

Taking on Prostate Cancer in Baltimore City

Charlene Ndi has spent her entire career reaching out to the poor and underserved to bring them vital health care. She and her team have a monumental task before them, one that can at times, seem insurmountable. As program manager for the Maryland Cigarette Restitution Fund's (CRF) Public Health Grant at Johns Hopkins, she and her team are charged with bringing prostate cancer screening to uninsured African American men, ages 45-70, who live in Baltimore City. The city has some of the highest prostate cancer death rates in the nation. State legislators are hopeful that the CRF-sponsored screening program, which began in 2001, will lead to earlier detection of prostate cancer and, as a result, better treatment outcomes.

Ndi has been with the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center's Cancer Disparities Program since March of last year, but under her management the program has already shown great success. Ndi has received help through a new partnership with the Baltimore City Health Department and has bolstered an already impressive team by adding two health educators with extensive experience and contacts in community outreach. "We have assembled an excellent team. They know the population and are seasoned, so we can hit the ground running," says Ndi.

According to state statistics, there are 40,000 uninsured African American men in Baltimore City. Ndi knows that for many of these men, the conditions in which they find themselves are more immediately threatening than the prospect of getting prostate cancer. As a result, the first challenge for Ndi and her team has been finding these uninsured men and engaging them in discussions about cancer screening. These men are struggling just to get by, Ndi explains. Many of



them are homeless, dealing with health issues and/or addiction, or just coming out of prison. For those just trying to survive, getting them to participate in cancer screening, and particularly a test that includes a digital rectal exam, is no easy task.

Accessibility is critical to success, so Ndi and her team have set up screenings at transitional housing shelters, drug treatment centers and needle-exchange programs, job-readiness programs, parole and probation re-entry programs, churches, and community centers. "People want to feel like they are a part of something big, so we're out there beating the drum, setting up booths at health fairs and other community events, partnering with radio and television stations to get events advertised, and getting fliers into the communities."

Ndi has learned two things through her experiences: Community events work and prostate cancer statistics are skewed because many men with insurance benefits are not getting screened. Currently, CRF support is only for uninsured men.

"We've built bridges in the community. We don't want men to feel like we're tearing down these bridges while they're standing on them," says Ndi. As a result, she sought to find funding sources that will allow her group to screen insured men who show up at their events. She has already found a partial solution by teaming up with Chesapeake Urology and their mobile screening van. During joint outreach events, all men who arrive are screened. Ndi's group attends to the uninsured, and Chesapeake Urology screens the insured men. Still, at other community outreach events, insured men must be turned away. "It is one of the most painful things we have to do. We know those who are denied will probably not get screened," says Ndi. She recognizes that the faces behind the alarming prostate cancer rates in African American men in Baltimore City are those of both insured and uninsured men. She worries that the problem will not be solved until both groups are addressed through community outreach.

"It grieves us to turn these men away, but we realize we must focus on helping those we have funding for," she says. And she stays focused by reaching out to as many of the 40,000 uninsured that she can locate. The challenge, however, does not end with screening. Ndi and her team must also work with these men and community outreach groups to follow up to explain their findings. With no fixed address, it is challenging to contact the men about suspicious findings or positive prostate cancer results.

Despite the difficulty of the task before her, Ndi remains optimistic. "What we are trying to do speaks to everything I have done for over the last 30 years," she says. "I love this job."

FIND US ONLINE AT www.hopkinsmedicine.org/communityservices
 COMMUNITY TIES IS PUBLISHED FOR EMPLOYEES AND FRIENDS OF JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE, BY THE JHHS OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, A DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS. SEND COMMUNITY STORY SUGGESTIONS TO 550 N. BROADWAY, SUITE 510, BALTIMORE, MD 21205, OR CALL 410-614-4976.



Nursing Managed Centers in Baltimore Provide Valuable Care

Johns Hopkins Nursing students are providing East Baltimore residents with valuable health services at the Isaiah Wellness Center in Apostolic Towers, the House of Ruth Maryland and the Lillian Wald Community Health Center on Rutland Street.

"These centers are not designed to provide primary care services for area residents," said Dr. Phyllis Sharps, director of the East Baltimore Community Nursing Centers. "We can assist people in finding primary care if that is what they need, but student volunteers and faculty trainers are there to educate and provide specialized community health programs, including immunizations and after-school programs."

With 200 or more regular visitors each year per site, the centers also allow students to gain critical volunteer and community service hours.

"We look for gaps in the care our guests receive and that can only happen if the students have the opportunity to really engage the residents," says Dr. Sharps. "The fact that these centers have a long-standing relationship with the community, some more than 10 years, reinforces the commitment to making a difference."



