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Musicians, singers inspire relaxation, joy for music lovers during COVID-19



Ron Ward, Jr's newly released project has been garnering excellent reviews. Entitled "Ron Ward Jr. And Friends," the album features the talents of local musicians and singers who joined creative forces with the Anne Arundel County resident. Up to nine of them have played with him when he has performed in-person. "What the World Needs Now" is a popular, original song, which serves as a reminder that the world needs more positivity. This project marks Ward's fifth smooth jazz album intended for all music lovers to enjoy, while taking their minds off these stressful times. The musician likes to make feel-good music that anyone can enjoy. (See article on page 9)

Photo credit: DHM Multimedia/Michael Anderson

The Walters: Virtual Learning and Sensory Friendly Museum for kids with Autism

By *Fatiha Belfakir*

Visitors at the Walters Art Museum are not only astonished by the museum's stunning panorama of thousands of years of art, but they are also impressed by the museum's continuous alliance with the autism community, as well as launching a virtual learning for kids at all ages during this time of uncertainty.

While the sensory program allows families of children with autism the opportunity to access and enjoy public spaces without worry, the virtual museum page is helping kids enlarge their circle of learning during quarantine.

It offers a number of digital resources such as coloring pages, lesson plans and manuscripts inspired by the museum art collection, where kids can dive into thousands of artworks from around the world and across centuries.

"We are trying to make the museum more accessible and welcoming place for everyone, we are providing a quiet space with sensory equipments and visual supports to provide families with more activities and to show parents that their kids are accepted as they are," said Rebecca Sinel, a manager of the family program at the Walters Art Museum.

Brooke Shilling, 41, has a daughter with autism and is non-verbal. Shilling and her family have been attending Sensory Weekends at the Walters for 18 months.

"The program has fun crafts, manipulatives, sensory break and sensory play areas, and even provide social stories in advance so the kids know what to expect. The program is exceptional and our whole family loves it," said Shilling.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability, which causes significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about one in 68 children are identified with autism spectrum disorder. This new estimate is roughly 30 percent higher than the previous estimate in 2012 where one in 88 children were identified with autism spectrum disorder. As the number of kids receiving a diagnoses of autism has been rising for years, the stigma around autism still run high as many families with kids with autism often face



The sensory program at the Walters Art Museum allows families of children with autism the opportunity to access and enjoy public spaces without worry. All the museum staff are welcoming and accepting to all families, especially the ones who are sometimes concerned about going to public places because of the perception about their kids behaviors.

Photo Credit: Jason Putsche

stereotype and misconception.

Lynn Canterbury, a director at the Forbush School at Glyndon, Maryland, which serves students with emotional disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, believes that stigma about autism was worse five or six years ago than it is now. She thinks that people are more accepting and understanding. Yet, she says that families' lives and activities can be deeply affected by autism.

"It is difficult for some parents to take their kids in public, when the child is constantly scripting, screaming or flapping. Their normal everyday life and activities have to be adjusted," said Canterbury. "Maybe if it's a family of three they have said that one of the adult stayed home with the child with autism and the others go out, unless there is something so specific like programs at the Walters Art Museum where parents can take the entire family."

Sinel says all the staff at the museum are welcoming and accepting to all families, especially the ones who are sometimes concerned about going to public places because of the perception about their kids behaviors; and how people will look at their kids; stare or yell at their kids; or ask them to leave.

"Through the sensory program, we are assuring families that this is not going to happen and hopefully they will have such a positive experience and come visit the Walters each and every time," said Sinel.

The Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) at the Kennedy Krieger Institute provides volunteers to facilitate activities at different stations alongside the Walters' museum educators.

"CARD staff will support the museum educators by providing developmentally appropriate modifications, facilitating communication, and helping children engage with the materials and activities provided," said Taylor Racicot, a Therapeutic Assistant at the Center For Autism and related Disorders at Kennedy Krieger Institute. "For a place like The Walters, an art gallery, with so many presumed rules

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about social behaviors, to say, 'you are welcome here,' and to back the sentiment up with physical supports is huge in the fight against the social stigma individuals with autism face."

"The program offers special access to the museum, either before or after hours, and the support of Kennedy Krieger therapists. It is essentially free therapy with excellent therapists and supportive educators in a very special and serene environment," said Shilling.

With the collaboration of Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) at Kennedy Krieger, the sensory program at the Walters offers different intervention options and provides individualized treatment in small-group settings to children under age six. Children are given opportunities to work with new materials and practice their skills with new people. They even create works of art that are displayed in the Walters during sensory weekends.

"The Walters Sensory program helps to expanding the creative experiences children have and their access to the kinds of community engagement and experiences that neurotypical children have. The program also demonstrates to the larger community that individuals with autism are creative, innovative and deeply appreciative of art forms but they may just express that appreciation differently," said Racicot.

