Human potential is a central concept of Ethical Humanism: We believe that human beings have the potential to grow, improve, and change our circumstances. But what are the limits of our potential? How far does human potential extend, and how can we realize it best? In this Platform we’ll explore the idea of “human potential” and learn some ways to maximize our own.

Sunday, December 1, 11 a.m. Platform
“Potential in Every Person”; Kate Lovelady, Leader
Music: Katie Busby & Desiree Jones, percussion

Come learn the newest news about the Uganda Humanist Schools and how the Ethical Society is helping bring out the potential in young lives across the world. We will also celebrate the legacy of member and educator Ed Schmidt.

First Sunday Lunch: Fundraiser for the Uganda Humanist Schools. After Platform is our annual pay-what-you-want fundraising lunch for the Uganda Humanist Schools. The Ethical Society community currently supports 30 female high-school students with full boarding scholarships ($480/yr), as well as additional projects. The lunch is a Ugandan rice and vegetable stew similar to that which our students might eat. If you would like to make a donation but cannot attend the lunch, or would like to make an additional donation, please contact Kate Lovelady at klovelady@ethicalstl.org.

Sunday, December 8, 11 a.m. Platform
“Our Human Potential”; James Croft, Outreach Director
Music: Amelia Kingman & Hannah Wang, piano

Human potential is a central concept of Ethical Humanism: We believe that human beings have the potential to grow, improve, and change our circumstances. But what are the limits of our potential? How far does human potential extend, and how can we realize it best? In this Platform we’ll explore the idea of “human potential” and learn some ways to maximize our own.

Sunday, December 15
4:30 p.m. Good Cheer Potluck; 6:15 p.m. Winter Festival Evening Platform
Music: Ethical Voices Chorus and Community, and Celia’s Yuletide Express!

Good Cheer is our annual holiday celebration. Members and friends gather at 4:30 p.m. for punch (BYOB); the potluck dinner begins at 5:15 p.m., followed by a short program upstairs. We then return downstairs for dessert, a special visitor for the children (remember to register all children with the elf helpers when you arrive), and, new this year, a high-energy singalong with popular musician Celia! Suggested donation for the evening: adults $3, children (7-12) $1, and 6 and under no charge.

Food assignments by last-name initial (please, nothing that requires a bowl):
- Main Dish: M-Z;
- Salad or Side: A-G;
- Dessert (finger food only; no plates or utensils are available): H-L.

Couples, bring a dish to serve 8. Singles, bring a dish to serve 4. Families, do the math! There will be a separate table for vegan dishes.

It is very helpful to include a notecard listing the ingredients in your dish, and to put your name on the bottom of your dish in case it gets misplaced.
Good Cheer Elves Needed

Good Cheer will be here soon, and the Society needs “elf helpers” for several jobs. Please contact Donna Kniest—Donnakniest@gmail.com; (314) 712-3569—if you can help with any of the following:

December 6, 3:30 p.m. Deck the Halls. Come for about an hour to help with winter decorating (garlands, wreaths, etc.).

December 15, 9 a.m. Set tables and prepare for Good Cheer that evening.

December 15, the Big Night of Good Cheer. Elves are needed for various jobs before and after the potluck, including setting luminaries outside the building, greeting and registering children, serving punch, handing out candles for the program, helping organize desserts, and taking down tables after the potluck to make room for the man in a red suit!

December 16, morning. Pack up and put away the decorations until next year.

Sunday, December 22 the Society will be closed. —Happy Holidays!

Sunday, December 29, 11 a.m.
“Imagine That!”; Jan Kiefer
Music: Music Videos from Artists We Lost in 2019

Former art teacher and storyteller Jan Kiefer invites us to take a look at the nature of the creative process and the dynamic relationship between potential and limits.

9:45 Forum, December 1—A Conversation on Secular Addiction Recovery

The holidays can be a particularly difficult time for those struggling with addiction or related issues. Sunday, December 1 at 9:45 a.m. in the Hanke Room, join John Gennari of SOS for a conversation on secular addiction recovery.

