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College is not for Everyone! Apprenticeships may be better

By Peter Bramble

The state of American education is in turmoil from kindergarten through college. People are asking serious questions about the goal of education. It is generally held that a good education provides the path to success in America. But, even at the pre-college levels, children are under performing at an alarming rate while we continue to believe that a college education, for which many children are ill prepared, is the main avenue to success in America.

Perhaps we should pause and critically question whether that is indeed the case. We know that although Bill Gates qualified for entry into a top college, it is rumored that he never graduated from college and yet he went on to become one of the ten most successful people in the country, at intermittent times being the richest man in the world. He is not the only non-college graduate to reach great heights of success in the world. And if exception proves the rule, then, although a college education remains a good path for many people's success, it may be a hindrance to others.

What other paths to success should we be considering, one might ask? Apprenticeships, whereby young people gain the knowledge and skills needed in industry and other places of employment, comes to mind. In many of the trades there is no need for a college degree. The skills are learned by osmosis and practice. Centuries ago, these skills

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Christmas Village in Baltimore brings German Christmas Market back to Inner Harbor



Christmas Village follows its annual tradition— opening during regular hours for the season starting on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 25 through Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24, 2021. The Glühwein Pyramid, the event's 30' tall centerpiece, once again features a large selection of six different mulled wines, one of them being a kid-or driver friendly- non-alcoholic version. Spiked hot beverages as well as an assortment of important Lebkuchen (Gingerbread) will make the experience complete. (See article on page 8). Photo Credit: Kory Aversa

Oprah Winfrey Scheduled to Close Out Baltimore Charity's Giving Tuesday Speaker Series

By Stacy M. Brown

Despite the global success enjoyed by television mogul Oprah Winfrey, many in Baltimore still claim the icon as their own.

And Winfrey doesn't seem to mind. To conclude Equity First, a four-part virtual speaker series launched by Baltimore-based nonprofit Associated Black Charities (ABC), Winfrey has agreed to appear in the series' final installment on Tuesday, November 30 – or Giving Tuesday.

ABC's president and CEO, Diane Bell-McKoy will interview Winfrey during a live event in which viewers can sign-up and view online beginning at 6 p.m. EST.

"The first thing people should know is that we are using Giving Tuesday as a way to celebrate by having Oprah Winfrey and particularly for the African American community to do what it's always done to make a difference in and for our community," Bell-McKoy remarked.

"We didn't need to declare 'Giving Tuesday' or anything because we're always giving in our community. We didn't have charities or foundations. We had each other," she insisted.

Equity First began as an effort to support fair and sustainable solutions to combat institutional and structural racism.



Oprah Winfrey
Photo: Harpo, Inc. Chris Craymer



Diane Bell-McKoy,
President/CEO, ABC
Courtesy Photo

The conversations have included speakers from various businesses and civic and corporate leaders.

The organization noted that invited speakers had put equity first in their careers and their passions.

Event sponsors include Wells Fargo as Title Event Sponsor, Comcast and Under Armour Foundation as Presenting Sponsors, Bank of America and Whiting-Turner Contracting Company as Gold Sponsors, and Afro News as exclusive Media Sponsor for ABC.

"When we began, we certainly did not realize that we would have Oprah as our closing speaker," Bell-McKoy insisted.

"We feel very blessed to have achieved that for our series. It means a great deal of significance that someone who is now a world icon came through this doorway of Baltimore and moved on and grew from all the challenges she faced here."

Bell-McKoy said many of the charitable organization's donors are African Americans who, by giving, display confidence in the vital work ABC performs in and around the community.

"It's a vote of confidence in terms of saying 'we know that this is important work,'" Bell-McKoy noted. "We are pushing even harder to change the core issue that's been stopping all of us from moving forward – structural racism." She also dispelled the myth that all donors are wealthy.

"That's not true," Bell-McKoy demanded.

"The real important thing about giving whatever you can is that it's a show of your belief that we can make a difference together," she said.

"That's what I want people to know that we have to change the outcome for Black workers. We know that Black workers don't always have the same op-

portunities to climb the corporate ladder. We know that businesses don't always provide opportunities to Black workers, and we know things like transportation can be a factor."

Bell-McKoy continued: "We want people to know that Black people are absolutely not broken. I want people to know that we know what they know. We are excellent and outstanding, and we need people to undo this structural racism that still exists so that they can get to our greatness."

Having Winfrey as a guest should help get that message across, Bell-McKoy said.

Throughout her esteemed career, Winfrey has created an unparalleled connection with people around the world.

As host of the top-rated, award-winning "The Oprah Winfrey Show," she entertained, enlightened, and uplifted millions of viewers for twenty-five years.

