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Homelessness, gross inequities in education, shortages of affordable housing, a lack of job training, few options for underprivileged inner-city youth, and a thriving and deadly drug trade. Are we picking on poor, old, bad-mouthed Baltimore again? Actually, we could be talking about the challenges facing any large American city—check out St. Louis, New Orleans, Detroit, Birmingham, and even Chicago. But in the pages that follow, we look at the Baltimoreans who are wrestling with their hometown problems, not just wringing their hands. And we had no problem finding some great

examples of people giving their time, money, and hearts to our big, beautiful, complicated city, warts and all. With the season of charity upon us, we found a handful of causes that you may never have heard of, but which cover the waterfront of philanthropy, from housing and poverty to pets in need. So pick your nonprofit—the rest is up to you.



THE MARYLAND SPCA BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

BY NICOLE NOECHEL

AFTER HURRICANE MARIA hit Puerto Rico in 2017, a street dog rescued from the U.S. territory was delivered to the Maryland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MDSPCA) in Baltimore.

“She was unadoptable,” according to Kaitlyn Thomas, foster-program coordinator. The brindle mutt was terrified and huddled in the corner throughout the day. “She was not going to thrive with just anyone,” Thomas says. “We knew we had to find a special kind of adopter.”

The staff had the idea of putting a camera in the dog’s pen, and they observed that she came alive after hours. They suspected the dog had grown accustomed to scavenging at night and seeking cool shelter during the day in her stifling homeland.

“Typically, a shelter would have euthanized that animal because she was breaking down in the shelter environment,” says Jim Peirce, executive director of the MDSPCA. But this story has a sweet ending: A local woman heard about the rescues and ended up adopting the dog and bringing it out of

its shell, Peirce says. “We have a happy home now.”

Now celebrating its 150th year, the society was established four years after the end of the Civil War, when founder William Woodward and 50 other Baltimore citizens including such familiar figures as Enoch Pratt and Alexander Brown came together to address the abuse of the city’s work horses. The animals were beaten and underfed, and frequently collapsed from exhaustion on Baltimore’s cobblestone streets.

Today’s MDSPCA, which is not affiliated with the American SPCA or any other state organization, focuses on three areas: education, veterinary services, and adoptions. But the fastest-growing program area, education, is focused on humans, not animals, and involves everything from enlisting school children to visit the shelter read aloud to animals, to educating professionals like postal workers and first responders on how to interact with animals they might encounter on the job, to visiting senior facilities.

Another critical part of the MDSPCA’s veterinary service is its spay/neuter program. The staff performed 6,600 surgeries in 2018 and, in June 2019, marked 90,000 surgeries since the program started in 2006. The MDSPCA Wellness Center, located nearby in Hampden, offers a sliding payment scale to low-income people.

“AT ANY GIVEN TIME, THERE ARE ROUGHLY 150 ANIMALS AT THE MDSPCA CAMPUS.”

At any given time, there are roughly 150 animals at the MDSPCA campus on Falls Road, many waiting to be adopted. As of 2018, about 25 percent of MDSPCA admissions were strays, while 35 percent represented animals surrendered by their owners. Many animals are also transferred from other shelters, where they have been vetted and deemed ready for adoption, or sent due to overcrowding. Most of the animals come from Maryland, says Peirce, “but when there’s a national emergency, like a hurricane, we have taken animals in from Puerto Rico, Houston, and other parts of the country.”

The MDSPCA’s \$6-million annual budget relies on fundraising and donations, and the organization enthusiastically welcomes animal lovers who want to help. Volunteers, says Peirce, “are a true reflection of the variety and diversity of Baltimore.” People from all backgrounds pitch in. “Some of our biggest donors are cleaning out the cat pens and dog pens, or they’re walking the dogs,” he says. “Everyone’s here for the same reason to improve the lives of pets and people.”

B AND DEE’S BALTIMORE LOVE A FRIENDSHIP FOSTERS A CAUSE

BY JANE MACLEOD

BRIAN DOLBOW envisions moving his nonprofit into an office someday, but, for now, the do-gooder, who works as a security guard at Chase Brexton and M&T Bank Stadium, is happy to operate from his apartment in Baltimore’s Mount Vernon neighborhood and donate money from his own pocket to feed lunch to hundreds of people each month.

Dolbow operates B & Dee’s Baltimore Love, a small nonprofit with a simple mission: to reach out to anyone who might need a meal or, in some cases, donated clothing, hygiene products, school supplies, or children’s toys. He started the organization in 2016 after the death of his friend Demetrius Mallisham, who had worked in the Mayor’s office as a neighborhood liaison and liaison to the LGBT community. For the previous three years, the two had been part of a small group of volunteers who would get together to distribute food and clothing to those in need. When Mallisham, known as Dee, passed away, Dolbow says, “I was inspired to start this organization in his honor.”