SOS is an alternative recovery method for those alcoholics or drug addicts who are uncomfortable with the spiritual content of widely available 12-step programs. SOS takes a rational, secular approach to recovery and maintains that sobriety is a separate issue from religion or spirituality. SOS credits the individual for achieving and maintaining their sobriety, without reliance on any “higher power.” SOS is not opposed to or in competition with any other recovery programs. SOS supports healthy skepticism and encourages the use of the scientific method to understand alcoholism and drug addiction.

An SOS group meets at the Ethical Society every Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Coming of Age Room. Anyone seeking or maintaining sobriety is welcome.

Questions? Contact John Gennari, (314) 353-3532; john.gennari@yahoo.com.

9:45 Forum, December 8—“Social and Economic Justice (Earth Charter 4)”

We continue our exploration of the Earth Charter—a framework of ecological renewal and social justice—with the section on social and economic justice. We’ll explore the links between social justice and the economy.

Science Enthusiasts Club in December—Supernova!

The Science Enthusiasts Club is for anyone interested in scientific discoveries and their impact on society. You don’t have to be a scientist to be part of the discussion. Just come love science with us! We meet most 3rd Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in the Hanke Room.

The topic for December 17: Supernova! Supernovas are among the most violent events in the universe, but are also crucial to the generation of life. The heavy elements that are fundamental to building living organisms are produced in the hearts of these exploding dying stars. Come learn about these cosmic phenomena, and how we are all descendants of supernovas.

For more information, to join the email list for monthly readings, or to suggest topics, contact Rich Feldenberg, irichard.feldenberg@health.slu.edu.

Bad Weather Policy

Decisions to close the Society building are based on MoDOT information and weather warnings. Whenever possible, cancelation of Sunday meetings will be made the night before to get the word out to everyone. Sunday cancellations will be shared through the Ethical Society website and Facebook page; channels 2, 4, and 5 (and their websites); in an email to the membership; and on the “events” extension on the Society phone system (314) 991-0955 x224.
“Star Wars and the Hero’s Journey,” Thursday, December 5

Ahead of the release of “Star Wars Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker,” the Ethical Society of St. Louis and Apotheosis Comics will present “Star Wars and the Hero’s Journey,” a free public lecture by James Croft exploring what the heroes, anti-heroes, and villains of Star Wars can teach us about ourselves. Thursday, December 5, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Auditorium. Come in costume for a chance to win prizes!

Sunday Ethical Education for Kids (SEEK) for December, and Seeking a New Director

Parenting is hard. Let’s keep talking. Parent Talk—December 1, 10–10:50 a.m. Kathy Schrenk will facilitate a conversation among parents in the Visitors’ Open House Room about the joys and challenges of raising children in a community of Ethical Humanists, while also sharing in celebrations and traditions of friends and family who have different religious orientations.

To recommend a topic or to facilitate a Parent Talk, please contact SEEK Council Chair Kathy Schrenk at kathys@gmail.com.

Kwanzaa Workshop with Treasure Shields Redmond for SEEKers and Friends on December 8, 10 a.m. in the Library.

SEEKers and friends are all invited to join us in the library to learn the seven principles of Kwanzaa and celebrate African heritage and African American culture with song and movement!

A Fond Farewell, and Seeking a New SEEK Director

At the end of 2019, Rachel Valenti will be stepping down as SEEK Director. Rachel writes, “Thank you all for your support, your creativity, and your passion for raising thoughtful, compassionate, and collaborative movers and shakers! I’ve grown so much through this work over these last seven years, and I wish you all the best going forward!” We all wish the very best for Rachel as well and know she will excel in her new endeavors.

And SEEK is seeking a new Ethical Education Director! For information see https://www.indeed.com/job/sunday-school-director-179636e0ec8f45d7, and please share widely.

End Racism News

Black Lives Matter Vigil, December 8, noon–1 p.m. Every second Sunday, Society members and friends gather on Clayton Road to uphold the dignity and worth of every person and support the movement for black lives. Join us for fifteen minutes or stay for the full hour. We have signs and scarves to share. All are welcome.

