

# WES Monthly

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

November 2016

## Upcoming Platforms —Join us at 9:30 am or 11:30am

**Sunday November 6. "America's Story: The Vision"**  
**Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.** As we begin our exploration of story, Amanda will reflect on the American dream, and how far we have to go. Using the work of the Rev. Dr. William Barber II and his call for a Third Reconstruction, we will think together about how Americans can be the heroes of our collective story. Music from the WES Chorus.

**Sunday, November 13. "America's Story: The Work"**  
**Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.** With the election behind us, we are faced with the most pressing question: how will we move forward into the unknown ahead? Our task now is to move from a nation which sees heroes and villains among us to a nation that calls on all to be actors together in a shared story. Can we cross the barriers to connect for good? And how do we do that without giving up our most cherished ideals? Music from singer-songwriter LEA.

**Sunday, November 20. "Stone Soup: Whose Story Is This, Anyway?"** **Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.** As we continue our annual tradition of telling the Stone Soup story, we explore this year the idea of many perspectives. What do the villagers think? The travelers? The vegetables?! Join us for our always wonderful multigenerational celebration, followed at 12:45 by our Stone Soup Lunch. *Alternative programming will be available during the 11:30am platform service for those who attended at 9:30am and would like to stay for lunch!*

**Sunday, November 27. "Once Upon a Time..."**  
**Sandra Dobbs Bishop, David Phillips, and Shirley Storms.** WES members explore the defining stories of their lives, sharing how they have shaped them and what "happily ever after" really means. Music from pianist Susan Alexander — and perhaps some other musician friends. Stay "tuned."

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***The Washington Ethical Society is a humanistic congregation that affirms the worth of every person.***

We strive through our relationships to elicit the best in the human spirit.

With faith in human goodness, we appreciate each person's unique capacities. We joyfully celebrate together and support each other through life. We nurture a sense of reverence and responsibility for each other and the earth.

We invite you to join our community of children and adults as we work for a world where love and justice cross all borders.

**[ethicalsociety.org](http://ethicalsociety.org)**

## Theme: Story

**Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader**

What's your story?

It can be heard as a demanding interrogation — hey, you, what's your story — or as an invitation to greater sharing — tell me your story, all of it, and I'll tell you mine.

Our stories are among our most personal possessions. No one can take them from us, and yet at the same time we don't seem to really have power over them. Sometimes, in fact, our stories feel as though they have power over us, running the same script again and again when we are ready to break free. A number of years ago I gave a platform inspired by narrative therapy, a therapeutic technique that (to really oversimplify it) invites us to notice the stories we tell about ourselves and then to choose a different way to tell those stories. I used as an example a children's book, *The Pout-Pout Fish*, about a fish who is sad and pouty because that's just the way his mouth is shaped. No way he can be anything different, right? Over the course of the book's singsong rhymes, the Pout-Pout fish meets another fish, falls in love, and discovers his mouth is really shaped for...kissing! He becomes the Kiss-Kiss fish, and a new story about himself is born.

We don't all have such dramatic experiences of a life turned around, but we do all have choices in the way we tell our stories. This month, we'll explore how we choose to tell the American story — the promise of what America could be, the heroes in the American story, and the role that each of us has to play as characters in that story. And we'll explore our own stories, too, as John Bushman has started doing in his beautiful Board column this month. As we go through the coming weeks, I encourage you to think about your stories, about the ones you like and the ones you don't, and consider how you want to tell them. And then, share with each other! Tell the most important stories of your life to your children, your parents, your friends. Tell them on Facebook, in a letter, in a coffee hour conversation. What's your story?



[Explore the Theme: Story](#)

Share the Plate:  
Pact Family Camp

## From Your Board of Trustees:

**By John Bushman**

In last month's board conversation, my friend and BOT colleague, Rachel Alexander, shared with us her thoughts about money and the stories she had heard about how past financial contributions have enabled WES to upgrade its building, expand the staff and accommodate a growing membership. She specifically mentioned the 2006 WES community and the significant spiritual, financial, and leadership changes they went through at that time. Rachel concluded her thoughtful missive with a suggestion that these are stories that need to be told and heard because by doing so we enrich and inspire ourselves with our history.