The monthly “Lunch Patrol,” is held the last Sunday of each month the last week of the month can be hard for people on public assistance, Dolbow notes. The location changes: Sometimes volunteers hand out brown-bag lunches to people living under the JFX, sometimes at small parks and open spaces throughout the city. Today, B & Dee’s volunteers have set up tables at a small park across from the Greenmount Recreation center on Greenmount Avenue. Attendees generally number around 200-300, Dolbow says, but they’ve had many more, especially at outings like the annual holiday party, Black History events, and Pride month celebrations. In September, a back-to-school event can draw hundreds.

Meg Corasaniti and her sister Mena Cooper were among the volunteers at last September’s event on North Avenue. Corasaniti purchased dozens of children’s backpacks on Amazon, and she and Cooper filled them with notebooks, pens, and pencils to distribute, joining many volunteers who similarly contributed.

The sisters learned about B & Dee’s in 2017 from their sister-in-law, who found it on Facebook while researching charitable organizations. That year, the family had decided to donate to those in need instead of purchasing Christmas gifts, Corasaniti says. Demetrius “was a friend of a friend” of her sister-in-law, she adds. So, on New Year’s Eve, in bitter cold weather, the women attended their first Lunch Patrol at the Fallsway, handing out sandwiches and warm clothing.

Social media has swelled the ranks of the group’s supporters: “People ask how we grew so large,” Dolbow says, but with more than 1,000 Facebook followers, the organization rarely lacks volunteers.

On one June afternoon, Corasaniti and Cooper have prepared about 50 lunches for the event on Greenmount; each brown paper sack has a ham and cheese sandwich, a bag of chips or pretzels, and fruit or a sweet treat.

FOUNDED ON PHILANTHROPY

By Christianna McCausland

Baltimore has many homegrown charitable foundations. Here are some of the largest, as determined by assets:

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Year founded: 1948. **History:** Jim Casey, the founder of UPS, and his siblings began the foundation in Seattle, Washington, and named it in honor of their mother, a widow who struggled to raise her four children. The headquarters moved to Baltimore in 1994. **Mission:** To improve the lives of disadvantaged children, their families, and communities.

HARRY & JEANETTE WEINBERG FOUNDATION

Year founded: 1959. **History:** Billionaire businessman Harry Weinberg began the foundation to help poor and vulnerable populations. When he and his wife, Jeanette, died, their fortune endowed today’s grant-making entity. **Mission:** To improve the lives of low-income and vulnerable people by supporting organizations that provide direct services in housing, health, jobs, and education.

ABELL FOUNDATION

Year founded: 1953 as The A.S. Abell Company Foundation. **History:** Begun by Harry Black, chairman of the board of the A.S. Abell Company, which once published *The Baltimore Sun*. **Mission:** The largest private foundation exclusively serving Maryland, its grants support seven broad areas of interest: education, workforce development, health and human services, community development, criminal justice and addiction, environment, and the arts.

FRANCE-MERRICK FOUNDATION

Year founded: 1988. **History:** Jacob France, founder of The Equitable Trust Company, began his foundation in 1959; Robert G. Merrick Sr., a board member and president of France’s foundation, as well as president of the Maryland Title Securities Company, began his own foundation in 1962. In 1998, the two foundations merged into the France-Merrick Foundation. **Mission:** The foundation strives to improve the quality of life in Maryland, particularly the Baltimore region, in six program areas: civic and culture, community and economic development, conservation, education, health and human services, and historic preservation.

BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Year founded: 1972. **History:** BCF was founded by the leaders of five Baltimore-based banks, inspired by the idea of a community foundation that would bring together diverse people with no affiliation or special cause. **Mission:** To help Baltimore thrive by investing in nonprofits that support investment in neighborhoods and education.

T. ROWE PRICE PROGRAM FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

Year founded: 2000. **History:** A national, donor-advised fund, the program was created to give individuals and corporations a means to initiate, invest, and distribute charitable gifts. **Mission:** Participants (initial investment is \$10,000) gain immediate tax benefits along with the flexibility to recommend grant disbursements to charities.

Ice-filled bins hold bottled water and juice, which Dolbow purchased at Safeway, and D.J. Jubak has set up his speakers to spin tunes. With July 4th just around the corner, someone has brought small American flags and red-white-and-blue leis, which a small girl distributes to those gathered in the park. The mood is like a family picnic or a block party.

Charlita Watlington, known as C.J., arrives with more ice. Watlington, who says she often finds holidays lonely, discovered B & Dee's nearly three years ago, pitching in on Thanksgiving Day to serve turkey to some 1,200 people. "Not only do we love working in the community," she says, "but we're a family." The first time she volunteered for B & Dee's, she says, "I realized, here's the family that I was missing for all these years."



