Engaging Our Community in Change
Continuing Our Transformation

by: Jim Davenport, President

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Recent transformations at The Door include stronger use of electronic and social media to stay in touch with our community and supporters. We’ve completely overhauled our web site - www.thedoorinc.org - to be more user friendly and informational. Now you can find us and follow us on Facebook (search for Baltimore Urban Leadership Foundation) and on Twitter to learn what’s going on at the Door and in the surrounding community, like the upcoming C.A.RE. environmental projects.

Summer won’t slow our transformation. We’ll be rolling out new programs through our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)-based Generation E4 (Education, Enrichment, Engineering & Entrepreneurship) after-school and summer programs, to help transform our children into 21st century learners.

In this newsletter, you’ll get a taste of the personal transformation going on in our community, from the peace of mind community members get through The Door Food Pantry to a person’s overall well-being, with Frank Alston’s story of his journey from selling drugs to success as a tradesman.

Join us as we continue down our path. We are always in need of partnerships, short and long-term, for our community-impacting programs, especially our community economic development project, which I’m excited to say, will be partially funded by a major foundation. But we cannot do it alone. Contact us through our office, Facebook, or Twitter. Whatever the method, we look forward to connecting and working with you.

YOU CAN HELP

In these tough times, help from caring people like you is critical. All of the donations we receive go toward improving the quality of life of individuals and families in our community through education, mentoring, nutritional support, training, and spiritual development. There are several easy ways for you to donate today!

- Via our web site: www.thedoorinc.org
- By sending a check to The Door at: Baltimore Urban Leadership Foundation P.O. Box 13447 Baltimore, MD 21203
- Through the charity campaign or matching gift program at your office using the numbers below:
  
  United Way: 6591
  Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) #: 35594
  Combined Charity Campaign (CCC) #: 7638

Your donations make our programs possible. We thank you in advance for your generous support.
C.A.R.E. works hard to make the community more aesthetically pleasing.

“...the youth of this neighborhood need to know that vacancies and trash are not normal,” says Drew Bennett, president of C.A.R.E. [Cleansing, Active, Restoring, Efforts] Community Association, Inc, an all-volunteer organization created for the preservation, protection, growth, and general well-being of their community. The group is made up of resident-volunteers from the C.A.R.E. Community neighborhood. N. Washington Street to the west, N. Patterson Park Avenue to the east, E. Fayette Street to the south, and McElderry Street to the north.

The overwhelming number of building vacancies throughout the City has led to an overabundance of trash in countless empty lots. C.A.R.E. has made it their mission to convert many of those spaces and to remove the “trash is acceptable” mentality of residents.

In May, Morgan State University’s landscape design program presented “vacant space renewal program” plans for 400 N. Duncan Street, one of the largest illegal dumping sites in Baltimore City. Plans include converting the lot to a combination of parking and green space, with one of the first urban storm water management programs designed to meet strict EPA standards. This project can only happen with the muscle, determination, and help, financial and otherwise, from residents, local government, businesses, and organizations of the surrounding area. C.A.R.E. is also excited about PNC Bank giving financial support to the first vertical garden in Baltimore at the corner of Chester and Orleans Street.

With these projects, and with education for residents covering proper disposal of trash and recyclables, C.A.R.E. hopes to create a culture of recycling in their neighborhood. Residents were involved in the planning for 400 N. Duncan, and in mid-June a booklet was given to residents explaining the City codes for trash and recycling, along with window decals for homes that recycle.

C.A.R.E.’s Save the Harbor Day is Saturday, July 16th. In addition to trash can distribution, the first Baltimore City street painting project will take place at the intersection of McElderry and Chester. The painting will show how storm water and runoff moves through the City on its way to the Harbor. Residents participated in the decision making for this project and helped with the design.

Drew and the other residents hope that the changes will be much more than grass, water and blacktop. “Working together,” he says, “we can give the community a voice and opportunity to positively improve the environment we live in.”

Projects will be completed with help from the youth in the C.A.R.E. neighborhood, including children from The Door. To learn more about either of these projects or the C.A.R.E. Community Association, contact The Door or email C.A.R.E. at thecarecommunity@gmail.com.

“Success Stories” - Project Lazarus

Project Lazarus (PL) employs and trains hard-to-employ community residents to help restore neighborhoods by renovating homes and participating in various construction projects.

“If you want a chance to be successful and stay away from the streets by doing something positive than this nice environment with supportive people is the program for you.” (Frank Alston, Project Lazarus participant)

At 18, Frank Alston was running with the wrong crowd. He became involved in the drug trade, selling on Baltimore corners for 12-14 hours a day. After his release from jail at age 29, he wanted a new start. Social Services recommended Project Lazarus. He’d always been good with his hands, so he was interested. And it had to keep his interest, because the first three or four months were voluntary - and no pay. Frank didn’t mind. He says it was a better start than going back to his old life. He stayed very enthusiastic and faithful, and that diligence paid off with a job working for PL and Oral Lampart, the program head.