Winfrey's accomplishments as a global media leader, producer, actress, author, and philanthropist have established her as one of the most influential and admired public figures in the world today.

"Oprah's participation is phenomenal," Bell-McKoy exclaimed.

"We are very blessed, and we understand how this is just so huge to have this interview happening and to have me do the interview with Oprah. This is Baltimore. This is where she lived and spent years, so I think it's important to see how's she's giving back."

For more information, visit www.abcm-d.org/speakerseries. Virtual tickets for the event are on sale and cost \$75 each. All proceeds directly benefit ABC's efforts to close the racial gap for Black workers in Maryland.

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

Didn't Get Your Flu Shot Yet? Now is the Time

By Dr. Rinku Mehra, Amerigroup Maryland

It's getting cooler outside, meaning people across the country will be moving activities indoors – and this is when the flu normally takes hold. Now is the time to get a flu shot.

Last year's flu rates were historically low, largely credited to masking, social distancing, remote work and learning, and avoiding crowds. As many activities have resumed, some experts warn that infection rates for both flu and COVID-19 could rise this winter.

Many people at higher risk for flu are also at higher risk for COVID-19, but there are ways to reduce risks for severe disease from both.

Getting both vaccines is the best way to avoid illness this flu season. No one gets the flu from the flu shot, just as no one can contract COVID from the COVID vaccines. Conversely, flu vaccination reduces the risk of illness by more than 50%, and studies show the COVID vaccines are even more effective at preventing severe illness, even with the rise in variants.

Time for a booster? It's OK to receive both vaccines at the same time. The CDC website shows who is eligible for COVID-19 booster shots based on approvals for the different manufacturers. If you are getting a COVID-19 vaccine, you may be able to get your flu shot during the same visit.

Ideally, you should get your flu shot by the end of October annually **but as we are entering the winter months it is important to get your flu shot as soon as possible.** If you are not eligible for a COVID-19 booster until much later, you should get your flu shot now and then follow up when the time is right for the COVID-19 booster.

The flu vaccine may be as nearby as your local pharmacy. Most pharmacies accept walk-ins and most insurance. Visit my-flu-shot.com to find pharmacies offering flu shots this year. If you are seeking vaccines for a child, check to see what ages the pharmacy is certified to vaccinate.

If you have insurance, the shot will likely cost you nothing. Most health insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover flu shots at no cost. No-cost transportation may also be available for members in select Medicaid and Medicare plans. If you don't have transportation through your health plan and need help finding a ride, you can use the Amerigroup Maryland Resource Link to find assistance at <https://www.myamerigroup.com/md/support/community-support.html>.

Data from Anthem, the parent company of Amerigroup Maryland, shows only half of adults and children received a flu shot last season, we are reaching out to those at risk for complications from the flu and COVID-19 to increase awareness of the importance of the flu shot and decrease barriers to receiving it.

We are also taking our message to the community, partnering with the American Lung Association to provide digital educational tools and resources to empower employers, community leaders, and the general public to take control of their health and help minimize their risk, and the risk of others, in contracting the flu.

This is a critical moment, and we all have an opportunity to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities. Amerigroup Maryland encourages everyone eligible to get their flu shot, in addition to their COVID vaccines – it's our best shot at staying healthy this flu season.

Dr. Rinku Mehra is a pediatric endocrinologist and medical director for Amerigroup Maryland.



Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Re: Downsizing Poverty

Did you know that 700 million people globally currently in extreme poverty that is less than \$2 a day? The Borgen Project, a U.S.-based non-partisan non-profit, has been on a mission since 2003 to help downsize global poverty and create a better world by increasing U.S. government contributions. Only one percent of the National budget goes towards foreign aid, and only a small percentage of that aid goes towards poverty reduction programs.

The Borgen Project advocates for poverty reduction bills and lobbying U.S. congressional leaders for support in areas such as food insecurity; maternal mortality; access to clean water and sanitation; and health care. We mobilize and educate individuals to lobby and raise awareness for various issues like COVID-19 relief.

Thanks to the work of our team in 2019 alone, over 165 million people were helped as result four bills the Borgen Project health pass in the previous year i.e., Water for the World's Act, the Electrify Africa Act, and the READ Act.

Global poverty is National security

concern. In 2019, over 140 retired three and four-star generals called on Congress to increase funding for the International Affairs Budget. The Generals noted that investments, non-military tools of development, and diplomacy foster economic and political stability on a global scale. It also strengthens our allies and fights the spread of poverty, disease, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Global poverty is also an economic issue. Frankly, 95 percent of the world lives outside of our borders. Unsurprisingly, upwards of 50 percent of US exports have gone to emerging markets that have formally had no consumer class due to poverty. New markets mean new trading partners, higher demand more jobs in the U.S.

