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PNC Grow Up Great® program celebrates 15th Anniversary



Children from Catholic Charities Head Start were welcomed at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore City to help celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the PNC Grow Up Great® program on Thursday, April 4, 2019. Since 2004, Grow Up Great has focused on helping to prepare children, especially underserved children, from birth to age five for success in school and life. The program is now a \$500 million initiative benefiting 40 PNC markets. (Above) Annie Bobbitt with the American Visionary Art Museum reminds the pre-schoolers of museum manners before going into the galleries. (Story on page 8)

Photo Credit: Richard Lippenholz

AWARE for All – Baltimore:

Free event to help educate public about importance of research studies

By Stacy M. Brown

On Wednesday, April 17, 2019, The Center for Information & Study on Clinical Research Participation (CISCRP), along with the Johns Hopkins Institute for Clinical and Translational Research will host AWARE for All – Baltimore, a free event that aims to educate the public about the importance of their participation in research studies.

Sponsored by EMD Serono; the Chase Brexton POWER Project; Susan G. Komen; the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society; Alzheimer's Association; and others, AWARE for All – Baltimore is scheduled from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Turner Auditorium at the Johns Hopkins Medical Campus at 720 Rutland Avenue in East Baltimore.


Attendees will be treated to health screenings, informational panels and speeches, healthy bites and giveaways.

“There is a need for general education about the clinical research process

including the risks, benefits, and the rights of participants. This is an important opportunity for the Baltimore community to work together to address this need and to recognize those who give the gift of participation,” said Ellyn Getz, the association director of Development & Community Engagement at CISCRP.

“A very high percentage of the public cannot name a place where clinical trials are conducted and most say they wouldn't know what to do if they needed to find and evaluate clinical trials to aid in their decision to participate,” Getz said. “Through AWARE for All – Baltimore, CISCRP and our local collaborators are working to build greater awareness and understanding of the clinical research process and the important role diverse participation plays in advancing public health.”

CISCRP is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to educating and empowering people to make informed



BALTIMORE, MD

Wednesday, April 17, 2019
5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Turner Auditorium, Johns Hopkins Medical Campus
720 Rutland Avenue, Baltimore City

decisions about clinical research participation.

Since its founding in 2004, officials said the organization has been an international leader in promoting public trust of the clinical research enterprise and raising public awareness of clinical research's role in improving public health.

“The goal of the ‘AWARE for All’ event is to help diverse communities understand all their treatment options so that they can make the best decision for themselves and for their families,” Getz said. “We’ve been moved by the number

of advocacy and research teams joining in the movement to raise awareness about clinical research and share free educational resources with the Baltimore community.

“This is an important milestone in building awareness about both clinical research participation and the crucial role that clinical research volunteers play in advancing new medicines.”

To register for the free event, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aware-for-all-baltimore-2019-registration-53654046698?aff=sarahroseoutreach>.



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Ravens fans offered way to celebrate NFL Draft with team

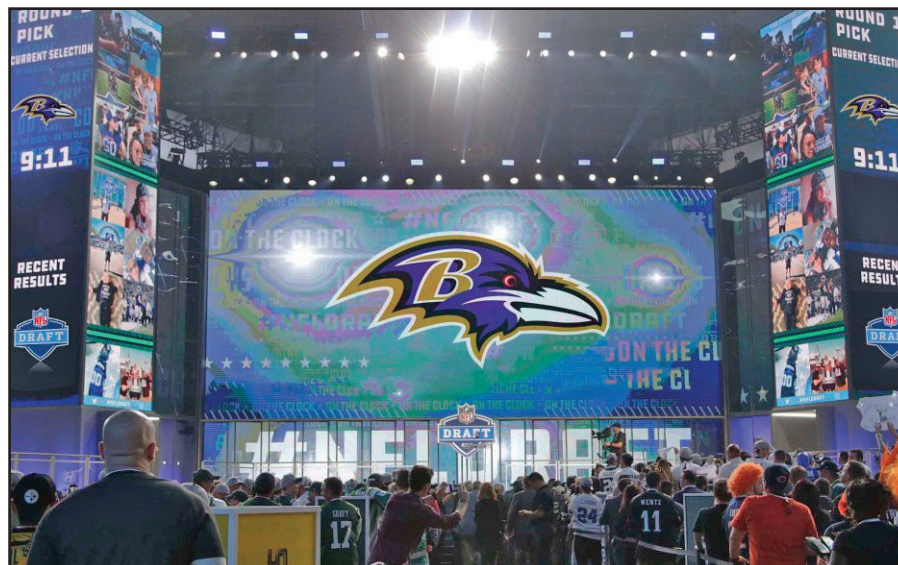
By Tyler Hamilton

This year, the NFL Draft will take place in Nashville, Tennessee for the first time in its long history. There will surely be many passionate NFL fans making the trip from all over to see the draft. However anyone who doesn't make the trip will be able to take in some Ravens specific draft festivities starting on Thursday, April 25, 2019.

The Ravens announced some of the events on their website earlier this month. All of the events are free for the general public.

