



# ETHICALLY SPEAKING

53 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215 (718) 768-2972

Volume 95, no. 10

## June Platforms

This Season's Platform Theme is *Living Our Ideals: an Exploration of Paths and Resources for an Ethical Life*. The focus this Season will be on a BSEC community-wide, bottom-up collection of questions, resources, themes, and practices to help us assess and achieve our own aspirations for ethical living, however onerous the external conditions, or misguided our national or global authorities.

### June 3: *Membership Sunday*

Join us to welcome formally and hear from the people who have made the decision to join the BSEC community this past season. Followed (after lunch) by the Full Membership Meeting.

### June 10: *Toward a Humanistic Spirituality*

Last fall Ethical Culture's Leaders tried their hands at defining a version of spirituality consistent with their humanistic life stance. Elements included a sense of deep interconnection, of awe before nature and the greater universe, and personally experienced moments uplifting to the human spirit. Bring your own definition and questions to this exploration of inner life, for the non-traditional folks in modern society. With Leader Lisel Burns. Last Platform of the Season!

Platforms are held every Sunday morning from 11am to 12:15pm in the main hall of the Meeting House at 53 Prospect Park West, followed by a convivial and delicious buffet lunch. Please stop by!

## Ideas for the Summer

A series of backyard colloquies and pot luck cookouts Sunday mornings and/or Monday evenings is being planned for the summer. Each session will need one member-organizer to make the arrangements, and one host to provide the space. Lisel has offered her home for hosting any of these events, but we're still looking for members to make arrangements or to offer a separate venue. Contact Maureen, Lisel's assistant, at 783-2298, if you would like to participate.

July Fourth should be the traditional BSEC Freedom pot luck barbeque and picnic at the Meeting House for BSEC families and friends.

## Leader Notes: Aim, Focus, Measure by Lisel Burns

As John Hoad, former Leader of the St. Louis Ethical Society has said so simply, there is the given, then there is the attitude toward it. Religious experience, he says, is found in the attitude toward the given. So also I think is the deep learning and instantaneous shift of attitudes and values that in religious terms is called "conversion;" more humanistic language might describe this as a "paradigm shift."

Sages across time and tradition have mentored largely using the leverage of proverb, experience, and story to help seekers achieve a transformational view of the given that provides access to deeper and more important knowledge than previously acquired.

On April 7th, Linda Bankowski, a nationally known business leadership trainer in the quality management world offered a dozen BSEC community leaders a workshop in Total Quality Management, one that she offers to executives in business and non-profits all over the world.

How can quality management training empower our own sense of leadership and help us accomplish the work that is in keeping with our mission, helping us understand and secure the personal and community conditions necessary to succeed by our own highest standards of ethical behavior?

The core themes were delightfully simple. Whether presented in exercises, stories or proverbs, the drum beats behind and beneath the powerpoint charts lighting up the screen placed in front of our library fireplace were *Aim, Focus, and Measure*.

*Aim* for what we understand as excellence, or the quality we regard as success in whatever endeavor.

*Focus*: put attention on agreed upon priorities rather than distractions, however appealing they are.

*Measure*: only measure things that are important, but measure those and use measurement to continuously raise the quality of relationships, processes, and results we deliver.

Her illustrations got our attention. Silly, but playing a group game throwing little hacky sacks (bean bags) worked to teach a powerful lesson. Without her stop watch and the goal of decreasing the time we took to throw

multiple balls around and across the circle in a predefined manner, it was a relaxing game. With her stopwatch ticking, and several rounds in which to improve our scores (along with encouragement to give feedback to aid each other), we became a cooperative team, all for one and one for all—coaching each other, using our own strengths to offset a teammate's weakness. The lesson was simple, but visceral: quality teamwork makes a huge difference in accomplishing a goal, and in forming positive relationships.

I won't soon forget a chart with this continuum: *Prevention; Assess/Measure; Private Failure; Public Failure*.

"A lot of good leadership is simply doing the math," she said. "My messy car may be a failure, but it's a private failure. Exxon's refusal twenty years ago to spend the monies needed to double-hull their oil tankers cost them a public failure down the road of incalculable cost." The organizational challenge is largely to engage people in processes where success, prevention and monitoring efforts are valued more highly than the more visible crisis management or cleanup of private and public failures.

She said that those organizations that survive and thrive have recognizable elements:

1. They have an aim. They clarify their vision, mission and purpose. They know exactly what their stakeholders require. They design the organization to serve the stakeholders and exceed their requirements. They treat each other like partners.
2. They have a method. They establish values to guide behavior. They define a way to close the gap between the current state and the desired state, recognizing that all effort is a process.
3. They have a means of measurement. They use measures for everything they intend to change.

