WELCOMING A NEW GROUP OF DYNAMIC LEADERS TO THE BUNTING NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM!

In February, we welcomed seven new community leaders and health advocates to the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program (BNLP)!

This dynamic group of program directors, entrepreneurs, activists, food justice warriors, and more, span their reach from East to West Baltimore working to uplift our neighborhoods.

Throughout the year Fellows will build on their knowledge and skills by participating in modules and workshops that address the following:

- Leadership Development
- Relationship Building
- Deconstructing Racism through Racial and Cultural Awareness
- Developing Communication Skills
- Policy and Advocacy
- Building Systems for Change and Effective Management

→ Cont’d on page 2.
Get to know the 2019 Fellows!

Joyell Arvella (she/her), is a racial and gender justice strategist, facilitator, women’s rights activist, and restorative justice practitioner. Her professional background is in education, reproductive justice, international civil and human rights law, race and equity, and transitional justice. Joyell combined her eight years of experience in education, ten years in nonprofit organizations, and seven years of social justice advocacy to create harp + sword, which uses restorative justice to advance racial and gender equity in womxn’s health.

Denzell Walker is the program director for Project Pneuma, the mission of which is to breathe new life holistically into the young men they serve by challenging them intellectually, strengthening them physically, nurturing them emotionally, and uplifting them spiritually. Denzell brings a wealth of knowledge about service to Baltimore City’s youth, as he worked with the Middle Grades Partnership (MGP) program which aims to reverse summer learning loss and prepare students to excel at strong high school institutions.

Sarah Wallace is an entrepreneur, consultant, community organizer, and community activist in the Baltimore area. Currently, Sarah fulfills the role of operations assistant for the BeMore Group and is the founder of her new business venture, Vision to Life. Sarah is a proud graduate of the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.

Dominique Willis is an educator and entrepreneur with a passion for urban youth. She currently works as a program manager at Community Law in Action, where her goal is to collaboratively teach youth in the 21217 community to be facts-based advocates around local social issues. Dominique has over 4 years of experience working with Baltimore youth through local out of school time and summer programming such as Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools. Dominique’s goal is to be a safe face and build a safe place for urban youth in the Baltimore community. She believes every child should be able to experience what life has to give regardless of their socioeconomic status.

2018 Fellows Graduate

Back in December of 2018, the Urban Health Institute celebrated the graduation of our second cohort from the BNLP! Fellows were joined by family, friends, colleagues, and mentors to commemorate the momentous occasion. During the ceremony, they shared what the program has meant to them and presented the policy agendas they plan to pursue in Baltimore with the tools and connections they’ve acquired since joining the program. Friends and alumni of the program also offered encouraging words of reflection.

“[When you go back out there and continue to be there you are going to be make a difference],” said Ms. Mary Catherine Bunting. Alicia Wilson, keynote speaker, also added “This program to me is about the cultivation of not seeds but rather plants that were already in their neighborhoods doing what plans do, doing amazing things, allowing for other things to sustain life.”

About the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program

Established in 2016, the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program (BNLP) is a one-of-a-kind initiative that aims to equip the next generation of Baltimore’s community activists with the knowledge, skills, and tools to be transformative leaders. With the assistance from our diverse faculty of community organizers, though leaders, and educators, Fellows receive hands on training in a variety of categories, including capacity building, professional growth, deconstructing racism and unconscious bias, fundraising, grant-writing and much more!
The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins: A Conversation with Antero Pietila

In November, faculty, students, and community members from across Baltimore gathered in Sommer Hall to participate in a discussion with veteran journalist and renowned author Antero Pietila and a panel of community and university leaders about his new book, The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins: The Life and Legacy That Shaped an American City. His book takes a close look at the life and hopes of Johns Hopkins the man and how the medical institutions created in his honor shaped and impacted the racial geography of Baltimore.

The conversation took a “put it all on the table” approach. Panelists not only shared their perspective about the relationship of Johns Hopkins institutions and Baltimore, but also talked about the life of the Baltimore business man, who, unlike many of his peers at the time, desired to see equality for all, especially within the health care system. While many agreed Johns Hopkins request for a charity hospital to be built that catered to everyone highlighted the pioneer and abolitionist he was, it left readers and panelists discussing how the institution took a turn from this vision of equality.

Some of these blemishes that took place during Johns Hopkins Institutions’ (JHI) darker moments in history were noted in Mr. Pietila’s book and throughout the discussion. Such as, JHI’s role in the forced displacement of residents (many of them being African American residents), the segregation of black and white patients, the removal and testing of Henrietta Lacks cells without consent, and Hopkins role in “robbing” graves and selling corpses to medical institutions along the East Coast for testing and research.

The discussion allowed for community and Hopkins members to reflect on past relationships, the progress that has been made today, and hopes for the future.

UHI Funds Eleven Community-University Partnerships

We are proud to share that eleven amazing community-university projects are the recipients of our small grants this year. Projects funded will focus on a variety of issues including breaking down barriers to provide neighborhoods access to affordable and nutritious food, helping women who have experienced intimate partner violence receive the care and tools they need for optimal health outcomes, and providing school-based vision care to students attending Baltimore City Public Schools. We are extremely honored to have the opportunity to help our grant winners push the needle forward in improving the health and well-being of Baltimore City communities.

To learn more about this year’s recipients, please visit our Facebook page.

About UHI Small Grants Program

Our Small Grants Program was formed to stimulate and advance community-university collaborations around research and program development. In each category, students and faculty are required to partner with a community-based organization or agency and vice versa.

