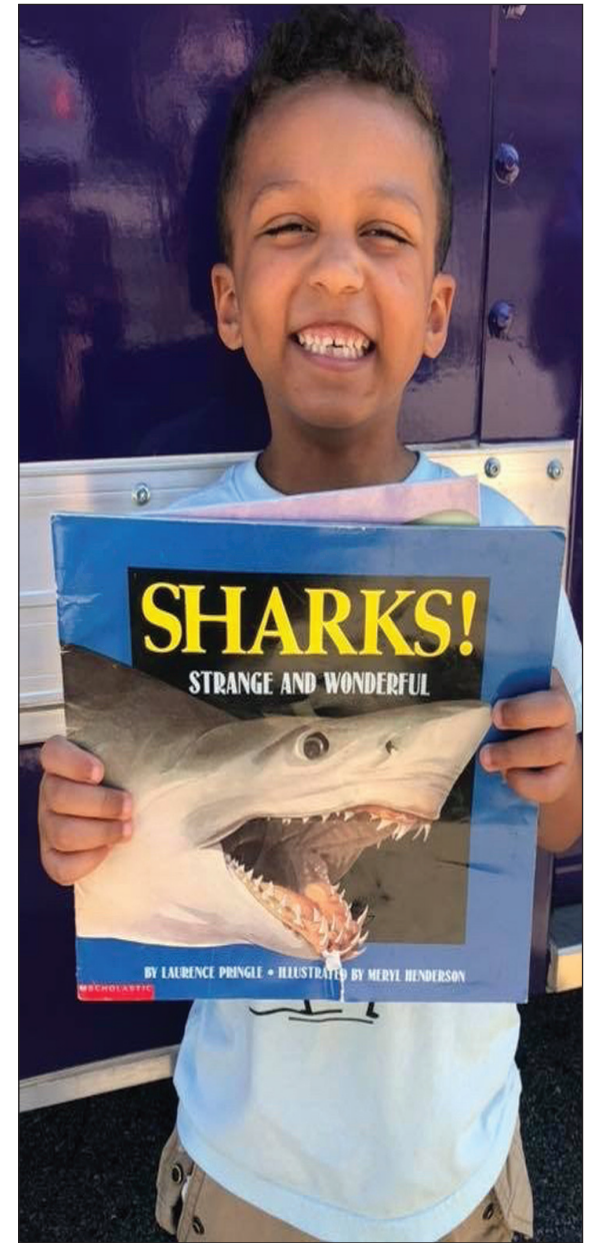


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Maryland Book Bank Prepares for 'Books for Kids Day'



The Maryland Book Bank will hold their annual Books for Kids Day, a large-scale book donation event, on Saturday, May 4, 2019. The all-day event will take place at the Book Bank's new warehouse space, located at 1794 Union Avenue in Woodberry.. These youngsters proudly show off books they collected from a Bookmobile visit. The young ladies received their books during a visit to a Home Library Project School in December 2018. The young man received his new book from a Bookmobile visit to a Campfield Learning Center a few weeks after the 2018 Books for Kids Day. (See article on page 8) Photo courtesy of the Maryland Book Bank.

Protect your energy!

By Nikki Abraham,
Nucleus Team Member
Positively Caviar, Inc.

“Be the type of energy that no matter where you go, you always add value to the lives and spaces around you.”

—Anonymous

Staying positive is our motto mainly because we strive to give off energy that is contagious. As a group, we discovered that by maintaining our positivity, our team ultimately creates a peaceful and happier environment not only for us but for others, as well.

No matter where we go, we consistently challenge ourselves and others to live a healthy, purposeful and positive lifestyle. Aim to have the goal of leaving whatever space you enter more loved, motivated, inspired and passionate.

Always remember, the positive energy lies within you to change the trajectory of your life and the people around you.

One of the most important ways to protect your energy is by becoming aware of your surroundings. The people and

places you surround yourself with will either have a positive or negative effect on you. If you have ever felt drained after being around someone, or had to listen to someone’s problems or spent time somewhere that caused you to feel down and depressed, it may be time to change your environment.

In order to live a happy, prosperous and fulfilled life it’s imperative to protect your energy by surrounding yourself with others who have a similar mindset and outlook on life. It’s your responsibility to determine how another human will influence your energy or outlook on life.

Another great way to protect your energy is by activating your sacred space. What does that mean exactly? Having a sacred space doesn’t have to be related to anything religious but can be necessary on a spiritual level. Your physical surroundings will help to connect with your better self and allow you to enter a beautiful, calming state of mind. Examples of a sacred space can be outdoors in the garden, a separate room in your house, or even your desk at



Nikki Abraham,
Nucleus Team Member
Positively Caviar, Inc.
Courtesy Photo

It’s important to remind yourself that everybody does not deserve your energy. Sometimes the best thing to say and do is nothing at all— sometimes the best way to handle a situation is to just walk away.