Shale D. Stiller, Esq., president of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and his wife, Ellen M. Heller, Esq., announced a pledge of \$15 million to fund EBDI community support programs.

"Our efforts are focused on helping people understand what they are up against in their lives and to learn to work within those challenges."

— Nikita Cox, EBDI

East Baltimore Redevelopment Goes Deeper Than the Eye Can See

Drive through East Baltimore shows the new construction that has replaced blocks of homes, but the depth of the community's reformation goes far deeper. Residents can see the invaluable addition and expansion of vital services, like workforce training and programs for seniors. Funding for these programs comes from a variety of state, federal and private groups.

Thanks to a Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation five-year grant, senior activities and programming are supported. "Specifics about the types of services and programs depend on the needs of the community as they are identified," says Nikita Cox, residential services manager for East Baltimore Development, Inc. (EBDI). "We already offer many different programs to meet the varying needs of residents, but the grant will allow us to meet the ever-changing needs by either expanding the programs we offer or adding new ones."

A grant from a partnership with Aramark supports programs focused on healthy eating, appropriate meal choices, meal preparation and healthy lifestyle. "Many of our residents don't realize or focus on proper diet, since they have so

(continued on page 3)

Workforce Training Can Make the Difference



Every Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., community residents are invited to participate in Workforce Wednesdays. The event is held at the EBDI Community Center (1731 E. Chase Street) and is designed to help residents find new jobs, define their interests, or improve job skills.

It's a Wednesday morning in December and the waiting area at the EBDI offices on Chase Street is buzzing. It's Work Force Wednesday and the 20-some men and women, ranging in age from teen to mid-life, are talking about a program that is about to get under way. Most of the people waiting seem to know someone else, and there is some banter about neighborhood activities.

"Most of the people we have coming into the center, our primary clients, were relocated with the neighborhood redevelopment," says Tim Lewis, workforce development associate with EBDI. "We help these folks find new jobs by working with them to define their interests, improve or gain skills that they might need in the workplace, or just provide some career counseling to help them determine what they want or need from their job."

In partnership with the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Lewis and his colleagues have supported more than 800 registrants since they began just a year ago with a pilot program. Of those who have registered for assistance, nearly 100 have been fully employed.

"We find ways to match the needs of our registrants with the resources that we have available, those within the Mayor's office, and local government, and in businesses and community-based programs," says Mr. Lewis. "Fortunately, we have shown some success in reattaching some of our residents to the labor force."

Workforce Wednesday is just one of the programs available to community residents. One-on-one assessment and training is also

available, giving extra attention to individuals in need of specific assistance. "Our average resident has some challenges on the skills side that they have to deal with. Many times we can identify a group of residents with similar challenges and put them together as a group. But that's not always the case. And much of our success depends on the resident buying into the process," Lewis adds. "Without their buy-in, and if they don't accept that we can't just flip a switch and get them a great job, they will get frustrated. This is a process, beginning with the assessment and hopefully setting realistic goals. We work with the residents to develop a plan to get them from point A to point B. Once we get them to point B, we take a look at their individual situation to determine point C.

"Our long-term goal is to streamline the process we use and improve the partnerships we have with companies coming into the EBDI areas," says Lewis. "Local hiring and recruitment assistance with these companies increases the likelihood that jobs will come directly from the EBDI neighborhoods. Keeping the jobs local not only improves the neighborhoods where the residents live, but it also eliminates the uncertainty of transportation to and from the workplace," says Lewis. "These are all things we need to take into consideration when we counsel the registrants. Sometimes the biggest barrier is transportation. We can offer assistance with this also, we just need to know what we are dealing with. Like the residents, we just want the opportunity to help."

Reducing Risk to Children

Reducing the risk of injury to children is a priority for the staff of the Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP), part of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Prompted by their own research showing that low-income Baltimore families face many barriers to protecting their children from injury, the No. 1 threat to their health, the center partnered with the Johns Hopkins Department of Pediatrics to develop the Children's Safety Center (CSC). Located in East Baltimore, the CSC provides residents with free, personalized safety information, including one-on-one car seat safety checks and installations. Lack of access to affordable safety products is a significant barrier for families and the Safety Center provides them with heavily discounted safety products including safety gates, bike helmets and car safety seats. Since its inception in 1997, the hospital-based safety center has served more than 10,000 Baltimore residents.

