Really a Crisis?**” featuring **Paul Krugman, Michael Tanner and Joshua Marshall**;
- **April 6, 2005:** Co-sponsored, with *The Nation* and *Economist* magazines, a debate, “**What is Good for Wal-Mart is Good for America?**”

Additionally, we presented:

- A monthly “**Cultured Comedy Club**,” featuring political and social humor with the likes of **Scott Blake-man, Nancy Giles, and Reno**;
- Ethical Family Fridays, “**It Takes an Ethical Village to Raise Ethical Children and Build Family Bonds.**” This program was aimed at parents and children together;
- A “**Distinguished Community Service Award**” to **Nicholas D’Agostino**, founder of D’Agostino Supermarkets, for his significant philanthropic contributions to the New York City community.

We are additionally proud of:

- The continued efforts of the **Social Service Board**, which include: the running of our homeless shelter, the homeless artist workshops, and the Supervised Visitation Program, and sponsorship of youth soccer and other programs that focus on the welfare of children.

Challenges ahead:

The challenges for the near future are clear. Perhaps the most immediate challenge before the Society is to find a replacement for our Senior Leader, Khoren Arisian, who has announced his retirement at the end of August 2005. Khoren has been an integral part of the Society’s turnaround. He will be sorely missed and we are challenged to find a leader who can help us keep our momentum and, hopefully, add considerably to it. The change comes at a critical time in the life of the Society.

We need to continue to make Ethical Culture relevant to the times. We’ve made great strides through the aforementioned programming, but we need to strengthen our outreach to larger audiences.

We need to develop a relationship with the larger movement of Ethical Culture. We have necessarily been inwardly focused as we attempted to turn our “ship” around, but we are coming to a point where we can be more outwardly focused and should sincerely want to begin to partner with and learn from the rest of the movement, as well as share some of the program riches we have begun to accumulate.

As noted before, we also have the challenge of continuing to improve our financial situation. We believe that the rental of our facilities, which already accounts for 80% of income, will continue to grow and will help us overtake our expenses. Apart from exercising fiscal prudence in budgetary decisions, from which we can only expect relatively small incremental improvements in the future, the two areas we need to focus most strongly on are the growth of membership, which will grow income through pledging, and the development of fundraising initiatives that reach outside of the Society and

into the future. I believe we have set the stage for success in both areas.

It has taken a whole community:

I think I can be justifiably proud of the distance the Society has come during my presidency, but I can and must also say, it has been a communal and collaborative effort all the way. I have built on the solid leadership of my predecessors, Chuck Debrovner and Judy Wallach. It has included the exceptional efforts of the Board, leadership, membership and staff, so much so that listing everyone by name would seem to be the same to you as providing you with the membership and staff phone directory. We have become, in the true sense of the word, a family all working towards the success of the Society.

Executive Director

Robert C. Liebeskind

Hello, for those of you who do not know me, my name is Bob Liebeskind and I have been the Executive Director of the NY Society for Ethical Culture since July, 2004. I came from being an Executive Staff member of a Jewish Community Center in Northern Manhattan for 16 years, thus the role is not new to me, although the organization is. I believe I have acclimated myself quickly to the Society and have very much enjoyed providing leadership to the organization over the past year.

I would like to walk you through the life of the Society and provide you with an update to what has been going on at the Society over the past several months.

I. Staff

- a. We have worked very hard to put together a staff that can work together, that is effective and efficient.
- b. We currently have a staff that is extremely dedicated to the Society and its mission, and all work very hard.

c. I would like to make special note of the following, who have worked very closely with me in working with membership to move the Society forward.

Leslie Doyle, Director of Marketing & Special Events. Leslie is extremely committed to the Society's mission and has worked very hard in developing relationships outside of the Society. This has greatly assisted us in widening our visibility and getting our name out into the larger community.

Susanna Frazer, Membership Director. Suzy works very closely with members to assist them in meeting their needs and is also working very closely with the Membership Growth Committee as we work to enhance the membership of the Society. We have begun to become very successful in recruiting and enrolling new members. This is an ongoing process and one I believe will require some strategic decision making, which will need to take place between the Membership Growth Committee, the Board, and Ms. Frazer. This is very exciting, as it is extremely important to the survival and well being of the Society.

