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2010 Recipients of UHI Small Grants for Research, Program Development, and Education

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT-COMMUNITY GRANTS

Theresa Marshall, Undergraduate, Business Management
Peter Hegel, Deputy Director for Outreach, Downtown Sailing Center
Ebony Vaughan, Program Manager, MENTOR Maryland

Sail-Ability Program at the Downtown Sailing Center

The Downtown Sailing Center offers sailing as an accessible noncompetitive (or competitive) outdoor activity that combines aerobic exercise with teamwork and communication. The Downtown Sailing Center will partner with MENTOR Maryland to provide repeated outdoor education (sailing) and teambuilding exercises to 8 young people with disabilities from Baltimore in order to build health, wellbeing, and an appreciation of the outdoors, through a new athletic activity. The Downtown Sailing Center is a non-profit community sailing center that works with almost 2000 youth and adults each summer by partnering with dozens of other community organizations. Of that total number of participants, approximately 20% are people with disabilities. In each case, the center uses sailing as a vehicle to teach different topics for different program partners. One partner uses sailing to teach literacy skills. Another uses sailing to teach self-confidence and self-reliance. A third partner works with the center to develop competitive athleticism among youth with disabilities. Each lesson uses the participant's natural interest in sailing to drive education on the desired topic.

Eruejerien Okoh, Undergraduate Student, Peabody Institute
Jeanette Seaman, Greater Homewood Corporation

Health Literacy Initiative Days

Health literacy is one of the most significant factors affecting a person's state of health. People who lack basic literacy skills also lack the skills to successfully understand and manage their personal health and family's health, consequently creating a high-need population for medical services. Being able to read, understand, and complete a health insurance application is a staggering obstacle to obtaining health care for someone who lacks basic literacy skills. Even if they do manage to get access to health care, understanding the forms and instructions of medical care providers poses another challenge that interferes with a favorable health outcome. In the Health Initiative Days Program, an assessment of the health care needs of the population that the Greater Homewood Community Corporation Adult Literacy Program currently serves will be conducted and a series of four Health Literacy Initiative Days will be implemented during which the most pressing individual health-related needs of these adults may be addressed. Anticipated needs include: help with signing up for health insurance; understanding existing health insurance coverage and access to health care; and an explanation of the most prevalent conditions affecting the GHCC population.

Aaron Chance, Undergraduate, Department of Neuroscience & Bioethics
Aubrey Jordan, Undergraduate, Department of Psychology
Valencia Warnock, Site Director, The Carmelo Anthony Youth Development Center

Unrealized Potential: Preparing East Baltimore Youth for Sustainable Careers in Science, Engineering and Medicine

The socio-economic climate of the East Baltimore community does not lend itself well to the promotion of science as a viable career option for the vast majority of children. The lack of interest in science is a testament to the rising need for capable students to undertake careers in science, medicine, and engineering. This project hopes to determine to what degree enthusiastic instruction in the scientific method affects mental acuity, improved academic performance, as well as a propensity towards development of scientific career aspirations. An empirical data set will be compiled assessing mental acuity progress, as gleaned through brain training software, as well as potential career interest inquiries. With the collaboration of Valencia Warnock, site director of The Carmelo Anthony Youth Development Center, and the student organization ASEPP: Aspiring Scientists, Engineers & Physicians Partnership, weekly interactive experiments will be conducted introducing the scientific method and invoking student hypotheses. Exposure to an array of scientific topics through hands-on experimentation will be the tool utilized to achieve our overarching goal: to unlock unrealized potential with a new approach applicable to all academic endeavors, resulting in improved learning outcomes, and, optimally, creating Baltimore's next generation of scientific professionals.