The resources provided by the Children's Safety Center have had a direct impact on the lives of community members like Laticia Cannon. Laticia first visited the Center at the referral of her son Mica's pediatrician. A CSC health educator conducted an injury risk assessment and provided Laticia with a referral to the Baltimore City Fire Department for free smoke alarms. Laticia also wanted a new, forward-facing car seat for her son, however, the health educator informed her that Mica would actually be safer in a rear-facing seat until his weight, height and age met the criteria for a forward-facing one. Complying with this recommendation proved invaluable when Laticia and Mica were in a car accident. Thanks to his rear-facing seat, Mica survived with no injuries. Laticia has continued to visit the safety center to replace Mica's car seat, buy him a bicycle helmet and get an infant



car seat for his baby sister. The young mother, like thousands of others who have visited the facility, has been able to provide her children with the best in safety practices and products.

The demand for services provided by the CSC has led to the establishment of two additional safety centers: Safety Lane, housed in the Harriet Lane Clinic in the David M. Rubenstein Child Health Building in East Baltimore, and the CARES Safety Center, a mobile unit that resembles a typical home with a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and stairway. CARES, a partnership with the Baltimore City Fire Department, visits Baltimore neighborhoods to teach parents and caregivers about the risks children face at home and to offer ways to make the home a safer place. Recently, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield provided CIRP with a three-year grant to cover the mobile van's operating costs.

"When we started the CSC more than a decade ago, there were few places to buy things like smoke alarms and car seats in East Baltimore. It was even harder for families to get accurate advice about how to use them," says Eileen McDonald, program director of the Johns Hopkins Children's Safety Centers. "We know from research that the combination of enhanced access to safety products and one-on-one advice with a safety expert is what's needed to assist parents in keeping their children safe from injuries. With our expanded resources, we look forward to continuing to provide East Baltimore and other communities we serve with the products and services that make them safer."

Redevelopment ... continued from page 1

many other priority issues they are trying to manage," says Ms. Cox. "We want to help them make better choices, which ultimately will help them in other aspects of their lives, including improving their overall health and well-being."

EBDI partnerships with the schools of Nursing and Public Health also benefited residents by bringing flu shots and other health workshops to the community in the fall. "Our efforts are focused on helping people understand what they are up against in their lives and to learn to work within those challenges," says Ms. Cox. "We're pleased with the progress we have made so far, but we have a long way to go. It has taken many of these residents a long time to appreciate the breadth of what is available."

Baltimore Week Gets Students Involved



"One of the benefits of attending a school like Johns Hopkins is that you get to see communities where your training and education can make a significant difference," said Jessica Harrington, assistant director of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Student Outreach Resource Center (SOURCE), which sponsors Baltimore Week activities.

During the Fall Baltimore Week, nearly 300 students from the schools of Public Health, Medicine and Nursing "broke down the walls and barriers in the East Baltimore community" by providing community-based support such as cleaning up open spaces, repairing homes and assisting homeowners.

Along with student volunteers, representatives from Baltimore City government and

the health department supported the Healthy Homes program. Participants were also invited to submit photographs for the Baltimore Week Photo Contest. www.jhsph.edu/source/programs_events/PhotoContest

Now in its third year, Baltimore Week activities take place in the spring and fall. One participant, Rachel Weber, a doctoral student in the School of Public Health, returned to Baltimore in 2006 after two years of fieldwork in Tel Aviv examining the sex worker trade and human trafficking. She valued her experience abroad but wanted to focus on local health-related issues.

"Not all of the activities were service activities," said Harrington. "Many were about awareness, allowing the volunteers to see firsthand some of the problems and issues they could contend with after they graduate."



Fun with Science Camp

Students at eight Baltimore City elementary schools can get a glimpse of science in a first-class research setting this summer. That's when the second annual Fun with Science summer camp will introduce fifth-graders from Collington Square, Fort Worthington, Harford Heights, Dr. Bernard Harris, Dr. Rayner Browne, William A. Paca, Wolfe Street Academy, and Tench Tilghman to the basic sciences. Fun with Science summer camp enhances the concept of science for children and is part of the Community Science Education Program (CSEP), which began with Science Days in 2001.

"We've been successful in getting city school students interested in the sciences through these programs," says Carolyn Chance, program development coordinator for the Johns Hopkins Office

of Community Services. "Last year we had 24 students participating in Fun with Science Summer Camp from eight area schools. We had the support of the school leadership and the teachers, who selected the participants. We hope to open the program up to middle and high school students."

Baltimore City Summer Science Camp students have the opportunity to apply principles of basic science with members of the Johns Hopkins faculty, seeing firsthand that they are capable of success in science.