I endorse the idea of making these and other stories known about the people who comprise the WES community. Yes, that means you and me. I would enjoy getting to know every WES family by knowing their history and stories about what draws them to WES and Ethical Culture. What keeps them coming back to WES every Sunday? Each of us has our own personal history and stories about WES. Our stories should be shared with each other because they are important to the history we all make as members who share this remarkable community. As Rachel noted, "In sharing them we enrich ourselves and our community with our powerful history, . . . and the pride of knowing that our community is one that inspires . . . even in times of uncertainty."

Perhaps we can make use of the video capabilities on the TV located in the WES lobby on Sunday mornings to record our stories and make them available to the WES community via "video chats"? Would anyone care to join me in developing and co-hosting a forum that would allow us to share our stories? WES members could share as much or as little about themselves as they wanted others to know. Please give this idea some consideration and let me know if you might be interested at [jsbushman@aol.com](mailto:jsbushman@aol.com).

Here is a snapshot of my history and journey to WES.

I am an American Indian. I was born and raised on the Ft. Peck Indian Reservation located in northeastern Montana. I am a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians and was raised in the traditions and customs of my tribe. I enjoyed an idyllic childhood growing up on the wide open northern plains surrounded by my community of family and friends. It was where I learned the meaning of self-sufficiency, community service to others, respect for one's elders and other authority, and love of country.

I finished high school at age 17 in San Francisco at the dawn of the so-called "hippie" era and all that ensued thereafter. I recall being excited and often confused about what was going on around me at the time. Little did I realize I would have a front row seat to some of the events that have shaped our world today.

Here are several things I recall about the events that occurred during this period in our country's history. I vividly recall the Vietnam War escalating rapidly and then dragging on while the body count rises. The draft is reconstituted and as a teenager you suddenly realize

that your chance of dying in a war depends on your draft lottery number! A youthful rebellion is underway against the status quo, aka, “The Man.” The baby boomer generation begins. The civil rights movement is going strong, then Memphis. An incredible music scene develops in San Francisco. The Haight-Ashbury is exciting and inviting. Throw in a political scandal or two — Watergate, and Iran-Contra, come to mind. Sometimes it seems that things haven’t changed that much over the years. I digress. Fast forward . . .

I am academically trained as a native rights attorney. I retired after 25 years of working in various capacities throughout the federal government, including at the Departments of Interior and Health and Human Services, and the United States Congress where I served as counsel to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Doing all of that while becoming a blessed husband, and father of four incredible human beings (and at one time helpful tax deductions). Did I mention two beautiful grandsons?

This is part of my story. Interested in knowing more? Ask me anything, please don’t be bashful.

Now it is your turn. Please consider sharing your story with your WES family, My hope is that we will share and memorialize our WES stories so others walking this road may enjoy the diverse and rich histories we all share.

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## WES News

### Impressions of WES Screenings on Refugee Children for the Immigration Film Festival

*By Katherine O’Kester and John Kester*

The four short films on refugee children screened at WES drew about 100 multigenerational attendees, ages from youth to grandparents.

We watched the experiences of families with children being carried or walking across European borders (**The Long Journey**), a Mexican boy left on his own in the desert (**Land of Exodus**), and heard two mothers’ accounts about their boat journeys with their lost children (**The Last Time**). The longest film, “**Refugee Kids: One Small School Takes on the World**” was the Best Short Winner of this year’s Festival. The International Rescue Committee runs this summer school for recently arrived refugee children in New York City, showcasing the sheer diversity of migrants from 80 countries who come together in small groups to learn what to expect in a New York City classroom. Their faces beamed with joy as the children tackled art therapy, writing about their lives, learning how to navigate classroom tensions, singing and dancing together, and finally, graduating and leaving behind their devoted IRC teachers.

