



# Ethical Views



February 2013 Vol. 126, No. 6 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

## Platforms



**Sunday, February 3, 2013, 11:00 AM**  
**People, Animals and Beasts:**  
**Ethical Evolution**

**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia**

For centuries, we human beings have competed with, cared for, eaten, used, and compared ourselves to other animals. We often see our animal side as “bad” and mark ourselves off as ethically distinct from the rest of life. After Charles Darwin, we appreciate more fully our place in an ever-changing stream of life. How has that changed our moral perspective? Do we see ourselves as more good or evil than other animals? Hugh Taft-Morales thinks that the better we understand our animal nature, the better we’ll behave. Join him as he explores ethical evolution through philosophy, sociobiology, and zoology.

**Sunday, February 10, 2013, 11:00 AM**  
**A Tale of Two Streets: Development on the Avenue of the Arts in North Philadelphia**

**Linda Waters Richardson, President, Uptown Entertainment & Development Corp.**

Mayor Ed Rendell aimed to breathe economic life into Center City by attracting tourists to cultural activities with the Avenue of the Arts, on South Broad Street. The North Broad Joint Venture completed the original project in 1997. Institutions cherished by the African-American community -- Freedom Theater, the Met, the Uptown Theater -- were based on expressions of social justice, equality, and multi-generational and multi-cultural parity (notions of culture unfamiliar to

the majority community). So these institutions found themselves propelled into a new, economic development role. Today the issues are the disparity of resources, future development plans and whom they benefit, and the efforts of indigenous cultural institutions to maintain their presence in an area that is increasingly valued by outsiders.

Linda Waters Richardson knows this story from the inside out. She headed the North Broad Joint Venture until 1997. She has also had a long career in economic and social community development as President of the African-American United Fund, 1982-2004, as President of the Uptown Entertainment & Development Corporation since 1995, and as CEO of Richardson and Associates since 2007. She and her multi-generational family are long-term members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia.

**Sunday, February 17, 2013, 11:00 AM**  
**Powerful Presidents and Ethical Questions**

**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia**

As President Obama begins his second term, renewed ethical questions arise concerning extreme executive authority. Arthur Schlesinger’s warnings about “the imperial presidency” have taken on new urgency since 2000 as Presidents Bush and Obama swing a big stick regarding issues of “national security.” As we honor our executives with another Presidents’ Day holiday, Hugh Taft-Morales explores pre-emptive war, extrajudicial detention, rendition, and drone attacks, and wonders about the ethical and constitutional status of America’s commander-in-chief. Was Daniel Webster correct in 1834 when on the Senate floor he said, “Executive power has been regarded as a lion which must be caged . . . it has been dreaded, uniformly, always dreaded, as the great source of its danger.”

**Sunday, February 24, 2013, 11:00 AM**  
**Martin Buber and the Just Economy**  
**Andrew Lamas, Professor, Urban Studies, University of PA**

After three preliminary introductions, (1) John Locke, the father of classical liberalism, (2) James Mill, a founder of classical economics, and (3) contemporary currents in anti-capitalist thought, Lamas will examine the significance of Martin Buber’s work, *I and Thou*, for the reconstruction of principles of the just economy.

Andrew Lamas began teaching at the University of Pennsylvania in 1990. His primary appointment is in the School of Arts & Sciences’ Urban Studies Program, where he focuses on the theoretical and practical dimensions, as well as the philosophical and religious bases, of social justice and economic democracy — in the context of urbanization. He is on the editorial board of the *Radical Philosophy Review*, and he is a board member of the Bread & Roses Community Fund. With his partner, Dr. Virginia Vanderslice, he lives in the People’s Republic of Mount Airy in Northwest Philadelphia. Ginny and Andy have two grown children. For additional information on Prof. Lamas, visit his Penn faculty website at: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/urban/faculty/andrew-lamas> <>

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## Leader's Column



### *Defending the Integrity of the Legislative Process*

**Hugh Taft-Morales**

Thanks to our ever-vigilant Ethical Action Committee Chair, Kate Esposito, the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia is now an *amicus curiae*, or “a friend of the court,” regarding the very essence of democracy: the maintenance of a constitutional and transparent legislative process.

