Dear Colleagues,

On April 23rd, The Urban Health Institute and the Johns Hopkins University Office of the Provost hosted the 2nd Annual Symposium on the Social Determinants of Health at the Johns Hopkins University Homewood campus. Thanks to the support and involvement of the Baltimore community, as well as Hopkins students, faculty and staff, the event was a tremendous success, with over 600 registered participants and a day full of stimulating discussions.

The theme of this year’s symposium was Action for Equity and focused on identifying solutions to some of the biggest challenges with respect to health equity.

The program included thought provoking keynote addresses from Sir Michael Marmot of the World Health Organization, Anthony Iton of the California Endowment, and Congressman Elijah Cummings, as well as the granting of a lifetime achievement award to Dr. Charles Simmons of Sourjourner Douglass College for his work to reduce inequalities in Baltimore. The day also included a series of engaging panel discussions on topics ranging from overcoming the legacy of racism in Baltimore to policies that have brought about positive change on the social determinants of health. Additionally, the day concluded with a poster session that highlighted student-community collaborative projects happening across Baltimore to address many of the issues discussed throughout the day’s program.

Pleased as we were with this year’s Symposium, we do not see it as a one-time event or the culmination of our efforts. Rather, Action for Equity was just one part of the Urban Health Institute’s broader Social Determinants of Health Initiative that will continue through the coming months and beyond. With that in mind, we have a number of products that will result from this meeting and will be disseminated widely both in Baltimore and nationally, including a report summarizing and synthesizing the event, and issue briefs focusing on specific topic areas within the broader theme of the social determinants of health.

We will also convene follow up meetings to set our agenda moving forward, and we would love for you to be involved.

If you are interested in joining our Social Determinants of Health e-mail list, please contact us at urbanhealth@jhsph.edu.

Thank you to everyone who joined us at Action for Equity and have continued the conversation! We hope you will join us in this exciting and important work to make Baltimore a healthier, more equitable city today and for generations to come.
Meet the UHI’s Community-University Coordinating Council
by Meron Solomon, Administrative Coordinator

Starting up a business might be thought of as very daunting in these economically trying times, but many people in our community have the passion and talents to really go for it. You will hear Joe Mechlinski state, “ask yourself how many times have you failed for good. For most people, the answer is not often.” Joe acknowledges the importance of passion when it comes to any endeavor, but also recognizing that it’s “about loving who you do it with, and loving who you do it for... people don’t care about what they do, they care about why they do it and who they do it with.” He encourages anyone who wants to start a business or to grow and expand to Grow Regardless.

Joe grew up in East Baltimore and attended a high school which was, at the time, named one of the worst high schools in Maryland. With encouragement to aspire rooted in his family members and other various role models, Joe excelled in his academics and later attended Johns Hopkins University to study Economics. Soon after, he became the CEO and Co-Founder of his company, entreQuest, Inc. that he founded along with one of his colleagues. A local Baltimore business development firm, his company seeks to increase the revenue for small to midsized businesses that have the desire to grow. This endeavor was driven by their wealth of knowledge, experiences and something equally important to Joe—a big heart. Their goal was to get everyone in an organization to think like an entrepreneur, get them to create goals to go after, and overall, encourage people to become better people.

It’s not surprising that Joe has a great passion for education and entrepreneurship. Joe believes that “small to midsized businesses are the backbone of this country,” but have been “underserved and undervalued.” He emphasizes the need for community and ecosystem mindsets—addressing the important fact that we all need each other. In regard to our generation, he states that “our calling is to deal with all the social issues that are in front of us and all the economic issues to find out what this next generation is going to be known for.” Joe and his team have been featured on a variety of media outlets such as FOXNews, The Baltimore Sun, and Bloomberg Radio. In addition to being chosen as Maryland Chamber of Commerce “Small Business of the Year” in 2004, The Baltimore Business journal also named Joe’s company, entreQuest, Inc. one of the “Best Places to Work” in 2011 and 2012.

Another one of Joe’s successful endeavors is that he wrote a best-selling book called Grow Regardless. Grow Regardless packages more than 10 years of management and consulting experience into a product that gives small to midsized businesses the tools and strategies that larger companies readily have access to. “I think what the world is asking for right now is for more people who live it and less people who talk about it... people who are givers versus takers,” states Joe. He also mentions that the book resonates with readers because “it has been lived by someone who did it.” Grow Regardless hit the New York Times, USA Today, Amazon.com, and Barnes & Noble best-seller lists.

Joe is an outstanding example of someone who uses his talents and gifts to increase human and business capital nationwide, as well as here in Baltimore city. As a humble leader, community advocate, and entrepreneur, Joe’s passion and work show his dedication to the well-being of individuals and small to midsized businesses. In addition, Joe and his company prove to be invaluable to the University and community as a whole. Last year, The Daily Record named Joe as one of “Maryland’s Most Admired CEOs,” and we are honored to have him as a part of our Community-University Coordinating Council.

“The focus is more on the journey, not the destination.”

Joe Mechlinski, Grow Regardless

The Baltimore Book Club: Beyond Conversation
by Noah Smock, Assistant Director, SOURCE

The Spanish philosopher and essayist George Santayana is credited with the following quote that so aptly summarizes the danger of ignoring history: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The Baltimore Book Club is not only dedicated to avoiding the plague of parts of our common past by exploring and exposing them, but also looking deeply into our current attitudes and conditions to define those threads that are indeed repeating. The engaged and honest conversations that arise in this setting are more than mere noise—they are foundations for a balanced present and informed future.