The two generous filmmakers, Renee Silverman and Houssam Haj Yousef, who took questions about their perspectives and work, were warmly applauded. The moderator of the discussion panel, Prof. Daniel Martinez from George Washington University, added clarity and shared relevant statistics. The evening's focus was on wellbeing of refugee children, from newborns to high-school age.



Afterward, attendees discussed how WES members can help refugee children, such as the Good Neighbor Project at WES which will help a newly arrived family settle into their new life in the U.S. (see next article by Sue Smith).

Hearty congratulations to the many interfaith volunteers and WES members who collaborated on this year's successful Third Immigration Film Festival, co-founded by Patti Absher and Judith Johnson.

## **WES to Sponsor Refugee Family**

***By Susan Smith***

A few months from now, a family forced from their home by violence, persecution, or disaster will arrive in our area and WES members will provide a warm welcome and help them adjust to life here. WES has partnered with a resettlement agency, Lutheran Social Services (LSS), as a "Good Neighbor" for a period of 6 months. We have committed to set up an apartment with furnishings, household supplies, food and clothing, to welcome the family at the airport and take them to their new home, and to help them establish connections to jobs, school, and community. While our application is being matched to a family, we can start gathering furniture and basic items; volunteers will attend a training session; and those planning to interact with the family are required to have background checks (at a cost of \$30). Some volunteers have already stepped up to gather food and clothing, to offer rides, and help with English if needed, but more are needed, especially for mentoring and advocacy around employment and finances. If you are moved by what you saw at the IFF and would like to help out, please contact Sue Smith [suzhome2@verizon.net](mailto:suzhome2@verizon.net) or 240-281-0102.



## Coming Up at WES

### Sunday, November 6

**Teen Waffle Bar, 10:45 am, Lobby.** Every first Sunday of the month the Teens will offer waffles and an assortment of toppings for WES members and friends. Waffle ingredients and toppings are purchased through waffle bar proceeds. Remaining funds go to the Teen group for Service trips. Free will donation.

**Newcomers' Q and A, 10:45am & 12:45pm, Library.** New to WES? Join us for this informal gathering to learn a little about who we are and what we do here, and to get your questions answered!

**WES-SURJ Study Group Session, 1-3pm, Double Classroom.** This is a reminder that this group will be meeting.

### Monday November 7

**Mindfulness meeting, 7:30-9 p.m. Library.** This group meets monthly on the first Monday of the month for people interested in practicing meditation and living with mindfulness – or for anyone wanting to find out more about these topics. We explore both practices and ideas. Contact Trish Weil at [trishweil@juno.com](mailto:trishweil@juno.com) or Ann Baker at [bakera@gao.gov](mailto:bakera@gao.gov).

**Adult Ed. Meeting, 7 pm, Adler Study.** This group meets monthly and is open to anyone wanting to work with classes/events/lectures for adults. Usually we will be meeting on the Second Tuesday of the month, but it moved to this day because of the election on the 8th.

### Wednesday, November 9

**Gathering Time, 10:30am-2pm.** Join Amanda to process the events of the national election and be together in community. Bring a lunch for yourself or treats to share.

### Thursday, November 10

**Working for Racial Equity, 7-9pm, Adler Study.** Have you been learning about anti-racism work and Black Lives Matter, and wondering what the next step is for you and for WES? Join us to vision together! We will continue our discussion of plans for shorter term and longer term projects, including Restorative Justice, Muslim solidarity, and deepening our existing work. If you aren't on the WRE listserv or have any questions, please email Danna Pope ([dannapope@gmail.com](mailto:dannapope@gmail.com)).