In response to the outrageous elimination of Pennsylvania's general assistance program, EHSoP is joining with other interested organizations to challenge the constitutionality of 2012's Act 80. These various Pennsylvania-based groups include: the Immigration and Citizenship Coalition, the Education Law Center, the Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Alliance for Retired Americans, Resources for Human Development, Inc., the Pennsylvania Social Services Union, Local 668, the Coalition Against Hunger, the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, the HIV Policy Collaborative of Pennsylvania, the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, the Women's Law Project, and Common Cause of Pennsylvania.



#### So what is a friend of the court?

An *amicus curiae* is a person or organization interested in a particular legal case who wants to offer relevant information in the form of legal opinion or testimony. Generally *amicus curiae* petitions draw attention to broad legal effects a particular court decision may have on parties external to the case or on society in general. The court can decide whether to accept such petitions.

#### The story of Act 80

To explain why EHSoP has become a friend of the court, we have to start

with the story of Act 80. As a student of American history, I have studied moments of ethically shady behavior on the part of legislatures, both state and national. This instance is particularly offensive, however, due to its blatant disregard of the legal framework of Pennsylvania's legislative process.

It all began when HB 1261 was introduced to the House last session. Its original purpose was to require that a person applying for public assistance had to do so in their county of residence. That was it . . . except it wasn't. HB 1261 became a “shell bill,” a bill that is introduced innocently, and then, often behind the scenes, gutted and rewritten with entirely new language for an entirely different purpose. Some have pointed out parallels to a 2004 state gaming bill that began as a one-page bill about state police background checks for horse-racing track workers and ended up legalizing casino gambling in the state.

Suddenly and almost secretly, HB 1261 morphed into a version of Act 80 that eliminated the General Assistance cash grants of about \$200 per month that barely covered room and board for nearly 70,000 of Pennsylvania's most economically challenged. Act 80 also allowed 20 selected counties to shift tens of millions of dollars for already under-funded mental health and intellectual disability services to pay for other services. The final version of the bill had diverse unconnected subjects, was never referred to a committee, was considered by both the Senate and House only on the last day of the session, and was signed by the Governor the very next day.

Perhaps you have heard of such shenanigans taking place on Capitol Hill (sigh), but the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are much more restrictive regarding what legislatures can do. Article III, Sections 1 - 4 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, establishes clear and strict criteria for due process in lawmaking. These criteria are supposed to guarantee citizens an open, deliberative process. Section 1 states that “no bill shall be so altered or amended, on its passage through either House, as to change its original purpose.” Section 3 explains that

“no bill shall be considered unless referred to a committee” and “no bill shall be passed containing more than one subject.” Section 4 stipulates that “every bill shall be considered on three different days in each House . . .”.

Passage of Act 80 violated all of these constitutional provisions. This is an undeniable fact and a matter of public record. On top of that, the bill passed by the slimmest majority possible. What would have happened had our legislators been able to examine and discuss the bill?

#### Act 80's effect

For one thing, perhaps our representatives would not have eliminated so blindly the \$150-million General Assistance fund without due process! Community Legal Services lawyer Michael Froehlich points out that 70,000 people might not now be faced with homelessness and hunger. Froehlich is coordinating a lawsuit brought by three low-income Pennsylvanians with disabilities: Billie Washington, Opal Gibson, and Tina Smith. This is the lawsuit soon to be heard in Commonwealth Court, to which the *amicus* brief is being attached. If successful, Froehlich hopes to get a preliminary injunction to nullify Act 80 and restore GA cash grants and help low-income families move from welfare to work.

At the moment, however, Act 80 has terminated the sole source of monthly income -- a meager \$205 -- for 52-year-old Philadelphia resident Ms. Washington. She stopped working as a home care assistant because of rheumatoid arthritis and now has few options other than a homeless shelter.