GRADUATE STUDENT-COMMUNITY GRANTS

Vijay Varma, Graduate Student, Bloomberg School of Public Health
Sylvia McGill, Director, ExperienceCorps

Volunteer Stress and Burnout in ExperienceCorps Baltimore

Experience Corps Baltimore (EC), a civic venture of Johns Hopkins University Center on Aging and Health and the Greater Homewood Community Corporation (GHCC) has been recruiting, training, placing, and evaluating mostly African American older adults in public elementary schools in Baltimore City since 1999. Volunteering has been shown to confer a number of health benefits to adults as they age, however volunteers engaged in high stress environments can experience burnout due to both the stressors associated with volunteering and a lack of adequate support structures. In general, volunteers across the United States have been typically white, female and middle to upper income. Therefore by design, most studies looking at stressors and required support structures have been tailored to a particular socio-economic/ethnic background. Through a series of focus groups and associated questionnaires, this research looks at the stressors and associated coping mechanisms specific to a mostly low-income, urban, African American, female population. The results of the research will be used to directly provide recommendations to both GHCC and JHU on how to increase volunteer satisfaction and reduce overall attrition. Additionally, we hope the results will inform future proposals aimed at (1) better recruiting and retaining African American, female older volunteers in urban areas and (2) creating a model of how non-traditional volunteers can successfully develop and sustain effective coping mechanisms in response to stressful environments.

**Nadine Chen, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Division of General Internal Medicine
Kathleen Page, Latino HIV Outreach Program Director, Baltimore City Health
Department**

Acculturation and Migration as a Risk Factor for HIV Among Latinos in Baltimore

HIV disproportionately affects Latinos in the U.S. and has become a growing concern for Baltimore City Latinos as incidence of AIDS is increasing in this population. Previous studies have shown that the overwhelming majority of Latinos in Baltimore are foreign-born, and foreign-born status has been associated with worse outcomes in HIV/AIDS among Latinos. This project will be a cross-sectional study of Baltimore City Latinos that will evaluate the association of acculturation and migration related risk factors and HIV. The hypothesis is that foreign-birth and low acculturation levels will be associated with decreased knowledge of HIV, increased sexual risk behavior, and higher HIV rates. Results of this study will aid the Baltimore City Health Department in targeting HIV prevention services to those who are high risk for HIV in the Latino community.

**Joshua Garoon, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of Health Behavior and Society
Peter Bruun, Director, Art on Purpose**

**Recovering a Sense of Place: Environment and Community in Treatment (ReSPECT) for
Addiction**

The ReSPECT project will investigate how Baltimore residents perceive and respond to drug addiction and treatment in their area. Drug addiction and treatment for it are serious health issues in the city. Exclusionary zoning and community resistance, however, are hindering the spread of drug treatment services. To understand these dynamics, the ReSPECT field team will form a sustainable community-university partnership to conduct community-based participatory research (CBPR) in the Waverly/Oakenshawe area. The team will recruit 10 area residents as artist-researchers, engaging them in photography and interviewing training workshops, complemented by group discussions. After training, the artist-researchers will photograph their area and interview 50-100 fellow residents, focusing on issues of neighborhood, safety, crime, and drug addiction and treatment. Using a treatment ecology framework, the ReSPECT team will analyze and organize the resulting data and artwork for presentation and feedback in Waverly/Oakenshawe and elsewhere, disseminating findings and generating further data. ReSPECT will provide key insights and a novel methodology through which to more effectively address drug addiction and its treatment in Baltimore. Its success will pave the way toward effective replication and extension – enabling acquisition of future funding, and encouraging further university-community collaborations on critical urban health issues.