“When you are living in a different frequency and energetic vibration, a lot of times people can’t hear or understand what you are saying. They can only meet you as deeply as they have met themselves. Don’t drain your energy by continually trying to explain yourself.”

—Audrey Kitching

Never give anyone the opportunity to waste your time or energy. Remove yourself from negative spaces and surround yourself with people who lift you higher. As you strive to live a more positive lifestyle, you will ultimately attract others who can keep up with you vibrationally.

Positively Caviar, Inc. is a nonprofit organization focused on a message of positivity and optimism. Once a month, our Nucleus Team writes a column focused on mental and physical health tips, scientific studies, nutrition facts and stories that are positive in nature to support a purposeful and positive lifestyle. To learn more about our organization, the nucleus team or how you may join our positive movement, visit: staybasedandpositive.com

work— somewhere that you automatically feel at peace upon entering.

There are several ways to activate your space in order to retrieve the calming benefits as a whole. Spiritually, burning sage is one of the oldest and purest methods of cleansing a space.

Cleansing your space by using sage sets the intention of removing negative energy. Burning incense or candles, or even by posting words of encouragement can help to bring about the inner state of peace that you may be aiming to experience externally.

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This is **Anthony.**

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like graduating from *college*,
finding a *job*, and moving
into a new *apartment*.

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planning for the future,
he could use *a little* guidance.



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Guest Editorials/Letters

Stronach family wants to orphan Pimlico

Back in the day, musical wunderkind and Grammy-winning singer, songwriter, musician, arranger and producer, Sylvester Stewart, better known as Sly, of Sly and The Family Stone, performed one of his many hit songs, Family Affair, where he described a mother's two very different children. One child was said to be someone who just loved to learn, while the other child was someone you'd just love to burn.

The analogy sounds spot on compared to two major horse racing venues owned by a family business, the Stronach Group, who glorifies one, Laurel Race Track, and vilifies the other, Pimlico. In the Sly Stone song, mother loved both kids. In the Pimlico versus Laurel debate, Pimlico gets no love at all.

Like most family squabbles, at the center, there is a lot of money involved. In this situation, the extended family, the City of Baltimore and the town of Laurel, are forced to take sides, and both have lots of skin in the game. If the Stronach Group is successful in its effort to lift up Laurel and orphan Pimlico, the town of Laurel will inherit potentially thousands of jobs—to include local development tied to the race track, hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity, millions more dollars in tax revenue, and the prestige of the Preakness Stakes.

The City of Baltimore will potentially inherit another abandoned business site located in another abandoned neighborhood. The struggling Park Heights community will inherit a 140-acre hole in the ground. It is obvious that one of the reasons Stronach Group prefers Laurel Park over Pimlico is Pimlico's location in a blighted urban neighborhood.

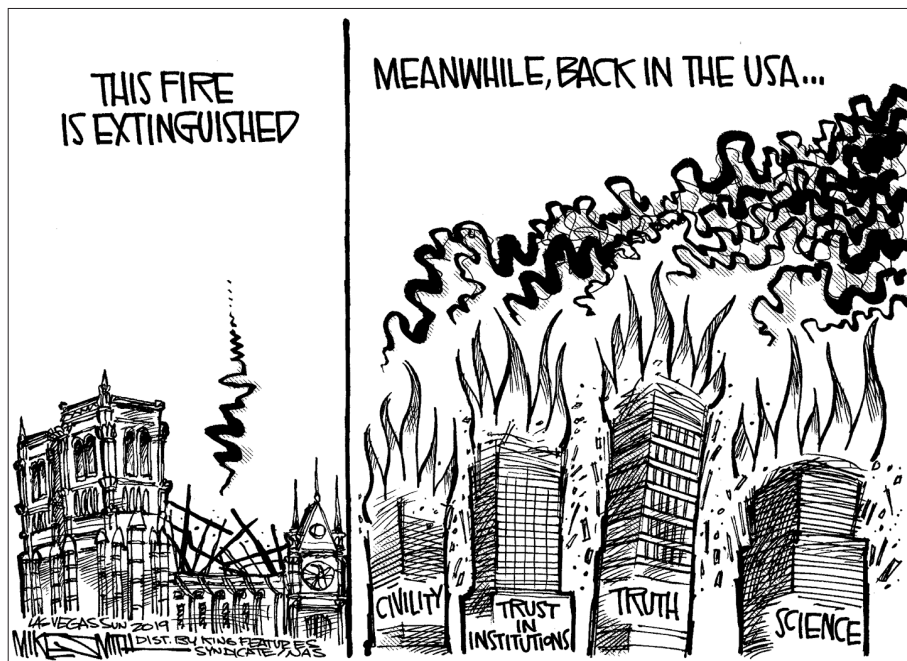
However, anyone who can remember Baltimore City 40 years ago will recall that what is now the Inner Harbor was one of the city's most blighted neighborhoods, home to muck, mire, sea gulls and acres of abandoned buildings. The same is true for the areas, which are now home to Orioles Park at Camden Yards and M&T Bank Stadium. Successful redevelopment can happen anywhere in Baltimore City where the will and commitment exists.