BLACK WOMEN BUILD IF YOU BUILD IT, YOU'LL COME

BY COREY MCLAUGHLIN

STANDING JUST outside the front door of her house on Etting Street, Quanshay Henderson, a slender and cheerful 27-year-old black woman, is right when she says she doesn't look like the renovate-your-own-house type. Except, of course, for the bits of sheetrock caked on her arms and orange tank top, the clear protective glasses she's wearing, and the white dust mask hanging around her neck.

It's a hot summer afternoon on a mostly deserted West Baltimore block, and Henderson was just inside, knocking down plaster from the first-floor ceiling of the previously boarded-up vacant rowhome, that, if all goes according to schedule, she'll live in about four months from now. A place to call her own. Two bedrooms. One bath. Three skylights (she's very excited about that). Open concept, and an affordable \$600 monthly mortgage payment.

"I like working with my hands, sure, but mostly I like feeling more in control of my life," Henderson says. "I see a door and I open it."

Henderson, a part-time hospice aide who grew up in the Sharp-Leadenhall neighborhood near M&T Bank Stadium as the middle child of nine, just opened her future front door this morning, with a little bit of help. A Baltimore-based nonprofit called Black Women Build-Baltimore, led by tireless founder Shelley Halstead, has provided the direction to get here, a path for worthwhile change.

Halstead a renaissance woman who is the rare carpenter and lawyer had this idea to give black women like her and Henderson the chance to build wealth through homeownership in a direct way, teaching the construction skills to renovate and maintain their own homes, then helping provide financial literacy so they'll know how to pay for them. And all while hopefully rehabilitating an entire Druid Heights neighborhood block defined by the two-story brick vacant rowhomes that *The Wire* made infamous.

Henderson got where she is now by signing up for a 14-week construction-training program at Baltimore JumpStart, originally with designs on building her own small house after watching a few YouTube videos.

That move connected her to Halstead, who four years ago moved to the city's Marble Hill neighborhood with just her cat and a new goal.

Halstead has had a fascinating life she became a union carpenter in 1996 in her 20s in Seattle, fought fires in the Pacific Northwest, worked as an electrician's apprentice in Antarctica, went to law school at the University of Washington on a full scholarship, then moved to D.C. to work at an LGBTQ nonprofit. That's where she devised the Black Women Build concept in 2015, after realizing office work wasn't for her. She incorporated the nonprofit two years later.

“Homeownership has allowed me to do some things in my life that I wouldn’t have been able to otherwise,” Halstead says. “The idea was, where can I help make that happen? Where is there low-cost housing stock and black women? Because it seems like we have the least net worth of anyone in the United States.”

Through money raised from grant writing and a healthy dose of perseverance, Halstead secured the rights to the shells of four boarded-up city-owned homes on Etting Street, properties that otherwise would likely be demolished, she says, as part of Project C.O.R.E. Her plan is to stave off that trend and recruit two to three women per year for the next few years to rehabilitate these rowhomes “one house at a time.” Then she’ll do the same to a half dozen other vacants on the block.

“I never thought I would be a homeowner,” says Henderson. “I didn’t see it growing up, but I’m going to be one soon.”

SANTA CLAUS ANONYMOUS YES, SANTA HAS HELPERS

BY JANE MACLEOD

WHEN JIM RUSSELL was a kid growing up in the low-income Claremont Homes in Northeast Baltimore, he would get a toy each Christmas—just one. He doesn’t remember the actual toys, but he remembers how it felt to receive them. “My father died when I was young, and I was raised by my mother,” he says. The family didn’t have enough money for gifts, but would attend an annual holiday party at the neighborhood rec center, where each kid would receive a toy. “It was always a joyous day,” he recalls.

Although Russell, now 66, didn’t know it then, those toys came from Santa Claus Anonymous, an 85-year-old organization with the motto, “Give a Child a Christmas.”

Each year, Santa Claus Anonymous distributes some 15-20,000 gift certificates each worth an average \$20 to families throughout Maryland. As the organization grew from its early years, the model of distributing the actual gifts presented logistical issues. “Storage was difficult,” says Russell. Now Santa Claus Anonymous raises money and purchases vouchers that can be redeemed by participating vendors, he says. “That’s where the anonymous comes in.”

Russell, now CFO and COO of an industrial maintenance company, rediscovered the nonprofit 30 years ago and immediately became a volunteer. Since then, he’s served on the board and as its president. His daughter Nicole Russell is the organization’s executive director—the only paid position planning events, securing volunteers, and coordinating with both the social service groups that distribute the vouchers and the merchants who redeem them. “Our recipient families never know who is contributing to the program,” says former president David Blumberg, now chairman of the board, in a letter on the organization’s website.

At the same time, donors don’t know who their gifts are going to which means, he writes, “Supporting Santa Claus Anonymous . . . is an act of truly altruistic generosity.”

Gift certificates are usually distributed by social service organizations such as Catholic Charities or through public housing authorities.