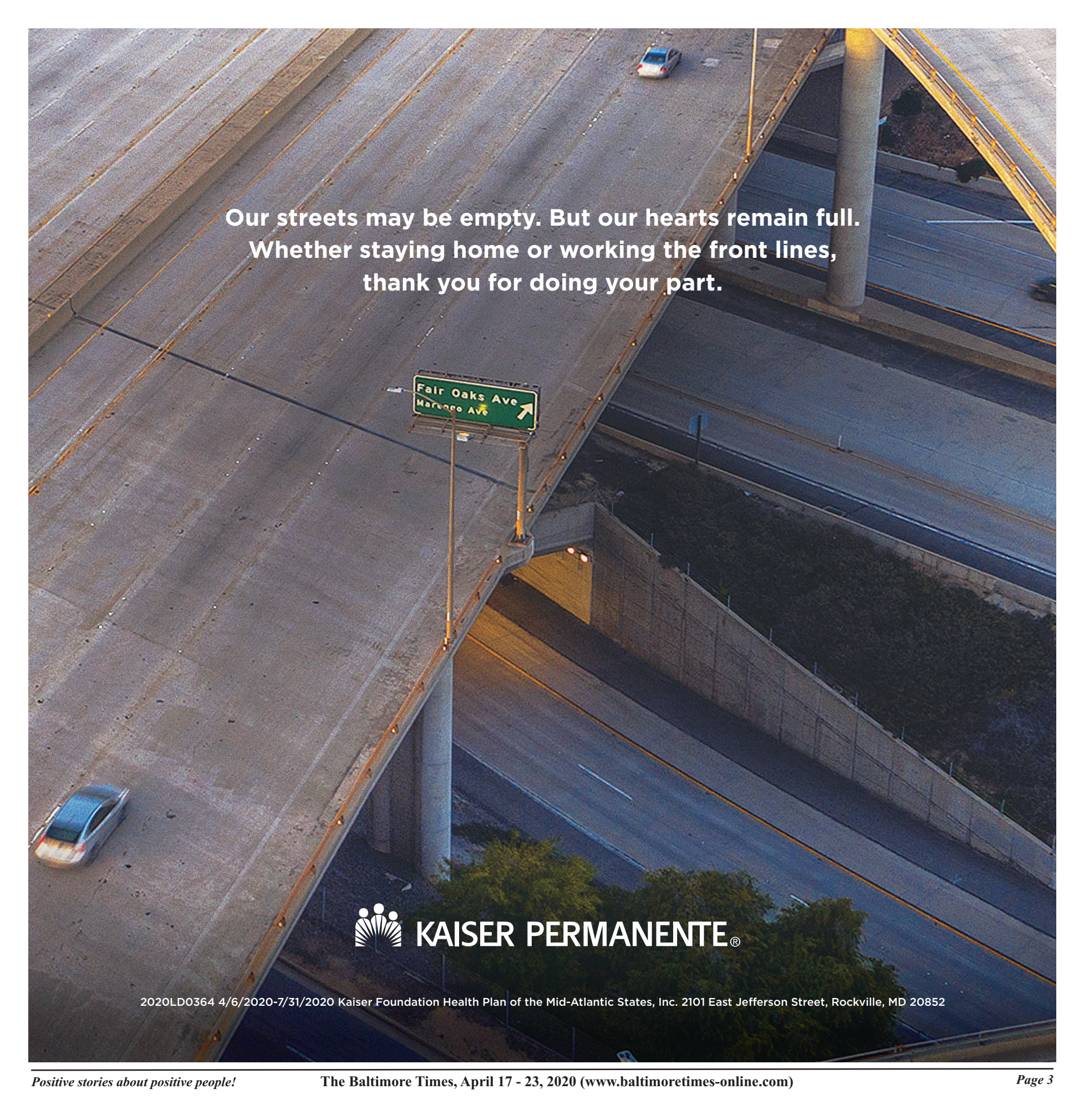
Families continue attending and enjoying the sensory program at the Walters. Such events carry on with its mission to increase awareness and understanding and eventually fight social stigma that many families and kids with autism experience.

"I am grateful for the Walters program, it is a model of inclusion and should be replicated everywhere," said Shilling.

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Guest Editorials/Letters

Signs COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting African Americans grow larger

By Lauren Victoria Burke, NNPA Newswire Contributor

In a letter dated February 4, 2020 and sent to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) said comprehensive demographic data on people tested or treated for the virus that causes COVID-19 doesn't exist.

Cities with large black populations have now emerged as new hot spots for the spread of the virus. They include Houston, New York, Detroit and New Orleans. Nearly 70 percent of the COVID-19 deaths in New Orleans have been African American.

"Any attempt to contain COVID-19 in the United States will have to address its potential spread in low-income communities of color, first and foremost to protect the lives of people in those communities, but also to slow the spread of the virus in the country as a whole," Warren and Pressley the lawmakers wrote to Azar.

"States MUST start tracking and reporting race data in connection with #Covid_19. As of Friday morning, African Americans made up almost half of Milwaukee County's 945 #Covid_19cases and 81 percent of all 27 deaths in a county whose population is 26 percent black," wrote attorney Kristen Clarke of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law on April 3, 2020.