The first event, "Flock Party - Draft Edition" on April 25 at Hightopps Backstage Grill starting at 6 p.m. Hightopps Backstage Grill, located at 2306 York Road in Lutherville-Timonium, is a well known Baltimore County hotspot famous for its Dirty Banana, a custom drink made with banana rum and Kahlua.

The party will feature a live broadcast on 98 Rock and WBAL Radio. The Ravens also announced that former play-



The stage is set during a previous NFL Draft event for the Baltimore Ravens turn to exercise their pick. Courtesy Photo/NFL.com

ers Justin Forsett, Jarrett Johnson and Brad Jackson are scheduled to attend the event along with the Ravens Cheerleaders and Poe, the team mascot. They will sign autographs and will be available for photo opportunities.

The party continues on Saturday, April 27 with the Ravens Draft Fest at the Inner Harbor in McKeldin Square from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. with food trucks and fun activities. Fans will have the opportunity to see the Ravens make their picks on the final

day of the draft. The team's first-round pick will be on hand along with Forsett, Jarrett Johnson, Jacoby Jones, Jermaine Lewis, and Tom Zbikowski for photographs and autographs.

The event will also feature an on-stage presentation for the grand prizewinner of the Touchdown for Teachers program. The three finalists will be honored before the winner is named.

There are a limited number of tickets available to attend the free event. For tickets, visit: www.BaltimoreRavens.com/DraftEvents.

The annual sale at the Ravens retail outlet store located on the South Concourse at M&T Bank Stadium will also take place on Saturday. Fans can park for free in Lot D and enter through Gate D before making their way between sections 126 and 132. The sale will feature Ravens merchandise by New Era, Nike, and Under Armour at discounts between 40 and 50 percent.

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Should the smell test or legal test define Mayor Pugh's actions?

Pugh! Would that be the Mayor of Baltimore City or the stench of corruption? Could these be one and the same? While the charges and condemnations are coming fast and furiously against Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh, it must be kept in mind that the mayor has not been charged with a crime. Even if the mayor were to be indicted, she would still be presumed innocent under the law until proven guilty.

Despite damning allegations and quick-draw demands for her resignation Mayor Pugh, so far, is only guilty of having pneumonia. Having won office with 57 percent of the popular vote—short of a formal conviction—it is the voters who will sit in judgment regarding the mayor's fate. Appearances alone must not be the criteria to force the mayor from office.

Nearly ten years ago, former Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon, was arguably charged with a much more egregious crime relating to outright personal theft of gift cards intended to brighten Christmas for Baltimore's poorest children.

The drumbeat for Dixon's resignation by her former city council colleagues did not rise to the decibel level we are hearing from the current City Council who voted unanimously for Mayor Pugh to resign—some of whom supported the mayor's bid for City Hall.

The same is true for Catherine Pugh's former colleagues at the State Capital in Annapolis. The entire Baltimore City delegation has also demanded the mayor's resignation. Again, some of whom championed her race for Baltimore Mayor.

Do these politicians know something that Baltimore voters don't? Did they know it when they endorsed the mayor's candidacy? Why did they turn on the mayor based on allegations in lieu of evidence and on speculation in lieu of legal proceedings? Are these knee-jerk reactions or more calculated?

The bandwagon of mayor Pugh's detractors will surely breakdown at the rate finger pointers on piling on. The smell test notwithstanding, public officials who purport to uphold the rule of law, should not be in a rush to judgment by vilifying the mayor in the media. If Mayor Pugh is guilty of anything, the 'truth' should be ascertained in a court of law, not in the court of public opinion.

Former Baltimore Mayor Dixon, who made the rounds last week, publicly weighing in on Mayor Pugh's situation, was only made to resign as a result of her criminal conviction, staying on as mayor for over a year after she was indicted—not just accused—of heinous criminal acts against the most in-need and vulnerable of her constituents.

This assessment is neither an apology nor an attempt to make light of Mayor Pugh's conduct, simply to say that until all the facts are in, the jury should be out as to any criminal culpability or ethical lapse associated with Ms. Pugh's behavior. While what has been exposed does not encourage confidence, it should also not substitute for a comprehensive finding of fact.

The nearly 130,000 Baltimore voters who swept Mayor Pugh into office in 2016 must be the cooler heads that prevail in this controversy. An able politician who honorably served Baltimore City for 20 years in the City Council and State Assembly must be given the benefit of the doubt and the benefit of an impartial investigation, like every other citizen. Extremely serious allegations of criminality and possible espionage against President Donald Trump's, floated for nearly three years since he announced his candidacy, has not removed him from office.

Mayor Catherine Pugh is deserving of due process and the presumption of innocence until a preponderance of all the evidence indicates otherwise.



Community Affairs

Maryland Farmers Market Association expands Maryland Market Money Program

Millersville, Md.— Maryland Farmers Market Association (MDFMA) has expanded its cornerstone program Maryland Market Money (MMM) throughout the state to new markets, growing from 21 farmers markets in seven counties in 2018 to 37 farmers markets in 13 counties in 2019.

“We are able to grow the program thanks to generous funding from Maryland Department of Agriculture, Whole Foods Market, Montgomery County, Prince George's County Council, Garrett County, private foundations, and corporate and individual donors,” said Amy Crone, founder and executive director. “These public/private partnerships are vital to growing a food system that can help food-insecure Marylanders, support local farmers and growers, and foster

farmers markets as economic powerhouses and inclusive community spaces.”