Amazingly, 92% of those losing General Assistance are disabled. Without funds to pay for prescriptions, rent, transportation to therapy, laundry, or their next meal, these fellow Pennsylvanians now have to deal with the cold of winter. Daniel Denvir, who addressed EHSoP about the school closings issue in January,

*(Continued next page)*

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shares more unfolding tragic scenarios in his *City Paper* article, "Welfare cuts push Philly's poor to the brink." See his article at <http://www.citypaper.net/news/2012-11-22-net-loss-act-80.html?c=r>. Last fall when Kate Esposito told me about the sudden elimination of General Assistance, I had not heard such stories. Since the passage of Act 80, however, I have heard and read about many such cases.

### Our constitutional challenge

To be clear, however, the *amicus* brief does not address the devastating impact of Act 80 on the lives of our most vulnerable neighbors. As friends of the court we are challenging the procedural abuse that allowed the bill to become law.



According to Kelly Darr, Legal Director for the Disability Rights Network, "If the Governor and Legislature wish to implement this program, they must do

it with opportunity for debate and real consideration, as the Pennsylvania Constitution requires." Michael Froehlich, who represents the individuals who lost General Assistance, added, "If Pennsylvania really wants to eliminate General Assistance, a last resort safety-net program for nearly 70,000 people with disabilities who are unable to work, it ought to be done lawfully and consistent with our state Constitution."

This point was made clear during a conference call with other potential friends of the court last month hosted by Donald Marritz and Robert Williams, the two authors of the *amicus* brief. Froehlich invited EHSOP to participate in part due to our historic engagement on issues of ethics, public policy, and law. Not only are we committed to numerous ethical action projects defending ethical, democratic

processes that serve all citizens, particularly the marginalized and dispossessed, but our current public education and advocacy opportunities like "Democracy on Trial" and "The Constitution at Work" testify to our emphasis on citizen involvement in bringing out the best in our political processes.

Having established our "direct and substantial interest in Plaintiffs' challenge to the Act 80," and with proper board consideration of this legal challenge, EHSOP has eagerly joined the cause. I knew this was the right thing to do halfway through that first phone conference. Near the end of the conversation, however, Marritz, Williams, and Froehlich offered sobering predictions about our chance of success. Despite the legal and ethical merits of our case, politics may still determine the outcome. In times of financial squeeze, there may not be enough political will to defend those most in need in Pennsylvania. That would be a moral travesty. Let's hope right trumps might! <>

## HOW TO KEEP SANE

Difficult, right? Teetering on the edge of a fiscal cliff, about to knock out the world economy by hitting the debt ceiling, Congressional gridlock, gun madness, a melting planet, etc., etc., etc. It's enough to make many people want to give up and play Angry Birds.



Angry Birds game icon

But not us Ethical Humanists.

While many others may throw up their hands or fall on their knees, we roll up our sleeves.

As humanists, we care about each other. We want to nurture what is best in ourselves and each other. And we want to alleviate suffering, find peaceful alternatives to conflict, address injustice and stop environmental degradation.



On the Ethical Action Committee, we chip away at these things. We make the difference we can in small but meaningful ways through KIVA, the Dictionary Project, the Men's Shelter Dinner Program, Midnight Angels, Martin Luther King Day of Service and marching in the Interfaith Walk and Pride Parade. We weigh in through coalition work on the macro issues: opposing how General Assistance was ended in Pennsylvania in an injudicious and unethical manner, trying to end the death penalty in the Commonwealth, and exposing the dangers of fracking, incarceration injustice, and impeding voters' rights.

And the best thing about it? We feel that doing something, thereby wresting back some of the control, is much more empowering than not doing anything.

We meet the first Wednesday of the month at the Society in the Weston Room at 7:45 p.m. All are welcome. If some issue is important to you, bring it to our attention. But be prepared to roll up your sleeves.

And there's nothing wrong with playing Angry Birds really . . . in moderation.

Good luck with that!

--**Kate Esposito,**  
**Ethical Action Chair**



### Quote-Unquote

Rank of U.S. males in life expectancy in a study of 17 wealthy nations: 17th.  
Rank of U.S. females: 16th.