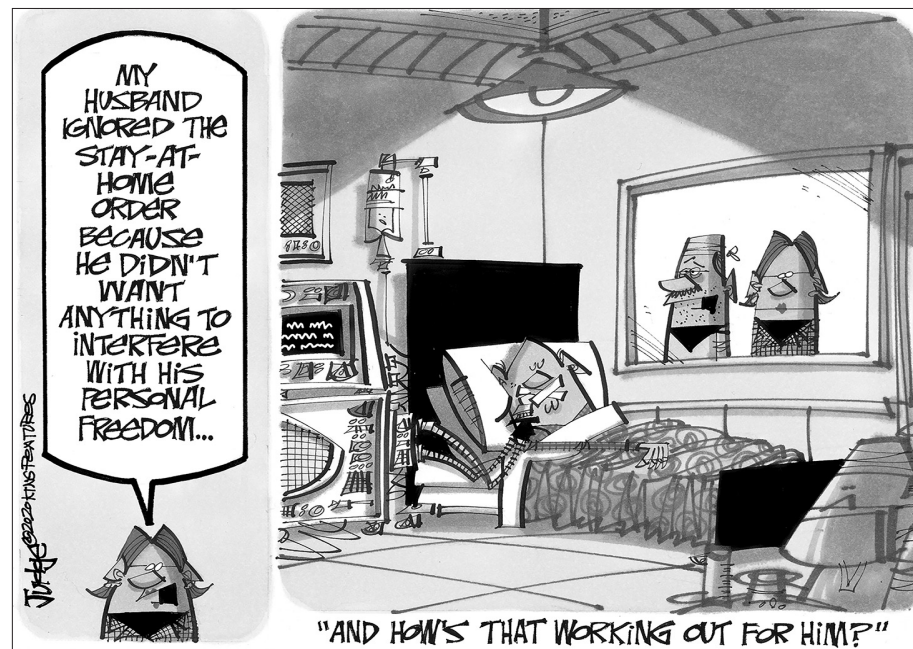
An April 3, 2020 report in ProPublica analysis stated that "early data shows African Americans have contracted and died of coronavirus at an alarming rate." African Americans made up almost half of Milwaukee County's 945 cases and 81 percent of its 27 deaths in a county whose population is 26 percent black. Milwaukee is tracking COVID-19 cases by race— one of few cities that does so.

In Michigan, where the state's population is 14 percent black, African Americans made up 35 percent of cases and 40 percent of deaths as of Friday morning. Louisiana has not published case breakdowns by race either.

"COVID is just unmasking the deep disinvestment in our communities, the historical injustices and the impact of residential segregation," said Dr. Camera Jones, who spent 13 years at the CDC. "This is the time to name racism as the cause of all of those things. The overrepresentation of people of color— is not just a happenstance— it's because we're not valued."

As public health officials watched cases rise in March, misinformation has also been a factor. Rumors and conspiracy theories proliferated on social media, pushing the bogus idea that black people are immune to the COVID-19. Much of the initial focus was on international travel and closing borders and not underlying health disparities that persist in the U.S.

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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Every year, during Volunteer Appreciation Week, we celebrate those in our communities who volunteer their time. This year we do so nationally, April 19 to 25. None of us could have anticipated that this year "celebrating together" wouldn't be possible in person.

Sadly, on one hand, in-person visits made by Hospice of the Chesapeake Volunteers have been put on hold as we do our part to "flatten the curve" as well as to protect not only our volunteers, but also our patients. On the other hand, I am proud to say that it didn't take long for our volunteers to find ways to adapt.

Each week during this crisis, they have found new and innovative ways to continue their important work and to honor the bond they have created with their patients and their families and our mission of caring for life. From the safety of their homes, they are reaching out to patients and their families by telephone to offer their compassionate care.

Those who make patriotic quilts for

our veteran patients have added CDC-approved handmade facemasks to their creative hobbies. Our board members and committees are working behind the scenes to support us through the changes we face as a nonprofit organization caring for hospice and supportive care patients and the families grieving the loss of a loved one.

And though we can't be together during this special week, we'll find a way to gather online, to share our gratitude for the incredible kindness, ingenuity and passion they exhibit everyday as they support us in our mission of caring for life throughout the journey with illness and loss. I am proud to say the volunteer spirit lives on as it has for 40 years at the very grateful Hospice of the Chesapeake.

Ben Marcantonio
President and CEO
Hospice of the Chesapeake
Pasadena, MD

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Save black lives from COVID-19

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire
Senior Correspondent
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With evidence growing that African Americans are disproportionately affected by the novel coronavirus, only nine states and the District of Columbia have released a racial breakdown of those diagnosed with the disease.

Concerned health experts, members of the U.S. Congress, and civil rights organizations have ramped up their call for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to provide a detailed report.

"We know that there's a disproportionate rate of infections and death nationwide," stated Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chair Karen Bass (D-Calif.) in a conference call with the Black Press of America represented by the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) on Tuesday, April 7, 2020.

"It's happening in all of our [African American] communities nationwide. We feel that it's an emergency that needs to be addressed right away, and, importantly, we need data, and the CDC is not compiling data," Bass added.

Rep. Robin Kelly (D-Ill.), the chair of the CBC's Health Braintrust, agreed that statistics along racial lines are vital.

testing and getting testing sites and equipment into the community."

A published report this week noted that the Louisiana Department of Health revealed that 70 percent of coronavirus deaths in the state are African American, despite Black people making up just 32 percent of the population.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, African

that the government is failing to collect and publicly report on the racial and ethnic demographic information for coronavirus tests and patients.

"Without demographic data, policy-makers and researchers will have no way to identify and address ongoing disparities and health inequities that risk accelerating the impact of the novel coronavirus and the respiratory disease it causes," the letter said. "Although COVID-19 does not discriminate along racial or ethnic lines, existing racial disparities and inequities in health outcomes and health care access may mean that the nation's response to preventing and mitigating its harms will not be felt equally in every community."

Dr. Ebony Hilton and Dr. Taison Bell, of the Virginia Medical School, have publicly demanded the release of racial data surrounding the virus.

"Release the data," said Dr. Hilton, who continuously posts that message on social media sites like Twitter.

"We see in states that aren't reporting on racial demographics that there's been a surge in patients dying from respiratory distress and respiratory failure," Dr. Bell said.

The NNPA and its Coronavirus Task Force was the first media related entity in the U.S. to declare a "State of Emergency for Black America" as the fatalities among black Americans continue to rise across the nation. Using social media to increase public awareness about COVID-19, the NNPA is encouraging the use of the following hashtags: #SaveBlackLives and #NNPACoronavirusTaskForce.