Deborah Foster is a key office member of the Society. Deborah has worked extremely hard to keep the web site up to date, develop necessary flyers for all programs and activities at the Society and to see to it that the day-to-day operations of the Society flow. Deborah works very closely with many Board members and other Society members to assist in meeting the needs of all of you.

Gloria Chandler, my secretary, has been instrumental in acclimating me to the Society over the past year. She continues to see that the day-to-day functions of the office operate in an organized and efficient manner. I thank her for all her dedicated work.

Yolanta Kosmaczweska, our bookkeeper, has been influential in overseeing the bookkeeping and accounting changes which have taken place over the past year. This new system provides me with the opportunity to keep a close eye on the Society's financial status on an ongoing basis. Yolanta works very closely with me.

All of the Maintenance staff; **Antony, David, Leonardo, Joe, Anwar and Jason**. We could not survive without them. We all must offer them a loud round of applause. All of them make themselves available to be sure all programs and activities run effectively, efficiently, and in an organized manner. I thank each of them.

II. Building

We are housed in an old building that has many needs. Again, I wish to thank the maintenance staff, who work each day to keep the building clean and orderly.

While our budget is tight, I would like to note a few things that have been done over the year to keep the building in proper shape.

- Upgrade to sound system. This was extremely necessary for our own programs, as well as for all of the renters. We were experiencing various feedback and other sound problems in the auditorium;

- Elliott Library – complete upgrade – painting of room, straightening of books, rehangings of paintings;

- Social Hall (downstairs) women's bathroom – upgrade – all new toilet seats, general upgrade;

- Resurfaced the floors in the 4th floor hallway and Ceremonial Hall.

As we move into a new fiscal year, we are taking a look at other projects which will need to take place. The decision-making process is still ongoing as to the exact projects which we will take on.

III. Budget

The budget continues to be a struggle. Although I walked into the Society 10 months ago to a very large deficit, I have worked hard over my short tenure here to bring that deficit down for the current fiscal year. Through increasing our revenue and controlling our expenses, I have been able to do that.

Moving into a new fiscal year, effective July 1, we have developed a budget that has a significantly smaller deficit than previous budgets. I believe this is a realistic budget. While we have not been able to develop a balanced budget yet, we are moving toward it.

IV. Community Relationships

One of the things I wanted to do upon coming on staff here was to develop more relationships with the outside community. In evaluating the Society, I felt it was too insular and needed to develop these relationships in order to be a vital not-for-profit organization.

Over the past year we have begun to develop many very positive, strong working relationships. These have assisted the Society in becoming more visible and a community player. I believe this is very important for the survival of a not-for-profit organization.

We have developed relationships with:

- YMCA
- Goddard Riverside Community Center
- Congregation Habonim
- Center for Inquiry
- Gilder Lehrman Foundation
- WBAI, WNYC
- *The Nation* and many more

V. Rentals

Rentals are a very important part to our survival, as they make up a large percentage of our revenue. In my 10

months here, I have developed many, many new relationships, which have led to a significant increase in our rental revenue. Moving into the new fiscal year, I anticipate an additional \$130,000 in rental income. Much of this is due to an increase in long term annual rentals, but some is also due to an increase in one-time users of our renovated auditorium.

I believe we have a wonderful opportunity as we move into the new fiscal year. We are carefully focusing on membership growth, program development and expansion and operating the Society in a fiscally responsible manner. I believe we have the opportunity to achieve all of this over the next year. I am excited to be a part of this growth.

Membership

Suzy Frazer

This has been a tremendous year of growth and learning curves! After every event and project we've done, I always feel that the committee heads, members and staff were not thanked *enough* for all their help to this office, so *THANK YOU, GRAZIE, GRACIAS, MERCI BIEN* and *DZIEKUJE!* (Polish via our own Yolanta, bookkeeper.)

We have added 42 wonderful new members since our last recognition Sunday, May 15, 2004: Talat Ali, Nancy Ambruster, Lynne Barrow, Joyce Brenner, Brunetto Chiarelli, Shu Chin Li, Hilda B. Classon, Patricia Cohen, Naomi Dagen Bloom, Donna Damhorst-Pang, Rita Dawson, Arlene Donar, Dan Frazer, Penelope Ghartey, Michael Gottlieb, Heather M. Grady, Alma Guinness, John Gurney, Jon Liechty, Lee J. Loshak, John H. Lovelady, Ian Lowson, Jane Lowson, Bahram Maskanian, Daniel McCrimmons,

Nancy McGeorge Lovelady, Ryan Paulson, Jackie Pope, Nneka Pope, Dorothy Rangel, Amira Reason, Adriana Ricci, Marianne Sponholz, Carla Stea, Nina Tornabene, Felix Transport, Eric Volpe, Judith Wank, Eric Weynand, Sondra K. Wilson, Maureen Young, and Dominick Zollo.