Like any schism in a family there are complicated issues, multiple factions and fluid circumstances involved in the Pimlico versus Laurel dispute. The Players. Baltimore City's mayor, city council and state house delegation speak with one voice on the subject: The Preakness must remain in Baltimore. The Stronach Group. Laurel, Yes! Pimlico? Who? The governor, pre-re-election: "The Preakness should stay in Baltimore." The governor, post-re-election: "The overwhelming number of people in Maryland don't really care where [the Preakness] is."

Many of the state legislators who support moving The Preakness from Pimlico to Laurel have vested interests. Compare anti-Pimlico boosters among Annapolis lawmakers from Anne Arundel, Howard and Prince George's counties where Laurel Race Course essentially straddles all three jurisdictions. It's been considered that Laurel has substantial land surrounding the race course which is ripe for development to support the race course or as the Stronach Group calls it, a "super track." Pimlico has Park Heights.

Park Heights has a 14.2 percent unemployment rate and a median household income of \$36,500, according to the American Community Survey, compared to Laurel's unemployment rate of 5.7 percent and median household income of \$72,726. Bowie has a 5.8 percent unemployment rate and median household income of \$108,600—both are Prince George's county communities.

Last but not least, follow the money—Pimlico's biggest live racing handle was 2014, totaling \$181,000,000. Laurel's biggest live racing handle was 2107 totaling \$627,300,000.



Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

I want to preface my letter by stating as clearly as I can that I consider myself to be "on the side" of minorities, as I happen to be one myself and have had more than a "taste" of the prejudice and discrimination that minorities (and women) face a great deal more of than I do on a daily basis.

Here is an example of why I fear that Donald Trump will probably win re-election. We Democrats might win it for him due to our excesses and "over-reach."

Most national Democrats seem to believe that they ALWAYS have to go overboard and defend and make excuses for all members of minority groups, even when they are clearly in the wrong, because they need their votes, and want their votes one day.

Take the example current example of Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, the Congresswoman from Minnesota who happens to be a Muslim.

For her to casually and flippantly dismiss what happened on 9/11 by saying that "Some people did something," was totally morally wrong, insensitive and disrespectful.

It was wrong of her to trivialize and

minimize the horror of what happened.

Period!

Also, her criticisms of the government of Israel were also wrong not because of what she said, but because of how she said it.

I have no problem with anyone, including Omar, pointing out there have been times when the government of Israel has been unfair and unjust to the Palestinians. I am saying that as someone who has Jewish ancestry. I will not give the Government of Israel a "pass" just because I have Jewish ancestry.

My mother taught me, "right is right, and wrong is wrong." But Omar did clearly come across as disliking Jews. Why couldn't the Democrats admit that?

If the national Democrats would focus more than they do on fighting for our federal government to do more to help the lower and middle classes with their economic and financial struggles and problems, we would easily defeat Trump in 2020.

Stewart B. Epstein
Rochester, NY

Delegate Adrienne Jones vying to become next House Speaker

Busch successor to be decided during May 1 Special Session

On the evening of November 20, 2002, Delegate Adrienne A. Jones received a call from Michael Busch.

“Bob Ehrlich would become the first Republican governor in 30 years, and Casper R. Taylor Jr. lost his seat as Speaker of the House of Delegates,” recalled Jones. “Michael Busch would become Speaker. He called me on November 20, 2002 at 8:30 p.m.—which was on my birthday, to ask if I would serve as Speaker Pro Tem. I told him I would do it.”

She added, “There was a trust factor he had in me.”

Delegate Jones would serve in the position, and continues to serve as Speaker Pro Tem till this day. Now, Delegate Jones would like to serve in the position of the man who believed in her ability to lead and serve. House Speaker Busch (D-Anne Arundel) died April 7, 2019



Speaker Pro Tem Adrienne A. Jones is hoping to succeed the late Michael Busch as Speaker of the House of Delegates. Photo by Joy Bramble

after a short bout with pneumonia. Busch, 72, who was Maryland’s longest-serving speaker, held that position for 16 years.

“It was a great loss to the members of the House of Delegates, the General Assembly as a whole, as well as the people of Annapolis where he ably served,” said Delegate Jones. “I have known Michael since 1997 when I came into the General Assembly. He was a very personable and very caring person. He knew no color or ethnicity, and was the type of person who wanted you to be successful.

“He would go out of his way to assist in any way that he could. He was one of a kind. Going forward, whomever the next individual is, I believe Michael has left a legacy for that person to look up

to, and given them the opportunity to expand on in their own way.”

Delegate Jones is vying to be that individual. On May 1, 2019, the Maryland House of Delegates will reconvene in a Special Session to select a replacement

mously elected by the full House of Delegates to serve as Speaker Pro Tem. This is the 17th time she has been selected to serve in this position.