Recovering from Religion Support Group Meets Wednesday, December 11

Recovering from Religion is a nonprofit organization with chapters across the U.S. and around the world. If you are questioning your religion but feel unable to voice your doubts to friends and family, you’ll find a safe space here. If you have long since left religion behind, but still feel the after-effects, Recovering from Religion may be for you too. Or if you just want to meet others who have left religion and share your experiences, you’re welcome as well.

The Ethical Society is now hosting an RfR group on Wednesday once a month at 7 p.m., in Kate Lovelady’s office. The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 11. All are welcome. Also see Meetup, https://www.meetup.com/RfR-St-Louis/.

Great Books Reading and Discussion Group Next Meeting December 12

The Great Books Reading and Discussion Group will meet for its next session on Thursday, December 12, when the group will discuss selections from the Pensées of Blaise Pascal. This year our meetings will be held on the second Thursday of every month (through May) in the Ethical Society Board Room at 7:30 p.m. The group reads from the anthology Great Conversations 1, which contains selections from authors Emerson, Whitman, Ibsen, Freud, Jung, and others. Copies of the anthology can be ordered from the website of the Great Books Foundation, https://store.greatbooks.org/colleges-book-groups/discussion-group-favorites/great-conversations-1.html. If you are interested in joining this reading group, please contact Alan Easton at ameast89@yahoo.com.

Photo-Ops Photography Club

The Photo-Ops group will meet Monday evening, December 9, at 7 p.m. in the Hanke Room. Jim Rhodes will talk about the photography of John Loengard, a photojournalist who was recently inducted into the International Photography Hall of Fame. Jim will also follow up on a discussion on lightroom editing tools for black-and-white photography. As always, everyone is asked to provide some photos they would like to share with the group. Photos should be sent to jamarhodes@gmail.com in advance and ideally be sized no larger than 1500 x 1000 pixels.
“We Thinks Good”—“Love and Transformative Politics,” and a New Time

First and Third Saturdays, 3–4:30 p.m. (please note new starting time) in the Hanke Room, member Michelle Ciurria (Philosophy PhD and teaches philosophy at UMSL) will lead a workshop on ethical and political philosophy and theory. Each session begins with a presentation, leading into guided discussion. The workshop is designed for newcomers, so don’t be shy! December’s topic is “Love and Transformative Politics.” You can also keep up with the group on Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/groups/147779839205159/.

Committee of Concern

When you or a family member is ill or experiencing tough times, a call from a concerned friend means so much. Whether the caller just asks, “How are you doing today?” or offers assistance, you know someone cares. That is what the Committee of Concern does. If you or someone you know is in need of such support, or if you would like to be a part of this caring team, please contact Jeanette Langton, ethicalstl-coc@yahoogroups.com; (314) 707-0658.

“Harry Potter and the Sacred Text” Podcast Live, Thursday, December 19

Harvard Divinity School graduates Vanessa Zoltan and Casper ter Kuile will deep-dive into a chapter of Harry Potter, tell stories from their own lives, and try out two with this modern-day classic. Come and enjoy a night of live music, spiritual engagement, great storytelling, and hanging out with two of your favorite podcasters! Thursday, December 19, 7-9 p.m. Tickets are $18 (plus a $2 Eventbrite fee). They will be available online shortly. Stay tuned for updates!

Our Society Is Advertising for an Associate Leader! Spread the Word!

The Ethical Society of St. Louis is seeking to hire an Associate Leader for a full-time position starting June 1, 2020. This person will report to James Croft, who will become the Society’s Senior Leader at that time. The new Associate Leader will be expected to present at least one platform address per month and provide pastoral counseling to members. For a more extensive description of the position see https://ethicalstl.org/apply/. —Alan Easton on behalf of the Second Leader Search Task Force.