***"We are the number one target for this disease.
We have pre-existing conditions, and yet we're told
to go home when we visit the emergency room.
We know that there must be some form of regulation
in place for testing and getting testing sites
and equipment into the community,"
—Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-Michigan).***

"The data already released shows troubling trends for African Americans that must be addressed to ensure public health," Kelly said.

African Americans make up about 18 percent of the population in Michigan but account for approximately 40 percent of coronavirus-related deaths, according to Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-Michigan).

"I am speaking as just one part of the major piece of concern, and that's the alarming way in how this pandemic is having an impact on our Black community," Lawrence said. "We are the number one target for this disease. We have pre-existing conditions, and yet we're told to go home when we visit the emergency room. We know that there must be some form of regulation in place for

Americans reportedly accounted for nearly half of coronavirus cases and more than 80 percent of deaths related to the disease.

"I have seen in my waiting room mostly black and brown patients who are essential workers and service workers who can't afford to stay home," Uche Blackstone, the CEO of Advancing Health Equity, told The Hill. "These are the ones that I see presenting to the clinic with COVID-19 symptoms."

Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.) led a group from congress recently in demanding that the federal government release data about racial disparities in America's response to the pandemic.

Pressley said she and her colleagues made clear in the letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar

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Lendistry steps up for Baltimore small businesses during COVID-19 crisis

Baltimore— When Everett Sands founded Lendistry, he had a mission to help small business owners get the fair, affordable capital they needed to grow. He knew that women and minority business owners were and are still under-banked and needed a lender that was willing to step up and give them the financial opportunities they deserve. He knew that he could deliver these funds with a combination of state-of-the-art fintech and personal, one-on-one customer service that continues after the loan is closed. He did not know that he was building a lending model that was perfectly suited for a pandemic.

Lendistry has grown fast with its “bring it on” attitude, backed by results. An SBA-approved lender, Lendistry quickly gained attention for its unique combination of agility and accessibility, becoming the number two SBA lender in the nation in 2018.

This week, Lendistry, the mayor of Baltimore, and Goldman Sachs announced a game-changing, rapid-response collaboration to help Baltimore small businesses and nonprofits get desperately-needed capital during the COVID-19 crisis. Through its 10,000 Small Businesses program, Goldman Sachs seeded the small business lender with \$10 million, which Lendistry will loan to Baltimore small businesses in accordance with the guidelines established by the Small Business Administration’s Payroll Protection Program (PPP). The Small Business Emergency Stimulus Program is specifically focused on minority-owned businesses in low-income areas of Baltimore.

“Our model and our team at Lendistry are made for this. It’s like we’ve been training for this moment all along.”



Everett Sands
Lendistry CEO
Courtesy Photo

Sands said at the press conference announcing this new program, “We have continuously sought out connections and partnerships between community leaders and major banks like Goldman Sachs, and leveraged those connections through our unique platform to bring small businesses the support they need.”

Even before this program was officially announced, it was already making an impact. Suzanne Razaq was running a tutoring and test prep business Baltimore when COVID-19 brought her operation to a sudden halt. Though she qualified for a PPP loan, her bank was not accepting applications for the program. Lendistry was ready for her, and though she’s still staying home, she says, “The PPP Loan, through Lendistry, will allow me to hit the ground running when the lock-down ends.”

Lendistry is a Community Develop-

ment Financial Institution (CDFI), which means it’s dedicated to delivering responsible funds to businesses in underserved, low-income areas, because when small businesses grow and thrive, so do their local communities. It also works with its non-profit partner organization, The Center, to provide businesses with ongoing coaching, learning and networking opportunities.

Though it’s California-based, Lendistry and The Center have been active in the Baltimore small business community since well before the coronavirus was a household term. For the past three years, the partner organizations have also hosted six “Access to Capital” events featuring panels of local business owners and financial experts, including \$1000 business grants for some of its participants.

Sands saw such potential in Baltimore’s entrepreneurs that he put plans in

the works to open a Lendistry location in Charm City. It had already begun providing responsible, affordable loans to Baltimore businesses in collaboration with Baltimore Development Corporation and Baltimore Community Lenders while the process to open a location moved forward, but COVID-19 forced it to pause.

“We had planned to make a big splash in Baltimore this year,” said Sands. “However, the current crisis has caused us to roll-up our sleeves and get to work in a different way... we need to make sure no business is overlooked, especially those in lower-income areas and those owned by minorities. Their employees, their customers, their local economies are depending on lenders to step up and do their part.”

Stepping up has been the foundation of Lendistry’s mission from day one.

Information for Applicants

This service is coupled with online technical assistance to applicants, including their PPP Resource Guide, Payroll Resource Guide, and online application portal, which can all be easily found on their homepage.

All loan funds are first come, first served. Below is information businesses will need to get started accessing available funds.

To get ready, applicants should have the following documents on hand before applying:

- 1. Twelve months of payroll documentation, including wages, health and retirement benefits and state taxes paid*
- 2. Primary owner’s photo ID*
- 3. 2019 Tax Return, or 2018 Tax Return & 2019 Year-End Financial Statement, or 2019 1099*
- 4. Corporate Documents (varies by entity type: Articles of Inc., By Laws, Operating Agreement, Fictitious Business Name, Partnership Agreement)*
- 5. Download the SBA PPP Application here.*

Once those materials are gathered, businesses are ready to start their application by visiting: www.MyLendistry.com and clicking Start Your Application.

