

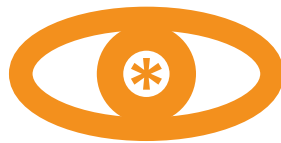
AUDACIOUS THINKING

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER
FROM OSI-BALTIMORE

SPRING
2008

**FEW AMERICAN CITIES HAVE BEEN AS EXPOSED
TO NATIONAL SCRUTINY AS BALTIMORE.**

As the final season of the acclaimed television series *The Wire* comes to a close, we wonder if we can shift our focus to the powerful impact we are having on the deeply rooted problems the show dramatized. In these pages, we give examples about how OSI works to bring lasting change. Ultimately, we aim to tell a different story from those featured on television: how Baltimore can become a model city of opportunity for all. **Read on.**



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OSI-Baltimore Welcomes Two New Staff Members



Monique L. Dixon, JD, has joined OSI-Baltimore as its director of the Criminal Justice Program replacing Aurie Hall who had served in that capacity for nine years. Prior to joining OSI-Baltimore, Dixon served as senior staff attorney at Advancement Project in Washington, D.C., a non-profit civil rights organization. She joined the Advancement Project after working with the Public Justice Center—a Baltimore-based, non-profit legal organization—as its first Equal Justice fellow where she spearheaded the Center's juvenile justice reform project, utilizing litigation and legislative advocacy to reform Maryland's juvenile correctional facilities. Dixon, a member of the Maryland Bar, has committed her entire legal career to public interest and civil rights law practice. She is a graduate of Hunter College and the University of Maryland School of Law.



Kimá Joy Taylor, MD, MPH, has joined OSI-Baltimore as the director of the Tackling Drug Addiction Program, replacing Robert Schwartz who now serves as senior fellow. Just prior to coming to OSI, Taylor served as the deputy commissioner for the Baltimore City Health Department. Before coming to Baltimore, she served as the health and social policy legislative assistant for Senator Paul Sarbanes, with issue areas including Social Security, TANF, pharmaceuticals, Medicare, Medicaid and other health care policy and women's issues. Taylor is a graduate of Brown University, Brown University School of Medicine and the Georgetown University residency program in pediatrics. From 1998 to 2002, Taylor cared for uninsured and underinsured patients at a community health center in Washington, D.C. and created a city-wide coalition to advance literacy in pediatric primary care. In 2002, Taylor was awarded a Commonwealth Foundation fellowship in minority health policy at Harvard University. During the fellowship, Taylor's research focused on exploring state legislative remedies for racial and ethnic health disparities.

OSI-BALTIMORE'S BLOG HAS BUZZ!

www.audaciousideas.org

OSI-Baltimore launched our blog in September 2007 to stimulate discussion about solutions to difficult problems in the city. Since then, we've had an array of weekly bloggers: everyone from Baltimore School Superintendent Andres Alonso to City Health Department Commissioner Josh Sharfstein to federal judge Andres Davis to a group of Baltimore Urban Debate League students. Everyone has posted ideas about what can be done to promote opportunity, achievement, health and prosperity in Baltimore.

Join the conversation to create positive, lasting change.
Sign up to receive your weekly notification at www.osi-baltimore.org

HELP US MAKE LASTING CHANGE.

Your financial gift to OSI-Baltimore will help us continue to tackle the most challenging issues our city faces and ensure that every individual in our region has the opportunity for a successful future.

No gift is too small or too large. Every dollar given will be matched 2:1 by our founder, George Soros. Our donors share a common goal: to revitalize Baltimore. They realize that, by investing in OSI-Baltimore, they can play a vital role in improving our city's future.

You can contribute online at www.osi-baltimore.org
or call us at 410-234-1091

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

DIANA MORRIS

This year, as we mark the 10th anniversary of OSI-Baltimore's work in this city, we are reflecting on change and how it happens. Over the past ten years, we have tackled some of the most difficult challenges: inadequate drug addiction treatment, poorly performing schools, unacceptably high rates of incarceration. Often we are asked how we decided to focus on these issues and why we are confident that these rather persistent and difficult problems can be solved.

The goal of our work is to make lasting change in Baltimore for the benefit of those who are vulnerable or subject to discrimination. Because this goal is the foundation of all our work, we know that finding long-term solutions involves focused thinking and expertise and deliberate, sustained action.

It takes time to find the root causes of some of the problems that have developed over many years. One example, which you will read about in the pages that follow, is connecting poor children more directly to school. We recognized that the overuse of suspension and expulsion often severed an important connection: children who most need to be nurtured and guided and in school were suddenly thrust out of it. After identifying this as an issue, we chose to educate ourselves and others. We brought national and local experts to our office for open forums. In those informal sessions, many leaders and lay people discussed and debated the problem—and brainstormed about possible answers. We then worked with multiple partners—private and public—to find specific programmatic solutions for Baltimore. And, several of our Community Fellows helped to introduce new programs to keep kids in school.



