

Committee Reports

Education Committee Annual Report, 2007-08

Membership

Ellen Rose, Chair; Richard Kiniry, Leader (ex officio); Ron Coburn, Temma Fishman, Terry Martin-Murley, Lyle Murley, Henry Pashkow, Scott Pleune, Chuck and Ramona Ward, Bertha Waters, others from time to time (meetings are open).



Responsibilities

The Education Committee is responsible for

- Sunday mornings (i.e., inviting and paying platform speakers, hiring and paying a music director, arranging for ushers and coffee hour hosts—everything but Sunday School and lunch)
- educational forums
- classes (although, historically, the Leader usually has been solely responsible for them).

As the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, we have a religious philosophy and point of view, which our Sunday morning platforms should present (rather than merely providing a platform for representatives of various political and social causes with which we probably agree anyway). Our programs aim to address the whole person—appealing emotionally as well as intellectually (this is why music is integral to our platforms).

The September-May platform calendar has monthly “themes” for internal use by the committee—to remind us of core values and issues of concern—but it is understood that we take speakers when we can get them, even if their subjects do not fit that month’s theme. These themes are:

September: New Beginnings
October: Children
November: Harvest and Hunger
December: Community
January: Diversity

February: Love and Relationships
(also Black History Month)
March: Justice (also Women’s
History Month)
April: The Natural World/Science
May: Tradition

Procedure

As in the past, individual committee members (sometimes prompted by recommendations from Society members) usually suggested possible speakers and—after they were approved by the committee—initiated contact with them. (This year the committee standardized the letter that will be used by any member of the committee to invite a potential speaker.) Sometimes would-be speakers contacted Jean to express their interest in speaking to the Society. The committee always vetted them and followed up those that sounded in keeping with our priorities. Those that seemed interested in promoting their book or personal hobby horse we politely declined. Henry continued to send confirmed speakers the “confirmation packet” (confirmation letter, information sheet, brochure about the Society, copy of a recent Sunday program, and parking permit).



Issues Discussed

We decided unanimously to discontinue including platform summaries in *Ethical Views* because we felt they were too short to capture the essence of the platform for someone who wasn’t there and unnecessary for someone who was.

Reviewing the list of people who have either suggested themselves or been suggested by others as platform speakers, we tried to identify what we’re looking for in speakers. We’re not looking for a particular theme (save that we want all our speakers to relate their subjects to ethics in general and ethical humanism in particular, if possible in the latter case). But we agreed that we want to hear of their personal engagement in the issue they bring to our attention—we don’t want a mere abstract, academic talk.

We decided in February that once a month we would schedule the dialogue downstairs in the auditorium, immediately following the platform address, as was successfully tried on Jan. 13, choosing the platform/dialogue format selectively, depending on the nature of the platform.

We decided in February that **Saul Machles** will be permanent greeter and that ushers will be provided with a written list of instructions, so that there will be no confusion about what they are to do and what is Saul’s responsibility.

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Education Committee (Continued)

Looking Forward: Topics: homelessness, globalization, poverty and violence in the city, history of humanism before Ingersoll, connections with other religious organizations in the city, decriminalizing marijuana and treating drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal offence, black liberation theology. Possible speakers: **Bob Kay** on children and education for October (whose theme is children); *Inquirer* columnist **Annette John-Hall** on black liberation theology; **Ronald Cuie**, Director of the Mayor's Office for the Re-Entry of Ex-Offenders; more Ethical Culture leaders

Ethical Action Committee Annual Report, 2007-08

Members who served on the Ethical Action Committee (EAC) this year were Jean Bradley, Arnold Fishman, leader **Richard Kiniry**, **Saul Machles**, **Scott Pleune**, **Nick Sanders** as recording secretary, and **Temma Fishman** as chairperson.

The mission of the Ethical Action Committee is "to offer an Ethical Humanist response to social problems, with an area of responsibility that includes community outreach programs and political involvement."

Following are the projects sponsored by the EAC this year.

1. **Millennium Development Goals:** Read about the MDG's in detail at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals> or on the chart displayed in our lobby. A statement declaring our support of these goals is posted on the board outside the Society building.

2. **The Dictionary Project:** This is annual effort to distribute dictionaries to third graders at the Robert Morris School. **Nick Sanders** and **Temma Fishman** led an interactive lesson in their use. We also distributed bookmarks designed by **Nick Sanders** and **Janice Moore** with the notion of "Pay it Forward" – urging the children to do a favor for someone else now that they have received a favor.



3. **Ethics in Action:** This is the part of our Sunday platform where members bring issues from the Ethical Action Report (EAR) to our attention. The EAR is available online at aeu.org or in the Society lobby. Causes for action from other sources may also be presented.

4. **Micro lending to help eliminate poverty:** We held a forum on micro lending organized by **Nick Sanders** and facilitated by **Russ Hill** for Fonkoze-Haitian enterprises on Nov. 11th. At our Humanist Thanksgiving Celebration, we collected \$1,000 for KIVA, an organization that offers micro loans to entrepreneurs from the developing countries of Southeast Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East.