Young Ethicals & Young Ethical Ladies Winter Solstice Hike

Come join us for a brisk winter solstice hike at Mastodon State Historic Site on Saturday, December 21. Plan to meet at the Museum at 9 a.m. We’ll be hiking a series of short-loop trails (3.3 miles in total) so be sure to dress warmly! Please contact Beth Correnti at (314) 452-6950 with any questions. Young Ethicals is a social group for members and friends in the 20-40 age range; the Young Ethical Ladies use an inclusive definition of “ladies” and welcome transgender and non-binary people who are female-identified.

Member News

Please welcome our newest members:

Chad Bunch is a chef and food production manager. His passions are reading, writing, cooking, dining, wine, history, science, travel, local sports, and debate. He is joining because he enjoys attending the Ethical Society.

Zackery Cooper is in cyber warfare operations for the United States Air Force. His passions are information and technology, video gaming, and outdoor activities. He is joining because he enjoys the overall goals and ideals of the Ethical Society and would like to be a part of this community. Mary Monk is a student studying global sustainability management. Her passions are global sustainability, reading, dogs, equality, activism, and veganism. She is joining to be a part of a community that challenges her to be a better person.

With sadness we share news of the death of Bill Brighoff, husband of Carol Bartell and father of the late Mark Brighoff, on Saturday, November 16, after a long series of illnesses. Bill’s memorial will be held at the Ethical Society on Saturday, December 14 at 2 p.m. Bill was a long-time member whose most recent contribution to the community was the beautiful native-plant rain garden at the back edge of the parking lot. The family requests, in lieu of flowers, donations to the Ethical Society celebration garden.

On November 16, the Society celebrated the life of Ed Schmidt, who died on October 27 after a long fight with prostate cancer. Family, Society members, friends, and colleagues from the many organizations Ed supported came together to share memories and tributes, and thirty-two sweet potato pies baked by the Tuesday Women’s Association from Ed’s last harvest. Ed’s partner, Betsey Anderson, requested, in lieu of flowers, donations to the Ethical Society’s Uganda Humanist Schools project. Many thanks for all the expressions of sympathy and donations in Ed’s honor.
TWA Talk

The Tuesday Women’s Association (TWA) meets in the Becker Room (except where noted) on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. until noon, August through June. After the morning programs, all are invited to stay for a brown-bag lunch followed by news of members, roundtables, and/or mah jongg at 12:30 p.m.

December 3. Book Review of Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around by Barbara Smith. Reviewer: Marcia Cline

December 10. “A Story of Survival, my family’s escape from the Nazi’s … Remember! Never Forget!” Speaker: Evie Meyer. The goal of this presentation is to provide glimpses of life in prewar Germany and a description of the political and economic realities that set the stage for Hitler’s rise to power. The restrictions on Jews’ ability to earn a living and, ultimately, to survive sent members of the Gumprich family on a global diaspora seeking safety wherever they could. Evie will describe the survival of many members of her family and their lives after the Holocaust.

December 17. Winter Party (Volunteers needed!)

December 24. No Meeting (building closed). HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

December 31. No Meeting (building closed). HAPPY NEW YEAR!

TWA Bake Sale—Delicious Treats Supporting Good Causes, Sunday December 8

Sunday, December 8, TWA will again offer luscious treats prepared for your take-home or eat-here pleasure. In addition to our baked goods, we will have our famous jams and bread-and-butter pickles. Shop early beginning 9 a.m., or late till 1 p.m. We use the proceeds to fund local charities and social justice causes. Thanks in advance for your patronage!

Men’s Forum

Each Tuesday, September through June, from 10 a.m. until noon the Men’s Forum gathers in the Hanke Room: the first hour a formal program is presented, followed by a general meeting. Participants are invited to stay after noon for a brown-bag lunch. All are welcome. There is no formal membership in the group but a mailing list is kept for those interested. Write mcfriend.ly@gmail.com for removal or inclusion.

December 3. Ethical Society member Ron Wirts spent 35 years working for an airline in St. Louis. Ten of those years he was a union representative, encountering many local contract issues and participating in three contract negotiations, two strikes, and one class and craft hearing. He will help us understand why unions are important!

December 10. It is often said that there is a bit of a poet in every person! On this day, each of us will explore our poetry or poetry that inspires, educates or makes us laugh and share it with the group.