In Memorium: Maria Cruz, Clara Klaber, Ruth Larson, Elspeth Miller, Janice Sloan, Henrietta Stea, and Kitty Venus.

There are varied paths through which people initially became attracted to and then deepened their relationship with Ethical Culture this year. Our Sunday platforms and reputation bring in a steady stream of new people. (We're trying to get the stream BIGGER!) In addition to our well-received website, we published a comprehensive brochure and new application materials. The powerful, compelling Advocacy Forums brought in huge, interested crowds. Now called Ethical Edge, this very ambitious series continues to keep the Society right out there in the public eye, tackling big issues with top speakers and intelligent, probing questions. These evenings spawned some new follow up get-togethers/orientations on Friday nights. Other new members were intrigued by our adult education courses, especially the recent one on Fundamentalism. The very new Task Force on Corporate Ethics is growing and our new personal development classes—writing, drawing, and singing—are very popular, as were the series, Film Forum and Ethics and the Theatre. The Cultured Comedy Club seems to have developed a cult following and created genuine interest/publicity.

Ethical Family Fridays drew in another group of young children and parents, giving them an alternative

time to a Sunday Morning, and the Caring Committee's program on AIDS and other health issues drew in many newcomers.

Of course, many other new members became aware of NYSEC through a friend, spouse, or family member, or even by just passing the building; obviously, there are many roads to Mecca! I'm really delighted by the vibrancy and ideas that so many diverse people bring in with them and impressed with their real desire to help make the world better.

The Membership Committee is working on ways to be sure that both new and *current, long-time* members feel welcome, listened to, valued, and cherished for their uniqueness. All suggestions will be gladly heard! Have a superb late summer, and see you often, I hope.

Archives

Marc A. Bernstein

Two new projects absorbed much of my energy in 2004-2005. I took on the first at the request of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a division of the New York Public Library located in Harlem. Aware that some famous African-Americans had spoken from the New York Society podium over the years, the Schomburg staff asked me in September to prepare a catalog of Ethical Culture materials bearing on Black culture. I finished the job four months and 17 pages later, with the help of Donna Pang, a member of the Society.

The catalog includes some early gems: Booker T. Washington's type-written address, given to the Society at Carnegie Hall in 1904; the program from the First Universal Races Congress, held in London in 1911, which features speeches by Felix Adler and W. E. B. Du Bois; the NYSEC member-

ship card of James Weldon Johnson, the great Black writer, composer and NAACP activist. Most of the document, however, lists items from the mid-century, when Algernon Black led the Society's efforts to improve conditions for African-Americans. Original newspaper articles about the City-Wide Citizens' Committee on Harlem, an audio CD of Black's memorable address to the New York Society on the Little Rock crisis, a telegram from the White House inviting Black to join President Kennedy for a meeting on civil rights—all this and more fill the pages of the document.

The Schomburg asked me to prepare the catalog with the possibility of a joint program with the New York Society. If such a venture comes to pass, you will certainly hear about it in advance.

The second project I worked on for an extended period, again with the help of Donna Pang, was the brainchild of Suzy Frazer, our Membership coordinator. She asked me to interview Khoren Arisian before he leaves us and get his views on the past, present, and future of Ethical Culture. I am happy to report that interview has been transcribed and, by now, should have been made available to all members. Should you have failed to get a copy, please contact me in the archives.

The next big project from the archives: Donna and I will be taking digital photos of New York City landmarks that are part of our history. Stay tuned.

Ethical Humanist Award Committee

Carol Nadell

The Ethical Humanist Award Committee has had a very active and successful year.

The major event was the presentation of the Ethical Humanist Award on Monday, May 16, 2005 to David Kaczynski, for his courage in recognizing and identifying his brother, Ted Kaczynski, to authorities as the Unabomber, and for his continuing activism against the death penalty in New York State. It was an inspiring, emotional evening for all, and one that truly reflected the essence of what Ethical Culture is all about.