MMM is MDFMA's state-wide food incentive program that removes economic barriers for food-insecure shoppers, providing a dollar-for-dollar match for purchases made using federal nutrition benefits at select farmers markets. Federal nutrition benefits that qualify for the MMM match are: Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for seniors and WIC; eWIC (Women, Infant, and Children Fruit & Vegetable Benefit Program); and SNAP/EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps). MMM is an incredible multitasker with each MMM dollar helping food-insecure Marylanders access wholesome foods, boosting farmers' sales, and strengthening the farmers' market community.

Every year, MDFMA welcomes applications from farmers markets across the state to participate in the program, although many farmers markets do not have the capacity to run the program. Thanks to the robust funding this season, MDFMA also will be able to fund staff and equipment to help very small and understaffed markets build capacity.

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Maryland House Speaker Michael Busch's final thoughts, in his last days, in his own words

By Regi Taylor

Surrounded by loved ones, the State of Maryland's longest serving Speaker of the House of Delegates, Michael Erin Busch, passed away on Sunday, April 7, 2019, after contracting pneumonia resulting from complications associated with a 2017 liver transplant.

Sworn-in unanimously as House Speaker for the 5th time on January 9, 2019, Busch, known as Coach by many due to his lifelong involvement in sports and athletics, was beloved and well-respected by political colleagues on both sides of the aisle for his conciliatory demeanor and reputation as a consensus builder.

Busch self-identified as a Progressive. He is on record that he was strongly influenced by his parents' values of inclusiveness, embracing equal rights as a result of lessons learned during the height of racial segregation challenged during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's.

He shared with the Associated Press in a 2002 interview that "[equality] was

ingrained in me from my grandparents to my parents and through the [turmoil of] the '60s." Busch recalls two pictures on the mantel in his grandparents' home— Jesus and Franklin D. Roosevelt. He said both his paternal and maternal grandparents "believed that Roosevelt gave average people a piece of the American dream," adding, "I really believe government is there to give people opportunity."

The Speaker's advocacy for equality also extended to the LGBTQ community. "When I first got to the legislature, he wasn't somebody who worked against us. But he wasn't our ally," former Maryland state Del. Heather Mizeur said in an interview with the Washington Blade.

However, after counsel with his daughters, Busch would become "our greatest ally," Mizeur said. "He was pushing marriage before it was popular or easy to do, and I'm really honored that I had an opportunity to work under him," she informed The Blade.

As well, part of Mike Busch's recipe for success in Annapolis perhaps culminates from lessons learned as a young athlete. In 1969 during his junior year at Temple University in Philadelphia, Busch set a record as a running back, gaining 185 yards in a game against Bucknell University.

However, Busch's potential career as a professional football player in the NFL was sidelined by a leg injury. Before word of his condition became general knowledge, Michael received a letter from the Dallas Cowboys organization that read: "you are being considered by

our ball club as one of our top draft choices."

Yet the converse is equally true. Mike Busch was not timid about crossing the aisle to support legislation from his political rivals that he recognized as beneficial to Marylanders. The quintessential team player, Busch earned a reputation for even-handedness in doling out committee assignments and giving fair hearing on issues to his Democrat and Republican colleagues, both long-time and freshman Delegates.

The forgone thumbnail of Michael Erin Busch's career is gleaned from an examination of the available public record. However, a more revealing insight into Busch—the man, the person— requires a glimpse at his Twitter feed during the last 90 days of his life. Speaking to everyone and no one in particular, these are random, honest, candid thoughts, observations and feelings of The Speaker:

Mike Busch @SpeakerBusch Jan 9

I am honored to be unanimously elected by the House of Delegates to serve as Speaker of the House. We will work to provide affordable health care, a world-class education, and wages that allow working men and women to provide for their families.

Mike Busch@SpeakerBusch Jan 21

We as elected officials have to be examples, for tolerance, acceptance, and understanding. We must be examples for civil rights and equality. tonight I pledge myself to do that. The annual wreath laying is a constant reminder.

Mike Busch@SpeakerBusch Feb 12

Proud to present my good friend

Speaker Pro Tem Adrienne Jones with the Cas Taylor Award for her dedication to public service and for representing the spirit of the House of Delegates

Mike Busch@SpeakerBusch Feb 18

Our Democratic Leadership package speaks for itself. Strong support across the state for legislation to build a stronger middle class in Maryland

Mike Busch@SpeakerBusch Feb 25

The oyster population is at a critical tipping point. This legislation is about protecting public investment and ensuring that the Chesapeake Bay can experience long term economic and ecological benefits

Mike Busch @SpeakerBusch Mar 18

Tonight two important gun safety bills passed the House of Delegates:

Background checks on all private rifle & shotgun transfers

3D printed gun ban

Mike Busch@SpeakerBusch Mar 26

I'm proud of what we have accomplished by passing this year's state budget. It's bipartisan, balanced, and with over \$7 billion for public schools—it's the most ever spent on education in Maryland

Mike Busch @SpeakerBusch Mar 29

I want to thank my good friend, Speaker Pro-Tem Adrienne Jones, for taking the rostrum and guiding the House this week in my absence. I'll be back next week and look forward to seeing everyone.