**YES Conference at WES.** The 2016 Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) Conference is in Washington DC. On Thursday night, WES is hosting incoming youth from around the country as they arrive in DC for the conference, giving them a place to sleep and store their bags before a day of sightseeing in town and checking into the conference center on Friday. We need 20-30 sets of sleeping bags, pillows, blankets, etc. for these kids and their chaperones for

one night. Drop off bedding items in the office before noon on Thursday, November 10. Contact Mike Kravitz with questions at [mikek@ethicalsociety.org](mailto:mikek@ethicalsociety.org). #WES teens #WashingtonEthicalSociety

### Friday, November 11

**Bunco!, 7pm, Double Classroom.** Bunco! is an awesome dice game. It is a mix between Yahtzee and sitting around chatting with friends. If you have never played bunco, it is very easy to learn, and we will teach you that night. No experience necessary! There is a recommended \$5 buy-in that will be used for prizes at the end of the night (most wins, most buncos, last bunco, and most LOSSES! ) We invite you to bring a dish or drinks to share. Plates, utensils, and napkins will be provided. We will be downstairs at WES in the double classroom. Adults only, please. You do not have to be a member of WES to participate — visitors are always welcome! See the Facebook event here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1786161491644268/>

### Sunday, November 13

**WES talks, 11am, Social Hall.** No information available at this time. Please watch for announcement in the weekly WES News and Notes.

**Fall Membership Meeting, 1pm, Main Hall.** We hope WES members will attend our annual membership meeting on Sunday, November 13, from 1-2:30pm. We'll have a potluck lunch and discuss our community's growth, as well as hear a finance report and other topics. Contact Sera Morgan by November 1 if you have something for the agenda, and Melissa Sinclair by November 8 for childcare.

### Friday, November 18

**Still Thirsty After All These Years, Scion Restaurant, 1200 East-West Highway.** This group is for WES adults beyond the demographics of the "Young and Thirsty" group, but still thirsty for connections, entertainment, and new experiences. We will meet for Happy Hour on the third Friday of every month. Contact Nancy McGuire ([nkmontheroad@yahoo.com](mailto:nkmontheroad@yahoo.com)) or Shan Evans ([sevens4406@yahoo.com](mailto:sevens4406@yahoo.com)) for more details.

### Sunday, November 20

**Tai Chi, 11am, front lawn.** We invite you to join us out on the front lawn (or in the Main Hall if weather doesn't cooperate) for a 30-minute session of Tai Chi. No experience necessary and perfect for all ages and abilities.

**Stone Soup Lunch, 12:45pm, Social Hall.** Join us for our always beloved Stone Soup lunch, as we celebrate the magic of generosity by eating together. Sunday School families are invited to bring in food as assigned.

**Biology Reading Group, 1pm, Library.** We will be reading *Life Ascending: The Ten Great Inventions of Evolution*, by Nick Lane. It is not necessary to do the reading to attend the meeting, though it helps. For further information, get in touch with Barbara Searle, [bsearle70@msn.com](mailto:bsearle70@msn.com).

**Sunday Book Club, following lunch.** Cynna Janus will be leading a discussion of *Gratitude* by Oliver Sacks. For more information, contact Rachel Hartig, [rachel.hartig@gallaudet.edu](mailto:rachel.hartig@gallaudet.edu).

### **Sunday, November 27**

**Ethical Living Laboratory, 11am, Social Hall.** No information available at this time. Please watch for announcement in the weekly WES News and Notes.

### **Wednesday, November 30**

**Young and Thirsty, 7pm, Denizen's Brewing Company.** Young @ WES (generally about 18-35+) gathers for regular get-togethers. For more information, contact [ldisciullo@gmail.com](mailto:ldisciullo@gmail.com).

### **Sunday, December 4**

**Teen Waffle Bar, 10:45 am, Lobby.** Every first Sunday of the month the Teens will offer waffles and an assortment of toppings for WES members and friends. Waffle ingredients and toppings are purchased through waffle bar proceeds. Remaining funds go to the Teen group for Service trips. Free will donation.

**Newcomers' Q and A, 10:45am & 12:45pm, Library.** New to WES? Join us for this informal gathering to learn a little about who we are and what we do here, and to get your questions answered!

**WES-SURJ Study Group Session, 1-3pm, Double Classroom.** This is a reminder that this group will be meeting.

**Board of Trustees Meeting, 1pm, Social Hall.** All are welcome to attend meetings of the Board of Trustees! Agenda and materials are available in the Members' Access section of our website.