This was the first year that the Committee sought to create an Honorary Committee of distinguished individuals who knew the honoree and agreed to lend their names to the event. Renny Cushing, a member of

Action. This was agreed upon by the Board. It should also be noted that there was no money allotted to the committee for the Award.

In October the committee chose and helped in organizing The Ethical Community Service Award to Nicholas D'Agostino, Jr., Chairman of D'Agostino Supermarkets, Inc. Mr. D'Agostino is dedicated to improving the quality of life for millions of people in the community. He is known for his charitable giving and dedication to Meals on Wheels, Juvenile Diabetes Research, providing medicines for people in Africa suffering with HIV/AIDS, and City Harvest, to name only a few. Actually, it was our member Ben

Nicholas D'Agostino Jr., Chairman of D'Agostino Supermarkets, Inc.,...is dedicated to improving the quality of life for millions of people in the community. The award not only honored Mr. D'Agostino, but also raised money for City Harvest and NYSEC.

the Honorary Committee and executive director of Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights, spoke at the Award ceremony. Sister Helen Prejean, also a member of the Honorary Committee, sent a letter of congratulations to David for the Award and for his noble efforts to abolish the death penalty.

The Committee felt that the Humanist Award should not be a fundraiser, but at the same time shouldn't cost the Society a lot of money. With this in mind, we made the Award ceremony free and open to the public. However, we set a fee of \$35 to attend the reception. Unfortunately, even so, the Ethical Humanist Award cost \$2,076. The money will not come out of the Society's working capital, but rather from endowment money marked for Ethical

Bean, who volunteers for City Harvest, who brought this to the attention of the Awards Committee.

For the first time, the Society made this award a fundraiser. The award not only honored Mr. D'Agostino, but also raised money for City Harvest and NYSEC. Mr. D'Agostino committed himself and the resources of his company for this event. And in spite of rainy weather, the event was well attended and the Society received a check for close to \$5,000.

The Awards Committee is always open to suggestions from members for worthy individuals as candidates for the Ethical Humanist Award and the Ethical Community Service Award.

Membership Growth Committee

Barbara Levenson

The efforts of the Membership Growth Committee in the past year were focused on: (1) developing ways of reaching out to prospective members with information about the Society and encouraging them to get to know the Society better, and (2) assisting new members during their early months in the Society.

We continue to make certain that there is an information table, staffed by volunteers, at every Society event, with material about Ethical Culture, flyers describing upcoming programs, and sign-up sheets. Information from the sign-up sheets is transferred to our data base, enabling us to reach out to people via email, letters, and phone calls from their first visit to our building.

We prepared a colorful new brochure describing the history and meaning of Ethical Culture and the various activities and programs available to members and non-members. This brochure is now prominently displayed and given to all our visitors.

We created a bookmark to give to guests as a reminder of their attendance at Ethical Culture. The laminated bookmark features a color photo of the building on one side and on the other side the quote, The place where people meet to seek the highest is holy ground, and Society contact information.

Throughout the year, we continued holding receptions for new members, each in a different member's home, and concluded in June with a successful and well-attended reception for all members who joined during the last year, at the home of Christine Swann.

Thanks mainly to the efforts of Joe Marvel and Carole Chamlin, we continue to provide the quotes that appear in the Sunday program dealing with ethical humanism by well-known thinkers and writers.

We are the proud sponsors of the Cultured Comedy Club, which this May celebrated its first anniversary.

The members of the committee are: Ben Bean, Bonnie Bean, Muriel Berger, Elaine Berman, Holly Bogdanffy-Kriegh (co-chair), Carole Chamlin, Suzy Frazer (staff advisor), Sheila Kleinwald, Barbara Levenson (co-chair), Joe Marvel, Carol Nadell, Theresa Schultz, and Christine Swann.

Membership Activities Committee

Patricia Berens

We are now officially the Membership Activities Committee. This committee name more accurately reflects what we do: we create activities throughout the year for Society members. We welcome Society members who are not on the committee to join us at our monthly meetings, which are held on the third Wednesday of the month, to give us their ideas for activities and programs.