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Central Baltimore Partnership + Local Restaurants = Square Meals

Program pays big dividends during coronavirus crisis

By Ursula V. Battle

One local organization has come up with a “full-filling” and economical way to feed Central Baltimore’s hospital staff while also supporting local restaurants. The initiative is called Square Meals.

Launched by the Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP), the program provides meals for emergency and critical care hospital workers at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital. Meals and snacks are provided by local restauranters, which helps them to maintain some operations and stay open during the coronavirus crisis.

“By this week, we would have served over 1,000 meals,” said Ellen Janes, executive director

of Central Baltimore Partnership. “That includes the medical, professional, and other staff working in those areas. These workers are so busy, and once they come on, they can rarely take a break. They are very appreciative and excited about this effort.”

She added, “All of the restaurants are in Central Baltimore. Right now, we have eight restaurants participating, and we will be bringing on new ones. The goal is to expand participation.”

The participating restaurants include Bramble Baking Co.; Carma’s; Clavel; Larder; Sophomore Coffee; and Secret Sauce Company at North Ave Market. The restaurants all prepare dinners, breakfasts, and snacks for the effort. The hospital picks up meals and snacks at the restaurants. The food is individually wrapped and distributed on the designated hospital floors.

Dinners are provided in grab-and-go form twice daily (once per shift), and breakfasts and snacks are provided throughout the day. CBP allocated existing funds and raised additional money from the community to cover the cost for these meals, giving 100 percent to restauranters and other vendors prior to or at the time of sale. The cost for one dinner is \$12 per person, and breakfast and snacks, average \$8 per person.

According to Janes, CBP has raised over \$50,000, largely from grassroots fundraising for the initiative. The effort recently received a donation from Baltimore Raven’s Head Coach John Harbaugh and his wife Ingrid. The amount of the donation was not disclosed, but made it possible to fund two meals per day for all emergency and critical care workers at Medstar’s Union Memorial Hospital for the next four weeks.

“This makes the Harbaughs our largest donors, and we are deeply grateful,” said Janes.

Square Meals was launched Friday, March 27, 2020. Janes talked about how the program came to fruition.

“Early on, we looked at what was going on in Seattle, Washington and in San Francisco,” recalled Janes. “There were efforts in those areas to support hospital workers, and we knew we wanted to do something like that. At the same time, here in Central Baltimore, we were hearing that people were staying home, and that restaurants in the community were really feeling the loss of business. We have worked so hard to help build Central Baltimore businesses, and we didn’t want to lose that momentum.”

She added, “We reached out to the restaurants, and got their insight. What we heard from the restaurants was that they didn’t want to lay off their staff. Some worked part-time, while others were not eligible for federal assistance. The restaurants helped us to think through the price point they would need. We felt that if we could raise the money, we could help the restaurants.”

Janes said she also discussed the idea with Bank of America.

“We asked Bank of America to reprogram a grant they had given us, and they instantly agreed. We saw this as something that would resonate with people. I am honored to be a part of many good things, but this is really gratifying. School children are writing thank you notes, and florists are sending flowers. We also get to support a nice array of businesses. It just keeps growing every day. We are determined to keep this going as long as the crisis persists.”

CBP is a ten-year old nonprofit with



Medstar Union Memorial Hospital workers unload their individually wrapped meals from Secret Sauce Co. Courtesy Photos



Clavel restaurant owner Lane Harlan and an employee after loading food for Square Meals.

over 100 partners who together achieve a comprehensive strategy for community revival in 11 Central Baltimore neighborhoods. Their mission is to galvanize the renaissance of Central Baltimore. The organization pursues their mission by partnering with neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, educational institutions, businesses, and industries in Central Baltimore.

In addition to Square Meals, CBP’s other Coronavirus efforts include ensuring older adults living in senior high-rises in Central Baltimore receive food; helping senior citizens to obtain reusable face masks; organizing volunteers to help residents with errands such as pick-

ing up groceries and prescriptions; and helping businesses to apply for state and federal COVID-19 relief grants and loans.

“We’ve had 400 individual contributions, which is remarkable,” said Janes who was receiving a grocery donation from Wegman’s supermarket in Hunt Valley at the time of this interview. “It’s all been very heartwarming. Baltimore has always been a city of activism. But in this crisis, we have seen activism at its best.”

To make a contribution to Square Meals, visit www.centralbaltimore.org/donate-to-square-meals.

Musicians, singers inspire relaxation, joy for music lovers during COVID-19

By Andrea Blackstone

Although music events have been cancelled around the globe, due to COVID-19, artists have found ways to still uplift their audiences, near and far. When Governor Larry Hogan informed Marylanders that our state was officially on lockdown, due to a stay-at-home order, an independent musician from Anne Arundel County chose to indulge in creative optimism. Ron Ward, Jr., Minister of Music at Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church, located in Severna Park, Maryland, viewed the current times as a perfect opportunity to share his musical gifts inside and outside of the sanctuary.

In this unprecedented period of social distancing and the requirement for churches to worship with less than ten members, Ward shares his creative gifts online by playing the piano and preparing worship songs for fellow participants on Sundays, during the COVID-19 crisis. When Ward is not leading Rev. James Bishop, Sr.'s congregation through musical praise, the independent artist transfers his musical gifts to another space. Ward's new album—which is entitled “Ron Ward Jr. And Friends”—is a project celebrating musicians and singers he plays with during his musical journeys.