West Baltimore native, Regi Taylor is a married father of four. He is an artist, writer and media professional specializing in political history.

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Baltimore Office of Civil Rights kicks off 'Can We Talk' Series

By Demetrius Dillard

The Baltimore City Office of Civil Rights and Wage Enforcement (BOCRWE) launched a new series of community dialogues entitled, "Can We Talk?" The inaugural event was held in the Curran Room at Baltimore City Hall on March 12, 2019. The first of the series was a presentation by Lawrence Brown, Ph.D., an assistant professor in Morgan State University's School of Community Health and Policy, entitled, "Mapping Baltimore Apartheid in the Ongoing Quest for Civil Rights."

Public information officer for BOCRWE, John Milton Wesley, the originator and coordinator of the community talk series, felt impelled to have Dr. Brown as the first presenter of the series because unfair housing practices have been such a prominent issue in Baltimore City.

"I felt like there was a need to have a one-on-one conversation with the communities across Baltimore," Wesley said. "The idea was to create a series in which the people who support [Baltimore community] organizations could speak directly to the Office of Civil Rights."

Free and open to the public, there was a decent-sized group of inquisitive community members present to take part in the introductory discussion.

Suzanne Haley, a racial equity trainer and community organizer, who attended the gathering says she was sought insight on the topic of housing discrimination after reading some of Brown's articles.

"I'm just interested in peeling back the layers and changing the lens of the way we see what we see," said Haley, an Elliott City resident. "I'm curious about the devastation that I see in Baltimore, and so the presentation today helped me to



The first of the "Can We Talk" series concluded with a Q&A session and thorough discussion with five panelists (left to right) Betty Robinson, Baltimore City Office of Civil Rights; Cleveland Horton II, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights; Martin French, Baltimore City Department of Planning; Eric Booker, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development; and Dr. Lawrence Brown, assistant professor, Morgan State University School of Community Health and Policy.
Photo by Demetrius Dillard

get a clearer lens of what I'm really looking at."

The destruction of black neighborhoods was created by policies—social algorithms that were enacted to determine what parts of the city received capital funding from the federal government. As a result of which, black families were uprooted and pushed out. Plus the construction of major highways in the region displaced numerous black families and businesses, according to Dr. Brown whose research examines the impact of historical trauma on community health.

Another focus of Dr. Brown's presentation was James Preston, the Mayor of Baltimore from 1911 to 1919, considered by many as one of the city's most blatantly racist politicians for proposing and passing legislation that displaced black communities.

Dr. Brown also underlined a program called "Hope VI," a plan originally drafted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1992 under the Bill Clinton Administration. This piece of legislation was designed to revitalize the worst public

housing projects into "mixed-income developments" in the nation's major cities, but instead resulted in the displacement of countless black families and establishments, furthering a process known as gentrification.

The word "apartheid" was used repeatedly throughout his presentation to denote the deleterious effects that housing discrimination has had on Baltimore's black population. He also spoke to the audience about racial bias in the mainstream media, pointing out documented headlines from past Baltimore Sun articles with phrases like "Negro Invasion," "Infiltration of the Negro," and "Emergency War Fund" whenever black people moved into traditionally white neighborhoods.

Moreover, Brown cited research finding that more of Baltimore City's budget is spent on the police force than other important areas like community redevelopment, arts, education, housing, roads and public transportation.

To conclude his in-depth lecture, Dr. Brown presented what he feels is a feasible solution for the number of problems

he highlighted, which was a \$3 billion Racial Impact Bond—somewhat of a reparatory budget, which calls for more funds to be allotted to vital areas that will help to rebuild black communities adversely affected by gentrification and other inequitable housing policies.

During the panel discussion after Dr. Brown's presentation, the topics of fair housing; infrastructural systems used to rebuild underprivileged communities; solutions to gentrification; challenging local government and policy makers were discussed.

The "Can We Talk?" series will be held at various locations across the city in the months ahead. The discussions will explore a variety of subjects important to the citizens of Baltimore and issues impacted by the work of the Office of Civil Rights.

Upon leaving the podium, Dr. Brown encapsulated his presentation by urging community members and leaders to take a firm stand against the deplorable inequities that have had such a grave impact on the city.

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PNC Grow Up Great® program celebrates 15th Anniversary

Head Start welcomed at American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore City to kick off extension of early education initiative to \$500 million

Baltimore— On Thursday, April 4, 2019, PNC launched its 15th anniversary celebration of PNC Grow Up Great® announcing an additional \$150 million to extend the program that supports high-quality early learning for young children. The program is now a \$500 million initiative benefiting 40 PNC markets.

Preschoolers from Catholic Charities Head Start in Baltimore City enjoyed a fantastic field trip to the American Visionary Art Museum thanks to PNC's Grow Up Great. The event also marked 50 years of Catholic Charities Head Start in Baltimore.