Finding long-term solutions involves focused thinking and expertise and deliberate, sustained action

The results: one, the media and the broader public increasingly recognize the connection between school expulsion and Baltimore's high drop out rate; and two, there is great receptivity to efforts by school district CEO Dr. Andres Alonso to institutionalize programs to address students' behavioral needs and limit school discipline practices that push children out. **We are helping to keep kids in school, learning and thriving. Change that sticks!**

In the months to come, we'll be celebrating ten years of audaciously working in this very specific way to create change. We're proud of the results—but most important, it works! 🎯

A Conversation with an OSI-Baltimore Board Member: JOSEPH JONES, CEO CENTER FOR URBAN FAMILIES

Joseph T. Jones, Jr. is founder of the Center for Urban Families. Prior to founding CFUF (formerly called the Center for Families, Fathers and Workforce Development), he developed and directed the Men's Services program for the federally funded Baltimore Healthy Start initiative and replicated the Baltimore affiliate of the nationally recognized STRIVE employment services program. He has received numerous awards and honors, including the Johns Hopkins University Leadership Development Program's Distinguished Leadership Award and the Fullwood Foundation's Valued Hours Award. He served on President Clinton's Work Group on Welfare Reform and was an advisor on fatherhood issues to Vice President Al Gore. He is a Weinberg Fellow. Jone is a founding board member of Open Society Institute-Baltimore where he currently serves as Vice-Chair. At the age of 50, he became a graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the city today?

Like many urban communities, Baltimore has several challenges which compete for solutions on a daily basis. Requested to pick the biggest challenge, I would choose the unyielding stress faced by marginalized parents and their children.

All too often, these families are subjected to substandard conditions ranging from poor housing conditions to under performing schools. Maintaining a sense of hope and optimism under such conditions is difficult for many, sometimes leading to a subculture existence. This formula fuels family disintegration, leaving children vulnerable, often without the consistent guidance and benefit of two loving parents. Too many children find themselves being cared for by the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and in some cases existing in the community with no real place to call home.

These types of environments can breed resentment, hostility, and a sense of abandonment that fosters gang affiliation, abhorrent school behavior, and a perpetuation of generational family dysfunction.

Given that challenge, can you remain optimistic about the future?

There is no question that the future holds great promise for a better tomorrow and a healthier Baltimore. However, for this to happen, we must have as much commitment to strengthening families as we have to developing bricks and mortar campaigns. For the first time in the city's history, the top four elected officials are women. It is my hope that their intellect, experience and maternal instincts will produce a renewed commitment to families and infrastructure.

What motivates you to work towards change?

The city's new leadership, combined with a strong network of neighborhood associations, human service professionals, a concerned and accessible business community, a vibrant and concerned philanthropic community and other stakeholders bodes well for the city—they make me believe change can happen. Harnessing and coordinating these golden resources is essential and non-negotiable.

I have personally benefited from the support and belief of so many people at a time when I didn't believe in myself. And I strongly believe that most people on the margins of society want more for their families and themselves. If they are given the right set of circumstances, they can succeed. I have witnessed positive and productive change in people who were previously written off by society. People can turn bad choices into new opportunities. They can become good parents and valuable employees setting the right example for their children and their peers—they give me a real sense of hope.

Why is OSI-Baltimore important to the future of the city?

OSI has built a tremendous amount of credibility in this city. Its work as an advocate for school reform and the expansion of after-school programming resonates and has benefited the school system and the families it serves.


OSI has served as a catalyst to help create a publicly funded drug treatment system with more capacity, informed by scientific research

There is no question that the future holds great promise for a better tomorrow and a healthier Baltimore

and evaluation. It has done this in a city that historically has been viewed as one with an intractable drug addiction problem. Although this work has been underway for a few years it is critical that it continues so that the thousands of addicts who want treatment can receive it, without delay or cost.

The Foundation's Community Fellowships initiative has provided support to a next generation of leaders who can be found in neighborhoods all across the city. If not for the fellowships, these ambassadors might not be able to spread their incredible talent, energy, and goodwill in places where community resources are most needed and often non-existent.

OSI could never undertake this work alone. It uses its resources very strategically to link with other stakeholders creating and leveraging a broader coalition of others concerned about issues that impact Baltimore and its future. This includes a philosophy that believes in holding people accountable for their criminal behavior but recognizing that simply releasing them from prison without a re-entry strategy and system will only lead to recidivism.