“I did seven covers, and three original tunes that I wrote myself,” Ward said, referring to his latest project, which was released on March 24, 2020. “I like to try to make music to make everybody feel good, so everybody, no matter what age, from your elderly, to your middle-age (person), to your young adult, even down to your teens. Anybody who puts this album on can say, ‘Oh, I remember

that song,’ and I gave them a rendition of it that is still relevant now, and I just put my Ron Ward, Jr. spin on it.”

The piano, flutes, saxophone, strings and violins combine with vocals to deliver classic R&B tunes ranging from Stevie Wonder to Beyoncé. Ward has a reputation of making high-quality music that his fans expect to enjoy. Once again, Ward does not seem to disap-

point, while taking listeners beyond the walls of their homes, while quarantine is in full effect. Ward mentioned that he is dispelling the myth the pandemic rules out the possibility of successfully launching a project or product at this time. For Ward, digital copies of his album have been popular, although hard copies can be ordered from him.

“With the album (“Ron Ward Jr. and Friends”), for that one hour that you’re listening to the album, you’re going to go somewhere,” Ward said. “You’re going to sit back and just relax, and just enjoy, and take your mind off of things, if you choose to listen to the whole album.”

While staying at home due to COVID-19, many people have grown weary of overeating or binge-watching bad news updates, so more of the world may pause more often to savor music. Ward's

fifth solo album has been well-received. Sales were strong, even in the first week. Ward's U.S. fans typically begin listening to his projects before others join the musical wave in places such as Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand.

“It's just an interesting ride to be an independent artist right now. You have control over your career,” Ward said. “I just try to make some feel good music for anybody to listen to.”

Ward's wife, Dor'Ray Ward, also feels good when she hears her spouse's work. She has been juggling working from home with caring for a one-year-old and a 16-year-old, with her husband's assistance. She supports her husband's passion but the busy mother also feels that Ward's eclectic music appeals to other mothers like her. The song “Joy” was dedicated to the couple's daughter, Rylee.

“You have your slow music for when you're cooking or helping the kids with homework, you have your up-tempo for when you're cleaning or in the car, and then you have the music that you can relax and sing to,” Dor'Ray said. “Since I've been married to Ron, his music has touched me in so many ways. No matter what mood I may be in, I can always count on his songs to bring me joy.”

The Wards have been married for nearly two years. For a couple who has struck a harmonious musical chord, the pandemic serves as a reminder to find bits of love sprinkled with joy, even in challenging times.

“Seeing Ron create and implement music, and then seeing that come to fruition, is amazing. I am so proud of him and all that he has accomplished in his music career,” Dor'Ray said. “I haven't listened to one song that I can honestly say that I don't like. His music fits whatever mood I may be in. Whether I want to dance, sing, or go to church he provides it all.”

Ward's album is available via Apple Music; iTunes; Google Play Music; CD Baby and various streaming services online. Find Ron Ward, Jr. on Facebook to purchase a hard copy.



Ron Ward, Jr.

Photo credit: DHM Multimedia/Michael Anderson

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Edgewood High's 'Great Guy' wins Maryland Financial Education and Capability Award

By Stacy M. Brown

His peers at Edgewood High School have often described Dr. Austin Hill as a great guy who is doing wonderful things.

That assessment is shared industry-wide as the Dr. Hill, who serves as Academy of Finance Coordinator, is the winner of the 7th Annual Maryland Financial Education & Capability Awards.

"This is a great honor to have been selected amongst so many of my qualified colleagues. To be recognized for the efforts and programming I am doing at Edgewood High School is truly humbling," Dr. Hill stated in an email. "All I ever wanted to do since entering the teaching profession is to prepare students to be financially literate and responsible to help their families. This award lets me know that I am on the right track."

April is Financial Education Month, an opportune time for the nonprofits CASH (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) Campaign of Maryland, Maryland Council on Economic Education (MCEE), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to announce the winners of the awards which highlights the dedication and success of public school teachers, community champions and outstanding organizations who deliver financial education.

Financial education focuses on a range of business management concepts and behaviors, including budgeting, careers and income, credit, savings, financial decision-making, and understanding values and habits about money.

The Awards were developed by the CASH Campaign of Maryland, in conjunction with the Maryland Financial Education and Capability Commission, to call attention to the importance of financial education to the lives of Marylanders.



Dr. Austin Hill is the 2020 Middle School Teacher winner of the 7th Annual Maryland Financial Education & Capability Awards.

Courtesy Photo

"Financial education is so important because it is the key to change family situations and dynamics. Many families struggle to understand their finances and how to make changes to make improvements," Dr. Hill said. "Sometimes, an offer that seems too good to be true really is, and families do not realize that. It is up to us to educate the next generation and give them the tools needed to be successful, and make wise decisions to help the generation before them, and generations to come after them."

The Academy Of Finance at Edgewood High School helps to promote financial literacy within our program and outside of our program.

Dr. Hill says Edgewood High leverages relationships outside of the school to create programming for the entire student body and community.

"Starting with our student run credit union, we not only perform financial transactions for the students but have created 'Lunch and Learns' where students can learn about financial literacy topics during their lunch periods," Dr. Hill said. "For April, we will be hosting financial literacy events at our local library for teens and adults to benefit and learn about financial literacy. These are a few of the programs that we have going on at Edgewood High School."

Raised in Wilmington, Delaware, Dr. Hill attended the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, where he earned both an undergraduate and master's degree. Later, at Capella University, he obtained a doctorate.

"I encourage everyone to talk about finances with their young ones. I think

many families may be embarrassed to do so, but it is truly the only way that kids will learn and be aware of the world around them," Dr. Hill said. "Many students are oblivious before graduation, and life hits them hard once they walk across the stage. If parents talk about budgets, how to pay bills, what a wage/salary is and how to account for taxes. Also, giving kids scenarios—some real-life—can help them to understand the importance of knowing and understanding their finances."