**Eva Moore, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Division of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine
Reverend Horace Smith, President/Executive Director, Group Ministries, Inc.**

**Transitioning to Independence: Assessing the ReEntry Environment for Young Adult
Former Prisoners**

Youth have high rates of HIV and African Americans are disproportionately affected by HIV infection. African Americans have high incarceration rates which are associated with the spread and acquisition of HIV infection. Little is known about the specific risks of young adult former male prisoners, those aged 18-25, and how the availability of resources can relate to risk of HIV infection, substance abuse and recidivism. It is suspected that the needs and resources of this population are distinct from both juvenile offenders and older adults. This study aims to examine the environment of young adult former male prisoners as they reenter communities in Baltimore

City by identifying the distribution of the population, the capacity of services available to them, the utilization of those services, and potential unmet needs. Existing data sources will be analyzed from City and State resources as well as perform a provider survey of agencies that serve young adult former prisoners. This will be the first step in assessing the environmental predictors of recidivism and poor health outcomes for young adult male prisoners in Baltimore City in order to ultimately determine potential interventions to interrupt the cycle of recidivism and improve risks for HIV infection and substance abuse.

Brad Sutton, Clinical Fellow, Division of Cardiology
Susan Tibbels, Principal, New Song Academy

Characterizing the Need for Mental Health Services in Baltimore Youth

The violent death of a former student brought to light the need for mental health services in the New Song Academy/Baltimore City Public School #322 (NSA), a K-8 school federally classified as serving a high percentage of disadvantaged youth. Subsequently, Drs. Brad and Erica Sutton, NSA board members, initiated a community partnership with Drs. Crystal Watkins and Karen Swartz, faculty of the Department of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine to examine the disparity between need and availability of mental health services in this urban school setting. Specific Aim 1 will characterize the need for mental health services among urban youth in grades 5-8 through 1) teacher and parent focus groups, and 2) examination of special education and mental health referral patterns. Specific Aim 2 will gather input on ways to adapt for a younger population an established and successful educational program that heightens awareness for mood disorders in teens, the Adolescent Depression Awareness Program (ADAP). This project holds promise for identifying the mental health needs of 60 children ages 10-13. It will also provide a framework for the development of a mental health awareness program tailored to the unique needs of this age group.

Adam Milam, Graduate Student, Department of Health, Behavior and Society
Reverend Debra Hickman, President, Sister's Together and Reaching (STAR)

Improving HIV Preventive Services in Baltimore through Geospatial Analyses

This project is a collaboration with Community Partners, Colin Flynn, Chief Epidemiologist of HIV/AIDS Epidemiology and Surveillance at the Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration (IDEA), and Rev. Debra Hickman, President of Sisters Together and Reaching (STAR) to geocode current HIV/AIDS data for the state of Maryland and develop a plan to geocode future HIV/AIDS data. As an Epidemiologist at IDEA, Mr. Flynn has extensive working knowledge and access to HIV/AIDS data. Rev Debra Hickman founded STAR in 1991 to provide preventive services for women and families and can use this data to further her organizations mission. Mr. Milam has working knowledge in geospatial analyses and has worked closely with HIV organizations and HIV researchers throughout the city. This collaboration will provide HIV data at a more resolute level to improve preventive services. This project will also allow researchers to combine this geocoded data with other local data to better understand strategies to reduce the transmission of HIV.

FACULTY-COMMUNITY GRANTS

**Cynthia Minkovitz, Professor, Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health
Maxine Reed Vance, Director of Quality Assurance and Clinical Affairs, Baltimore City
Health Start**

Neighborhood Characteristics and Stress During Pregnancy: A Community Perspective in Baltimore

Research on the impact of stress on birth outcomes is shifting away from an exclusive focus on stress at the individual level to include stressors and buffers from environmental sources such as those found in residential neighborhoods. Low neighborhood-level socioeconomic status has received attention as a source of stress and has been linked to several pregnancy outcomes including whether women experience pregnancy complications or deliver babies of low birth weight.¹ Research into other neighborhood characteristics is necessary to fully understand the association between residential context, family and individual level risks, and maternal wellbeing and move the field towards practical applications. The goal of this study is to develop a theoretically-sound observational measurement tool that examines neighborhood characteristics and features, which relate both positively and negatively to stress during pregnancy. The specific aims are: 1) To describe and document residents' perceptions of features of residential environments that relate both positively and negatively to stress during pregnancy; 2) To develop a neighborhood observation measurement tool that captures community level factors that relate to stress and resilience during pregnancy. This study builds on the NICHD Community Child Health Network (CCHN) infrastructure and ongoing collaborations between Baltimore City Healthy Start and Johns Hopkins University.