December 17. Ethical Society member and tuner of many pianos, Bing Gibbs, will help us explore the magnificent instrument called the piano, its anatomy and its inspiration and how to keep it in perfect working condition.

December 24 and 31. No meeting. Happy Holidays!

Photo Ops Portrait Project

The Photo Ops group would like to take your picture! The group has been practicing and would like to do some portrait photos of either individuals, couples, or even small groups in a professional setting with studio lights and a backdrop. Examples of some recent portraits are up on the

Photo Ops board in the Hanke Room. We are asking for a $25 donation to the Ethical Society in advance for a 15-minute session; the resulting photographs would be edited and made available for download as .jpg files. Prints could also be obtained for an additional charge. If interested, please contact Jim Rhodes at jamar.hodes@gmail.com or at (314) 281-1312. The photographer/s will be either Jim Rhodes, Lauralyn Fields, Bob Saigh, or some combination of the three.

Divorce and Separation Support Group—2nd Thursdays at 7 p.m.

On the second Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. in Leader Kate Lovelady’s office, a self-led group of Ethical Society members and friends gathers to provide help, support, and encouragement to anyone going through the difficult and painful process of divorce and separation. The group is open to all. Contact Rich Feldenberg lrichard.feldenberg@health.slu.edu for more information.

A/V Team Opening—Learn a New Skill! Sit Behind the Desk of Power!

The A/V Team works in pairs to run the audio, lighting, and projection systems for Sunday morning Platforms. We currently have an opening for a First Sundays A/V Team member. No experience is necessary. It’s an important and fun volunteer opportunity if you’re technical-minded or would like to learn to be. For more information, contact Kate Lovelady, klove-lady@ethicalstl.org.
Around the Building and Around the Grounds

Thanks to those all those who washed windows and helped plant seeds and remove invasive species around the grounds as part of our Thanksgiving Service Sunday last month! If you have an hour or two to spare to help with a small cleaning or maintenance project, please contact Facility Coordinator Terri Arscott at tarscott@ethicalstl.org or (314) 991-0955 x 211.

How Can We Help New Members Feel at Home at the Society?—December 29, Noon

Each year we welcome new members into the Ethical Society family, and each year some of those members drift away. We would love to retain every member and be the perfect home for everyone that walks through our doors, but that’s not always in our control.

The Membership Team is starting a new program to help new members make the connections that lead to long-term happiness in membership. We are aiming to pair every interested new member with a peer from the Society to introduce them to people and groups that will foster the connections we all already enjoy.

Please attend our short informational session on Sunday, December 29 at noon in the Hanke Room. We are looking to get your feedback on this program before rolling it out. Refreshments will be provided. If you’re unable to attend, for more information, contact Travis Williams, (660) 528-1381; twdougan@gmail.com.

Board Tidbits

Thank You
Thank you again to all those who attended the Board Forum on November 10. It was great to cover so many topics and receive your input. If you were not able to attend but would still like to review the discussion, please reach out to me for a transcript.

Kate’s Farewell Celebration
The Board is discussing plans for a farewell celebration for Kate in the Spring . . . plan to get out your party shoes (and socks in her honor)! Several members have already reached out, and we’d love to hear from you if you have ideas. We will also need volunteers for the event, so please let me know if you’re interested.

Board Meetings
Did you know that our Board meetings are open for members to attend? Our meetings are held the second Monday of each month from 6 to 8:30 p.m. All we ask is that you let us know in advance if you plan to attend so we can set aside a seat for you. Members are also welcome to request time to address the Board (5-10 minutes). We will do our best to accommodate these requests.

Investments
A member has recently raised concerns about our investment management being handled internally at the Society. The Board discussed the concern and, with consensus, determined we will continue to do so. Per the policy manual, we have sufficient and multiple levels of both internal and external oversight in place to oversee our finances. As always, please reach out to me if you would like more information.

—Amanda Verbeck, President, Board of Trustees

Artist’s Statement—Mark Witzling

Mark Witzling is an artist and Director of Craft Alliance. His work will be on exhibit at the Society December 6 through January 19, with a reception on Sunday, December 8, 12:30–2:30 p.m.