Baltimore has a proud history, a bright future and a key resource in OSI with the *audacity* to work for lasting change. 



OSI uses its resources very strategically to link with other stakeholders creating and leveraging a broader coalition

AUDACIOUS

Kenya Lee | 2006 OSI-Baltimore Community FELLOW

Over 90 members strong, the Baltimore Community Fellows are social entrepreneurs working throughout the city with our neediest residents. Read about a current fellow, Kenya Lee, and Bernard Fayall, an alumnus of the program. The Baltimore Community Fellowships are supported by OSI-Baltimore and the Lois and Irving Blum Foundation, the Cohen Opportunity Fund, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Foundation for Maryland's Future, the Hoffberger Foundation, the Gloria B. and Herbert M. Katzenberg Charitable Fund, the John Meyerhoff and Lenel Srochi Meyerhoff Fund, the Alison and Arnold Richman Fund, and other investors in the OSI Campaign for Baltimore.



Kenya Lee

Not long ago, Kenya Lee, 31, was a single mom, supporting five children on welfare and living in public housing. She had an abusive boyfriend and felt life wasn't worth living. She had tried unsuccessfully to get her teenage son into special education classes. "I was fighting on my own," she said. "I didn't know that as a parent I had rights." Finally, after years of struggle, she got her son the help he needed.

Lee's crusade led her to become a parent advocate extraordinaire – she graduated from the Maryland Parent Leadership Institute and eventually became PTA president at Thurgood Marshall Middle School in 2005. She also has helped start a PTA at Sinclair Lane Elementary.

I want to help other parents set goals that they can reach

A 2006 Baltimore Community Fellow, Lee is using her fellowship to nourish Parents with Power, a parent empowerment program she founded, aimed at helping low-income parents become more involved in their children's education. Not only does she use her own experience to train parents to advocate effectively, but she also hooks them by offering classes for parents at their children's school: GED and literacy classes, computer training, parent-to-parent mentoring, career development and workshops to navigate the Baltimore City Public School System. She has even participated in parents' meetings with school officials about their children's individualized education plans. She also has conducted educational advocacy and motivational workshops for local nonprofits.

In 2007, Lee focused her advocacy at Garrison Middle School in partnership with former OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow Bernard Fayall's Meet Me Halfway Center. In fall 2007, Lee helped establish a PTA at Garrison, which has about 25 members. She also partnered with Baltimore Community College to offer a parents' literacy program at Garrison and recruited parents by sending letters and flyers to parents at Garrison and at 10 other nearby schools. The class started with 15 parents and ended in December with eight participants who now are preparing to take the GEDs test; some also want to go on to college.

Because of that success, Lee is launching another parent class in early 2008, which also will include computer literacy and job readiness training such as writing resumes and cover letters, filling out online applications and using the Internet for job searches.

Lee says parents in low-income communities face barriers that make it difficult to get involved in their children's education. "If you have a parent who is dealing with basic survival, illness and poverty to the fullest degree, such as their lights aren't on, those things become their priorities," she notes. "So we have to deal with these barriers first."

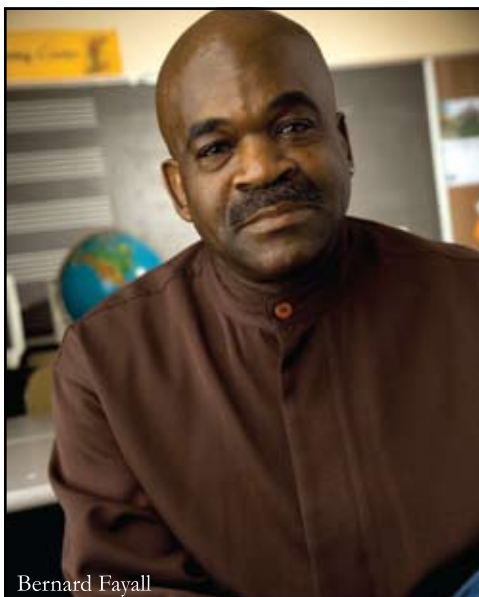
Lee notes that her partnership with the Meet Me Halfway Center has enabled her to do so much more to help parents become better parents. "At Meet Me Halfway, we have social workers available for crisis intervention, and another community partner is offering apprenticeships for parents and community members," she says. "We are essentially providing wrap-around services for parents and the community."

Lee knows from her own personal experience that sometimes parents just need a little extra support. "I didn't want to see other parents go through the same struggles I did," she said. "I want to help other parents set goals that they can reach."

WHY WE FUND IT.....