**Jacquelyn Duval-Harvey, Instructor, Bloomberg School of Public Health
Kirsten D'Andrea Hollander, Director, Finding Our Wings**

Finding Our Wings Community Documentary Program

The *Finding Our Wings Community Documentary Program* is an ambitious project entering into its third year. We are working with ten talented and promising African-American teen girls who live in the East Baltimore Community and attend five Baltimore City High Schools – Edmonson Westside, Dunbar high, Reach Academy, Carver Vocational and Frederick Douglass. While focusing on video skills as a means to empower the girls to document and create space for individual reflection, we are also co-creating with them a documentary that captures the complexities of their journeys through high school and into womanhood. Most recently this has included investigations into teen pregnancy and how to communicate with parents and guardians around the realities of teen sexuality and subsequent peer pressure. This also includes the girls evaluating how pregnancy might affect their own future goals. As they reflect upon these common challenges of budding womanhood the girls have been discovering their pressing need to have a creative outlet. Their video skills support them to frame their world in unique ways and to find intrinsic-motivation to do well in school and prepare for college. This community-based documentary will be taken in the Baltimore Public School system for screenings and discussions.

**Patty Wilson, Faculty, Department of Community-Public Health Nursing
Janice Miller, Residential Services Director, House of Ruth Maryland**

Passport to Health: Taking Charge of your Health; Empowering Intimate Partner Violence Survivors to Become their own Health Advocates

Women and children who have had to enter a homeless shelter to escape intimate partner violence (IPV) are at a pivotal transition in their lives. Navigating the complicated health care system is just another obstacle they must overcome. Nurse case management services at homeless shelters offer the unique opportunity to empower abused women by equipping them with the tools to make informed decisions regarding the health of both themselves and their children. Nurses are able to assist families with getting “back on track” with their health by assisting them with accessing health insurance programs, finding primary care providers and ensuring children are up to date on their immunizations and annual exams. The proposed project will provide mothers with health education, health promotion activities and a health passport (a booklet that stores their health information and provides them with anticipatory guidance to meet health care needs). The Passport to Health will target women and children at the House of Ruth Maryland. It will be customized to meet the special needs of IPV survivors. We will create two versions of a new Passport to Health, one for children that focuses on immunizations, health promotion activities such as healthy eating, physical activity and safety, and one for women of child-bearing age that will include information for routine screenings, health promotion activities such as healthy eating, physical activities, smoking cessation and community resources specific for women surviving IPV.

Elizabeth T. Jordan, Assistant Professor, Community Public Health Nursing
Erica DelViscio, Senior Manager, Organization International Rescue Committee

Birth Companions Services for New Refugees: Partnering with the International Rescue Committee

Birth Companions assist underserved and vulnerable pregnant women to optimize prenatal care, and to improve maternal and newborn outcomes. Since 1999, 600 Johns Hopkins (JHU) nursing student Birth Companions have provided prenatal care, labor support, advocacy, and education while attending 751 births in Maryland. Of the mothers 34% reported household earnings of less than \$20,000, 18% did not graduate from high school, and 6% were addicted to drugs or alcohol. The Birth Companions program has demonstrated success with several community agencies and is poised to collaborate with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The cultural diversity and assimilation needs of this population are significant. Focusing the program’s effort on culturally appropriate services to serve this population of vulnerable women is the goal of this project. The research findings from this project will inform the Birth Companions program on client needs, improve services targeted for women served by the IRC and continue to assure success serving urban, pregnant women. The funding requested will provide opportunity for the Birth Companions program to partner with the IRC to conduct a needs assessment, identify unmet needs and provide additional services to these refugee women.