Harriet Johnson, who works for the Housing Authority of Baltimore City’s Office of Resident Services, is tasked with distributing about 2,500 Santa Claus Anonymous gift vouchers each year. In the fall, she sends out a mailing to families qualified for the vouchers those who live in low-income and subsidized housing inviting them to a number of events.

Last year, the Baltimore City gift certificates could be redeemed at stores including Rite Aid and Shoe City. Johnson remembers watching a little girl who had just received a pair of sneakers. “They were sparkly. The kind when you walk the lights come on at the bottom of the heels,” she says. The little girl “immediately tried on her shoes and pranced around. She didn’t want to take them off.”

Gail Hamlet, a grants and contracts specialist at The Johns Hopkins University, is the current president of Santa Claus Anonymous, after nearly five years of volunteering and serving on the board. “I’m really big on Christmas,” she says. “It’s part of who I am.” As a kid, she remembers the excitement of waking up at 4 a.m., the subsequent big dinner, and the flurry of relatives in the house. And she volunteers because she wants to impart that holiday spirit. “Families can’t always do it,” she says. “They just need some extra help.”

GOING TO SCHOOL ON FATHER WATTERS

By CHRISTIANNA MCCAUSLAND

GABRIELLE AUTRY, 29, wanted her daughter Alyssa to attend preschool. She wanted her to have her own cubby, learn to listen to a teacher, and have classmates. Autry, who has experience as an elementary school paraprofessional helping kids with learning differences, has seen firsthand the importance of a high-quality preschool program. “In that birth-to-school-age time, I think a lot is lost or could be better reinforced,” she explains. “Especially working at an elementary school, I watch the kids who have only been in daycare or at home and how they struggle in the first months of school with attachment issues and crying. I also see kindergarteners who don’t even have letter recognition.”

Research backs Autry’s anecdotal evidence. The most definitive study on the value of early education, the Perry Preschool Project, documented that children who attend high-quality preschools not only learn and behave better, they also live healthier lives and earn more over their lifetimes.

Yet when Autry sought a preschool in her community on Baltimore’s west side, options were slim, especially for a full-day program, which Autry needed as a working parent. A friend told her about Loyola Early Learning Center (LELC), a new school opened in 2017 that offered tuition-free scholarships for Baltimore City residents. The program, located in Mount Vernon, is year-round.

“I loved the atmosphere of the school, that it was located in a rich cultural district, and that the building was tailor-made for these little babies,” says Autry.

LELC Director Erica Meadows underscores that being a preschool, not a daycare, is an important distinction. “We expect students to be in school every day, all day. They know we have high expectations for them,” she says. “We’re creating an environment that is nurturing, positive, and happy, so kids learn to love school and where parents feel valued and respected.”

LELC is open to all city residents regardless of faith and, though income is one of three main determinates for a child to receive a scholarship, the average household income for applicants is \$25,000 for a single mother of one. LELC also conducts monthly parent-education seminars covering topics such as health and nutrition and financial literacy, and a family member must give 20 hours of volunteer time and write three letters to their tuition sponsor each year. Tuition is underwritten almost entirely by donors who agree to support a student with \$16,000 per year for three years.

The school is a colorful, joyful space where students receive a healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack. The typical day includes circle time, where kids learn to talk about their feelings and pursue play-based learning and arts and crafts to build fine motor skills. There’s a playground and a neighborhood splash zone for hot days. Kids also learn mindfulness techniques and take yoga at a nearby studio, and go on field trips.

While LELC is new, it’s backed by longtime successful Jesuit educator and school president Father William Watters. Watters founded the all-boys middle school St. Ignatius Loyola Academy in 1993 for underserved families in the city, then created the coed Cristo Rey Jesuit High School. He was hoping to open an elementary school when he realized the dearth of preschools in the city.

“Many children in the low-income families of Baltimore don’t have the opportunity to have their children educated and prepared for kindergarten,” says Watters. “We want these children to be fully prepared with their spiritual, emotional, and physical gifts developed so that they are up and ready to pursue education at kindergarten and beyond.”

“We want to be with our kids all the way to help them become successful, productive citizens of Baltimore and to have the spirit of giving back so they give back what was given to them,” he says, “and they can’t do that unless they have a good education.”



60 SECONDS WITH HEATHER ILIFF

She’s president and CEO of Maryland Nonprofits, a statewide coordinating group for good causes.

By Keri Luise

When it comes to nonprofits, there’s a lot of noise out there as they all try to get your attention. But one organization—yes, also a nonprofit—makes it its job to keep tabs on the thousands of such organizations in Maryland. It’s called Maryland Nonprofits, and it was founded 27 years ago following a study at the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, which subsequently led to brainstorming with more than 800 leaders on the need to have a statewide coordinating body for the nonprofit sector.