INDIVIDUALS

Bernard Fayall | 2005 OSI-Baltimore Community FELLOW ALUMNUS



Bernard Fayall

When Bethlehem Steel Corp. closed its Sparrow's Point shipyard, welder Bernard Fayall was laid off – three years shy of retiring with 30 years at the company. He was nearly 50 and suddenly found himself unemployed. For a year and a half, he tried to figure out what to do with his life. The man who had never paid a bill late lost his car and was a day away from foreclosure on his house. His wife, Rita, urged him to find a sense a purpose by volunteering at Garrison Middle School down the street because the principal needed mentors for his students.

Bernard Fayall showed up at troubled Garrison in March 2004. But after the first day, he almost didn't come back. "I thought school was the way it was when I went 30 years ago," he says. "But it was pandemonium. Kids were cursing in the halls, and there were a lot of fights. I didn't want to come back." But he hung in there. He spent the first two months walking the hallways, talking to kids and fixing broken doors and hinges. He taught disruptive students who got yanked out of class how to use tools. Two weeks before school ended, the principal gave him a room in the basement and the Meet Me Halfway Center was born. Using free paint from the city, Fayall worked through the summer, painting the center a light, cheery color. The first day, he connected with about 15 kids. The second day, it was 30 kids, and now it's more than 60 a day.

Sometimes, we come here at 7 in the morning and kids just are sitting on the steps, waiting to get in

The Meet Me Halfway Center became a safe, nurturing place for students to receive guidance, work through conflicts, find tutoring help or just hang out and grab a snack. By fall 2005, more than 100 kids were dropping by during the school day and afterward – children who came from families devastated by drugs or absentee parents and who sought support from Fayall and the other adults at the center.

In fall 2005, Fayall won an OSI-Baltimore Community Fellowship to support his work at the center, and 450 children signed up as members that first full school year.

Today, the Meet Me Halfway Center occupies the entire basement at Garrison, not just the original one room. It has expanded to Forest Park High School to provide support beyond eighth-grade. Fayall estimates the center's adults have touched the lives of more than 1,000 students. Today, Garrison has about 400 active center members; Forest Park, 100. "Sometimes, we come here at 7 in the morning and kids just are sitting on the steps, waiting to get in," says Rita Fayall, who previously worked as a community organizer but now works full-time at the center. For the first year and a half, the two Fayalls and other adults volunteered there. Today, the center employs 11 paid adult staffers and has a budget of nearly \$300,000.

"Both of these programs are excellent examples of individuals who believe conditions must change—and they are willing to work within a system with true grit and tenacity to make that change happen."

—Pamela King, Director of Community Fellowships and Initiatives




The Fayalls have a clear division of labor. Soft-spoken Bernard works magic with kids. Rita's a whiz at keeping it going, winning grants from other local foundations and religious organizations. In 2007, the Fayalls sought and received an OSI grant for effective programs that reduce the suspension and expulsion rate because the center has contributed to an 87 percent reduction in suspensions at Garrison. Part of that has to do with Bernard's knack for resolving conflicts between sparring students. In 2005, he conducted 61 conflict resolutions in September alone. The Fayalls believe the kids are learning how to resolve their own conflicts. In September 2007, he had to resolve only nine conflicts.

I didn't know Baltimore's children were going through so much. I'm just someone they can talk to

The Fayalls also have formed a partnership with the city health department, which pays senior aides to work part-time in selected nonprofits. A retired social worker who is a licensed counselor helps kids talk through problems. A retired beautician operates a salon in the center so students can get their hair done. A retired printing instructor has set up a print shop to teach youth that trade.

Rita Fayall says her husband now admits he initially was reluctant to come to Garrison because he doesn't have a college degree. "He thought he didn't have anything to offer," she says. "I kept telling him, 'No, you have a special gift with children.'"

What is it the kids at Garrison are looking for? Bernard Fayall has a one-word answer: "Love."

"Some of these children have both parents on drugs. A lot of them are in foster homes," says Bernard. "I didn't know Baltimore's children were going through so much. I'm just someone they can talk to." 

Led by OSI-Baltimore, a group of private funders is supporting a \$1.5 million initiative to stem Baltimore's high rate of school suspensions and expulsions and to offer more effective options than forcing children out of school. "Suspension has severe consequences outside the classroom. Schools and teachers need other strategies, and fortunately, there are many that work," notes Jane Sundius, OSI-Baltimore Director for Education and Youth Development.

Four grantees are expanding counseling and mental health services, teaching children to resolve conflicts peacefully and training teachers in "restorative justice practices," in which children learn how their misbehavior hurts others.

Four other grantees, including the Meet Me Halfway Center at Garrison Middle School, are working to connect disengaged youth to the school system or educational services.