Since 2004, Grow Up Great has focused on helping to prepare children, especially underserved children, from birth to age five for success in school and life. The initiative goes beyond the classroom, supporting learning and social-emotional development of children at home and across communities by also providing free resources and tools to parents, guardians, caregivers and neighborhood organizations.

Access to high-quality early childhood education and resources is critical. Research shows that quality early education reduces dropout rates, poverty and crime while improving the skills of tomorrow's workforce.

In addition to the increased funding, details of the yearlong celebration includes:

•Launching the “Great Big Book Drive.” For the first time, PNC invites customers and other community members to join us in donating books and playing a role in helping children succeed. Books can be dropped off at PNC branches now through April 30. The books will be distributed to early learning organizations across PNC communities.

•Extending the alliance with DonorsChoose.org. PNC is extending its alliance with DonorsChoose.org, an online charity that connects individual donors with classrooms in need, by awarding another \$5 million grant from the PNC Foundation to help preschool



(Top left) PNC employee volunteers helping out the children at the Arts & Crafts table. (Top right) Beka Plum with the American Visionary Art Museum (extreme left) demonstrates various shapes in the “World of Robots” exhibit by artist Devon Smith. The children’s heads are covered with berets since they are all budding artists. (Above right) Laura Gamble, PNC regional president for Greater Maryland (at podium) welcomed all the guests and announced the extension of the \$500 million initiative which benefits 40 PNC Markets. On stage with Gamble were Rebecca Hoffberger, Founder/Director of the American Visionary Art Museum; and Bill McCarthy, executive director of Catholic Charities. (Above left) Group of PNC employees, preschoolers from Catholic Charities Head Start along with their teachers and parents and other members of the community at the kick off of the 15th Anniversary celebrations of the PNC Grow Up Great® program on April 4, 2019 at the American Visionary Art Museum.

Photo Credit: Richard Lippenholz

teachers to obtain high-quality resources and learning experiences for their students. From now through May 31, 2019, the PNC Foundation will match, dollar-for-dollar, donations that support pre-K and Head Start teachers' project requests in the PNC footprint listed on DonorsChoose.org, subject to restrictions and a maximum dollar amount.

For specific guidelines on the match component, visit DonorsChoose.org. In addition, approximately 52,000 PNC employees will receive a \$25 gift card funded by the PNC Foundation, which allows them to award the funds to a DonorsChoose.org project of their choice. To date, the PNC/DonorsChoose.org alliance has benefited more than 630,000 pre-K and Head Start students.

•Awarding \$6 million in focused grants. Each PNC regional market will receive up to \$150,000 in incremental grants from the PNC Foundation. These grants are designed to support the specific needs of learners from birth to three-years-old; community-based educational experiences for families with young children; or professional learning and skill-development for current or future early childhood educators.

•Doubling Grants for Great Hours. PNC provides employees with 40 hours of paid time off each year for Grow Up Great volunteerism. Employees could previously earn grant credits up to \$3,000 each year to be awarded to a partner early learning organization. For this year, PNC is doubling that amount up to \$6,000. To

date, employees' volunteerism has resulted in \$6.6 million in grants.

Throughout the year, PNC will continue the anniversary celebration with additional initiatives and events that continue to support the efforts of early childhood education champions—the teachers, experts, caregivers and parents committed to building a foundation for success.

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group, actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, including: the arts and culture.

If your Central Baltimore community needs sprucing up, CBP is willing to give helping hand

By Ursula V. Battle

Grant applications will be accepted until May 3, 2019

Does your neighborhood need some sprucing up? Perhaps there is a building you believe could use a fresh, inviting façade or a coat of paint? Maybe, a vacant lot across the way could use a community garden. Whatever that sprucing up might entail, the Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP) Community Spruce-Up program could be just the ‘helping hand’ you need to beautify your community.