“We reach out to the whole statewide nonprofit sector, which includes small startup organizations and community-based organizations, all the way up to the state’s largest employer—The Johns Hopkins University and hospital system,” says Heather Iliff, the group’s president and CEO. “And Maryland Nonprofits serves as a central hub for all kinds of nonprofits to come together—to learn together, share best practices, and unite our voices in advocacy for a greater quality of life and equity in Maryland.”

One of its most significant missions is to establish best practices for all the state’s nonprofits, she says.

“We started 27 years ago to define what it means to be an excellent nonprofit and really set the standard for the entire nation,” says Iliff. “Donors are always looking for organizations that are good stewards of their assets, honest in their fundraising appeals, and creating really strong outcomes in the community. Those kinds of donors wouldn’t be able to check out whether an organization is following best practices all by themselves, so we have more than 55 different benchmarks that we check that ensure that the organization is healthy over the long term.”



WHEN THE FOOD FOLLOWS YOU HOME

BY REBECCA KIRKMAN

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL students are served breakfast, lunch, sometimes even a late afternoon snack, for free during the week. But for the most vulnerable kids—the more than 3,000 in the city and 5,000 in the county that are homeless or in unstable living situations—everything changes on the weekends.

“Come Friday to Monday, there’s little to no access to food,” says Sandie Nagel. That’s why she founded Weekend Backpacks for Homeless Kids with her husband, Fred, in 2015, providing children with backpacks filled with enough healthy food to last through the weekend.

“We have even seen kids who have been given a peanut butter sandwich at lunch, and they stuff it in their pocket and say, ‘My mother’s hungry,

too.” With that in mind, the organization makes sure there’s enough to provide six meals to a family of four and more when there is a long weekend or it’s the end of the month and government benefits are most likely running low.

Nagel first heard about backpack food assistance programs while watching an episode of *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. A retired teacher, the 82-year-old has devoted her life to serving others, from running large-scale nonprofits to personal projects, like volunteering and donating holiday presents to needy students at Tench Tilghman School in Fells Point.

While delivering the holiday gifts, Nagel asked the school’s social worker how many homeless students attended Tench Tilghman. “I was expecting to hear something like 10,” Nagel recalls. “She said 100. My husband and I eventually packed 18 backpacks on our dining room table, and the story continues.”

Nagel’s charity has grown quickly. In June, it packed 506 bags distributed to children at 21 pre-K through eighth grade Baltimore City schools, enough to feed about 2,000 people.

“This is an all-volunteer organization. Nobody gets paid,” Nagel says. “All the money raised is used to feed the kids.”

It does, indeed, take a village: More than 200 volunteers come together to get the backpacks into the hands of the kids who need them each week. An assembly line of 50-70 people pack on Thursday mornings, then 20 drivers drop off the stuffed backpacks at the schools.

At the end of August each year, children identified as qualifying for the program get a new backpack filled with school supplies. Then, each Friday, the children visit their school counselor to take home their backpack, discreetly filled with food. On Monday, they return, and volunteers fill the backpacks again.

Nagel’s personal touch is evident in the contents, ensuring that meals are healthy (they’re nutritionist-approved, and there’s always some fresh fruit) and include seasonal items (incorporating canned ham and other holiday foods). Occasionally, there’s more than just food.

“We found out that homeless kids, when they sleep at the shelters or most other places, they either sleep in their clothes or their underwear,” Nagel says. “So, once a year, we started giving them pajamas. Once a year, we also give them hats, gloves, and scarves.”

During site visits to the schools, Nagel is reminded of her organization’s impact. “We had a grandmother who came up to us and said she’s a caretaker for a first, second, and fourth grader, and, without this, they would have no food.”

“It’s a huge need out there,” Nagel says. “We only want to be bigger and feed all the kids. If you think about a hungry, homeless child, you just have to join our cause. They’re innocent victims of hunger.”

SHARP DRESSED MAN

MEET BALTIMORE'S SARTORIAL SAVIOR

BY HANNAH CHENOWETH

EVERY WEDNESDAY afternoon, somewhere between 20 and 60 men gather outside a large, Civil War-era building at Old Town Mall in the Jonestown neighborhood. One by one, the men disappear inside and emerge with fresh haircuts, a suit in hand, and a pep in their step that hints at hope.

The beneficiaries of this sartorial magic trick all have different stories, but they have one thing in common: The desire for a second chance, which they get, thanks to a program called Sharp Dressed Man.

Since 2011, the nonprofit has provided more than 7,000 men with gently worn suits to dress for a new life. The premise is simple, says founder Christopher Schafer, owner of upscale Christopher Schafer Clothier in Harbor East: When you look good, you feel good. For men who have fallen on hard times, finding appropriate business attire is often the last hurdle to getting back on their feet but one that can make all the difference in making a fresh start.

Schafer, who was born in Baltimore and learned the art of tailoring in London, has seen firsthand that a change of clothes can change lives. “A lot of these guys have a past they’re ashamed of. We’re trying to give them a hand up, to help them turn the page and move forward with confidence,” he says. “It’s so powerful to see these men look in the mirror and see their potential.”