Delegate Jones holds the distinction of being the first African American woman

“Delegate Jones has been a member of the Maryland General Assembly since 1997, representing the 10th Legislative District of Baltimore County. On January 9, 2019, she was once again unanimously elected by the full House of Delegates to serve as Speaker Pro Tem.”

for the late Speaker.

“Governor Larry Hogan had to declare the Special Session,” said Jones. “I had to sign the papers along with the Senate to address the Special Session.”

In addition to Jones, the declared candidates are House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Maggie McIntosh, (D-Baltimore City), and House Economic Matters Committee Chairman Dereck Davis, (D-Prince George’s County).

“I learned from the best,” said Jones. “If it’s me, as a whole, I will make the House of Delegates and the General Assembly productive for all.” Delegate Jones has been presiding over the House since Busch was hospitalized with pneumonia on March 26, 2019.

“I am Speaker Pro Tem, but in Michael’s stead, I assumed the Speaker’s duties,” said Delegate Jones.”

Delegate Jones has been a member of the Maryland General Assembly since 1997, representing the 10th Legislative District of Baltimore County. On January 9, 2019, she was once again unani-

to serve as Speaker Pro Tem in the Maryland House of Delegates. There are 12 women in the country who serve as Speaker Pro Tem, and she is the longest serving woman in a State House Leadership position in the country.

Delegate Jones was recently presented with the Casper R. Taylor Jr. Founder’s Award. The award is given to sitting members of the House Delegates who serve with integrity and a focus on public service. It is the highest award given to a member of the House, and is named after Casper R. Taylor Jr., who served as Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates from 1994–2003.

When asked what she thought her chances were of receiving the needed votes to become Busch’s successor, Delegate Jones said, “It’s a vote by members of the House of Delegates which will determine who the next Speaker of the House will be. I don’t take anything for granted. I will know how successful I will be when the vote comes on May 1.”

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BCCC Upward Bound Math and Science Program offers students experience in STEM field

By Stacy M. Brown

When it kicks off again this summer, Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) Upward Bound Math and Science (UBMS) program will count as just one of four such offerings in the state.

Further, BCCC is the only community college to offer the program, which provides high school students with hands-on experience in the all-important field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics or STEM. The UBMS program is an academic study in science, math, engineering and biotechnology.

“Each year the BCCC UBMS program services approximately 62 students recruited from specially targeted Baltimore City High Schools,” said BCCC’s UBMS Director Gregory Hunter. “The program targets young people who are interested in pursuing postsecondary degrees in math and science and careers in the math and science profession.”

Eligible students live in households where parents or guardians do not have a degree at or above the bachelor’s level.

The program consists of Saturday sessions, high school visits, an intensive six-week academic and residential program, and a college bridge program. Students are recruited throughout the academic year and Hunter and other officials have close contact with area high school guidance counselors whom recruits can speak with about the program.

“We introduced a new program in partnership with the BCCC Computer Science and a local, minority-owned technology company that will assist students in developing the technical skills necessary for employment in the computer sciences areas of computer information systems, cyber security and assurance, and computer-aided drafting



Students in the 2018 Upward Bound Math and Science program at Baltimore City Community College with a teacher intern (far left). The program consists of Saturday sessions, high school visits, an intensive six-week academic and residential program, and a college bridge program. Students are recruited throughout the academic year and Hunter and other officials have close contact with area high school guidance counselors whom recruits can speak with about the program.

Courtesy Photo/Baltimore City Community College

design,” Hunter said. “In addition to the computer science component, we provide supplement instruction in science, biotech engineering, robotics, math including algebra, geometry and pre-calculus, and English composition.”

Baltimore-based BITHGROUP Technologies, a cybersecurity and systems integration company that provides Enterprise IT, Health IT, Identity Services, Cyber Security, Digital Business Transformation Services is a primary partner of the program, will work with BCCC on the UBMS program computer science component this summer.

BITHGROUP staff members who are experts in a variety of technology areas will work with the students on immersion experiences once each week over the summer, exposing the participants to lessons about Energy Management Information Systems software, Identity Services

software and Cyber Security software.

“We believe this program is important because there are so many great career opportunities in the information technology space,” said Harry Holt, the vice president of operations at BITHGROUP, a multi-state certified Minority Business Enterprise that’s headquartered in Baltimore. “This area is predicted to continually provide higher earning potential jobs for the next five to ten years and, in order for our entry level employees to be better prepared for being successful in entering the workplace, they must gain more exposure to real hands-on experience.”

Holt says that students’ need to be afforded the opportunity to work in teams on real project-based learning experiences.

“Also, I think it’s important for them to see people working in software development, cyber security, network support

and other IT area who look like them,” Holt said.

According to 2010 data from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Census Bureau, underrepresented minorities earned 18.6 percent of undergraduate degrees in science fields and less than 13 percent of degrees in physical sciences and engineering.

“We prepare students for college, increase their academic abilities in high school, and provide an environment of values and attitudes conducive to productive citizenship and lifelong learning,” Hunter said.