Women in Leadership Positions

In February, a panel of dynamic women who hold leadership positions in an array of fields — academia and science, education, and philanthropy — discussed the unique challenges and opportunities they’ve experienced along their journey to sitting at the top of their respective organizations and institutions. Diane Bell McKoy, CEO of Associated Black Charities, Sonja Santelises, CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, and Beverly Wendland, James B. Knapp Dean of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University and professor in the Department of Biology, were transparent in sharing personal stories from throughout their professional career. Dr. Santelises, attributed not being offered a position that she interviewed for to pushing aside the things that made her distinctive and instead focused on why she was qualified for the job.

“I realized the intersection of being a woman and a woman of color, in a very unconscious way, played in to my dialogue that somehow I had to prove more than other people […] in addition to qualifications sometimes the biggest challenge is pre-empting what people will see in me and short changing what my gifts and distinctives are.”

Attendees — including students, faculty, and community members from across Baltimore City — also walked away with words of wisdom from Dean Wendland, “Having the confidence to say your authentic self will allow you to be an effective leader” Diane Bell McKoy had this to share, “I am clear about what my priority is. It has helped me shift as a leader in terms of being a parent and caregiver. Being a leader is a balance of all that makes me who I am, and I am clear what my priorities are, and I lay those out. It’s important for women to know that is ok to honor those priorities.”

To view photos from the panel discussion, please visit our Facebook page.

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In October, we presented our annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award to CHECC-uP Cervical Cancer in Minority Women with HIV Project, a collaboration between Older Women Embracing Life (OWEL) and the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, at the annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Lecture hosted by the Johns Hopkins Institute for Clinical & Translational Research (ICTR).

“We appreciate the fact that older women, who have pre-existing conditions, can be a part of research.”

With the help of Dr. Hae-Ra Han, the lead Principal Investigator on the project, CHECC-uP recruits’ women living with HIV, who are not receiving the needed health care to reduce the occurrence of and offer early treatment for the same illness that took the life of Henrietta Lacks, cervical cancer. To date, over 900 women living with HIV have participated in the CHECC-uP study.

Upon accepting the award, Ms. Reese exclaimed “We are a largely volunteer organization and this award means so much to us”! The group plans to use the $15,000 award to increase healthcare access, engage and retain women in health care, and increase health literacy. The funds will also be used to reach more women living with HIV in the inner city who may be unaware of the need for cervical cancer screening and need social supports.

About Older Women Embracing Life (OWEL)
Older Women Embracing Life, also known as OWEL (pronounced oh-vel), is a 501(c)(3) organization established in 2005 with the help of the Johns Hopkins University AIDS Education and Training Center in response to their recognition that older women in Baltimore living with the challenge of HIV lacked the comfort and companionship that many support groups often provide.

Where are you from?
I am from southern California. I grew up in a city called Gardena. This city is adjacent to Los Angeles.

Research Interest
My research examines how African American students and their parents come to terms with educational, social, and health policies. I am particularly interested in understanding the impact of homes, schools, and communities on academic performance and social mobility. My research takes an intergenerational approach while examining poverty, systemic inequalities, and unequal health and educational outcomes. I am a theorist, as well as an applied researcher. I build and develop on sociological concepts to capture the lived everyday experiences of students and their parents. Also, I work with a team of researchers to develop policies and interventions/preventions that aim for academic and overall success for students and their families. Currently I am the Co-PI of the National Evaluation of Student Success Mentors, which is a mentoring initiative with school districts throughout the United States that aims to reduce chronic absenteeism through meaningful mentor relationships.

Favorite Food?
Growing up in southern California, I fell in love with Mexican food. So, my favorite type of cuisine is Mexican. I love chorizo and eggs for breakfast in the morning and shrimp fajitas with extra guacamole for dinner, with two margaritas.

Get to know Richard Lofton, Jr., PhD

Favorite Author?
Bell Hooks is my favorite author. When I was an undergraduate in college, I became extremely fond of her writing because it spoke truth to power. I loved her ability to address complex issues with clarity. My favorite two books of hers are Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom and Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics.

While I was away in college, Hooks’ books allowed me the opportunity to think about all the black women who I grew up loving in my school district, community, small black church, and home. Many of those women spoke to my soul and rehumanized me in a time when Rodney King was brutally beaten, and four police officers were acquitted.

What is an interesting fact about yourself?
I believe in working hard and playing harder. I am committed to the work that I do when it comes to loving and empowering students, parents, and community members by capturing their lived experiences and aiming to produce effective interventions to address inequalities in our society. I also take time to go to the gym, go on vacations, dance and laugh with friends, and spend time with family.

→ Cont’d on next page.
Get to know Hannah Breakstone

UHI also welcomed Hannah Breakstone to the team as an MSPH student in HBS who is doing a field placement with us. During her time here, Hannah has assisted UHI with evaluation of programs, capturing stories of Fellows, and several research projects.

Where are you from?
I’m from Connecticut, but I spent a decent amount of my time in NYC when I was growing up. I have family there and would visit them a lot. I’d say both places were equally influential when I was growing up, as well as a lot of family trips to DC, which is the reason why I attended to UMD!

Research Interest
I’ve been spending a lot of time learning about racial disparities in urban areas, especially Baltimore.

Favorite Food
Anything chocolate 😊

Favorite Movie
Diner. I’ve loved this movie since I was little. It’s actually set in Fells Point and was Kevin Bacon's first movie!

UPCOMING EVENTS!

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH SYMPOSIUM: “THRIVING! WHAT COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE NEED TO SUCCEED”
May 13th

CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION TO FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS
June 7th

ANNUAL SKOLNIK LECTURE WITH DR. HOWARD C. STEVENSON
September 4th

CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP WRITING FOR SUCCESS: PREPARING WINNING GRANTS
September 13th

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www.urbanhealth.jhu.edu/subscribe