Eden Lewis
The Borgen Project
Tacoma, Washington

Concert Disasters Like Astroworld Have Occurred Far Too Often

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire
Senior National Correspondent
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Promoters billed the event as the “World Series” of festivals, but the night ended with the dreadful shock of death filling the venue.

No, that’s not a reference to Travis Scott’s Astroworld Festival, which left nine people dead and several others wounded after the large crowd swarmed toward the stage, causing the trampling of many concertgoers.

About 42 years ago, on December 3, 1979, rock band The Who headlined a festival at Riverfront Coliseum in Cincinnati with about 19,000 screaming fans in attendance.

As concert time neared, fans revved up, preparing a race to get as close to their music idols as possible – many seats were unassigned.

As the crowd pushed toward the entrance, the surge caused 11 deaths and at least 26 injuries.



Concerts and festivals generally attract the most ardent of fans.

Photo Courtesy/NNPA Newswire

While Scott continues to receive criticism for not stopping the show quick enough, The Who played their entire set even as some fans lay dying.

Reportedly, authorities and promoters didn’t inform the group of the deaths until they left the stage.

About 30 years ago, hip hop stars Heavy D and Puff Daddy – known today as Diddy – held a heavily promoted show at New York’s City College. Run-DMC, Big Daddy Kane, Boyz II Men, and Jodeci were among the headliners at the December 28, 1991, show.

The popularity of each of the groups led promoters to oversell the small gymnasium with more than 3,000 people holding tickets – another 5,000 reportedly showed up hoping to gain entrance. The crowd entered the school’s lobby and reportedly rushed down a staircase that led to a staging area, causing a massive crushing of people, leaving eight dead and about 30 others wounded.

“It does not take an Einstein to know

that young people attending a rap concert camouflaged as a ‘celebrity basketball game,’ who have paid as much as \$20 a ticket, would not be very happy and easy to control if they were unable to gain admission to the event because it was oversold,” New York state Judge Louis C. Benza wrote in a 1999 decision that found Diddy partly responsible as the primary promoter.

In 1998, Diddy publicly admitted responsibility.

“City College is something I deal with every day of my life,” he remarked.

“But the things that I deal with can in no way measure up to the pain that the families deal with. I just pray for the families and pray for the children who lost their lives every day.”

Concerts and festivals generally attract the most ardent of fans.

Attendees at concerts given by the late King of Pop Michael Jackson routinely fainted with security and other personnel rendering aid.

On February 20, 2003, at a Great White concert held in a nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island, a fire erupted and trapped and killed 100 people and injured more than 200 others. The rock group’s road manager set off pyrotechnics as the band took the stage, but sparks ignited the ceiling, and flames quickly spread through the nightclub.

Club owners were prosecuted and found guilty of 100 counts of involuntary manslaughter. They ultimately paid a \$176 million civil claim.

Something similar occurred in 2013 at a nightclub in Brazil when more than 230 people lost their lives during a concert by the band Gurizada Fandangueira.

In 2020, three techno-music promoters escaped punishment from the so-called “Love Festival” in Germany ten years earlier.

The presiding justices ended the trial of the three individuals noting that the pandemic prohibited them from completing the case before the 10-year statute of limitations would be realized.

Seven other defendants won an acquittal in 2019.

Members of the promotion staff and a half-dozen city officials stood trial on charges of negligent manslaughter and bodily harm after 21 people died. More than 600 suffered injuries during the stampede at the festival attended by an estimated 1 million.

Prosecutors said serious planning mistakes occurred and safety measures were insufficient.

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Local Men to Give Cars to Families in Need During Christmas

By Andrea Blackstone

Stephen Green and Damond Horne founded a nonprofit called Cars With Care to provide wheels for families in need, during the holiday season. By day, Green specializes in automotive reconditioning in his Essex, Maryland based business, Paintless Dent Doctor. Horne established a similar business called Total Recon Automotive Reconditioning in Laurel. The giving men committed to combining their expertise to spread cheer to a family lacking the means to acquire transportation, along with members of their team, through their annual Cars With Care Christmas Car Giveaway.

“Well, I always wanted to find a way to give back, and I figured the easiest way to do that is to use my talents from my everyday profession. So my parents were big givers. They were actually pastors, and I always saw them take the initiative to help the community in any capacity they could, so it’s kind of a natural thing for me to find a space where I could lend a hand,” Green said. “I just really had a conversation with Damond (Horne) who also owns a reconditioning company down at Laurel. We founded Cars With Care, so that we could just kind of organically use our talents to give back to someone in need. So that was kind of the conversation that we had to start it (the nonprofit).”