The quality management approach might just be what we need in the ethical movement, and our little BSEC. Since so many of us have trouble yielding to other people's authority, but believe in telling the truth, and aspire to quality lives and processes, perhaps we can do some math. We can calculate for ourselves the costs of not deciding exactly what we want to accomplish together, and decide how to act now so we won't have to pay those costs, ever.

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY  
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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*Ethically Speaking* is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeyesen, Remi Gay, Francesca Biscardi, and Martha Hoffman.

*Ethically Speaking* is written by a number of BSEC members. Views expressed in this publication are always open to friendly discussion. Our newsletter staff, like the membership at large, may vary in their thinking on many issues, yet we are all committed to putting deed before creed, and to strive constantly toward living out, each in our own particular way, the Ethical Ideal of eliciting the best from ourselves and others.

## Building Community Through Diversity by Anne Klaeyesen

excerpted from her Founder's Day Platform speech, NYSEC, May 13, 2001

*Believe or disbelieve as you list - we shall at all times respect every honest conviction - but be one with us where there is nothing to divide - in action. Diversity in the creed, unanimity in the deed. This is that practical religion from which none dissents. This is that Platform broad enough to receive the worshipper and the infidel. This is that common ground where we may all grasp hands as brothers united in mankind's common cause. . .*

*Felix Adler — May 15, 1876*

Ours is not a creedal religion. It is not about what we believe, but who we are and how we are with each other. We do not ask of ourselves "what do we believe?" but rather "do we embrace the whole of human experience - life, death, joys, sorrows - with all its ambiguities and paradoxes?" Can we listen to others from that place in our hearts where we meet each other? Do we struggle to find the right way to be with each other? "Spiritual" for us means reaching out to connect to each other; "sacred" are the relationships we forge with one other; and "holy ground" is where we meet together in community.

I am required to leave too much of myself outside other doors. I want to bring my whole self through this one. As I grew up, there was less of me that I could take through the door of the church where I was baptized. When I attended my uncle's funeral many years ago, I checked quite a lot of baggage at the door, and an ill-spirited relative reminded me that I could not take communion, having married a Jew in an Ethical Culture ceremony. I loved my uncle, and when my son saw me crying, he said, "Don't be sad, Mommy. I'll sing you a song." His three-year old voice rang out. No hymn was sweeter, no voice purer, no sentiment truer than Andrew practicing his ethical religion in the pew of Sacred Heart Church. When I walk through the Ethical Culture door, I bring my whole self, baggage and all. And

if we're having an opening go-round, I might even open a bag or two and let you peek in.

In a letter written to his congregation on February 21, 1945, BSEC Leader Henry Neumann wrote, "A person's religion is only another name for his deepest and largest devotion, his most gracious love. As with every love, the thought of it renews our strength and greatens even the least act in its behalf." For the Spring Festival at BSEC this year, we acted out a play about Dr. Neumann whose story some had forgotten and others had never heard. We rang the chimes at the beginning of the Platform to mark the time we would be spending together. Then a Sunday School student lit two candles: one to dispel the shadows of ignorance, hatred, and whatever keeps us from being together; the other to commemorate the stories being told and heard in other religious meeting places.

We tend to be a rational bunch. Our practice too often is to analyze, critique, and talk. But we must also create safe communities where we can feel, where we can be vulnerable, where we can experience the full range of humanity. Here is a place where it must be possible for us to be open and loving, where we can create our lives anew. It is imperative that we treat each other with kindness and compassion in the place where we bring our whole selves through the door.

There has been much talk about the future growth of our movement. Growth is not only counted in numbers of people, but also in the depth of our experiences and the strength of our relationships. We can increase our membership tenfold, a hundredfold, a thousandfold, yet if we do not also sink deep roots and nourish them, when the big wind blows, we will topple over and wither away.

So make the door wider, bring in the baggage from the curb, and skotch over in your seats to make room for all the people of diverse creeds for whom ethics is at the center of their lives and who wish to join us to seek the highest and together create holy ground.

## Membership News

Bev Darwin is currently recovering from a second hip operation. We wish her a speedy recovery.

New member and social activist Maureen Egginton has taken over as part-time membership coordinator and Leader's assistant. If you hear a voice on Lisel's answering machine that isn't Lisel's, that's Maureen!

Martha Hoffman has accepted a one-year full time position teaching European History at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. She will also be attending a six-week NEH Seminar on Experience & Experiment in Early Modern Europe in Washington D.C. this summer, so we won't be seeing much of her for the coming year. She intends to continue her work with the Henry Neumann papers once she returns to Brooklyn next May.