"Among wealthy nations, health in U.S. is lagging," Eryn Brown, *L.A. Times*, reprinted in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 10, 2013, p. A4.



# Happenings

## We danced the year out with Cultureal's reggae!

*Photographs by Jeffrey Dubb*



Get tickets.



Get a band.



Get a load of this.



Lighting the lights.



Hugh keynoting.

## Dark days and bright lights

Light, light, and more light, as candles were lit to push back the darkness of winter. Each December the Ethical Society, like many gatherings of human beings over the eons, celebrated the return of the Sun and the promise of warmth and growth. Our celebration of the Winter Solstice is a favorite of many members and returnees, as well as engrossing for curious newcomers. This year was no exception. But this year our Solstice celebration was followed in the afternoon by a relatively new celebration, *Humanlight*. Promoted by our local humanist cousins, the Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia (HAGP) *Humanlight* brought together its members and EHSOP members for a program of fine food and an especially kid-pleasing science program by Ken Fink of Wondergy.



Kids excited by science.



Everybody eating.

*Photographs by Sandy Coffey*

## A Mindful Senior Moment

Our oldest member, Ethel Boyer, 94, was visited by our next-oldest member, Bertha Waters, 90, at the Quadrangle Residence in Haverford, PA.

Ethel was wearing one of our Camp Linden T-shirts. Carol Love and Bertha met her granddaughter and hope to see them both at our Founders' Day program in the spring.



Check out the women.



Check out the shirt!

*Photographs by Carol Love*



## Introduction to Ethical Humanism

**Sunday, February 3, 4:30 PM**

*[Please note the time change, for Super Sunday only!]*

Hosted by Leader Hugh Taft-Morales, this month's focus will be **"The future of Ethical Humanism."** Members and first-time visitors will share questions and reflections. Wine and cheese will be served. Open to the public. Please RSVP to [leaderhugh@phillyethics.org](mailto:leaderhugh@phillyethics.org).

# Announcements

## What's your item for our annual auction? Deadline Feb. 10



BID

Maybe you have just heard about our annual service auction, or maybe you are a dedicated provider of auction items. Either way, the time is now to name your item(s) for this year's auction.

A service auction item is one that you offer for others to bid on. Because the proceeds go to the Society, it is another way to help fund the Society while increasing feelings of community among us. Types of items have included special meals, outings to interesting places, and tickets to cultural or sports events. But many other types have also been popular, e.g., care of pets and hymn-singing with cocktails. Other smaller and fun items could be treating us to a cocktail hour at your favorite restaurant, offering coffee & donuts at Federal Donuts, taking us to Art After Five at the Philadelphia Art Museum, and many more. What will be your item this year?

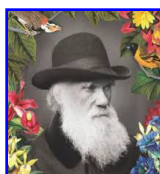
Auction items are first described for bidding at our Darwin Day Party, February 16. But display-maker and member Sally Redlener needs some lead-time to make her attractive, creative table displays for the items. So to check out your idea or send your item description (what, when, where, etc.), use [sredlener@comcast.net](mailto:sredlener@comcast.net). She needs ideas by Sunday, February 10, at latest, and questions before then. Earlier is definitely better, so as not to overwhelm Sally!



## The American Continuum of Racial Abuse

**Sunday, February 3, 2:00 PM**

A powerful panel discussion: *The Continuum of Abuse: Slavery, Black Laws, Contract Labor, Jim Crow, Lynching, Prison/Industrial Complex, Death Penalty*, at 1906 S. Rittenhouse Square. Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will welcome a distinguished panel organized by Moonstone Arts Center, a non-profit founded in 1983 that fosters understanding and builds communities through programs about literature and history. Invited panelists include: Vice Chair of Witness to Innocence, Shujaa Graham, formerly incarcerated on Death Row; Pam Africa, International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal; L. V. Gaither, activist and author of *Loss of Empire: Legal Lynching, Vigilantism, and African American Intellectualism in the 21st Century*; Sandra J. Jones, author of *Coalition Building in the Anti-Death Penalty Movement*; and Michael Coard, a criminal defense attorney who specializes in murder cases and adjunct professor at Temple University.