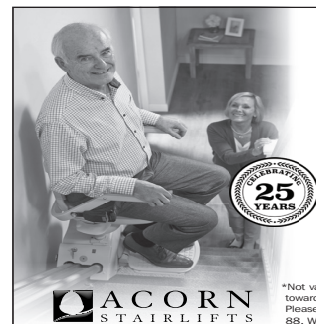
For more information about the Upward Bound program at BCCC or to find out if you are eligible or to apply to be a participant, visit: www.bccc.edu/upwardbound.

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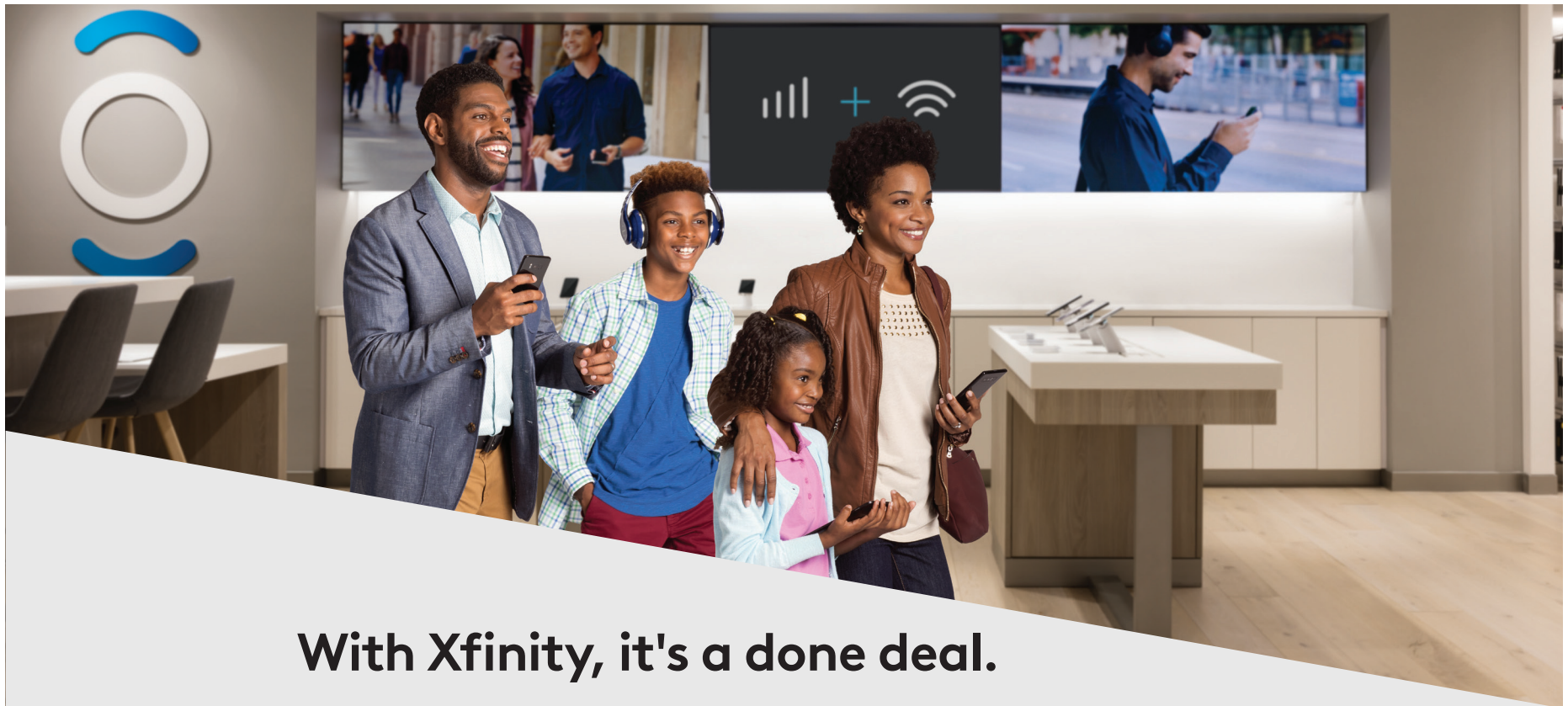
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Maryland Book Bank Prepares for ‘Books for Kids Day’

By Natalie Wallington

The Maryland Book Bank will hold their annual Books for Kids Day, a large-scale book donation event, on Saturday, May 4, 2019. The all-day event will take place at the Book Bank’s new warehouse space, located at 1794 Union Avenue in Woodberry.

“We hope to collect about 30,000 books,” said Mark Feiring, the Maryland Book Bank’s executive director. “We’ll have roughly a total of 100 volunteers that will be here throughout the course of the day, and they’ll help us sort out thousands of books.” The donation period will run from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m., but Feiring emphasized that the Book Bank accepts donations 24 hours per day, every day.

The Book Bank will also be offering tours of its new warehouse on Books for Kids Day. The new space, Feiring said, has been beneficial to their mission.

“The new warehouse has allowed us to bring in more,” he said. “Because of that, we’ve been able to get out more.” Until last year, the Book Bank operated out of the Baltimore Sun’s building and held their annual book drive event elsewhere.