Why did it work? Frank knew his life had to change and over time, with help from PL and Oral, he learned to stay out of temptation’s way, not ever wanting to give the appearance of any wrongdoing. He believes the key to not falling to temptation is to not put yourself in a vulnerable situation. Through PL, he says he’s learned instead to use his energy for positive gains. He came to see that he could use the same energy he used to sell drugs to work hard and maintain a job, a job he enjoyed, was good at, and one that had long term potential.

Frank works meticulously to perfect his craft.

Frank and Oral have a strong bond; Oral was the best man at his wedding and Frank says he is one of his role models. It’s much more than what he’s learned from him about the construction trade. “He’s a great person to work around and learn from,” Frank says. “He’s someone you can talk to. I look at him as more than just a boss; we can do a job and talk about life, family, and laugh.”

Through PL, Frank has started down his path to his long term dream: his own home-improvement business in five to 10 years. According to Frank, PL leads to transformation because it gives one a solid foundation and teaches a craft. “It teaches someone who didn’t have anything how to make something using their physical abilities,” he says. “It’s more than a job, it’s also a training ground. You have the motivation to stay out of trouble and do something productive.”

Frank truly believes PL can help others as it’s helped him. “Hands down,” he says, “if you want to work hard and make a difference in your life, this is something you should consider.”
**PROGRAM UPDATES**

**Science Enrichment Afterschool Program (SEAP)** - SEAP improves the reading and math skills of our children through intense planning and one-on-one tutoring. Improvement plans were created for each child during the winter and adjusted as necessary in the spring. This past winter and spring, the 43 children in the SEAP program showed they’ve got what it takes to perform; their skill levels continued to improve. They are performing at or above grade level standards.

**Science Enrichment Summer Program (SESP)** - SESP is an extension of SEAP, serving 1st - 6th grade students. The core focus is preventing summer learning loss in reading and math through the development of scientific thinking and hands-on projects. Field trips this summer include: the Maryland Science Center, Woodberry Crossing for 5 days of learning and fun in the sun, and a day in Washington DC at several museums.

**Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) and Seeking Individual Self-Expression through Academics and Spirituality (SISTAS)** - LOT and SISTAS seek to provide the necessary skills for adolescents to develop their character and increase their success factors, such as positive leadership, academic excellence, goal-setting, community involvement, and family appreciation.

Our teen boys (LOT) and girls (SISTAS) continue to experience business firsthand. SISTAS has started a jewelry design company, called Creative Designs, with help from LOT, and their advisor, Ms. Reynolds, who happens to make jewelry. Both groups have been exposed to entrepreneurship, formally in classes and as they’ve gone through the ups and downs of running a business (profit & loss, marketing, strategic decision-making, product mix selection, and sales strategy).

**One4One Mentoring Program** - This program addresses three primary areas: development of positive relationships between mentee and mentor, increased school success, and spiritual growth opportunities.

Halfway through 2011, over 126 successful matches have been made for our elementary and middle school children. Many of the pairings happened through partnerships with outside organizations, including the National Women’s Prison Project and the Boys and Girls Club of Westminster. In May the program held a fashion show, where the children modeled clothing donated by local vendors. The program is always looking for caring adults to participate, particularly men. The commitment for volunteers is one hour per week for one year.

**The Door Food Pantry** - Approximately 50-70 people visit the Food Pantry every month. In 2010, The Door won a large freezer from the Maryland Food Bank and since then has been including frozen food in the bags for clients, in addition to bread, canned goods and fruit.

**Sports Matters** - As part of the Pop Warner League, Sports Matters engages youth ages 5-15. The program helps develop well-rounded boys and girls who learn not only the fundamentals of football, but also the importance of education in an atmosphere conducive to developing sound character while having a good time.

Early registration for The Door Wildcats football season has started: $75 for tackle (ages 7 to 15) and $50 for flag (ages 5 to 7).

Football mini-camp has begun as well. Boys and girls work on their field skills along with their teamwork and relationship skills. Held on Saturdays, there’s no need to pre-register. Contact The Door or any of the coaches for more information.

**Project Lazarus (PL)** - These men not only learn how to build and renovate homes, according to Oral Lampart, PL program head, but they also “learn how to provide for themselves and their families from a Christ-centered perspective. Each day they leave with a better understanding of real truth.” For an idea of what “real truth” means to one PL individual, read Frank Alston’s story on page 3.