As usual, we celebrated New Year's Eve together at a gala party preceded by a concert by our resident Strathmere Ensemble. The Social Hall never looked more festive, thanks to Sheila Kleinwald's decorating ability. The only disappointment was Vincent Navarro's laryngitis, which prevented him from assuming his usual role as Master of Ceremonies, but Society President Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh filled in ably and the evening ended with members singing "Auld Lang

Syne" and watching the fireworks in Central Park. Stay tuned for news of a delirious, delicious New Years' Bash next December 31!

Last year's September Retreat to Walker Valley was very well attended and very successful. We'll be sponsoring the next one, set for September 30–October 2. Please contact Suzy Frazer to register ASAP!

Our Film Forum had an exceptionally successful year, with the sterling Richard Bruno as facilitator. Richard will return for the new series with New York City as its theme.

Henryka Komanska led some wonderful hikes that attracted members and new people alike. More to come—keep in shape, socialize, and see wonderful nature spots!

Lastly, our Pot Lucks were great fun and a wonderful way to catch up with friends. We'll have a new schedule for these out shortly. All suggestions and ideas welcome!

Program Committee

Henryka Komanska, Co-chair

The members of the Program Committee are: Henryka Komanska (Co-Chair), Tom Weishaar (Co-Chair), Barbara Levenson, Carol Rost, Christine Swann, and Elizabeth Ungar.

The Program Committee has two functions: it vets and recommends to the Board of Trustees new programs and requests for co-sponsorship, and it facilitates collaboration with NYSEC committees, especially those that have events or programs.

Accomplishments this year included facilitating the coordination of programming activities of NYSEC committees. Specifically, we organized and facilitated the following activities:

1) In lieu of an Activities Fair, committees that needed to sign up members for the new year, such as the reading groups, were promoted at a selected Sunday platform; a sign-up table was later available in the cafeteria.

2) Three All-Committees Meetings

i) On Tuesday, October 12, 2004, Bob Liebeskind and Khoren Arisian discussed new procedures and key plans and initiatives for the fall with the committee chairs, and committee chairs presented their key initiatives for the fall.

ii) On Tuesday, January 11, 2005, the Program Committee reviewed policies and procedures regarding budgeting and co-sponsorships with committee chairs, and the committee chairs presented their key initiatives for the spring. Attendees decided to meet again to focus on Sunday afternoon programs in which all committees could be involved.

iii) On Monday, February 28, 2005, committee chairs brainstormed possible Sunday afternoon program ideas and agreed on selected proposals. However, no committees were willing to take on the task of developing the proposals further.

The Program Committee vetted 10 new programs and requests for co-sponsorship. Two proposals (singing and art classes) were referred to the Membership Activities Committee and were offered in the spring. One (Cabaret Night) was referred to the Fundraising Committee for consideration. One program (Breakthrough on Women's Reproductive Rights) was referred to the Ethical Action Committee. Two programs were approved but later cancelled by the proposers; one program was approved by the Board and another is in the works. Two requests for co-sponsorship were not approved.

This year we clarified the policies under which the Program Committee becomes involved with new programs. Programs offered at NYSEC generally fall into three categories: those generated by a standing committee, new program proposals submitted by individual members, and requests for co-sponsorship submitted by external organizations.

I. Programs generated by a NYSEC standing committee: Generally, these programs do not require approval of the Program Committee. A committee may choose to ask for input from the Program Committee. This is a good idea when a new program requires either financial support beyond the proposing committee's budget or cooperation from other committees. However, if the program involves a co-sponsorship with an outside group, the standing committee should prepare a written request to the Board and be prepared to follow all the Society guidelines for co-sponsored events. There is no need to obtain the Program Committee approval first. When co-sponsoring an event/program with an external organization, in addition to getting the Board's approval, committees need to identify their needs for staff resources (PR, marketing, etc.) to Bob Liebeskind. This will help manage scarce resources better and assure that the membership-generated programs get appropriate support. The programs are given staff/resource support based on the following criteria: potential to increase Society membership, and potential to generate revenue for the Society.

II. External requests for Society co-sponsorship: Requests for reduced-rate rentals are not co-sponsorship requests. They are handled by the staff

as discounted rentals based on room and staff availability. Staff receives the request and sends the requester the guidelines for program proposals developed by the Program Committee. Staff forwards the completed proposal to the Program Committee for evaluation and to determine which standing Society committee might co-sponsor the program. The Program Committee evaluates the proposed program based on the following criteria: whether the program is in accord with the Society's mission and philosophy, and whether the program has the potential to increase Society membership or revenue. If the Program Committee supports the program and a standing committee agrees to be a co-sponsor, the Program Committee sends the Board a summary of the program and the committee's recommendation. The co-sponsoring standing committee is informed of the Board's decision and, if it is positive, is asked to get in touch with NYSEC staff and the requesting organization to coordinate implementation of the program.