5. **Opposition to the Iraq War:** We joined United for Peace and Justice protests on October 27th and March 19th -the 5th anniversary of the war. **Nick Sanders** organized both events.

6. **Helping the homeless:** **Judith Will** led the effort to provide home-cooked meals to homeless men at the Trinity Shelter at 22nd and Spruce in the winter months. Members prepared and served the meals to the men. **Scott Pleune** organized an effort for getting lockers installed at city shelters for the homeless so they can have a secure place to store belongings. He forwarded a letter and petition signed by members to Mayor Nutter. Scott is awaiting a reply from the mayor.

7. **Promoting Peace and Compassion through Nonviolent Communication:** On February 16, peacemaker **Keith Pacheco** led a workshop exploring the philosophy and techniques of NVC. Member **Chuck Ward** has organized a discussion group for those interested in putting NVC to use in their lives. If you are one of them, contact Chuck. To read about it, visit nvc.org.

8. **Opposition to the Death Penalty:** Leader **Richard Kiniry** regularly reports to the EAC on meetings of the Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and is currently engaged in persuading local clergy to work to eliminate the death penalty in Pennsylvania. We supported the nomination of **Celeste Fitzgerald**, winner of the American Ethical Union Elliott-Black Award at the AEU Assembly in April. Ms. Fitzgerald is founder of the New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, the group that succeeded in getting the death penalty abolished in New Jersey.

9. **Human Rights:** **Ron Coburn** attends monthly Amnesty International meetings. At platforms, he educates us about the violations AI is protesting and provides letters of concern to sign, which are then mailed to the appropriate leaders.

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Ethical Action Committee (Continued)

10. **Day of Caring:** This is our humanistic, rational response to the National Day of Prayer. Our Sunday School children prepared 60 breakfast bags of non-perishable foods to be donated to the elderly and disabled by Aid For Friends. **Carole** and **Jim Erb** supplied the items needed and delivered the finished bags to AFF headquarters for distribution.

The EAC needs your leadership and creative energy to fulfill its mission. Meetings can be scheduled at convenient times. Contact Temma or Richard if you are interested in serving in some way. Opportunities abound for putting your passion for doing good to work.

Communications Committee Annual Report, 2007-08



The Communications Committee has responsibility for communications within the Society and between the Society and the outside world. Currently, our main tasks are (1) to put out the monthly *Ethical Views* newsletter and (2) to keep the website current. We do most of our work by email and went all this year without a real-time meeting.

The Committee’s current chairman and webmaster is **Bob Moore**. **Ellen Rose** is editor of the newsletter. **Janice Moore** designs the newsletter and takes photographs. **Jean Bradley** handles newsletter printing and distribution. We have a contract for web design services with the all-women’s local firm YIKES!

Right now we’re short-staffed; we manage to get the website and newsletter out, but we lack “depth.” We could use more people to back us up – especially someone to take pictures on Sundays when Janice isn’t here: you’ll get free training on digital photography. We also could use more writers.

And always there’s a lot more we could do – such as a member’s forum on the website, a collection of Richard’s writings and platforms, recording and distributing our Sunday platforms and special events as podcasts, advertising and PR outreach, and so on. We could use more help...

Community Committee Annual Report 2007-08



When you think “party,” when you think “after platform lunch” you’re thinking of the Community Committee. Our mission also includes caring for members and membership growth.

This year, the committee organized several successful parties and events (impresarios are listed in parentheses): The Preposterous Poets’ Party (**Carol Love**), the Humanist Thanksgiving (**Dawn Morningstar** and **Scott Cox**), Darwin Day (**Bob** and **Janice Moore**), the Humanist Seder (**Ken Greiff**) and the Camp Linden Picnic (**Temma Fishman**).



This year also saw the solidification of a change in the after platform lunch program, with the culinary duties now spread among the entire Society. This change has produced more successful lunches, with greater attendance and more proceeds—for the season, close to \$3,500 going to the handicapped access fund.

We thank our Membership Growth chair, **Saul Machles**, who knows everybody’s name. We gained three new members this year: **Elit Felix II**, **Ann Freed** and **George Bunk, Jr.**

The Caring Committee arranges visits to sick members and sends birthday and condolence cards—thanks to **Mary Scholl** for sending out cards.

Members who served on the Community Committee this year were: **Arnold Fishman**, **Carol Love**, **Irene Putzer**, **Jean Bradley**, **Richard Kiniry**, **Saul Machles**, **Mary Scholl**, **Temma Fishman** and **Ken Greiff**, Chair.

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Community Committee Statement about serving meat at Society events

The Community Committee is friendly to the recommendation that members refrain from bringing meat or poultry to Society events, such as pot lucks and parties. If members bring meat or poultry, it should be free range and preferably organic. We would like to build consensus among the membership, and therefore encourage discussion of this topic at some plenary session of the Society, such as the annual meeting. ◇



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