Demetrius Byrd, 31, is just one of those helped by the program and Byrd believes his new suit will help him make the right impression at an upcoming job fair. “I want to look smooth and decent, you know? Once I get suited up, I’m going to shave, twist my hair, and get my handshake ready,” he says.

There are a few types of men who typically donate, according to Schafer: Those who have retired, lost weight, gained weight, or are clearing out their wardrobe. And then there are widows donating things after a husband passes away. He gladly accepts donations from them all at his downtown shop on Aliceanna Street.

After the clothes are sorted by volunteers, they’re transferred to the organization’s space at Old Town Mall, which is open one day a week for those who have been referred by Sharp Dressed Man’s partners. The beneficiaries aren’t left to simply rifle through the racks, either; they’re treated like true gentlemen from start to finish.

“It’s all one-on-one: We take their measurements and provide a custom styling experience,” says Schafer. “We believe when you treat a man with dignity, he has a better chance of treating himself with dignity.”

So far, Sharp Dressed Man has operated on a shoestring budget, an all-volunteer crew, and donated clothes. “We’ve done a lot with a little, and right now we are looking to take our impact to the next level,” says Schafer.

The current goal is to raise \$150,000, which will go toward hiring an executive director to expand the organization and also cover the overhead for the nonprofit’s expenses, including a new location in Los Angeles run by Schafer’s oldest son, Seth.

“I’ve been in recovery for a long time, and I’m reminded all the time how lucky I am. I’m in a spot now where I have dreams, I work toward them, and it’s super-exciting to help other people,” says Schafer. “In the world we live in, you judge a book by its cover. When a guy puts on a suit, he sees his second chance happen in front of his eyes. Ideally, every city will have a Sharp Dressed Man someday.”



ART WITH A HEART

PICTURE THIS, BALTIMORE

BY HANNAH CHENOWETH

WE CAN GIVE THEM FOOD, clothing, or shelter, but in 2000, lawyer Randi Pupkin envisioned a nonprofit that would enhance the lives of people another way—through art. She was certainly not a fine artist, and had zero nonprofit experience—just a strong belief in the healing powers of creativity. So the mother of two began pounding the pavement, practicing law by day and bringing art classes into the community by night.

Nineteen years later, Art With a Heart's impact on the community is indelible: The nonprofit offers more than 15,000 interactive visual art classes a year to vulnerable populations in shelters, schools, community centers, group homes, hospitals, and senior facilities. And the program is no longer a one-woman show—more than 4,000 volunteers support it each year through public art workshops, community-service events, and classroom support.

Pupkin, now the executive director with a staff of 13, says the organization has evolved in ways she never imagined. Its newest initiative, The Art of Leadership, is a 13-month program that brings together a diverse group of 10th- and 11th-grade students to explore the greatest issues facing Baltimore and encourage fresh solutions.

“A recent study from IBM showed that creativity is the number one leadership competency that CEOs say they look for, in both executives and staff,” says Pupkin. “If we don't give young people the opportunity to stretch their creative muscles, we are doing them a disservice. We need for them to imagine and explore places they might not otherwise know but if not for creating art.”

HeARTworks is another youth-focused initiative at Art With a Heart. Participants learn soft job skills in addition to social and emotional skills, and create marketable pieces of art that are sold in its social enterprise/retail store, HeARTwares. Participating in HeARTworks gives young people a sense of accomplishment and pride, and there's also a 73 percent job-placement rate for those who complete the program.

The magic happens in an airy, open-concept building on Falls Road, filled with funky artwork, mosaics radiating from every corner, and laughter. Klause Ferrel, 24, who was referred to the program as a homeless teen, says that before discovering HeARTworks, he struggled to find a place where he belonged. Today, he serves as an assistant on Art With a Heart's Workforce Development and Social Enterprise team.

“What I found at Art with a Heart is something I've been searching for my entire life: a reason to be alive, to care, and to be part of something bigger than myself,” says Ferrel.

While its headquarters is indeed a safe space of healing for countless people, the nonprofit's impact isn't contained by a roof and four walls: Art With a Heart volunteers and program participants are diligently beautifying Baltimore, with over 300 large-scale art projects completed throughout the city to date. “It's been an extraordinary experience,” says Pupkin. “I'm just a person who has ideas, and I'm so blessed to have this incredible, talented, and compassionate team ready and willing to forge those ideas into reality. Almost 20 years later, we are an important part of the fabric of this city.”



THE BIG BOYS WHO ARE HELPING HERE

Big national charities have a real impact at the regional level. Here are some of the largest charities in the U.S. that have programming in the Baltimore area:



UNITED WAY

Its programs and support of other nonprofits focus on education, income, and health.



