



***"Our shared task is to live decently, compassionately, and caringly
in the world we inhabit. "***

— Edward L. Ericson

"The Humanist Way — An Introduction to Ethical Humanist Religion."

**You *CAN* Make A Difference
When You *"Pay It Forward!"***

- You renew your faith in human nature
- You initiate social change
- You inspire more good deeds in others
- You plant tiny seeds of caring

What is “*Pay It Forward*”?

Pay It Forward is a way to effect social change by helping people and encouraging those who have been helped to in turn help others.

Let’s say you decide to help someone in need. You might do something kind for them such as cook a meal, change a flat tire, buy a bus pass... If instead of looking to be “paid back” for your efforts you encourage the person you’ve tried to help to help someone else in need, you have “paid it forward.”

The idea behind ***Pay It Forward*** was developed and made popular by the author Catherine Ryan Hyde who had a personal experience of being helped by anonymous strangers when her car caught fire. The experience left her with the desire to help others and the belief that paying it forward could be contagious.

In her book “Pay It Forward” her protagonist, a young boy with a big heart, develops a plan to change the world for the better by helping three people and rather than ask to be paid back asks them to in turn help three more people—as well as ask the three other people to help three more people...

What is the “*Pay It Forward*”? Fund

The Ethical Culture Society of Westchester’s *Pay it Forward* Fund provides direct aid to individuals, groups and projects with the goals of helping improve the lives of people in need and encouraging those who have received help to in turn be helpful to other people.

The fund exists for the express purpose of charitable giving with an emphasis on finding situations that could be helped by financial support. This could be a wide range of local to international concerns--perhaps a budding musician needs help to purchase an instrument or livestock would be purchased for a rural family...

Along with the help we would encourage the recipient to do something helpful for someone else, to ***Pay It Forward***.

Making Contributions to the *Pay It Forward Fund*

*Please make out all checks to
Ethical Culture Society of Westchester
noting that the check is for the Pay it Forward Fund*

**Ethical Culture Society of Westchester
7 Saxon Wood Road
White Plains, NY 10605
Phone (914) 948-1120
Fax (914) 948-3819
www.ethicalsocietywestchester.org**

The Ethical Culture Society of Westchester is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All donations to *Pay it Forward* are fully tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Visit the *Pay It Forward* website

<http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/>

to learn more about:

- The book by Catherine Ryan Hyde, Pocket books, 2000
- The movie, Warner Bros., 2000, PG-13 starring Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt, Haley Joel Osment
- The Foundation, an educational resource and catalyst
- Go to the “Movement” page to read many, many success stories
www.payitforwardmovement.org



Update on our Pay It Forward Project

We kicked off our fund raising campaign with a "Pay It Forward Auction" on March 10th following our Ethical Chefs dinner. Our efforts were helped considerably by the ECSW Board's decision to put \$5,000 from a recent gift into the fund. We raised about \$2,000 at the auction so we are on our way toward the goal of collecting \$30,000 by March 2008.

If you missed the auction (or if you were there and would like to contribute more) you still have the opportunity to give to the Pay It Forward Fund. Any donation you can make will be greatly appreciated. If you like you can have it applied to one of our identified projects (see list below), have it added to the general fund or make a suggestion for a worthy cause that would like the Ethical Action Committee to consider.

Checks should be payable to: Ethical Culture Society of Westchester
(Please write "Pay It Forward" or "PIF Fund" in the memo section of the check)

Pay It Forward Auction Results:

General Fund		\$5,050.00
Targeted Donations:		
WestHab Camp Kits	A bathing suit towel and flip flops for summer camp	\$350.00
WestHab Yonkers Lunch	\$5 a day buys lunch for campers at a free community camp.	\$150.00
International Partners-Pencils	School supplies for a school in El Salvador.	\$11.00
International Partners-Soccer Balls	Sporting goods for a school in El Salvador.	\$40.00
Heifer International--Bees	A colony of bees for a family who will breed them.	\$60.00
Heifer International--Chicks	A flock of chicks for a family who will breed them.	\$40.00
Heifer International--Sheep	A sheep for a family who will breed them.	\$240.00
Bikes Not Bombs	Refurbished bikes and bicycle repair training for urban USA and Internationally.	\$325.00
IICD – Mozambique	Sponsor a volunteer for extended HIV prevention and provision of training for teachers.	\$700.00
Locksmith Course	Help pay tuition for mental health center client who aspires to work as a locksmith.	\$80.00
TOTAL		\$7,046.00



Proposal: “Pay It Forward” Ethical Action Project

A. Project Description

The “Pay It Forward” Project takes a fictional concept and creates a positive reality. The concept of “paying it forward” - performing a kind or charitable act with the expectation that the beneficiary will do the same for others in the future - was introduced into popular culture by the film and book of the same name. Using this recognizable concept and title provides instant positive associations, and building on that positive connection will increase charitable giving, enhance the effectiveness of charitable contributions and encourage greater community presence for Ethical Societies’ ethical action efforts.