Dear Members and Friends,

Please note that the Darwin Day Party on February 16th is a BYOB event with costumes (should you want to dress as your favorite freethinker) games, and singing in addition to snacking and enjoying your favorite drink with friends.

Let us know what tasty snack you would like to bring to the celebration of Darwin's 204th birthday, so I can record all your great contributions on a sign up sheet.

We also need helpers to set up (starting at 5:30) and clean up, so please let me know if you're willing to do that.

Looking forward to hearing from all of you,

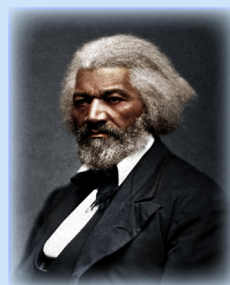
*Temma*

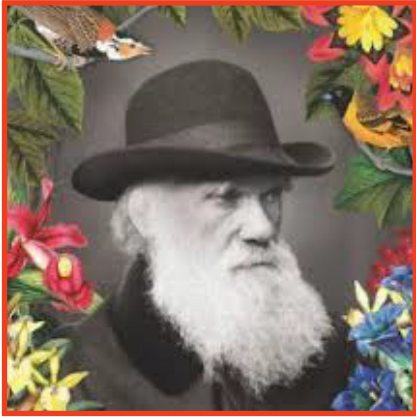
## Mr. President, I'm Frederick Douglass, Monday, February 18, 7:00PM

A one-act play and discussion in celebration of Black History Month and Presidents Day brought to us by Beacon Theatre Productions

After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Lincoln early in 1863, the Union Army began to enlist African American men. The first "colored regiment" to be formed was the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup>. Frederick Douglass, an ex-slave and well-known abolitionist speaker of the day, was concerned that the men in the 54<sup>th</sup> have the same pay and privileges as the white soldiers in the Union Army. He requested, and was granted an appointment with the President in August of 1863 to address these concerns, which is the subject of this drama.

"Mr. President, I'm Frederick Douglass" is based on the writings of Douglass and Lincoln, with a fictional character named Cornelia added for theatrical interest. The play runs about 35 minutes. Following the production there will be a guided discussion. Join us!





# **SAVE THE DATE!**

**Annual Darwin Day Celebration  
Saturday, February 16th  
7:30 PM**

Here at the  
ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA,  
1906 S. Rittenhouse Square,  
we are informed by science.  
So we'll be celebrating  
the  
204th birthday of Charles Darwin.

We'll play Evolutionary games  
as we enjoy snacks and drinks.

Dress as your favorite Freethinker!

\$10 if you bring a snack to share.  
\$15 if you don't.

BYOB




RSVP to Temma at:  
**[Temmafish@aol.com](mailto:Temmafish@aol.com)**  
by February 9th