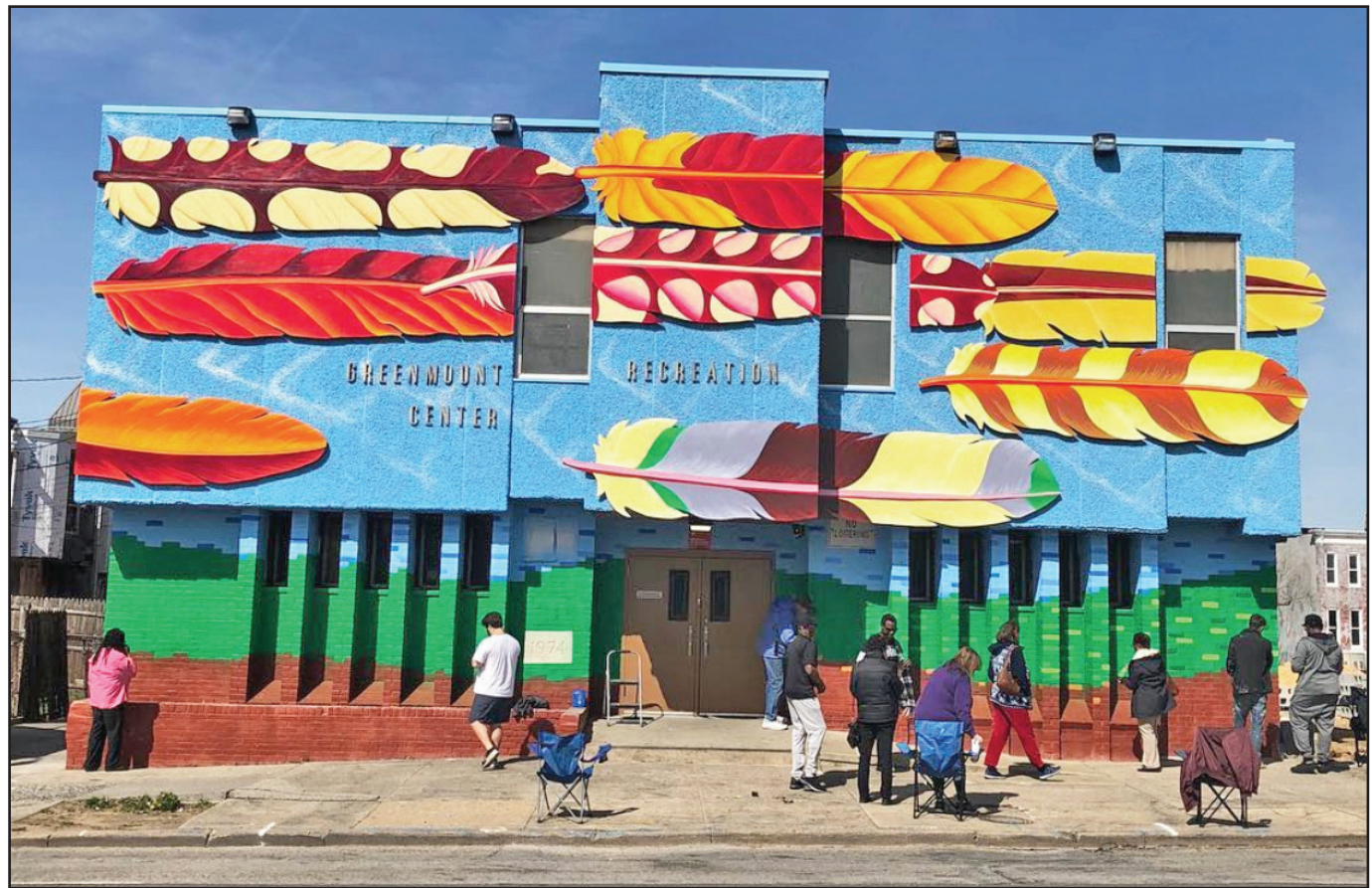
CPB is launching another applicant round of its successful Community Spruce-Up program. Since 2012, CBP has supported neighborhood-driven, capital improvement projects in public spaces in Central Baltimore through this program. The application deadline for the grant is May 3, 2019.

CPB is a ten-year-old nonprofit with over 100 partners who together achieve a comprehensive strategy for community revival in 11 Central Baltimore neighborhoods. CBP helps neighborhood leaders and other partners identify opportunities for community enhancement, assess project feasibility, and mobilize collaboration between public and private partners.

With funding from Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore Regional Neighborhoods Initiative of Maryland’s Department of Housing and Community Development, CBP awards grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000 to groups, individuals, and associations in Central Baltimore.

These areas include Abell, Barclay; Charles North; Charles Village; Greenmount West; Harwood; Oakenshawe; Old Goucher; Remington; Wyman Park; the Waverly Main Street commercial district; the Jones Falls area; and most recently the East Baltimore Midway community. Conceived in 2014 in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, the program was launched with the support of the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation.

“We have raised the funding pool, have done community outreach and have hosted Spruce-Up workshops,” said Aaron Kaufman, Community Projects



With the help of a \$24,299 “Spruce-Up” grant and community support, the once drab exterior of the Greenmount Recreation Center located at 2304 Greenmount Avenue was transformed into an inviting building that seemingly lights up the entire neighborhood.
Courtesy Photo/Central Baltimore Partnership

Manager for CBP. “We invite people to come in with their idea and questions. We want to make sure we are getting the word out about this grant, are receiving eligible projects, and receive feedback.

“We also want people to be well-supported with their projects to bring them into existence. It’s been interesting and rewarding to see the evolution.”

One example of this evolution is the Greenmount Recreation Center Facade Project. Through a \$24,299 Spruce-Up Grant, this community-led project came to fruition. The once drab exterior of the Greenmount Recreation Center located at 2304 Greenmount Avenue was transformed into an inviting building that seemingly lights up the entire neighborhood.

“The Greenmount Rec Center came with partner organizations and residents,” said Kaufman. “They all wanted to create a more welcoming space. The great work of this center was being done on the inside, but it was not being shown

on the outside. Artist Andy Dahl did the primary installation, but the community worked to paint the lower level. There was a lot of community engagement. The Center is an example of what can happen when agencies, neighborhood leaders, and others all come together for public benefit. It’s all about partnership.”

Spruce-Up Grants are intended to provide matching resources to stimulate improvements, leverage community assets, and provide auxiliary support for projects.

As a compliment to the program, six other organizations in Baltimore City are now replicating the Community Spruce-Up Program with their guidance, including Southeast CDC, Belair Edison, and the Greater Baybrook Alliance.