The Pay It Forward (PIF) Project includes three main parts:

1. a fund for the express purpose of collecting and disbursing money for PIF projects,
2. a mechanism for identifying people, programs or situations who are suitable beneficiaries for PIF efforts, and
3. a program for raising and distributing funds for the PIF project.

In a pilot program at the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester we raised over \$7,200 that was specifically targeted for the Pay It Forward Project, and then funded several very specific projects including:

- Paying one beneficiary’s tuition for a course in locksmithing, vocational training that will potentially allow the recipient to successfully support himself in the future
- Contributing to the airfare and board of a young woman on her way to Africa to participate in a year long anti-HIV program
- Paying for swimsuits, towels and flip-flops for children in a homeless shelter to help them enjoy their summer camp experience
- Purchasing several bicycles for the “Bikes Not Bombs” program

In all cases, by the nature of the fund’s title, as well as further explanation along the way, recipients understood that there was a hope – if not an expectation – of similarly philanthropic acts on their part in the future.

B. Needs Assessment

The central aim of all Ethical Societies is to create a more humane society characterized by caring, justice and the appreciation of the worth and dignity of all.

From the beginning of the Ethical Culture Movement this has included charitable giving. In fact, during the early years, one criterion for a group's acceptance as an Ethical Society by the American Ethical Union was the demonstration that 25% of the annual budget would be used for charity.

In terms of social responsibility, the "Golden Rule" of Ethical Culture is to take action that elicits the best from others and thereby elicits the best from ourselves as well. While there are many routes that lead to eliciting our "best," charitable giving has been a time-honored mechanism for achieving this goal. The PIF project combines the threads of social responsibility and charitable giving in ways that are personally and socially satisfying, and that do elicit the best from us as well as others.

The history of Ethical Culture includes both charitable ventures and a variety of social action endeavors, but efforts in recent years have typically been implemented by individual Societies rather than by the Ethical Movement as a whole. Yet individual Ethical Societies find it difficult to mount and maintain substantive ethical action projects. This patchwork of projects can be difficult to promote more broadly without an organizing idea that is both recognizable and appealing to a significant number of people in the larger community.

The PIF project offers a framework for charity that is recognizable by the general public and practical because it can be scaled to fit the resources of the sponsoring group as well as the needs of the recipient. Perhaps more importantly, PIF is consistent with Ethical Culture values and ideals, and seeks not only to alter the material conditions of the PIF beneficiaries but also to support each beneficiary's ethical development by building in the expectation that those who have been the beneficiaries of PIF will themselves support others in the future – thus, effectively finding ways to "elicit their best."

Another consideration: A recent report on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* discussed research that indicated that people respond more generously when the faces of those in need are personalized. More specifically, the report indicated that participants were more likely to give charitably to a single person in need, whose situation they could visualize and understand, than to victims of large disasters, such as genocide or earthquake, where the needs are overwhelming and impersonal. The PIF Project allows each individual Ethical Society to personalize their choices, and to envision – if not actually observe – the good results.

C. Expected Outcomes

- At least 25 individuals will receive direct help from each Ethical Society that participates in the PIF program
- A significant increase (at least 10%) in annual charitable giving in each Ethical Society
- An increased number of Ethical Societies with dedicated charitable funds
- Increased media attention to Ethical Society charitable giving in publications/broadcasts

D. Resources

- A fund that meets the basic requirements for non-taxable charitable giving and can be either connected to a local Ethical Society or a fund shared by more than one group.
- A mechanism for identifying potential beneficiaries—this can be a committee, a task force or even an individual who has the time and capacity to do the research to develop a list of potential beneficiaries who can then be considered for the PIF program. Once the list has been developed a task group, committee or the Society's board approves the list.
- A program for fund raising—this can be the same group that identifies the beneficiaries or a different one as determined by the Ethical Society.
- Pamphlets and other materials for advertising PIF events, communicating with potential beneficiaries, etc.