III. Request from an individual Society member: The Program Committee tries to determine if the proposed program fits with the mission of a standing committee. If so, the member is referred to that committee. If no suitable co-sponsor is found among standing committees, the Program Committee will ask for a formal proposal, following its guidelines, and ask the member to nominate an ad hoc committee. From there, the process is the same as that for co-sponsorship requested by an external organization.

IV. Staff-initiated proposal: The proposed program is referred to the appropriate NYSEC standing committee.

Sunday Program Committee

Carole Chamlin

This is not my usual Sunday Program Committee report. Instead, I am writing a personal account.

I am leaving the Chair of the Committee after several years. Happily, I will continue to serve as a member. It's been a grand experience and I am grateful for having had the opportunity.

Since joining the Society, twenty plus years ago, Sundays have been important to me; I've looked on this day as a way of ending my old week and beginning the new one. It was, therefore, a great honor to be asked to chair this committee. I accepted this commitment with some trepidation. This was a mighty job! However, with the help, guidance, and support of a superb group of members and staff, we have moved forward in instituting change and improvement while always honoring our tradition.

Now, it's time to hand the baton to Andra Miller. Her skills and fresh ideas will bring even greater Sundays to the Society.

We appeal to the membership to attend our Sunday programs and offer suggestions. Let's enjoy Sundays together.

Social Service Board

David Leiman, Chair

Election of Officers: At the Social Service Board meeting on May 23, 2005 the following were named as officers: Chair: David Leiman; Vice-chair: Phyllis Harrison-Ross; Secretary: Kenneth Wernz; Finance Officer: Michael Torres. Regrettably, Leslie Graifman, who has been immensely helpful as the Financial

Officer, resigned from the Board for personal reasons.

Nomination of new member to the Board: Amelia Lopatin was unanimously approved for membership on May 23, 2005.

Status of Current Projects

Shelter for Homeless Women: In its 23 years, the Shelter continues as a collaboration with the Partnership for the Homeless and the Olivieri Center for Homeless Women. The Shelter is open Monday through Thursday and also on Sunday during the school year, because volunteers are available to stay overnight at the Shelter. Without a volunteer remaining overnight to represent the Society, the Shelter could not operate. It is expected the Shelter will be open four nights a week during the summer months as well, due to the combined efforts of volunteers and a staff member from the Olivieri Center.

Maria Feliz Fridman coordinates the Shelter Project, and it is her task to continually seek overnight volunteers. She expresses her appreciation to the 40 or so individuals, Society members and friends, and Columbia University students who support this effort.

Maria also acknowledges the special help of Amelia Lopatin, Society member and overnight volunteer for several years, who has now joined her on a committee for Shelter housekeeping duties. Another source of support is the Society's Sunday School, which contributes holiday treats, greetings, and other expressions of welcome for the Shelter guests.

Finally, Maria arranges for an annual dinner at the Society, bringing together in celebration all who have helped to achieve another successful year for this valuable service. The dinner took place this year on June 8.

Homeless Artists Program: These semi-annual events provide occasions for

homeless and formerly homeless artists and performers to display their productions and talents before an audience at the Society. Organized by Maria Feliz Fridman and Judith Ginsburg of the Unforgotten Voices Creative Workshop, this season's first event took place on December 10, 2004, the second on June 10, 2005.

Society members are encouraged to attend these unusual presentations. As member Larry Yates said of a recent performance, "*An evening wasted with destitutes, depressing strangers? Not so. I spent it with fellow humans who love life and who respect themselves and others.*"

Youth Soccer Program: Henry Bunch directs this project and over the last program year worked intensively with 30 boys and girls to engage them in learning to play soccer. This involved weekly training exercises and supervised competitive games on weekends. Henry's budget was directed at children whose families could not afford the expense of their involvement in organized team play. The SSB allocated an additional budget for the production of a short video that would advertise the benefits of such involvement to a wider group of eligible families. The video has been made and will be used for this purpose.