BSEC Pledge Secretary and AEU Board Member Greta Gladney will be attending the Sokoni workshop on grassroots organization and the Green Belt movement in Kenya June 1-16.



<http://www.bsec.org>

# JUNE 2001 BSEC CALENDAR

**6/1 – 6/12**

**Friday 6/1**

**8pm:** Good Coffeehouse concert series presents a *Bob Jones Fest*. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 6/2**

**9-11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing* taught by Salome. Free to BSEC members. Call 399-1732 for information.

**Sunday 6/3**

**10am-12:30pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly

**10-11am:** Library Discussion Group.

**11am:** Sunday Platform: *Member Appreciation*: recognizing members' work and welcoming this year's new members.

**12:30pm:** Lunch with the Bunch.

**1pm: Membership Meeting**

**Monday 6/4**

**7-9pm:** *Brooklyn Community Storytellers*. A workshop for storytellers of all levels of experience. \$5-12. Will continue to meet first Mondays through the summer.

**Tuesday 6/5**

**7:30-9pm:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* directed by Bev Grant. Every woman can sing, so what's stopping you? Call 768-2972 for information.

**Wednesday 6/6**

**6:30pm:** *Pinewoods Folk Open Sing*. Potluck snacks.

**7-8:30pm:** *T'ai Chi Chuan* class with J.P. Harpignes. \$12 per class or \$40 for 4 classes. Free to BSEC members.

**Thursday 6/7**

**7:30-8:30pm:** *Ball Room Dancing Lessons*, led by Christina, an international competitive dancer. \$15. Call (212) 781-7475 for information.

**7:00pm:** Board of Trustees Meeting.

**Friday 6/8**

**8pm:** Good Coffeehouse concert series presents *Oscar Brand: Legend of Folk Music*. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 6/9**

**9-11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Sunday 6/10**

**10am-12:30pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly.

**10am-11am:** Library Discussion Group.

**11am:** Sunday Platform: *Spirituality and Humanism*, with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

**12:30pm:** Lunch with the Bunch.

**Tuesday 6/12**

**7:30-9pm:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**6/13– 6/30**

**Wednesday 6/13**

**7-8:30pm:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**Thursday 6/14**

**7:30-8:30pm:** *Ball Room Dancing*.

**Friday 6/15**

**8pm:** Good Coffeehouse concert series and the Park Slope Food Coop present contemporary music with Hana and Her Brothers and jazz with Jennie Hill and Liquid Horn. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 6/16**

**9-11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Tuesday 6/19**

**7:30-9pm:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**Wednesday 6/20**

**7-8:30pm:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**Thursday 6/21**

**7:30-8:30pm:** *Ball Room Dancing*.

**Friday 6/22**

**8pm:** Good Coffeehouse concert series presents the *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* under the direction of Bev Grant. Donation \$8. *Season Finale*. See you in the fall at the season-opening Jamboree.

**Saturday 6/23**

**9-11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Tuesday 6/26**

**7:30-9pm:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

**Wednesday 6/27**

**7-8:30pm:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**7:30pm:** Readings in Ethical Culture: Henry Neumann, *Spokesmen for Ethical Religion*.

**Thursday 6/28**

**7:30-8:30pm:** *Ball Room Dancing*.

**Saturday 6/30**

**9-11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Coming Events:**

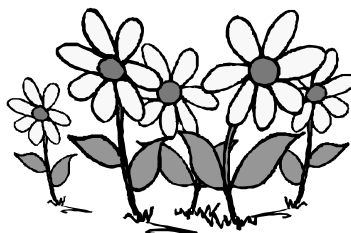
**July 27-29**

*Appassionata Festival*.

**September 28-29**

*The Fourth Annual Brooklyn Bluegrass and Oldtime Jamboree*.

Check in at [bsec.org](http://bsec.org) for updates throughout the summer!



## Long-Range Fundraising: Your Ideas Are Needed!

Dear Members and Friends of BSEC,

Last spring, the Board pledged to achieving a balanced budget within the next several years, and accepted a deficit budget balanced by profit from growth in investments.

This spring, the severe fall in the stock market has put a big dent in the considerable cushion the Trustees of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture had set up against the operating deficit in our annual budget.

The BSEC Long Range Fundraising Task Force is asking you to pay to BSEC what you pledged for this current Season ending June 30, and also to consider significantly increasing your financial pledges in the coming months. For people less burdened with busy schedules, we would love to receive some of your valuable time and volunteer energy.