E. Budget

All funds would be raised by the local PIF program. In addition to the fund, \$200 - \$400 ought to cover the costs of printing and postage. Fund raising events should be self-supporting.

F. Implementation plan and time line

The main components of the plan are:

- a dedicated fund for monetary assistance to individuals, groups, projects, institutions and foundations
- a mechanism for identifying potential fund beneficiaries,
- fund raising for the PIF project, and,
- a mechanism for distributing the funds and spreading the “Pay It Forward” message.

The project can be rolled out in several phases beginning with local Society efforts and progressing toward central coordination at the national level.

The first phase would include:

1. The board of the participating Society endorses and promotes the project for the Society.
2. Each Society establishes a local “Pay It Forward Project” including a special fund for collecting and organizing financial resources for the project.
3. A small group is established to identify individuals, groups or projects that will be supported by the PIF project. This may be the Society’s existing Ethical Action Committee.
4. A series of activities are planned and implemented to promote the project within the Society and in the local community. This should include brochures, at least one fund raising event, inclusion on the Society’s web page and press releases.

A second phase could entail greater cooperation between participating Ethical Societies and could include sharing a common PIF fund, sharing fund raising ideas and PIF beneficiary lists.

A third phase could involve collecting PIF results and sharing PIF ideas throughout the AEU.

G. Evaluation Plan

The success of this plan rests on the degree to which individuals, groups and programs not only benefit from the assistance, but also reach out to assist others in turn. It is certainly both possible and important to report on who are recipients of the funding; tracking the instances of recipients who reach out to help others will be more difficult. The notion of helping others in turn should be put forward as an opportunity rather than as a demand. Even so, the experience of the Pay It Forward Foundation is that some individuals are eager to report their own efforts to “pay it forward,” and response forms on PIF websites, self addressed cards and follow-up contacts could further encourage those reports.

A second point of evaluation would be the effect of the PIF program on overall charitable giving by the participating Ethical Society. A review of the budget should indicate at least a 10% increase in giving after the PIF program is fully functioning compared to the most recent year when it was not in place.

A third point would be measurement of the incidence of coverage of the PIF program in publications, broadcasts or hits on the PIF page on the Society’s web site.

H. Appendix/Attachments (optional)

The following Ethical Societies have agreed to participate in the Pay It Forward program:

- Ethical Culture Society of Westchester
- Philadelphia Ethical Society
- Ethical Society of Austin
- Northern Westchester Ethical Society

Endorsements have been made by the Board of Directors at the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester (11 members) and the Philadelphia Ethical Society (9 members) and the Ethical Action Committee of ECSW have volunteered to operate the program (6 members)

I. Authors

Bart Worden, Mikki Shaw



Ethical Culture Society of Westchester

7 Saxon Woods Road, White Plains, NY 10605

914/948-1120; ethicalsocietywestchester.org

Sunday Platform and Sunday School at 10:30 A. M.

DEED ABOVE CREED

Dear PIF:

I am a member of the *Ethical Culture Society of Westchester* (ECSW), located in White Plains, New York. Last year, during our 2006-07 season, the regular 'Movie Night,' which is held at ECSW once a month, featured the film *Pay It Forward*. The film had an enormous impact, on some members of the Society, and an initiative was begun to integrate the concept into our programs of Ethical Action.

The Board of Trustees, at ECSW, voted unanimously to implement a "Pay-It-Forward Fund," and predicted that it could be used as a method of increasing charitable giving, amongst our general membership. We were subsequently able to gather the support of other societies, including those as close to our own as the Ethical Society of Northern Westchester, and as far away as the Society in Austin, Texas. Then it was introduced by ECSW to the General Assembly of the American Ethical Union (AEU), held at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, in June 2007. The AEU held a lengthy discussion on the issue, and ultimately passed the initiative, as a National focus, for Ethical Action.

Since June, our leader, Bart Worden, has received follow-up contacts from other societies, concerning the development of their own Pay-It-Forward programs.

At our own Society, ECSW is approaching 25% of our total goal for our Pay-It-Forward fund, by Spring 2008. We have had brainstorming sessions concerning specific ways to implement Pay-It-Forward, as a Society. We hope to turn Pay-It-Forward into a general way of life. Long live Pay-It-Forward!

Ethically yours,

--

Eric Alan Steinnagel
White Plains, New York

Ethical Culture is a humanistic, liberal religious and educational movement inspired by the ideal that ethics are essential to building personal relationships and creating a more just and humane society.