Green grew up in Baltimore City, some of the time without a vehicle. He knows what it is like relying on buses, observing others face challenges of pursuing employment beyond the community, and parents juggling the management of school transportation when needed. In 2016, Green and Horne crafted a plan to assist others who found themselves in similar situations. They now recondition a car each year to ensure that they were mechanically and cosmetically sound, when a new owner was presented with the gift of owning transportation on Christmas Day. A total of six cars will have been given away by the end of this year.

In prior times, all vehicles were purchased. Green explained that this year marks the first time that a car was donated for reconditioning. This will enable



Damond Horne (far left), Eric Randle (left, center), Stephen Green (right, center) and Michael Foy (far right) are behind the annual Cars With Care Christmas Car Giveaway. Horne and Green are small business owners who founded the nonprofit, Cars With Care, in 2016. Photos courtesy of Stephen Green



This Christmas, two used cars will be given to two families in need of transportation.

one of the gifts to be presented to a Baltimore resident, and the second to a winner from the Laurel or District of Columbia area. Entries can be submitted from Baltimore, Laurel and Washington, D.C.-based individuals. Participants must also answer questions about their vehicle needs, and share their story, as a part of the selection process. Except for one selected male recipient, previous car winners were single mothers.

Green and Horne’s vision is timely. In addition to common financial barriers associated with repairing or buying a vehicle, CNN Business reported <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/24/tech/chip-shortage-car-prices-raimondo/index.html> that a computer microchip shortage has greatly impacted

used and new car prices and availability during the pandemic. Since selections resulted in slimmer inventory offered by various dealerships and personal sellers, buying a car has become more costly and difficult.

“We know that transportation is something that’s not afforded to everyone, and having it gives you opportunities beyond your immediate neighborhood, which can be huge for someone’s development and life,” Green said.

Four proactive men make the car giveaway possible. Except for Horne, Green, Eric Randle, and Michael Foy reside in Baltimore. However, Horne is a Morgan State University alumnus, so each benevolent leader has ties to Charm City. He added family, friends, and others have provided positive feedback and encouraging words to them.

Sponsors and other supporters are stepping up to invest in Christmas blessings provided by the nonprofit. Cars With Care’s 5th Year Celebration and Fundraising Gala will be held on December 19, 2021 in Randallstown, Md. Raised funds will be allocated for expenses related to vehicle acquisition, car reconditioning, and vehicle-related financial assistance for selected families, according to information provided on the nonprofit’s website.

“I believe we’ve had a huge impact on the families who received our past vehicles by relieving them of the burden of worrying about getting from A to B,” Horne said. “Honestly, I can’t describe how it makes me feel. But, knowing that we change a families’ life every Christmas is like winning the lottery.”

This year’s deadline for submitting entries to win a car is December 17, 2021. Entrants can be nominated. Visit <http://carswithcare.com/entries> to read a complete list of rules and entry details. Learn more about Cars With Care by visiting <http://carswithcare.com/>.



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THE BALTIMORE TIMES
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Build Back Better Helps Build Back Minority-owned Businesses and Communities

By Stacy M. Brown

According to the federal Department of Commerce, more than nine million minority-owned firms in the United States employ nearly half of the private sector workforce and contribute \$1.7 trillion to the economy.

In the Greater Baltimore area, minorities comprise more than 43 percent of the total population and own about 22 percent of startup businesses.

Minority Business Development Agency Director Miguel Estien said President Joe Biden has made clear that his administration remains committed to not just rebuilding to how things were before COVID-19 but to building back better and more equitably.

He said the Build Back Better legislation passed by the House and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill signed into law earlier this month accomplishes just that.

“For over 50 years, the agency has existed, and this week it’s become a permanent agency as a product of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill,” Estien remarked.

“That means minority business owners now have a permanent agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce that is coordinating policy to support your growth.”

He said the Build Back Better Bill funds the agency and emphasized many of the vital components of the legislation, which now must pass the U.S. Senate.

The Build Back Better bill lowers prescription drugs, health care, and housing costs.

The White House said the measure “gets Americans back to work by providing childcare and care for seniors so workers can get back on the job knowing their loved ones have the care they need.”

The bill cuts taxes for working families and the middle class – including extending the Child Tax Credit that is already helping the families of more than 61 million children and getting us closer to cutting child poverty in half this year.

According to the bill’s text, as passed by the House, the measure provides universal pre-Kindergarten for every 3- and 4-year-old in America.

In addition, it makes education beyond high school more affordable – with his-



Miguel Estien,
Director, Minority Business
Development Agency
Courtesy Photo

toric investments in Pell Grants and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions and other Minority Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities.