For an easy and free way for people across the state to learn to manage their personal finances better, visit the Maryland CASH Academy, the only statewide online source for free, in-person financial education classes at www.mdcasha-academy.org.

yes. every kid. Launches COVID-19 Educational Resource 'Learn Everywhere' for Families, Educators, Students

Alington, Va.— Today, more than 44 million children are impacted by school closures nationwide. In response, "yes. every kid." created an online community, "Learn Everywhere," where parents can ask questions, crowdsource solutions, find educational resources and lean on the network to help navigate the new educational reality caused by COVID-19. The organization also created a new website: LearnEverywhere.org that provides parents and teachers with educational materials for at-home learning based on grade and subject— along with the ability to upload their own content and solutions to help more children continue learning.

Every family has a different dynamic dealing with COVID-19, especially as many parents are working at home with children learning from home. Learning really can happen everywhere and the #LearnEverywhere social community on Facebook brings people together to help one another, to share ideas and provide that sense of community among parents dealing with similar circumstances.

The Learneverywhere.org website is a resource for families searching for educational material sorted by grade, subject and topic. A login feature allows

families to "favorite" and save material, add content to their personal calendars, with additional features continuing to be developed to help families navigate this new educational experience.

Meredith Olson, chair of yes. every kid. issued the following statement: *"No one expected these unprecedented circumstances— where virtually every child in America is away from school for an extended period. Parents, teachers, and kids are adapting to new and sometimes uncomfortable routines. We are inspired by how people are helping each other— by how children and adults alike are finding new ways to explore their curiosity and discover the joy of learning— and by how they are creating human connections virtually, outside of the walls of their homes and classrooms."*

yes. every kid., supports education policies that respects the dignity of every student, fosters a diversity of approaches, and is open to the free flow of ideas and innovation. yes. every kid., will join, support and build coalitions in order to advance a new conversation by bringing together voices from those who agree and disagree to find common ground and bold new visions to revolutionize K-12 education.

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We want to hear from you.

What are you doing to stay motivated and positive during these times?

The Baltimore Times will be sharing #OnAPositiveNote entries to highlight how our neighbors are overcoming a very challenging time with positivity. Join us.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE

Send us an email at btimes@btimes.com with the subject line #OnAPositiveNote. Tell us in 200 words or less (or send a 2 minute video) sharing how you have been creative in overcoming the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has caused.



#OnAPositiveNote

Veteran journalist discusses living with COVID-19

By Ursula V. Battle

Stacy Brown said he and his wife Shenay took various precautionary measures to protect themselves against contracting COVID-19, a disease caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. According to the veteran journalist, they practiced “social distancing,” long before it was state-mandated, and avoided crowds. Given these variables, Brown says the two were “shocked” to hear the news their doctor delivered to them in the wee morning hours of Friday, April 3, 2020.

“We both went to the Emergency Room, and the doctor took x-rays. I was in room five, and my wife was in room six. The doctor brought my wife and I together to tell us both we were infected with COVID-19. We looked at each other. We couldn’t believe it. We had been extremely cautious to avoid not catching it. I believe we did everything right.”

At the time this article was written, there were a total of 579,005 cases of COVID-19 in the United States and 22,252 deaths caused by the disease.

“The first thing we thought about was the kids,” said Brown who has five children. “The hospital would not test them because they were not showing any symptoms. Why not test them? That was another story. From there, my wife and I talked about it, and called our trusted friends and told them to look after our kids if we died. Our plan was written out and done. This disease is a beast, because you can feel it attacking your organs. Every night, I wonder if my heart is going to stop, or if my kidneys are going to collapse. That’s what it



Veteran journalist Stacy Brown, 42, was diagnosed with COVID-19 on April 3, 2020. Courtesy Photo

feels like. If God forbid, we don’t wake up, we want to make sure the kids are cared for. That’s what dominates your mind.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), COVID-19 is a disease caused by a respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019.

The Browns’ children are 27, 21, 20, 13 and nine. At the time of this interview, Brown and his wife were in isolation.

“Three of our children live at home,” said Brown. “We are among the fortu-

nate who have not had to go into the hospital and be put on a ventilator. We readily acknowledge as bad as things are, they could be a lot worse. I stay in the basement, our kids stay on the middle floor, and my wife stays upstairs in the master bedroom. It’s been a journey.”

Brown is a writer for The Baltimore Times and NNPA. A published author, his books include *Celebrity Trials: Legacies Lost, Lives Shattered, So What’s the Real Truth*.

When asked if he and Shenay ever

determined where they could have possibly contracted the virus, Brown said: “The conclusion was scary. The doctor concluded and we concurred, that it was from a supermarket outing. During the outing, we stayed away from people, and when we saw people in the aisles, we turned and went the other way. The doctor told us we may have walked into an area where an infected person may have been and caught the virus. She said the virus can hang in the air four or five hours.”

According to the CDC, the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

“I remember a time when my kids would come home from school, and I would be in the basement,” recalled Brown. “They would make so much noise I would tell them, ‘be quiet. I’m in the basement now.’ It seemed annoying. But now, to hear them from the basement is joy to my ears. It’s hard not being able to see my wife and kids. But we do conference calls throughout the day.