“We make sure the other six are set up for success,” said Kaufman. “That is where we are now.

“The creativity that comes from these groups is astounding. The grants also

emphasize leadership development and capacity building. We see projects where someone thought of an idea, and because they were supported, the project happened. From there, that individual took on other broader, leadership roles beyond their block.

“Forty-nine projects have been funded from 2014 to 2018. Spruce-Up grants help to show people they can make a difference in their communities, and we are here to help support them.”

The criteria for being awarded a Spruce-Up grant includes being a non-profit, being a small business or being a fiscally-sponsored organization, and that the idea be a capital improvement project, according to Kaufman.

For additional information or to apply for a Spruce-Up grant, call Aaron Kaufman at 443-681-7098 or email: akaufman@centralbaltimore.org, or visit their website: www.centralbaltimore.org/spruce-up2019.

Why testicular cancer should concern every man aged 35 and under!

By Joshua Garner
and Jamin Brahmhatt MD
Men's Health Network

What if you found out that the most common form of cancer in boys and young men ages of 15 to 35 is almost entirely curable if caught early? And what if you found out that awareness and screening are the most effective ways to fight that disease? Wouldn't you want to help spread the word? Well, now you can.

April is Testicular Cancer Awareness Month, and for the next 30 days—and beyond, of course—we want men and boys to know about the importance of screenings and awareness for testicular cancer.

Although testicular cancer accounts for only about one percent of all male cancers, it is the most common form of cancer among boys and men between 15 and 35 years old. This year, in the United States alone, more than 9,000 males will be diagnosed with testicular cancer, according to the American Cancer Society, and about 400 will die.

The good news is that testicular cancer, if caught early, has a 99 percent five-year survival rate. But the bad news is that in general, men and boys are far less likely than women and girls to have regular contact with a healthcare provider. That makes early diagnosis of testicular cancer—and most other potentially serious health conditions—extremely difficult. As a result, too many cancers aren't diagnosed until it's too late, which helps explain why cancer mortality rates for men are notably higher than for women.



Men's Health Network, a national nonprofit that advocates for the health and wellness of men and boys, encourages all young men ages 15-35 to regularly perform testicular self-exams, and if they feel a lump/bump, to tell someone and see a doctor immediately.
Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

The most effective way to reduce the number of deaths from testicular cancer is to educate boys and young men, and those who love them about the importance of doing regular testicular self-exams and recognizing the symptoms of the disease.

In recent years, a number of high-profile patients and testicular cancer survivors have increased the public's awareness of the disease. In January, five-time Olympic gold medalist Nathan Adrian went public with his battle with testicular cancer; and reality TV star Tarek El Moussa spent years battling testicular cancer before announcing this spring that he was cancer free. Olympic

legend Scott Hamilton is also a testicular cancer survivor. All three of these men were young and in their prime when they were diagnosed, far from typical perceptions of cancer patients.

Men's Health Network, a national nonprofit advocating for the health and wellness of men and boys, encourages all young men ages 15-35 to regularly perform testicular self-exams, and if they feel a lump/bump, to tell someone and see a doctor immediately. Early symptoms of the disease can be mild, which often causes many to delay seeking medical attention.

Treatment options for testicular cancer vary based on the stage but can include surgery to remove the cancer, chemotherapy, and radiation treatment or some

combination of the three. While increased awareness can help boys and men understand how getting treated for testicular cancer might affect their quality of life, it's important to note that it won't necessarily affect their long-term ability to become fathers. In fact, recent studies have suggested that sperm counts for men who undergo chemotherapy or radiation treatment eventually rebound to pre-treatment levels.

There is still a lot we don't know about testicular cancer, such as what causes the disease in the first place; why it affects primarily young men; and why certain groups of men (Caucasians, for example) are more likely than others (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians) to be impacted.

So as Testicular Cancer Awareness Month gets underway, Men's Health Network invites and encourages all men to take their health into their own hands. Literally. And if you're in a relationship, you and your partner can examine each other (women should be doing monthly breast exams). If you or your partner finds something that doesn't feel right, pick up the phone and make an appointment with a healthcare provider.

For more information and resources about testicular cancer and other male-specific health issues, visit <http://www.testicularcancerawareness-month.com> and <http://www.men-shealthresourcecenter.com/>.

Joshua Garner is the director of Communications for Men's Health Network. Jamin Brahmhatt is a board-certified urologist and advisor to Men's Health Network.

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Keeping Your Sanity: Getting started in the music business, Part II

By Imani Wj Wright

Back in high school, there were many things I looked forward to on a weekly basis. Some of those things include: lunch with my buddies, basketball/baseball practice, and more than anything—the weekend. There is nothing like the feeling of getting to relax after a strenuous five-day week. Now that I am grown up, that has all changed and believe it or not, my favorite day of the week now is—Monday.

Pursuing a successful career in the music industry has many parts. What I quickly began to realize is that in order to grow and expand in this business, you have to be constantly networking—contacting and reaching out to people, places and entities who have something you may need in order to get to the next level.