“It goes broader than our agency. The administration is recognizing that this is investing in our people,” Estien insisted. “They are making sure that the individuals we hire as business owners have access to healthcare; that our kids get access to pre-K, and our elderly receive the support they need in their older age.”

Estien further stated that the Build Back Better bill shows that the administration is doing everything in its power to help minority-owned businesses succeed.

“This is not only about the business community, but the people we work with, the members of our community,” Estien declared.

When President Biden took office in January, the nation faced a series of crises, including COVID, economic, climate, and equity, Estien noted.

He said people of color, women, and underserved communities had been disproportionately affected by all those crises.

“If we were to close the disparities that exist, we would add \$5 trillion to our economy,” Estien said.

“So, support your local community businesses, particularly if it is minority-owned because by doing so, you are adding dollars back into the U.S. economy. In doing so, we are securing jobs for our communities and prosperity for our families.”



Christmas Village in Baltimore brings German Christmas Market back to Inner Harbor

Baltimore— Christmas Village sails back into Baltimore’s Inner Harbor in 2021. After being cancelled due to the pandemic last year, Charm City’s beloved holiday tradition is ready to transform West Shore Park located at 501 Light Street into a traditional indoor and outdoor German Christmas Market.

Christmas Village opens early with a preview weekend on Saturday, November 20 and Sunday, November 21, 2021 to offer the opportunity of a sneak peek for visitors. After the preview weekend, Christmas Village follows its annual tradition— opening during regular hours for the season starting on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 25 through Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24, 2021.

Visitors and locals alike are invited to enjoy big holiday vibes with the return of the 30 foot tall stunning Christmas Pyramid from the Ore Mountains, the 65 foot tall illuminated Ferris wheel and the addition of a brand-new Christmas Village Carousel with horses and festive reindeer. Famous German ornament vendor Käthe Wohlfahrt returns to the heated festival tent along with over 50 local small businesses, makers, and international vendors.

Other highlights will include thousands of twinkling lights, the signature wooden huts, a large selection of Glühwein (mulled wine), the warm glow of the open-air Bratwurst Grill, an extended outdoor seating area, a new outdoor Hofbrau beer booth, photos with Santa Claus, appearances by Gingly the Gingerbread Man, and theme weekends with live entertainment. Foodies will find raclette cheese sandwiches, bacon on a stick, wine and beer tastings, all-new spirits tastings, and much more. Christmas Village will again partner with local organizations to create



Photo Credit: Kory Aversa

the Holiday District in Inner Harbor, featuring the Village Christmas Tree at the Inner Harbor Ice Rink.

“It’s the most wonderful time of year on the Baltimore Waterfront,” said Christmas Village Project Manager Nancy Schmalz. “Christmas Village is honestly so thrilled to return after missing last year— we missed Charm City, we missed our vendors, and we missed our visitors that have made this their annual tradition for so many years. We are back and making preparations for a safe

return with the lessons and protocols we fine-tuned at our sister market in Philadelphia over the pandemic. We are excited to bring back all of the things that make our German Christmas Village so authentic. We are also thrilled to introduce some new exciting additions we have worked hard on for the new season, including expanded outdoor food and drink areas, the festive historic carousel, and a full-roster of vendors with many fresh faces. Foodies won’t be disappointed either as we will fire up the

bratwurst, potato pancakes, raclette cheese sandwiches and bacon on a stick. We can’t wait to raise a mug of Glühwein with you again, Baltimore. Thank you for your continued support over these eight seasons— and we can’t wait to be back to spend the holiday season with you.”

Christmas Village is located in West Shore Park, between the Maryland Science Center and the former Baltimore Visitor Center. Follow the smell of gingerbread and fresh charcoal-grilled brats to the authentic wooden huts and grand heated tent, which features a full menu of European food, sweets, and drinks. New in 2021, look for an extended outdoor-seating area that will add plenty of seating for visitors to enjoy their food and beverages.

Admission to the outdoor area of Christmas Village in Baltimore is always free to visit and experience. Admission for the heated festival tent is free on the Preview and the Opening Weekend. For the remaining weekends, tickets to the festival tent are five dollars for adults 18 and over, while kids under 18 are free. All purchased tickets act as a holiday season pass, allowing visitors to return anytime throughout the season without paying admission again.

Event highlights feature the traditional Tree Lighting to kick off the 8th season of Christmas Village on Saturday, November 20, 2021, as well as the Grand Opening Ceremony of Christmas Village on Saturday, November 27, 2021.