Funders of this initiative include:

The Abell Foundation
Anonymous
Ben & Zelda G. Cohen Charitable Foundation
The Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund
United Way of Central Maryland

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A SUMMER OF ENRICHMENT, LEARNING AND FUN: POOR CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY, CAN LOSE OUT WHEN SCHOOL CLOSES

When many of us think about summer, we envision a time when young people can engage in additional educational opportunities, travel with parents, attend exciting summer camps, or secure rewarding summer employment. But for far too many Baltimore children, summertime doesn't reflect this vision. Instead, summer is often a time of loss for poor children: most lose academic ground and spend much of their days unsupervised while parents work. These children are at risk to become involved in negative activities such as crime.

THE CENTER FOR SUMMER LEARNING

The Center for Summer Learning tackles this problem. Because the need for summer opportunities is so essential to the city's youth, OSI-Baltimore has been one of the organization's major funders. Originally founded by Johns Hopkins University student Matthew Boulay to tutor Baltimore City Public School students during the summer, the program received national attention for its blend of programming and research on summer learning losses. To advocate more widely for summer learning opportunities, the organization expanded its mission and now works on a national level to create high quality summer programming for all children around the country, particularly in high poverty communities similar to Baltimore.

It's audacious thinking

"There's no other time of year when gaps between lower income children and their more affluent peers grow more significantly than during the summer," says Ron Fairchild, executive director of the center. Research shows that all children lose academic ground



in the summer and it has been proven that summer learning loss is responsible for a significant portion of the achievement gap between poor and more affluent children.

Research has also shown that it is not just academic ground that is lost during those summer months. “Many families in Baltimore struggle for access to healthy meals for their children during the summer,” Fairchild says. It’s estimated that 1 in 5 children who qualify for federally subsidized meals during the school year does not have access to those meals during the summer.

It’s also important to address the type of programs that kids need. Often, the summer programming that is more readily available in high poverty areas such as Baltimore is remedial rather than enriching, and focuses only on academics, instead of a full range of activities that children need to develop skills and passions and engage fully in learning.

There’s no other time of year when gaps between lower income children and their more affluent peers grow more significantly than during the summer

The center, which is housed at Johns Hopkins University, raises awareness regarding the issue of summer learning loss and advocates for increased public investment in enriching, universal programming. In 2006, the center used its funding from organizations like OSI to leverage an additional \$12 million in public investment. Locally, the center has been successful in encouraging the Baltimore City Public School System to invest more money in summer programming.

Throughout the year, the center offers professional development and training to more than 2,000 service providers across the country. Additionally, the center partners with service providers like BELL (featured on the next page). Throughout the country, the center works with hundreds of summer programs that collectively serve more than 1.1 million youth in more than 30 states.

According to Fairchild, it remains challenging to convince policymakers summer learning losses exist and, is thus equally challenging to coordinate public agencies to work together to address it. Nevertheless, in the past three years, the organization has witnessed dramatic growth in the number of high quality summer program opportunities. The center is eager to continue to build the momentum.

“It’s audacious thinking,” admits Fairchild, “when an undergraduate student can start a program, get support from foundations like OSI to develop it, and transform it into a national organization that leads the charge of addressing this fundamental issue of equity.”

“The American dream of summer for youth embodies the best of what we hope for our children: that they have time for exploration and fun; that they have access to different kinds of learning experiences and opportunities to develop new skills; and that they are safe, nourished and active. OSI’s vision is that poor children have equal access to that kind of summer, where they, too, can learn and grow.”

—Jane Sundius, Director of the OSI-Baltimore Education and Youth Development Program

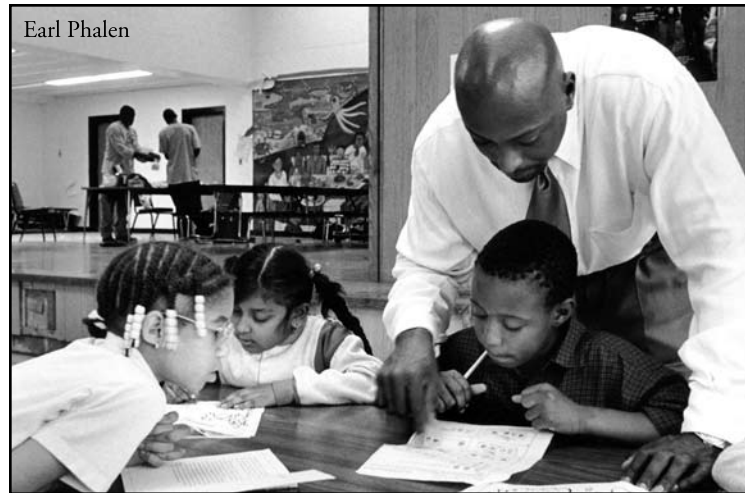


BUILDING EDUCATED LEADERS FOR LIFE (BELL)

While running a successful after school program in Boston, BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) noticed that many of its students would make amazing progress during the school year, leave for the summer months, and return the next fall in worse academic shape.