Books for Kids Day has been happening for over twenty years in Baltimore City. Born out of an adult literacy program called Baltimore Reads, it gradually developed into a youth-focused initiative. The Book Bank accepts all books regardless of genre or reading level, and funds their operation in part by selling the adult-oriented books online.

“This past year we distributed 376,000 books to schools, organizations, and



Volunteers from Johns Hopkins University sort donated books at the Maryland Book Bank.

Photo courtesy of the Maryland Book Bank.

families throughout the entire state with a focus on the city,” Feiring said. “Over 800 organizations and schools have gotten books from us, and we’ve served 70,000 children.”

The Book Bank connects children with books in a variety of ways. During visits to the warehouse, children are allowed to take as many books as they can physically carry, while adults are permitted to take up to 25. However, memberships are also available for individuals and organizations who want more books on a monthly basis.

“We really try to make it as easy as possible for people to get the books that

they require for their programs, mainly because in Baltimore City there’s a serious lag in the supply of books to children,” said Feiring. “Any kid growing up in a home with at least 20 books are going to get at least three more years of school under their belt than the average child.”

“There have been significant studies showing that having books in the home makes a huge difference,” he added.

The Book Bank also has a Bookmobile, funded by a partnership with the Baltimore Ravens, that brings books directly to schoolchildren around the city.

“The kids can come and take whatever they want. If they’re choosing a book, they certainly are more apt to read it,” said Feiring. “We’ve distributed close to 100,000 books off that Bookmobile.

We’re hoping to get a second one soon.”

In addition to the services it provides to children, the Maryland Book Bank also functions as a social enterprise. In a partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development, it provides job training and working opportunities in areas such as inventory and shipping management to unemployed individuals. “We’re able to provide some skills that they can then use at just about any warehouse,” Feiring said.

Individuals interested in getting involved with the donation efforts on Books for Kids Day should visit the Maryland Book Bank’s website for more information. They do not accept magazines or literary journals as donations, but any book on any topic, hardcover or paperback, is welcome.

“This isn’t a one-day thing where we just stop after this,” Feiring says. Instead, the event marks a moment of reflection and celebration of the efforts behind the Book Bank’s ongoing mission.

“This is really a celebration of what we do and our volunteers, and bringing everyone together just for a day of working and seeing the results of what we do,” said Feiring. “Everyone that’s there is excited about reading and they’re excited about helping people... it’s just a lot of fun and there’s a lot of great energy.”



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School among 100 nationally to be awarded Robotics Grant

By Ursula V. Battle

KIPP Baltimore is among 100 schools across 21 states who will receive an Amazon Future Engineer Robotics Grant. As a grant recipient, KIPP Baltimore will receive support to launch FIRST robotics teams, including teacher professional development to learn about robotics; \$10,000 from Amazon to expand access to computer science education in their school; and a tour of a local Amazon Fulfillment Center.

“Our students have worked incredibly hard,” said Jasmine Bacot, Manager of External Relations for KIPP Baltimore. “We are putting our students in a great position. We are excited about the opportunity this presents to our students.”

KIPP, which stands for the Knowledge Is Power Program, is a national non-profit network of college-preparatory, public charter schools serving elementary, middle and high school students. KIPP Baltimore’s mission is to create and operate high-achieving, college preparatory schools in Baltimore City that develop the knowledge, skills, and character strengths necessary for students to succeed throughout their education and in life.

KIPP Baltimore serves more than 1,500 students and 1,000 alumni. KIPP Baltimore operates an elementary school - KIPP Harmony Academy, and a middle school, KIPP Ujima Village Academy, in Northwest Baltimore. Starting in school year 2019-20, the schools will be co-located in the Walbrook building located at 2000 Edgewood Street.

“The Amazon grant will give our students hands-on learning experience,” said Bacot. “This will help them in STEM and diversify the industry as we know it.”

According to Bacot, the tour of Amazon’s Fulfillment Center at 2010 Broening Hwy. in Baltimore, and other aspects of the grant will begin in the fall.

“Our students are from underserved neighborhoods in the Park Heights community,” said Bacot. “This grant will allow them to have greater access to computer science coursework and enable them to compete in robotics. We are



Amazon Future Engineer is part of Amazon’s \$50 million investment in computer science/STEM education. Students from KIPP Columbus are pictured during their tour of an Amazon Fulfillment Center. Courtesy Photos

extremely honored and excited.”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by 2020 there will be 1.4 million computer-science-related jobs available and only 400,000 computer science graduates with the skills to apply for those jobs. Computer science is the fastest-growing profession within the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) field, but only 8% of STEM graduates earn a computer science degree, with a tiny minority from underprivileged backgrounds. Students from underprivileged backgrounds are eight to 10 times more likely to pursue college degrees in computer science if they have taken AP computer science in high school.