For more information about Christmas Village, and to spread early holiday cheer, follow @bmorechristmas on Twitter and Instagram, “Like” Christmas Village in Baltimore on Facebook, and visit www.baltimore-christmas.com.

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Community Engagement Center Welcomes Neighbors with Grand Opening

By: Jena Frick

Two years ago, neighbors from all over West Baltimore gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new community engagement center at 16 S. Poppleton St. After a lengthy relocation, a full renovation, and a global pandemic neighbors gathered once again to finally open the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) new Community Engagement Center (CEC).

West Baltimore community members, UMB faculty, staff, and students, and leaders from across the state of Maryland gathered Oct. 28 to celebrate this highly anticipated grand opening. The new CEC is the cornerstone of UMB's Community Campus, a location and concept that demonstrates a deep commitment to strengthening West Baltimore in collaboration with the neighbors who live there.

Working hand in hand with community leaders and neighbors, UMB has reimagined the historic building into an architecturally stunning, 20,000-square-foot space complete with a large event space; a dance and movement studio; private consultation rooms; and a robust computer lab. The expansion and relocation of UMB's CEC is in response to more than 45,000 recorded visits from men, women, teens, and children who have engaged with its services and programming since the original CEC opened in 2015.

"This new center is a place that our community deserves," said Ashley Valis, MSW, UMB's executive director of strategic initiatives and community engagement and a resident of West Baltimore. "Together, we have imagined, planned, brainstormed, and convened many residents to deliver a new center that will be a fun, educational, relaxing, respectful, and transformational space for our neighbors."

In the lot across the street from the new building UMB leadership hosted an outdoor, ceremony to commemorate the opening and allow attendees to experience "A Day in the Life" at the new CEC. The event began with a warm welcome from UMB President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS. He opened with a quote from the late Congressman Elijah Cummings who attended the opening of the original CEC back in 2015.

"I remember when [Elijah Cummings]



(From left) Tyrone Roper, director of the UMB Community Engagement Center, UMB President Bruce Jarrell, MD, FACS, and Ashley Valis, UMB's director of community engagement and strategic initiatives, accept an official citation of recognition from the Maryland Senate, presented by Maryland Senator Antonio Hayes (far right) and Del. Marlon Amprey. Courtesy Photo

was here to cut the first ribbon, on our first Community Engagement Center across the street there," said Jarrell. "Some of you may remember what he said during the opening. He said, 'We may not see the full benefit of things that we're doing today. We never may be thanked for all we've done, or for what you have all done. But there will be children whose trajectory and destinies have already been changed by what you're doing here today, and I want for this to be a model for the nation.'"

During the ceremony, attendees also heard from former UMB president and University System of Maryland (USM) Chancellor Jay A. Perman, MD. It was under Perman's leadership that UMB began to work in tandem with West Baltimore neighbors to visualize and build an engagement center for the community. He thanked the neighbors for trusting UMB and for their help in making the center a reality.

"When I talk about the power of a university, engaging with its community, I talk about the center," he said. "It's a moral obligation of our public institutions and universities to be anchor institutions in the communities they call home. When I talk about living a mission of service

and partnership and equity and opportunity, I talk about this corner of West Baltimore, and everything that we have done here together."

Following Perman's remarks, Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott presented Jarrell, Valis, and CEC director Tyrone Roper, MSW, with an official certificate of recognition from the city.

"It's only right that we acknowledge the progress of this center which was done side by side with our community leaders," said Scott. "That's a true demonstration of community engagement. We can see we have so many members of our community represented here today. This just proves that this project is not just in the community, but of the community."

Attendees were invited after the ceremony to experience the many resources, programs, and activities the CEC has to offer at tables set up around the lot. This included a Wellness table to learn about the CEC health services, a Police Athletics/Activities League (PAL) program table to meet PAL police officers, a tax prep table, a workforce development table, a CURE Scholars table, a virtual walk-through table, and a giveaway table where attendees could pick up informational flyers and CEC swag.

Ten-year-old A'rya Myers was very excited to check out the Maker's Studio table, which had a 3D printer and 3D pens that community members could use to make their own T-shirts and tote bags.

"I love coming here and doing fun things with my friends," said A'rya as she added the finishing touches to her homemade T-shirt. "I asked my mom if I could be part of the Youth Maker's Program so I can come here after school all the time and learn how to make things."

A'rya was one of many neighbors, of all ages, who enjoyed the activities and games at the grand opening. The feeling of community and comradery was electric, and many neighbors expressed excitement for the new center to be officially opened and operating.

"This center is everything to the neighborhood," said Charlotte McGoines a resident of the Franklin Square neighborhood. "We meet friends here, we develop relationships here, and it's just so nice. I've met so many friendly and nice people, and I wouldn't do anything else but come here if I could, because it's just that much fun and there is so much to do and experience."