Of his work, Mark says, “My journey as an artist has evolved from representational oil painting toward pure abstraction. I became fascinated with abstract expressionism as a way to express myself creatively. To be ‘in the zone.’ Painting is a solitary process and I find it meditative, and at times almost a form of prayer.

“My source of inspiration is truly multi-layered. Intellectually, I tackle intangible concepts while technically I am visually building up layers of oil paint and excavating back into the layers to bring forth contrasts of colors and textures. While painting, I rarely use traditional brushes, instead working with a variety of tools like pastry scrapers, brayers, sticks, and even old credit cards to activate the surface. The result is often bold, sometimes subtle, and always, at least to me, optimistic, delightful, and engaging.

“Much of my current work addresses the statement ‘Truth Matters,’ exploring the loss of fact and truth in public discourse, exemplified physically by layers of paint obscuring deeper underlying layers yet always exposing enough to let us know the truth lies beneath.

“I am always willing to talk about my work. Please feel welcome to contact me: www.markwitzlingart.com; mwitzling@gmail.com.”
Sunday, December 1
8 a.m. Ethical Mindfulness Practice. Foyer.
9:45 a.m. Colloquy. Board Room.
10 a.m. Parent Talk. VoH. See page 3.
11 a.m. Platform: “Potential in Every Person”; Kate Lovelady, Leader; Music: Katie Busby & Desiree Jones, percussion. Aud.

Monday, December 2
5 p.m. Yoga. Hanke Room.

Tuesday, December 3
9 a.m. Ethical Mindfulness Practice. Kate Lovelady’s office.
10 a.m. Tuesday Women’s Association. Becker Room. See pg 5.
10 a.m. Men’s Forum. Hanke Room. See page 5.
5:15 p.m. Tai Chi. Hanke Room.
7 p.m. SOS Secular Sobriety. Coming of Age Room. See page 2.

Wednesday, December 4
7:30 p.m. Ethical Voices Chorus Rehearsal. Hanke Room.

Thursday, December 5
7 p.m. “Star Wars and the Hero's Journey,” James Croft. Auditorium. See page 3.

Friday, December 6
6:30 p.m. Good Eatin’ meatless potluck and holiday white-elephant exchange. Becker Room. No RSVP necessary. This month, also bring a wrapped whatsit from around your house that you no longer want or need, for a lighthearted gift exchange. To join the email list, send a request to Bob at razorsharpmcomm@charter.net.

Saturday, December 7
3 p.m. “We Thinks Good—Love and Transformative Politics,” Hanke Room. See page 4.

Sunday, December 8
8 a.m. Ethical Mindfulness Practice. Foyer.
9 a.m.–1 p.m. TWA Bake Sale. Becker Room. See page 5.
9:45 a.m. Colloquy. Board Room.
10 a.m. SEEK Kwanzaa Workshop. Library. See page 3.
12:30 p.m. Artist’s Reception. Foyer. See page 6.
5:30 p.m. Second Sunday Dinner Theater. Becker Room.

Monday, December 9
5 p.m. Yoga. Hanke Room.
7 p.m. Photo Ops. Hanke Room. See page 3.

Tuesday, December 10
9 a.m. Ethical Mindfulness Practice. Kate Lovelady’s office.
10 a.m. Tuesday Women’s Association. Becker Room. See pg 5.
10 a.m. Men’s Forum. Hanke Room. See page 5.
5:15 p.m. Tai Chi. Hanke Room.
7 p.m. SOS Secular Sobriety. Coming of Age Room. See page 2.

Wednesday, December 11
7 p.m. Recovering from Religion. K. Lovelady’s office. See pg 3.
7:30 p.m. Ethical Voices Chorus Rehearsal. Auditorium.
Ethical Connection

DECEMBER 2019

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The submission deadline for the Connection is always the 15th of the preceding month.
Email items to klovelady@ethicalstl.org or bring/mail them to Ethical Society of St. Louis; Attn: Connection

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