The new robotics-focused program is part of Amazon Future Engineer’s commitment to increasing access to computer science education for all students. Launched in November 2018, Amazon Future Engineer is a four-part childhood-to-career program intended to inspire, educate, and prepare children and young adults from underrepresented and underserved communities to pursue ca-

reers in computer science.

“Our focus is to make sure more students who live in underrepresented, underserved communities have access to this type of education,” said Amazon spokeswoman Allison Flicker. “The four pieces of this effort include kindergarten to eight graders. KIPP Baltimore fits into that first phase. The next phase is the high school level.”

Each year, Amazon Future Engineer aims to inspire more than 10 million kids to explore computer science, and provides over 100,000 young people in over 2,000 high schools access to Intro or AP computer science courses, as well as offer guaranteed and paid Amazon internships to gain work experience.

“Our focus is to make sure children and young adults have the skills they need to build their best future,” said Flicker. “Coding and computer science are becoming imperative. There is a huge demand for this skillset and having it can lead to a well-paying career. We want to make sure more minority students have options to pursue that type of career and study.”

Amazon Future Engineer is part of Amazon’s \$50 million investment in computer science/STEM education. In addition, Amazon Future Engineer has donated more than \$10 million to organizations that promote computer science/STEM education across the country. Amazon made the announcement of the selection of KIPP Baltimore and other grant recipients on April 12, 2019.

“The grants are to inspire kids,” said Flicker. “This funding will enable KIPP Baltimore to start a Robotics Club and increase computer science access. What stood out for KIPP Baltimore and the other schools was that they were already focused on expanding robotics and computer science in their schools, and were looking for ways to do this.”

She added, “For this program, schools did not have to apply. Amazon was investigating what schools around the country could benefit from this program. There is great excitement in providing this kind of support to schools. We hope as a whole, more young people and children from underserved and underrepresented communities have the resources and skills they need to build their best future.”

Accomplished inventor Dean Kamen founded FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) in 1989 to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people.

“Amazon is helping FIRST in our goal to make robotics teams and programs available in every school,” said Kamen, who is also president of DEKA Research & Development. “In FIRST, every kid on every team can go pro. They gain a hands-on learning pathway in technology, computer science and engineering that propels them forward and inspires innovation.”

Special needs students practice interviewing skills with local businesses



The High Road Schools of Maryland and Delaware, part of the Catapult Learning family of schools, hosted a mock interview workshop giving special needs students the opportunity to develop their career readiness skills in Middle River, Maryland on March 10, 2019. (Left) Student with director of High Road School of Delaware, Louis Guertin (Right) Students of High Road School of Delaware in front of Foodliner Trucking vehicle. Representatives from Foodliner Trucking shared information about their occupations with the students participating in the event.

Courtesy Photos/High Road Schools of Maryland and Delaware

Middle River, Md.— Getting a job is tough work. It can be especially challenging for individuals with special needs, who may need more intensive resources, preparation and assistance in jumpstarting the process. The staff at the High Road Schools are determined to give their students that extra push they need to succeed.

On March 10, 2019, students from area special needs schools came together for a fun, yet challenging event aimed at bolstering their interviewing skills and job preparedness.

Activities for the day also included a presentation on interview guidelines and sample questions, as well as practice interview sessions, where students rotated stations and spoke with representatives from different businesses.

Participating students came from the High Road Schools of Maryland, which include Anne Arundel, Hartford, Balti-

more and Cecil counties, as well as High Road Schools of Delaware, which include Southern Delaware and New Castle County.

High Road Schools serve students in grades K-12 with exceptionalities, including but not limited to autism,

ADHD, traumatic brain injuries and other diagnoses.

In addition to the exercises, students also got the opportunity to network with potential employers.

Representatives from Foodliner Trucking, Shoprite, Chick-fil-a, as well as a

local registered nurse and small business owner shared information on their occupations.

Faculty and staff are confident that the event will have a lasting effect on the students as they prepare for graduation and post-high school employment.



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Why prison reform is about changing hearts and minds, as well as system