To stay up to date on all things happening at the new CEC, subscribe to the newsletter.

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Open Enrollment Medicare for Medicare Advantage and Medigap Plans 64 and Beyond, Part 2

By *La-Villa Brooks*

Medicare has the primary responsibility to pay for health insurance for those who do not have any other insurance or coverage. The Medicare program has 4 parts to help meet the health and wellness of individuals; Part A covers hospital (free), Part B covers medical (premiums associated), Part C (Medicare Advantage), and Part D (prescription drug coverage). As previously mentioned in “What you need to know about Medicare Open Enrollment, Part 1”, to be eligible for Medicare Part C, you must have Part A and B, and Part D with Part A and/or Part B.

Medicare overview:

*Part A is the hospital insurance and it helps to cover the care of hospital stay, home health, hospice, and SNF (skilled nursing facility).

*Part B is the medical insurance and it helps to cover preventative services like screenings and shots, doctor visits, diagnostic tests, durable medical equipment like wheelchairs and walkers, outpatient care, and qualified therapies.

*Part C, also known as Medicare Advantage may help to lower out-of-pocket costs and provide additional benefits that Original Medicare (Part A and/or Part B) doesn't. For example, some plans may offer vision, hearing, dental, gym membership or transportation.

*Part D is the Medicare prescription drug coverage that may help in lowering the cost of prescription drugs and protection against high-rising premium costs in the future.

Original Medicare does not cover long-term care, cosmetic surgery, hearing aids and exams, alternative medicine like acupuncture, and other services which leave some gaps in coverage for Part A and Part B. The alternative to Original Medicare are plans offered through Medigap that helps to cover your Part B bills. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan (Part C) and previously signed up for a Medigap policy, you may want to drop the Medigap policy. Medigap policies cannot be

used to cover Medicare Advantage Plan copayments, deductibles, nor premiums.

Medicare as the Secondary Payer

When signing up for Medicare, keep in mind that if you already have health insurance, the current insurance becomes the primary for health insurance coverage. In this scenario, Medicare will not have primary payment responsibility, thereby, becoming MSP (Medicare Secondary Payer) which will provide qualified coverage for services that the primary insurance does not cover. If you're on a fixed income, you may want to weigh the pros and cons of switching to a Medicare Advantage Plan.

During Open Enrollment if you already have Original Medicare, you will have the opportunity to disenroll from Original Medicare and sign up for a Medicare Advantage Plan. You will also have the opportunity to switch from a Medicare Advantage Plan back to Original Medicare, enroll in Part D (prescription drug plan) or cancel your prescription drug plan and move from one plan to another.

DID YOU KNOW?

When you have limited income and resources to pay for health insurance and prescription drugs you can apply for Extra Help. To find out if you qualify, contact ssa.gov to find out more.


La-Villa Brooks, MPA is the founder of Brooks Home and Healthcare Management and is an Army Veteran. She has worked as a Project Leader for Local, State and Federal agencies in case management. She is a Certified Application Counselor for healthcare in the Marketplace, in addition to certifications with CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) and HIPAA. She is a member of GPNY (Gerontology Professionals of New York) and NAIPC Member (National Aging In Place).

All inquiries should be emailed to LrtBrooks@gmail.com

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- Providing funding and support through innovative programs and partnerships with community colleges, universities and nonprofits, including Morgan State University, that offer training and credentialing programs connecting more people to high-wage, in-demand careers.

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College is not for Everyone! Apprenticeships may be better

Continued from page 1

were learned through the trade guilds via the practice of apprenticeships. A master horseshoe maker or blacksmith would apprentice younger ones to the trade and as the apprentice gained skills and himself mastered the trade, he was then able to move on to his own shop, take on apprentices of his own, while providing a living for his family. Apprentices with the right aptitude could perfect essential skills in much less time than it takes to get a bachelor of arts degree from a college.

One would be surprised to learn that in urban areas like Baltimore, graduates from local colleges are glad if they can find a job that pays \$30,000.00 per year. Just imagine that for a moment. A student borrows large sums of money, very easily in many cases, to finance majoring in some useless college degree, to graduate with massive debt and get a job which pays a salary below a living wage. They can hardly repay their college debt. They can hardly think about getting a loan for a house or making plans to get married and support a family with kinds.

In recent generations, right here in Baltimore, many men who never went to college gained jobs at places like Spar-

rows Point in the steel industry. They learned the necessary skills, gained good pay as union members and they married wives who were often teachers and social workers. These people went on to lead happy family lives in homes they bought. They could take vacations to nearby beaches and dine out from time to time.