The Baltimore Book Club is an open platform for discussion on issues that are often avoided or approached in an overly-simplistic manner. Primary topics include race, ethnicity, class, gender, public health and health disparities in Baltimore City and in the country. Lively and candid discussions with these authors and community members dig deep into attitudes, causal factors, historical precedents and modern implications. And it’s not just talk; the Book Club is an incubator for ideas on how best to join hands as a common community in order to avoid the disparate impacts on public health for populations within our city and country.

This academic year, the Urban Health Institute (UHI) asked SOURCE (Student Outreach Resource Center) and community partner Amazing Grace Lutheran Church to co-sponsor the Baltimore Book Club discussions.

(continued on page 3)
Baltimore Book Club

(continued from page 2)

We are proud to have hosted three authors as part of this year’s Baltimore Book Club: Daniel J. Sharfstein, Peter Beilenson and Jonathan Odell. In *The Invisible Line*, Daniel J. Sharfstein unravels the stories of three families who represent the complexity of race in America and force us to rethink our basic assumptions about who we are. *Tapping into the Wire* uses dramatic recounts of scenes from HBO’s “The Wire” as a launching point; authors Peter Beilenson and Patrick A. MacGuire expose and discuss gross injustices of media, criminal justice, education, labor and government in the City of Baltimore.

Jonathan Odell’s, *The Healing* is a novel with unforgettable characters based on a southern plantation during the pre-civil war period. All of the books’ characters and stories sparked great conversation during our book club discussions.

Authors joined for a day of activities including a conversation with community leaders, an open session for community members, students, faculty and staff to meet and ask the author questions and a smaller luncheon conversation with Hopkins students who have read the book. These engagements help to both expose valuable works to a relevant community and allow for in-depth exploration for those who have already been exposed.

Highlight on 2011 Small Grants Recipients: Addressing Food Insecurity in Reservoir Hill, Baltimore

by Elizabeth Toft, Program Coordinator, Urban Health Institute

It’s hard to miss the conversations about “food deserts” in Baltimore. Many Baltimore neighborhoods are miles away from supermarkets where fresh produce is regularly sold.

In 2011, then MPH graduate student Alishea Galvin thought that the UHI Small Grants program could be the perfect connection with her course work and passion of Urban Farming. Alishea, a long time volunteer and Board Member of Whitelock Community Farm secured funding through the UHI Small Grants program with the goal of addressing food insecurity in Reservoir Hill, Baltimore, MD – identified as a food desert by the collaborative work between The Baltimore City Office of Sustainability, Food Policy Initiative and Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

Alishea along with Elisa Lane, Whitelock Community Farm manager, reached out to Dr. Joel Gittelsohn from the Johns Hopkins Center for Human Nutrition to help with some of the data and other programmatic details of this project.

The Small Grants funds helped to purchase a produce refrigerator for the Linden Market Corner Store located at 2435 Linden Ave Baltimore, MD 21217. The refrigerator was a huge step in the success of the project because without it the Whitelock Community Farm produce wouldn’t stay fresh for customers. To help analyze the program, weekly data was collected about what produce items sold out first and what was left over. The partnership also printed out healthy produce recipe cards to encourage shoppers to try new items. Healthy cooking classes were held throughout that summer and continue now through the help of the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council.

Elisa Lane said the best news about this project is that the Linden Market corner store “has been selling produce nonstop weekly since the project started in August 2011.”

There has been an increased demand for fresh fruit at the Linden Market. Whitelock Community Farm was able to purchase fruit to be sold at the market and is hoping to increase the farm’s size this upcoming season to provide fruit for its customers.

Whitelock Community Farm is a member of the Baltimore City Farm Alliance. The Alliance helped to purchase a shared EBT (food stamps)/credit/debit machine. The EBT machine allows Whitelock and other members of the alliance to process produce payments with food stamps and credit cards. Customers can also use Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers as well as WIC/Senior Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVC)

“Funding from the UHI Small Grants, support from Johns Hopkins Center for Human Nutrition and the launch of the Mayor’s corner store initiative was the perfect match of collaborations to make this program successful” Alishea stated.

Dr. Joel Gittelsohn and his team at Johns Hopkins Center for Human Nutrition are working on developing grant applications to help greatly expand this approach in the Baltimore area.

To stay connected to Whitelock Community Farm visit:
http://whiteLockfarm.wordpress.com/
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Whitelock-Community-Farm/137767799596896?ref=ts

Whitelock Community Farm
Photo courtesy of Elisa Lane
2013 SMALL GRANTS FOR RESEARCH AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
APPLICATION DUE DATE: JUNE 14, 2013 - 5:00 PM

The Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute (UHI) Small Grants Program was formed to stimulate and advance community-university collaborations around research and program development. Grants are awarded to partnerships that most successfully demonstrate the potential for advancing the health and well-being of the residents of Baltimore.

Applications must be submitted online. Full instructions available at:
http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/our_work/smallgrants_2013_Info_RFP.html

DATES TO REMEMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location / Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May/June 2013</td>
<td>Community Health Initiative All Partners Meeting</td>
<td>The meeting date will be announced via email and the CHI and UHI websites. For more information please contact Meron Solomon at <a href="mailto:mesolomo@jhsph.edu">mesolomo@jhsph.edu</a> or 410-955-6669.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14, 2013</td>
<td>UHI Small Grants for Research and Program Development Proposals Due</td>
<td>See announcement above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September-October, 2013</td>
<td>Community Health Initiative Data Interpretation Conversations</td>
<td>Dates will be announced via email and the CHI and UHI websites. For more information please contact Meron Solomon at <a href="mailto:mesolomo@jhsph.edu">mesolomo@jhsph.edu</a> or 410-955-6669.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please visit our website home page” Highlight and News” section to view more information about events.
Or contact urbanhealth@jhsph.edu

The Urban Health Institute is on Facebook!
Check out our page for more news, updates, photos, and videos. Comment and share!