We need to do several things, and to do them quickly. We need to:

1. Analyze the real costs of operating a quality program in a safe and refurbished Meeting House. Organize ourselves to raise sufficient monies on an annual basis. The Finance Committee has asked all staff and lay leaders to forward their ideas on cutting waste, increasing income, and the quality of our programs. We now ask members at large to do the same.
  2. Look at our individual and group resources. We have so many more resources than we know about! Resources aren't just money and time.
  3. Recruit a team of people willing to secure the future of both the Meeting House we love, and the community, programs, staffing, and services inside. Ruth Pikitch has agreed to chair whatever team is formed as we start to face this challenge creatively. This team will make up the Long Range Fundraising Task Force for the coming Season.
  4. Identify the chief sources of long-range funds and pursue them:
    - gifts and bequests to BSEC from members and friends
    - skills, items, and services to auction on a regular basis
    - exploration of foundation grants related to civic education or ethical action programs
    - special events such as award dinners, parties & co-sponsored fundraisers with local groups
    - increased fees for the Children's Sunday Assembly and adult education programs
- We hope you will think about these issues, and look forward to hearing your response.

*The BSEC Long Range Fundraising Task Force*

**Last Platform of the Season:**

***Toward a Humanistic Spirituality***

**with Lisel Burns**

**Sunday June 10, 11am  
BSEC Meeting House**

**Philosophy for Children Training Seminar in August**

From August 4-12 Lisel Burns will represent us at the Teacher Training seminar conducted by the Philosophy For Children Program, held in rural New Jersey, and subsidized by the Stuckenbergs fund at the St. Louis Society. The BSEC budget provides room and board help as needed. Any other person interested in the program, and willing to follow-up the program by teaching a class of young people using this methodology, please contact Lisel as soon as possible, 783-2298.

**Children's Sunday Assembly**

Greetings and goodbyes from the Children's Sunday Assembly Program. We are coming to the end of our educational year. I am happy to report that the four graduates in our senior class worked very hard to be ready for Recognition Day Platform on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Jonathan Wagnerman, Brent Doldron, Ali Hussain, and Dylan Cohen each gave a thoughtful and well-received speech about themselves and an ethical value that was of particular importance to them. I was proud of how calm they appeared and how well-spoken they were up on the podium, considering how many butterflies were hovering around when we were practicing!

Recognition awards were then presented to all the other children. Flowers were given to all the parents of the CSA, thanking them for their commitment to the program. In an unexpected turn, miniature rose bushes were given to all the staff! How appropriate for our May theme: *How Do You Thank A Hero?* A delicious luncheon catered by Ali's mother Nosheen followed.

In June will we focus on wrapping up. There are two last sessions on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup> before we break for the summer. June 3<sup>rd</sup> will include a town meeting at 10 AM for parents, students, and teachers where we have traditionally evaluated what worked and what could be improved in our program. The last session will focus on the individual classes saying goodbye, followed by food and fun, to which parents and friends are welcome.

Have a wonderful summer!

**CSA Calendar:**

**6/3:** CSA Town Meeting, 10-11am, regular classes afterward

**6/10:** Last Day of Classes, picnic at noon in the yard

Our Children's Sunday Assembly program meets every Sunday from 10am to 12:15 pm. We offer an ethics-centered curriculum and community for children aged 4-13 years. Registration is open all year.

*Remi Gay, Director*

**This Summer!  
Appassionata Festival**

**an exploration of the mystery of passion  
a collaboration of artists, performers,  
therapists, and lovers of all ages**

**July 27-29  
at the Meeting House**

**You are invited to participate  
as a performer or as an audience member.**

**Presented by BSEC and The Free Mistake Project**

Passion comes from needs. Unfulfilled needs. Through the experience of passion we would like to reappropriate the awareness of the moment. The clear, sharp, unconditional tension of a child with no memory. No obligations. No need for approval. No reason for perfection: the right to make a mistake. To explore. To indulge in particulars and to fly on non-sense. The Free Mistake Project— professionally, culturally, and humanly— has the need and the passion to declare, express, and relate, to ask and to clarify, to affirm and negate, to provoke and invoke, to imitate, and to feel from the depths of the heart.

Francesca Biscardi, actress and teacher, and the artistic director of the Free Mistake Project, has assembled a diverse group of artists, musicians, actors, singers, and dancers for a weekend of exploration of the boundaries of art and life, word and thought, passion and depression, strength and weakness. If you are an actor, artist, singer, dancer, or other performer or creative type, we ask you to join us. Bring your poems, your paintings, your plays and songs and dances. Whatever you are most passionate about, bring it. Therapists and healers are invited to share their knowledge of the heights and depths of human emotion. Audience members are invited to see (for a small donation) what happens July 27-29 at the BSEC Meeting House. Call 965-2299 for information.

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