That is no longer true because the jobs at Sparrows point are gone. But there are many other skilled jobs, in hospitals and at tech companies that could fill the gap. Many of these jobs do not need any college degree and employers may need to model their hires after the ancient practice of the Guild Houses by apprenticing young adults to these jobs and paying them entry-training-wages until they have mastered the particular skills needed for the job. They could begin by training in elementary skills, adding more intricate stages as the apprentice progresses.

I recently heard a story about someone, locally, who is currently doing something like what is being proposed here. The story relates to the practice whereby through certain metrics developed to test the aptitude of young people who may not want to go to college,

youngsters with a proven aptitude for technology, and that is a large pool of young people who love to play video games et al, are then hired at minimum wages while they are trained in the technology at hand, apprentice style. After they have mastered the skills being taught, the skills needed by the growing technology companies all over the country, these young people are guaranteed hires in their new fields at jobs which offer salaries of \$90,000.00 and sometimes more! Could you believe that?

That model, now that it has been tested, can be taken and applied in other fields. Hospitals need technicians and other skilled persons in various departments. They can develop the metrics to test the aptitudes that fit the job skills that are in play. They can then hire the trainees, apprentices at minimum training wages, give them the skills of the jobs and after mastery, make them permanent hires or recommend them to other institutions. Bright young people with the right aptitude could often mas-

ter the skill sets in quick time. Certainly, this can be done in less time than it takes to get a degree in some major that offers no job skills, and without the debt from student loans.

There is another story I heard about a young man who was working at a gas station. He was challenged to take an aptitude test in technology and did so well that he was recruited, apprenticed in the field and in very quick time was making almost \$100,000.00 in the growing tech space. Imagine just how many able young people are out there in the world waiting for opportunities like this to change their futures from gas station operator to master of Tech skills.

You know that welders, plumbers and even carpenters make far more money than most graduates from colleges? We would as a society do well to think outside the convention education-box while remembering that jobs developed via apprenticeships do not carry those massive student loan debts that burden so many in our community.



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006131

10th Annual Ed Reed Foundation “Thanksgiving Blessings” provides over 400 meals to SEED School of Maryland Students and their Families

On Friday, November 19, 2021, a team of over 25 devoted community volunteers gave their time at The SEED School of Maryland for the 10th Annual Reed Foundation “Thanksgiving Blessings” campaign. They assembled more than 400 Thanksgiving meals for families of the school’s students and other members of the community.

“Service is one of our core values here at the SEED School of Maryland. We want to model for our students the importance of giving back. We partner with the Ed Reed Foundation to provide 400 meals for families of our students and some in the community. The 10th Annual Ed Reed “Thanksgiving Blessings” is a great way to kick off the season of gratitude, the season of giving. It brings together the fire department, biker groups, and community members. It is one of the most anticipated events of the year,” said Kirk Sykes, Head of School, SEED School of Maryland.

SEED is the only tuition-free public boarding school in the state of Maryland. It serves 400 students in grades 6-12. Its mission is college completion. “Some kids can be struggling for several reasons at home, in their neighborhoods, or at schools. The common denominator is that they have someone in their lives pushing for them and wanting them to succeed. They’ve got big dreams and big aspirations, and all they need is access and opportunity. And that’s what our school does,” said Katie Byram, Director of Development.

Luciana Smith is a volunteer and a parent. Her kids have been attending the SEED School for six years. She said, “I love this event. I have five children, and it is hard, but knowing that this event is coming every year helps me. I am working, and my time is limited. I know that the SEED School has me, and the program has me.”

Darian Tucker is an 18 year old senior at the SEED School of Maryland. He has been at the school since sixth grade. This event has helped his family over the years. “It gives us less stress and saves money so that we can spend it on other things we need,” he said. He also enjoys



Volunteer, Arona Carroll, is very satisfied after packing food bags for families.



Volunteers bagging cabbage for family Thanksgiving care packages.

volunteering. “It is about giving back and helping out.”

“I have been a part of this for almost ten years. It is an amazing thing. You can never assume our students are having Thanksgiving and going home to homes with food. The fact that we can guarantee



Ed Reed's Thanksgiving Blessings Volunteer and mother of two SEED School's scholars taking a moment to pose for a picture.



Student volunteers, Alexander Randall-Johnson (left) and Darian Tucker (right) are helping to bag Thanksgiving care packages for families.

that all 400 students are having a Thanksgiving is beyond amazing,” said Alexis Boyd, Senior Dean of Students.



Kirk Sykes, Head of the School, SEED School of MD, is giving thanks for everyone pitching in to make the event great.

Photos: Dena Fisher

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