# February 2013



| Sun                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Mon                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Tue                                                                                        | Wed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Thu                                                                                                                                            | Fri | Sat                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                | 1   | 2                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>*3</b><br>11:00 a.m.<br><i>Ethical Evolution.</i><br>Hugh Taft-Morales<br>See <b>Big Sunday</b> below.                                                                                              | 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 5                                                                                          | <b>6</b><br><b>Meetings</b><br>6:30 p.m.<br>Education Committee<br>7:45 p.m.<br>Ethical Action Committee                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 7                                                                                                                                              | 8   | 9                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>*10</b><br>11:00 a.m.<br><i>Tale of Two Streets</i><br>Linda Waters Richardson<br><div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> <b>Auction Item Deadline</b><br/> <b>Sally Redlener</b> </div> | 11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>12</b><br><i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Meeting</i><br>7:00pm | <b>13</b><br><b>Meetings</b><br>6:30 p.m.<br>Finance Committee<br>7:30 p.m.<br>Communications Cmte.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>14</b><br>                                               | 15  | <b>16</b><br><br>7:30 p.m.<br>Darwin Day Party<br>Temma Fishman |
| <b>*17</b><br>11:00 a.m.<br><i>Presidents and Ethics</i><br>Hugh Taft-Morales                                                                                                                          | <b>18</b><br>7:00 PM<br><i>Lincoln/Douglass Play</i><br><b>Beacon Theater Productions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 19                                                                                         | <b>20</b><br><b>Meeting</b><br>6:30 p.m.<br>EHSOP Board of Trustees                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>21</b><br><br><b>Amnesty International</b><br>7:00 p.m. | 22  | 23                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>*24</b><br>11:00 a.m.<br><i>Martin Buber/Just Economy</i><br>Andrew Lamas                                                                                                                           | 25                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 26                                                                                         | <b>27</b><br><b>Meeting</b><br><i>(to be confirmed)</i><br>7:00 p.m.<br>Camp Linden Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 28                                                                                                                                             |     |                                                                                                                                                    |
| *Child care provided during all platforms                                                                                                                                                              | <b>BIG SUNDAY - Feb. 3</b><br><div style="background-color: #e0f0ff; padding: 5px;"> <b>2:00 p.m.</b><br/> <b>Racial Abuse Continuum</b><br/> <b>Moonstone Arts</b> </div> <div style="background-color: #e0f0ff; padding: 5px;">           4:30 p.m.<br/>           Intro. Ethical Humanism<br/>           Hugh Taft-Morales         </div> |                                                                                            | <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 10px;"> <b>FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS</b><br/>           2 - Sally Redlener<br/>           3 - Arnold Fishman, Esq.<br/>           [The listing is without counting Bob Marley (6), Charles Darwin (12), Abraham Lincoln (12) or, more dubiously, George Washington (21).]         </div> |                                                                                                                                                |     |                                                                                                                                                    |

## Preview! Fun with Western Philosophy

Tuesday nights from 7:00-9:00PM - March 5, March 19, April 9 and April 23.

Philosophers, and philosophical wanna-be's: mark your calendar for some fun with Western Philosophy! Join Hugh Taft-Morales for four evenings exploring reality, mind, and meaning. This rigorous but rollicking exploration will touch on Plato, René Descartes, Bishop Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, F. H. Bradley, William James, Henri Bergson, J. P. Sartre, and Albert Camus. Depending on the level of interest, a companion reading can be made available at cost. More information in the next newsletter, but space is limited. To register or for more information please email Hugh at [LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org](mailto:LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org).

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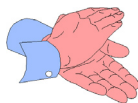
**Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia**

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

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**SUNDAY SERVICE**

**Hosts** - Coordinated by Nick  
Sanders



Feb. 3 - Harry Thorn and Bob  
Kay

Feb. 10 - Garry O'Rourke and  
Diann Brown

Feb. 17 - Temma and Arnold  
Fishman

Feb. 24 - Sandy and Bill Coffey



**Flowers** - Coordinated by  
David Ralston

Feb. 3 - Sally Redlener,  
"For Mr. Groundhog and  
myself, hoping that cloudy  
weather and days go, and fair  
weather stays!"

Feb. 10 - Harry Thorn, "In honor of  
Darwin Day"

Feb. 17 - Kate Esposito, "In memory  
of my mother Irene and Girle"

Feb. 24 - Ruthann Dubb, "In honor  
of Jeffrey's mother Frances Dubb  
and to my mother, Ruth Clearey"



**Coffee Hour**, Coordinated  
by Ken Greiff

Feb. 3 - Group A-E

Feb. 10 - Group F-K

Feb. 17 - Group L-O

Feb. 24 - Group P-Z



**Speaking of thanks...**A  
quick shout-out of thanks  
to someone who volunteers  
much time to EHSoP: Tony

Nixon, a local realtor and friend  
of caretaker Antuan Heath, has  
put in many hours on maintenance  
projects at 1906 like painting and  
carpentry and just being generally  
helpful. Thanks, Tony!

***Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia***

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