“Even those not infected, have been affected. Everyone feels like a prisoner. There are folks on ventilators in hospitals and they can’t be seen by anyone. And there are those like me, and my wife who are in isolation. My hope is that more people will start to turn to their Creator. Most have turned away from their Creator. We are living in a world where it’s all about ‘me’ and ‘self.’ Hopefully people will dig into their Bibles and read them for themselves.”

To find out more about COVID-19, visit <https://www.coronavirus.gov/>

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John Harbaugh donates meals to feed medical workers

By Tyler Hamilton

As the head coach of the Baltimore Ravens, a part of John Harbaugh's job is to keep the players focused and motivated. Sometimes, it's a tough thing to do because outside factors arise. Harbaugh recently made an effort to have the same impact on those who are working the front lines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Harbaugh placed a phone call to critical-care workers at Medstar Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore recently. He wanted to provide words of encouragement and to hear from them about the COVID-19 crisis.

"We are just so appreciative and so proud of what you do. I know you guys take it in stride and, I know you feel like it's part of the duty and in some ways what you signed up for but it doesn't lessen the sacrifice and service and courage," Harbaugh told the workers during the call.

"You guys have hands for work and hearts for God. You're doing God's work, healing work. We're thinking about you and we're with you. We want to do anything we can to help."

The Maryland Department of Health



With a recent donation from Baltimore Ravens Head Coach John Harbaugh and his wife Ingrid, the Central Baltimore Partnership is able to provide two meals each day to all essential care workers at Union Memorial Hospital for four weeks through the Square Meal initiative.

Photo Credit: Slaven Vlassic/Getty Images North America

(MDH) recently reported over 8,000 people have tested positive for COVID-19 and 235 people have died. Close to 2,000 of those cases were in Baltimore.

There is an immense amount of pres-

sure placed on those on the front line fighting this pandemic. They're risking their lives by coming to work but nevertheless, they continue to press forward in the fight everyday.

To show their appreciation and support, Harbaugh and his wife, Ingrid, made a donation to the Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP), which will help fund two meals a day for all emergency and critical-care workers at Union Memorial Hospital over four weeks.

Named the "Square Meals" initiative, the program is a collaboration between the Central Baltimore Partnership and several restaurants to provide two meals a day to hospital staff, including: doctors, nurses, janitorial and administrative staff. To date, over \$30,000 has been raised largely from grassroots fundraising efforts.

Before ending his call with the hospital workers, Harbaugh told them he loved them and shared an infamous quote from his father, a former football coach. "Let's go out and attack the day with an enthusiasm unknown to mankind!"

As of April 8, 2020, approximately 700 meals have been distributed through the Square Meals initiative.

The public is invited to make a tax-deductible donation on the CBP website, Facebook or Pay Pal: helpcentralbaltimore.org.

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Legal Notices

ral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Website (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org) the California Courts online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case.

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30-2018-01029792

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The name, address and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is:

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Amtoj S. Randhawa, CBN 301360
895 Dove Street, 5th Floor
Newport Beach, CA 92660
(949) 854-7000

Date: November 05, 2018
David H. Yamaski
Clerk of the Court

Clerk, by Mary M. Johnson
Date: November 01, 2018

BGE reminds homeowners and contractors about importance of calling 811

Baltimore— April is National Safe Digging Month, and BGE is joining Miss Utility 811— the one-call notification center for Maryland— to remind homeowners and contractors that safe digging must remain a priority to prevent damage to critical utility services and keep communities safe.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has homeowners spending more time than ever at home potentially engaged in home improvement activities requiring digging, it is imperative that underground utilities be marked before any digging takes place. Calling 811 or placing an online request before digging is free of charge and will help residents avoid accidentally damaging buried utility lines. Projects such as gardening and landscaping, installing a mailbox, deck or fence can result in serious injuries, service disruptions and costly repairs when gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines are damaged.

More than 60 percent of BGE's electric lines, approximately 17,000 circuit miles, are located underground and BGE manages more than 7,000 miles of buried natural gas lines in its region, many of which may cross through residential properties. Properly locating these lines is essential to safely completing a digging job.

Residents and businesses should take the following steps when planning a digging project this spring:

- Always call 811 a few days before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.
- Plan ahead. Call several days ahead for work planned for an upcoming weekend, providing ample time for the approximate location of lines to be marked.
- Confirm that all lines have been marked.
- Consider moving the location of your

project if it is near utility line markings.

- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that the contractor has called 811. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.

- Visit call811.com for more information.

When calling 811 at least three business days prior to digging, customers and contractors are connected to Maryland One Call that will take the caller's information and communicate it to local utility companies. Professional locators will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with spray paint, flags or both. Once a site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging around the marked areas.

To promote safety around electric infrastructure in the communities it serves BGE also reminds residents and businesses that customer-owned structures are not permitted within BGE's easements or near overhead equipment. Customers must contact their local municipality to obtain the necessary permits prior to any construction near company-owned transmission or distribution lines.

For information on digging safely, including how to get lines marked and what to do after lines are marked visit www.bge.com/811, or contact the BGE Damage Prevention team at 410-470-6698 to arrange for free damage prevention training. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve and impact our community, we want to reaffirm with you our commitment to the safety and well being of our customers, employees, and contractors. Safety is our top priority. We have implemented important procedures to prioritize the health of our community. All BGE employees and contractors have been instructed to follow health and safety best practices consistent with CDC guidelines including but not limited to practicing safe social distancing.

BGE joins the Exelon family of companies, the other 1,700 Common Ground Alliance members, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and governors across the country in marking April as National Safe Digging Month to bring extra attention to the issue of underground utility line safety and reduce the risk of unnecessary infrastructure damage.

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