SALVATION ARMY

Meeting human needs with community-specific programs to combat a host of challenges, from homelessness and addiction to disaster relief and domestic abuse.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Offering stability and self-reliance by building or renovating safe, affordable homes.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

Creating safe, inclusive club spaces for young people in need so they can reach their full potential as productive citizens.



YMCA OF THE USA

Dedicated to developing the full potential of individuals, with special emphasis on programs for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Born in the early 1960s from the work of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

BALTIMORE WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE LADIES WHO DO SOME HEAVY LIFTING

BY HANNAH CHENOWETH

WHEN WOMEN JOIN FORCES, they can change the world. Case in point, the Baltimore Women's Giving Circle (BWGC): What started as 52 women with a vision to better the community has expanded to a thriving group of 460 members.

The circle's diverse members are united by a common goal: to promote self-sufficiency for underserved women and their families in the greater Baltimore area. Since 2001, the BWGC has awarded more than \$5.3 million in grants to local nonprofits that support this mission, made possible by each member's yearly contribution of \$1,150.

“Our ability to effect change is amplified by pooling and leveraging our enthusiasm, expertise, and financial resources,” says circle co-chair Dawna Cobb. “I first got involved because I wanted to tap into the collective power of women supporting other women.”

The BWGC works entirely through volunteer committees and is led by co-chairs that are elected by the membership every two years. Cobb and fellow co-chair Susannah Bergmann are both forces to be reckoned with in their own right. Cobb is a New York native who practiced law for 22 years and previously served as the dean of students at the University of Maryland Francis Key Carey School of Law; Amsterdam-born Bergmann owns a commercial construction company with her husband.

Both women have proudly made Baltimore their home, praising its most admirable qualities, yet not turning a blind eye to the systemic issues that plague the city.

“When I was recruiting at UMD, I would tell students, ‘If you want to come to a town with complex problems, lots of great resources, and where you can be sitting across from your delegate in two phone calls, come to Baltimore,’” says Cobb. “There’s a level of grit, determination, and incredible accessibility here.” Bergmann echoes the sentiment, adding: “You can’t just say, ‘Oh, the problem is over here so I’m just going to move to another neighborhood.’ We’re all in this together.”

Indeed, the hands-on, engaged nature of BWGC’s grant process exposes its members to parts of the city that they otherwise wouldn’t be in touch with. In 2018, the circle received 122 grant applicants; each went through a thorough review process from committee members. Forty-five were chosen to give presentations, of which 24 were ultimately selected. The circle supports all sorts of organizations, helping one-person startups gain momentum while also ensuring that well-established nonprofits aren’t left behind.

“There are so many people out there who are trying to solve the same problems and don’t know each other. We bring them together,” says Cobb. “We’ve had situations where our grantees form partnerships, which is something that’s fairly unique to our model. There’s a level of engagement and interest; we don’t just write grantees a check and tell them how to spend it.”

The BWGC is more than just a major grantmaking force—they also bring about change through education, advocacy, and other community-based activities. Each year, members vote on a topic; housing is the focus in 2020. The education committee organizes speaker series, events, and book clubs all year long to raise awareness among the group, which then creates a ripple effect into the community.

“The more you know, the more you can do. It’s an incredibly empowering energy,” says Bergmann. “The circle allows women to connect to each other, to the community, and to causes they support to the extent that they desire. Each member is an essential link in the chain that continues to grow.”

CHARITY CHECKPOINT

By Christianna McCausland

When you make a donation to a charity, you expect the cash to go to a cause in which you believe. Yet in an era of well-crafted scams, how do you ensure a nonprofit is what it seems?

While websites like *CharityNavigator.org* are helpful, their listings aren’t comprehensive and often exclude small, local charities, says Heather Iliff, president and CEO of Maryland Nonprofits (see interview on page 147), a member organization that promotes standards of excellence for nonprofits. She likes the idea of giving locally, not only because you can see the impacts in your community, but also because you can build a more meaningful relationship with the charity.

“Firsthand knowledge is always the best,” she says. “Ask your friends and neighbors where they volunteer or if they are on boards at local groups.” Here are Iliff’s other tips for checking out a charity:

☑ Attend an event, such as a golf outing or a gala. Start a relationship with a group.

☑ Check out *Guidestar.org* and look for a charity’s Form 990, the IRS form that provides the public with financial information about a nonprofit organization, or ask the organization to provide you a copy.

☑ Look for a seal on the website from an accrediting body, or you can ask if the organization is accredited.

☑ The Secretary of State maintains a searchable database of Maryland nonprofit organizations in good standing: <https://sos.maryland.gov/Charity/Pages/SearchCharity.aspx>

☑ Read the annual report. While not legally bound to provide an annual report, organizations that do are showing a commitment to financial transparency.

☑ Look for warning signs that a charity may not be in good standing—or a nonprofit at all: They include not listing key staff and the board of directors, a board of directors that’s tiny (seven to 12 members is average), and no information provided confirming its 501c3 status.