“You can see the summer learning loss, not just academically, but in the children’s confidence level and in their physical health,” says Earl Phalen, co-founder and CEO of BELL. It wasn’t long before the organization was compelled to start its Accelerated Learning Summer Program (BELL Summer).

Two years ago, BELL brought its program to Baltimore. Shortly after it arrived, the organization was awarded the Excellence in Summer Learning Award, administered by the Center for Summer Learning, an OSI grantee, based at Johns Hopkins University.



When searching for a location to expand its summer offerings, BELL found that Baltimore had the right ingredients. “We tried to identify communities that we thought matched the environmental factors that would allow us to be successful and make an impact,” says Phalen. Baltimore’s strong foundation community, led by OSI in this initiative, ensured support for expanding summer educational opportunities. Baltimore also houses the Center for Summer Learning, the nationally recognized advocacy organization. Phalen says that BELL was also eager to tap into the large college community where it could draw undergraduates to work during the summer.

Currently, BELL Summer is a full-day, five-day per week program, that already serves more than 2000 Baltimore children, ages five to 12, in 13 sites throughout the city. The program combines passionate educators and a rigorous curriculum, and meets physical health and nutritional needs. Phalen says that BELL Summer ensures parental involvement and works to build scholars’ self esteem, strengthen social skills and provide enrichment activities ranging from drama to dance. Scholars interact with weekly guest speakers and role models such as actor James Earl Jones and Harvard professor Charles Ogletree. The students also visit museums and college campuses, attend Orioles games, and participate in service projects such as building gardens in the community.

BELL Summer rigorously evaluates its programs, including assessing scholars’ progress. Currently, youth in the program gain an average of four months in grade-equivalent reading, writing and math skills.

Phalen says that BELL has ambitious plans for its future in Baltimore and will continue to grow its offerings to serve more children during the summer. 📌

You can see the summer learning loss, not just academically, but in the children’s confidence level and in their physical health

.....WHY WE FUND IT

THE FACTS ABOUT BUPRENORPHINE TREATMENT

Recently there have been some questions posed by the press about buprenorphine, a relatively new therapy approved by the FDA, used to treat heroin addiction. In the article that follows, Robert Schwartz, MD, OSI-Baltimore Senior Fellow for Drug Addiction Treatment, presents the scientific facts about why this treatment has such potential.

The reality of Baltimore's heroin addiction plague is this: thousands of heroin-addicted residents are not in treatment because too few slots exist, and too many myths and hurdles thwart the expansion of drug addiction treatment centers. This has been the status quo for more than a decade and produces the same numbing results every year: 200 overdose deaths, 5,000 heroin-related ER visits, 400 new HIV infections, and tens of thousands of arrests.

Until now.

Since 2002, for the first time since 1914, U.S. physicians can prescribe an opiate medication for heroin-addicted patients outside of the restrictive confines of methadone programs. The federal legislation enabling this monumental change and the subsequent FDA-approval of buprenorphine have returned addiction treatment to mainstream medicine, opening up new and expanded opportunities. The availability of prescribed buprenorphine provides the most promising avenue to reach a tipping point in which most of the addicted enter treatment. It could have a profound impact on reducing the spread of HIV infection, overdose death and crime – problems that have crippled our city for three decades.


Buprenorphine has met the same high standards of safety and efficacy that the FDA requires of any medication. It has been proven effective with or without counseling because, like methadone, it blocks the euphoric effects of other opioids such as heroin. Yet unlike methadone, oxycontin and heroin, overdosing on buprenorphine alone is quite difficult, unless it is taken with excessive amounts of alcohol or other medications. This effectiveness and safety record is why buprenorphine is commonly provided in Western Europe and Australia through doctors' offices.

Any opioid – including buprenorphine – can be misused. That's precisely why Congress attached unprecedented restrictions on physicians' ability to prescribe it. Buprenorphine is the only medication requiring special training beyond medical school and residency training, separate registration with drug enforcement, and a strict limit on the number of patients treated. These restrictions were intended to expand treatment availability while reducing the possibility of diversion. This measured decision considered buprenorphine's safety record, a decade of international success, and the opinions of every relevant federal department and professional organization. As an extra precaution, buprenorphine in the United States, unlike elsewhere, generally is prescribed in a formula that also contains naloxone, which discourages abuse because it triggers unpleasant withdrawal.