Henry would like to bring his teams of children to play soccer at the Society in the Ethical Culture School gymnasium. This was, in fact, approved by the Ethical Culture School and tentatively arranged, but was not done because of a lack of some basic equipment. However, we plan to try again in the next program year. The children would benefit from having a place to play, and Society members would be able to see them play.

Scholarship Project: Under the direction of Valerie Leiman, this project currently provides tuition for four students at the East Harlem School at Exodus House, an alternative middle school

serving children who would be at risk of failing in their public schools. Valerie very actively monitors the status of the scholarship recipients through contact with teachers and administrators and detailed reports of their progress received twice yearly.

This is the sixth year the Board is supporting this remarkable school, and for the first time this past year the East Harlem School came to the Society. On January 26, 2005 Valerie, with the active help of Bob Liebeskind and the Society building staff, arranged for the entire student body to conduct their Winter Arts Recital in our splendid auditorium. This was a performance opportunity for almost all of the 60 or so children involved, and the occasion was a big success.

We received letters from every child expressing heartfelt thanks for the experience of performing for their classmates and families from a real stage.

Supervised Visitation Project (SVP):

Now in its sixteenth year, this project continues to provide the opportunity for non-custodial parents to develop relationships with their children in weekly supervised visits. The program has been universally praised for its value to the families served, and it is very much prized as a project of the Social Service Board. However, the Board has long been concerned about the high cost of maintaining the SVP, which consumes over 75% of the SSB budget for programs.

It is therefore with a good deal of enthusiasm that we announce a partnership between the Social Service Board and Northside Center for Child Development to preserve and foster the Supervised Visitation Program. Northside Center is a very prestigious licensed agency that has been providing clinical and therapeutic educational services to children for more than 50 years.

The SVP will benefit from the input of Northside's administrative, clinical, and fundraising expertise, and Northside will be able to add a valuable supervised visitation program to the range of services it sponsors.

This very promising connection has been developing since January 2005 and is entirely due to the initiative and inspiration of Phyllis Harrison-Ross. Dr. Harrison-Ross has a long-standing connection with Northside Center and she simply made it happen.

New Initiatives:

- Joint fundraising event with the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation. On January 14, 2005 the Social Service Board co-sponsored a dance program with the Isadora Duncan Foundation to raise money for scholarships. Students of the Duncan technique performed with members of the dance company for an enthusiastic audience in Ceremonial Hall. A reception with the dancers followed in the Adler Study. It was a very successful event raising over \$1,500 to be allocated for SSB scholarships.

- A proposal for Society members to volunteer at the Jewish Home & Hospital nursing home. Growing out of his experience of many years as a volunteer at the Jewish Home & Hospital, Board member Paul Berman proposed an effort to educate Society members about the need for volunteers at the nursing home and the satisfactions to be gained from such involvement. The Board endorsed the proposal and agreed to co-sponsor such an effort with the Society's Caring Committee, to which the matter was referred. In the meantime, anyone interested in volunteering at the Jewish Home & Hospital may contact Paul Berman for more information.

- SSB collaboration with the Black Psychiatrists of Greater New York (BPGNY). The Social Service Board has joined with BPGNY, a consortium

of mental health providers headed by Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross, to seek funding to expand mental health services to underserved minority communities in the metropolitan area. Several proposals have been launched with this goal during the past year, and further efforts are pending.

- SSB will support the Youth and Family program with the American Place Theater in 2006. The Board readily agreed to support the proposal to again provide an experience of educational enrichment through drama for a group of children during their winter school break next year. Because of the connection the Society has already developed with the American Place Theater, the precise nature of the Board's support has yet to be determined. However, an ad hoc committee of Board members was assembled to lend a hand and will be guided in this by Bob Liebeskind.

- SSB upgraded its computer capability. The Board authorized the purchase of a state-of-the-art computer to replace the old one in the SSB office. Looking ahead to the requirements of the new partnerships established and other upcoming developments, the Board recognized the need to enhance its computer capability. An ad hoc committee researched the prospects and, guided by our Board expert Ken Wernz, settled on the Sony VAIO. Ken has proceeded with the task of orienting staff and Board members to the new equipment. He will also oversee the major undertaking of transferring programs and files to the new computer.

- Refurbishment of SSB Office. The Board authorized a substantial refurbishment of its office space, which over the years had lapsed into a rather dilapidated state. We are grateful to Valerie Leiman for her energy and determination to bring the office to its present good order.

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