LIVING CLASSROOMS

CRACKING THE TOUGHEST NUTS

BY JANE MACLEOD

IN THE 1980S, when Jesse Garner was a teen, after bouncing around in foster homes in New York City, he was arrested at the Baltimore bus station for transporting drugs. He was sent to a juvenile detention center and ended up in a woodworking program building boats. “I was a terror, so uncooperative,” Garner recalls. A guy named James Bond ran the program. “I’d cuss him out on a regular basis,” he says. “But it seemed like the more rebellious I was, the more patient he was.”

Now Bond is Garner’s boss. “Jesse was a tough man,” Bond recalls. The program, Fresh Start, which continues to this day as one of the many branches of the Harbor East-based Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF), was designed to provide academic and vocational training to youth, most of them referred by the Department of Juvenile Services. “They gave us some of their more challenging young people,” Bond says. Garner went on to start a business, raise a family, and send his children to college, Bond says. “Now he’s come back to work as an instructor.”



The first paid employee at LCF, James Bond (no relation to the fictional international spy, but his family is responsible for naming Fells Point's Bond Street) is now its CEO. And the nonprofit, which began when two McDonogh teachers wanted to teach kids to build a replica 19th-century schooner, is currently engaged in multiple education, job training, wellness, and violence-prevention programs throughout the city and in Washington, D.C.

"From the beginning, we were involved in job skills, work force development, and working with teenagers," Bond says. "Those threads have carried through, but we have evolved into looking at how we can meaningfully disrupt the cycle of poverty in Baltimore."

With about 500 full-and part-time employees and a long-standing expertise in the art of restoring historic boats, Living Classrooms also manages the U.S.S. Constitution, the paddle boats, and the pirate ships in the Inner Harbor, as well as operating the Historic Ships of Baltimore museum. "These become the living classrooms for the community," says Bond.

Living Classrooms opened the charter school Crossroads Middle School in 2002 and partnered with the city to turn around The Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School in Butchers Hill. It began a Safe Streets program modeled on a Chicago initiative that trains mediators to go out in the streets to stop shootings in the McElderry Park neighborhood in 2016, leading to a 545-day stretch without a homicide. The city awarded funding for LCF to expand the program into nearby Belair-Edison. Living Classrooms manages playing fields, oversees youth athletic leagues, and has established a 2.5-square-mile target investment zone in East Baltimore.

"Living Classrooms saved my life," says Garner. After graduating from Fresh Start, he had a few more run-ins with the law and was "piddling around," he says. "I saw James Bond somewhere, and he said, 'You should come back and work at Fresh Start.'" This was 2004, and Garner saw 20-year-old photographs of his younger self in the organization's brochure. "I thought, all right, this is what I am supposed to be doing," he recalls.

He later left and started a small trucking company that employs former convicts, and he's helping put three of his six children through college. He also works with the Baltimore police to teach a class called "Men over Manhood." Garner returned to Fresh Start this year as a vocational instructor, teaching kids about tools early in their apprenticeships. "All of them remind me of the young Jesse," he says. "Someone's got to give them a chance just like someone gave me a chance."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS
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'The Brother You Choose' Details Enduring Bond Between Paul Coates and Eddie Conway (<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/community/the-brother-you-choose-paul-coates-eddie-conway-black-panther-party/>)

Coates discusses Susie Day's new book, the Black Panther Party, and his friendship with Conway.

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GameChanger: Dominic Nell (<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/fooddrink/dominic-nell-city-weeds-talks-west-baltimore-grocery-community-center/>)

We catch up with the farmer and founder of City Weeds.

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(<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/artsentertainment/photographer-captured-john-lennon-yoko-ono/>) "C'mon, Mister-all-the-way-from-Baltimore, you can do this," Stuart Zolotorow remembers Lennon telling him.

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Hampden Woman Searches for Beloved 'Bawlder' Vanity License Plate

(<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/community/hampden-woman-searches-for-beloved-bawlder-vanity-license-plate/>): Elizabeth Desmarais hopes to find new owner and reclaim the familial tags.

Mess in a Bottle's Kalilah Wright Wants You to Wear Your Message:

(<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/styleshopping/mess-in-a-bottle-kalilah-wright-wants-you-to-wear-your-message/>)The entrepreneur talks new storefront and sparking activism through clothes.

Socially Distanced First Date Ideas to Try Out This Fall:

(<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/fooddrink/socially-distanced-first-date-ideas-baltimore-this-fall/>) Got the first date jitters? Take the edge off at these fun spots.

This Ravens Season Will Be Most Unusual to Watch--And Play:

(<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/covid19/this-ravens-season-will-be-most-unusual-to-watch-and-play/>)From cardboard cutouts to ambient stadium noise, the team's "work-at-home" situation is new for everyone.

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