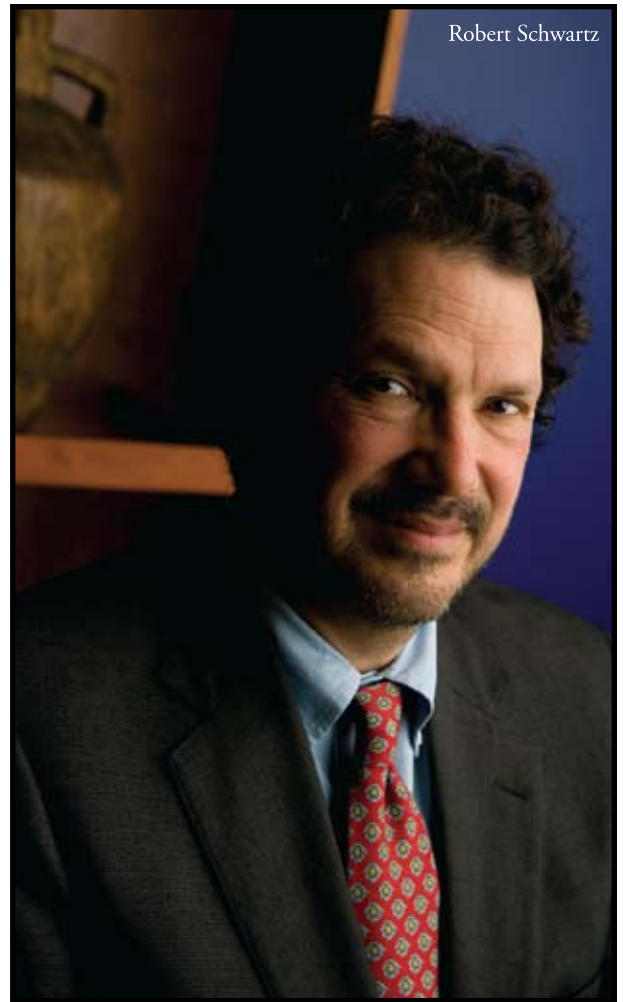
While these measures never were thought to be perfect, what does the misuse of buprenorphine consist of in the US? The vast majority of misuse occurs when individuals already addicted to opioids “treat” themselves without a prescription. Needless to say, it is not recommended that people take any prescription medications without physician oversight. Nevertheless, this type of misuse can often lead addicted individuals into legitimate treatment. Far less common are individuals who inject or snort buprenorphine to get high, which mostly occurs by individuals who are already drug-addicted. This, of course, is not a wise behavior, but given the safety profile of buprenorphine, it would appear to be less dangerous than injecting or snorting heroin or medications such as methadone or oxycontin.

Medicine constantly weighs the risks and the benefits of every treatment. The question becomes: What are we more afraid of – the disease or the treatment? Buprenorphine misuse pales compared to the toll from heroin addiction and the misuse of other opioids. Official national estimates indicate that the number of ER patients reporting buprenorphine misuse was too low to measure, but emergency rooms annually treat many hundreds of thousands of people for illicit drugs, alcohol and abuse of prescription drugs. More than 28,000 people in the United States die annually due to illegal and legal drugs, compared to 5 known deaths associated with buprenorphine combined with alcohol and illicit drugs. Intravenous drug use has led to more than 240,000 AIDS cases in the United States.

Buprenorphine’s few critics call for even tighter restrictions because of its potential harm. Based on all available data, they are wrong. The sad truth is that the restrictions have discouraged doctors from prescribing it. Although the number of physicians able to prescribe it is increasing slowly, less than 2 percent of Maryland’s 20,000 doctors are certified to prescribe it today, five years after it first became available.

And yet, until drug abuse treatment is available to a majority of the city’s addicted population, it will have limited impact on public health and safety. When France expanded buprenorphine treatment through doctors – without any of the U.S. restrictions – overdose deaths dropped by 79 percent, HIV infection was cut in half and crime decreased. The scenario is comparable to the AIDS epidemic in our country. When highly effective anti-retroviral medications were made widely available to people with HIV infection, AIDS deaths dropped dramatically. The same is possible for buprenorphine if we give it a chance. 

Robert Schwartz is the Senior Fellow at the Open Society Institute-Baltimore and the Medical Director of Friends Research Institute.