Why has Monday become my favorite day of the week? Well, the weekends have become dreadful to me as many businesses don't check and/or respond to emails on Saturdays, especially publications and venues. Emails are such a crucial aspect of your come up. On average, I send many emails out each WEEK attempting to get new opportunities in place for my band and me. There have been weeks where I've sent as many as 20 emails to different people or

entities in an attempt to make things happen. I would not be writing for The Baltimore Times today, it had not been for me reaching out to the paper relentlessly over a three-week period. I eventually landed an interview, and the rest is history!

Now, reaching out to people, publications and venues is a must but it means absolutely nothing if you haven't built a solid portfolio to go along with it. I've seen a lot of artists try to make connections but have nothing substantial to back it up. It's almost as if they are hoping for someone to just give them a blind chance. The key in this business is to put, as much power in your own hands by creating a package that would make it hard for anyone to turn down.

When I asked former English teacher and verified artist, Luke O'Brien to weigh in on the topic of building your portfolio and gaining leverage, this is what he said, "Having a foundation of quality content is key. If I'm going to ask someone else to help add value to what I'm doing, I need to be able to provide them with value as well. The only way to establish said value, and have it be sustainable, is to build your content and your audience organically. This will happen faster for some than others but it will always require time and patience.



Former English teacher turned musical artist, Luke O'Brien has performed at the highly respected South by Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas

Photo Credit: LC The Poet

"I made a song called "Old Love," which I used to propose to my wife. We turned our wedding ceremony into the music video. We did all that on our own. We added value to our own thing. Then, Good Morning America picked up the video and it gained just over a million hits on their Facebook page. Now, I had a piece of authentic, organic content that I could leverage as part of my musical resume. That piece of content is still helping me secure shows two years after it was created. A booking agent can look at that and see that I have a story to tell

and an audience that's listening."

Listen to O'Brien's advice, because he has almost mastered the skill of creating a platform for himself. He even managed to get Temple University to sponsor him to go to the highly respected Music festival, South by Southwest.

You can connect with Luke O'Brien on Instagram @lukeobrienmusic

In the meantime... Stay Virtuous. Stay Idealistic. Stay Progressive. To contact Imani Wj Wright, email: iwright@btimes.com

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Five ways young people and everyone else can fight for the environment

News & Experts— Climate change continues to draw attention globally, from governmental debates on pollution solutions to people protesting against a lack of action.

In Europe, teenage girls and young women are leading a large student environmental movement, and organizers in the U.S. are planned an international day of action on March 15, 2019. Against this backdrop, those engaged in environmental issues say that while there is strength in numbers during protest events, the difference often starts with individuals doing the right things daily for clean air and water—when no one is watching.

“Creating awareness on a massive stage is wonderful, but how many realize the responsibility each of us has in this critical battle and how it can’t be won unless we all make the necessary changes?” asks Leslie Landis (www.chendell.com), author of *Chendell: A Natural Warrior*, a fantasy novel with environmental themes.

Landis hopes her novel will expand awareness of climate change and inspire young people to work together and foster environmental improvements. The characters in her book have a special relationship with nature and that leads to a superhero who fights for environmental issues.

“Anyone can be a hero in the fight against pollution; anyone can step up for any of the environmental problems that plague us and be a natural warrior,” Landis says. “From everyday habits to small lifestyle changes, doing those things daily can make a huge difference.”

Landis lists five ways to be a natural warrior for the environment:

•**Take a tote.** “Ditch the plastic shopping bag and opt for a more versatile alternative like a reusable tote bag,” Landis said. “States like California are



already doing their part to reduce the use of plastic bags, and you can help carry that movement forward by keeping a handful of reusable bags in your house and car.”

•**Think before you drink.** “Say goodbye to plastic water bottles by getting a reusable canteen or thermos,” Landis said. “Not only do these items help Mother Nature by cutting down on plastic waste, they also reduce your exposure to BPA and help keep your beverages insulated.”

•**Get thrifty.** “The fashion industry creates a lot of unnecessary waste,” Landis said. “But you can help slow it down by giving discarded clothes a second chance. Shop at thrift stores, second-hand shops and vintage boutiques. By sporting looks from the past, you’ll actually be helping the environment in the future.”

•**Don’t put the pedal to the metal.** Environmental experts talk about how we all leave carbon footprints by the modes of transportation we use. “It’s a lot larger than you think,” Landis said. “Fortunately, there are many alternative means

of transportation. Whether you ride your bike to work, carpool to school, or walk, you’ll be saving yourself from the high price of gas while helping reduce carbon emissions in our air.”

•**Grow green.** Whether you’re planting trees to combat the carbon emissions or planting an edible garden to cut back on store-bought waste, Landis said. Putting your green thumb to good use will always have a positive effect on the government.”

“It’s great to see young people in particular get involved in large numbers regarding climate change,” Landis says. “But it’s amazing how simple it is for everyone to get involved to save our most precious resources.”

Leslie Landis is the author of “Chendell: A Natural Warrior.” She holds an M.A. in psychology and is a licensed marriage and family therapist. Landis also has been a legislative assistant to a U.S. senator, a teacher, financial planner and associate director in television. For more information, visit: www.chendell.com.

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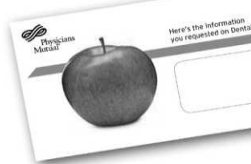


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