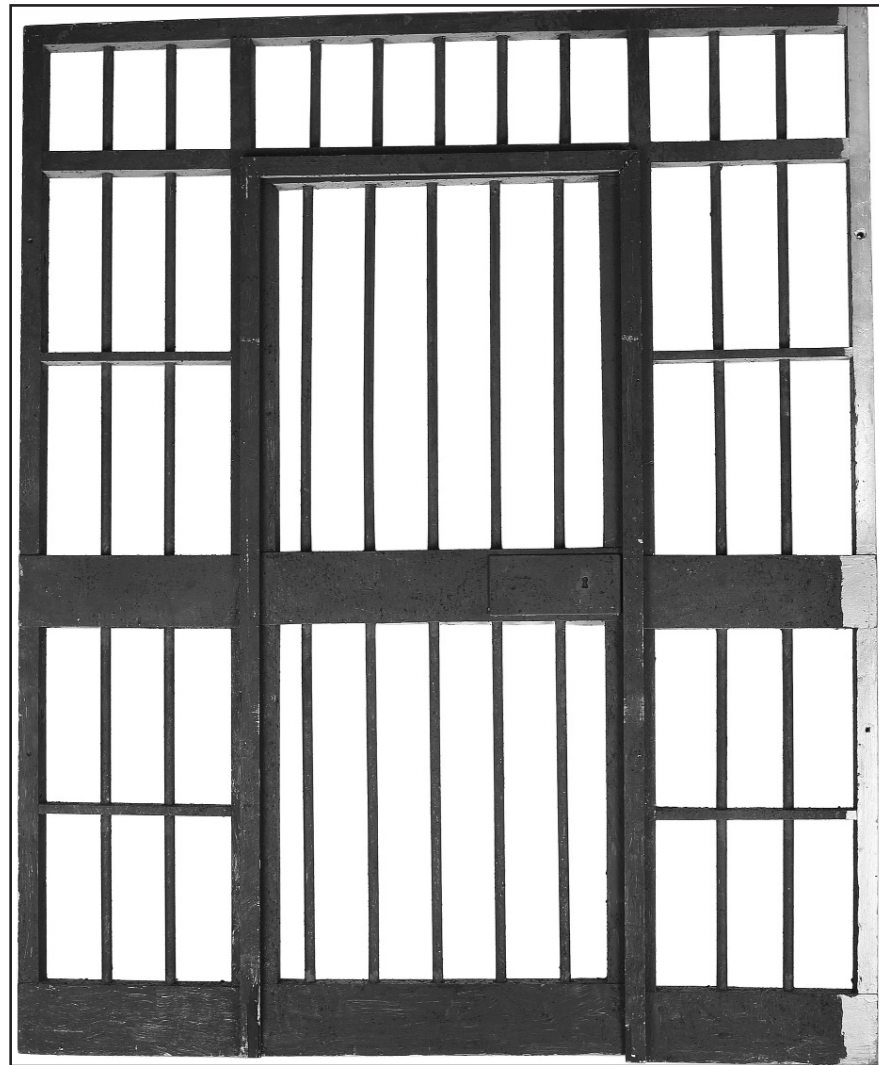
News & Experts— Prison reform efforts in many states have often been about reducing the inmate population in an effort to save money, but for prison reform advocates this is more than just a pocketbook issue.

“Criminal justice reform isn’t just about passing laws to reduce prison sentences or promoting policies to reduce prison populations,” said Khalil Osiris, a former prison inmate and author of the book “A Freedom That Comes From Within.” “It’s about changing the way we think about crime and punishment.”

States are experimenting with reducing mandatory sentences, and giving judges and prosecutors more discretion in sentencing. Other reforms include coming up with alternative settings for the mentally ill, which some studies show is more than 30 percent of the prison population. Reforms also include enhancing educational opportunities, which is what helped Osiris turn his life around.

His path to prison began when he was a teenager, and at one time he was facing the possibility of a 75-year sentence. But by the time of his release, he had earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Boston University, and wrote the manuscript for his first book— *The Psychology of Incarceration: A Distortion of the State of Belonging*. During this time, Osiris also became pen pals with Makaziwe Mandela, the daughter of Nelson Mandela. This friendship led him to South Africa where he worked for seven years and launched several educational and social reform initiatives— including a re-entry program in prisons.

Osiris thinks there is plenty of room for more effective prison reforms in the



United States. His suggestions include:

•**Better data collection.** “We should start developing more effective practices and processes for collecting data on incarceration in order to develop a clearer understanding of what is happening and why, particularly on a state and local level,” Osiris said. “There are vast disparities in state statistics on prison and

criminal justice reform. We must develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of those differences in order to quantify what progress means.”

•**Increase employment opportunities.** Employment for formerly incarcerated citizens is foundational to criminal justice reform efforts. The most successful employment program Osiris has seen

in America is Ready4Work, an anchor initiative of the Jacksonville, Florida based organization called Operation New Hope. Ready4Work provides a practical way to turn our national concern about criminal justice reform into effective, scalable action.

•**Increase indigent defense and plea bargaining guidelines.** “To ensure prosecutorial oversight, it’s important to require judges to enforce the plea bargaining guidelines. It is also important to secure legislative adoption of the guidelines in states with directly elected county district attorneys,” Osiris said.

•**Develop prosecutorial guidelines.** “Prosecutors have more discretionary choices and power in the criminal justice system than any other stakeholder, including judges,” Osiris said. “They can have more impact on mass incarceration numbers than any other stakeholder. Yet they have very few established guidelines regarding sentencing.”

“Prison reform is a critical issue, and it can indeed save states money,” Osiris said. “But my mission is to transform the hearts and minds of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated citizens by inspiring them to think differently and make better choices.”

Khalil Osiris is an international speaker on restorative justice and transformational leadership and the author of “A Freedom That Comes From Within.” He spent 20 years in prison and transformed his life, emerging with a deep understanding of how to use personal crisis, challenges and opportunities for self-improvement. For more information, visit: www.khalilosiris.com.

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