Robert Schwartz

When France expanded buprenorphine treatment through doctors - without any of the U.S. restrictions - overdose deaths dropped by 79 percent, HIV infection was cut in half and crime decreased

OSI-BALTIMORE BOARD EXPANDS

OSI-Baltimore is led by a board of talented individuals who care deeply about increasing opportunity for all Baltimore residents, especially those affected by poverty and discrimination. We are pleased to announce two additions to our board, both of whom are involved in many civic endeavors and will continue to make valuable contributions to our organization.

Bill Clarke

Bill Clarke moved to Baltimore 30 years ago to become a partner in the investment advisory firm Campbell & Company. When he started, it was a firm of four people but by the time he retired in May 2007 as partner and executive vice president of research, the company had grown to 140 people.

Today, Clarke is managing his own grant-making foundation, which helps the less fortunate in Maryland and overseas. “I am doing something I have a real passion for,” says Clarke. “I decided to retire early so I could devote myself full-time to our mission work. We’re also getting our hands dirty too.” By that, Clarke means that he and his wife travel regularly to Cuba and Guatemala through the Baltimore Presbytery. Their mission work in those two developing countries is “not hammers and nails, but helping the marginalized populations get back on their feet,” he explains. “They need affirmation and a little direction at times. We are walking with them to let them know they can do things on their own. And we are helping with financial support, trying to develop sustainability.”

Clarke first came to OSI-Baltimore as an investor and has been particularly interested in its initiatives to improve Baltimore’s schools. “One of the best ways to give back to Baltimore is to help the educational system,” he notes. He is attracted by the challenge of helping to lead OSI-Baltimore as it enters a new chapter in its history. “To help the organization do that is a neat challenge that intrigues me.”

Clarke also serves on the board of WYPR-FM and the advisory board of IMA World Health, a faith-based nonprofit in New Windsor, MD, that provides products and services for global emergency, health and development programs.

Suzanne F. Cohen

Some 35 years ago, Suzanne F. Cohen gave an unsolicited gift to the Baltimore Museum of Art. “I was a young person who really didn’t know anything about art at the time,” she chuckled. “But I really became addicted to art.”


Cohen has embraced philanthropy and board service with the same zest. During her nearly 40 years on the museum’s board, including as chair from 2003 to 2006, she helped endow the policy of free admissions “to make sure the museum was accessible to everyone.” At the Baltimore Community Foundation, she created “A Teams,” providing academic, arts and athletic programs for middle school students. She is a life member of the board of The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, has served as past board chair and currently chair of Funds and Foundations as well as The Associated Institute. “The Associated is very important in my life because it has always been responsible for taking care of my community,” she says. The Jewish values of justice and repairing the world, she explains, were instilled in her by her parents and grandparents.

The list of awards she has won includes the 2007 Maryland Shero Award, the Distinguished Benefactor Award by the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and Philanthropist of the Year by the Association of Fund Raising Professionals. The Daily Record has twice recognized her as one of Maryland’s Top 100 Women.

The list of organizations Cohen has helped to lead is even longer. A Goucher College graduate, she is a college trustee emeriti. She is president of the Nathan and Suzanne Cohen Foundation. Other organizations that she has been affiliated with include the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, Baltimore Jewish Council, the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies, Health Care for the Homeless, Maryland State Arts Council, and Safe and Sound.



Sue Cohen and Bill Clarke

Cohen first came to OSI as an investor. “I got hooked on the Community Fellows program, which has enabled me to meet so many fascinating, committed, caring people,” she says. Despite her full schedule, Cohen relished another board commitment. “OSI is tackling problems I think need to be addressed by serious, brilliant people who are really going at the root causes of some of the most intractable issues in the city,” she says. 

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OUR GOALS

As OSI-Baltimore moves forward, it is pursuing four main objectives:

- * Increase access to high-quality drug treatment to achieve a “tipping point” where 75% of Baltimore’s drug-dependent population is in treatment.
- * Increase public high school graduation rates from 59% in 2004-05 to 80% in 2008-09.
- * Decrease incarceration and recidivism while protecting public safety by reducing the number of people entering and returning to prison by 5%.
- * Populate Baltimore’s struggling communities with a strong network of proven, social entrepreneurs by awarding up to ten Community Fellowships per year.

Founded by philanthropist George Soros, Open Society Institute-Baltimore is a private operating foundation that supports a grantmaking, educational and capacity-building program to expand justice and opportunity for Baltimore residents. With support from a range of investors, its current work focuses on helping Baltimore’s youth succeed, reducing the social and economic costs of incarceration, tackling drug addiction, and building a corps of Community Fellows to bring innovative ideas to Baltimore’s underserved communities.

To learn more about Open Society Institute-Baltimore, visit our web site at: www.osi-baltimore.org.

Please sign up for our periodic e-newsletters on our home page.



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