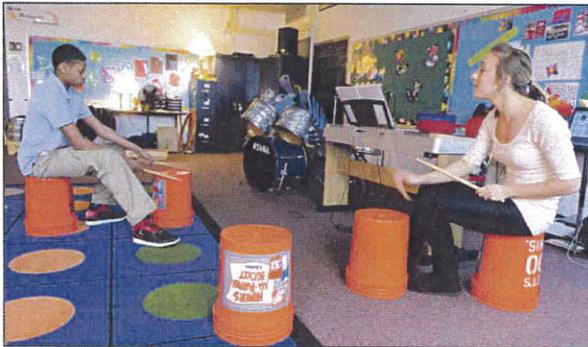




PHOTOS: ANDREW RUSSELL | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Propel Northside literacy coach Megan Newsome, 35, helps fourth-grader Tanayja Green, 9, of Pittsburgh's North Side during a recent class.



Music teacher Jess Lyon drums along with Sharod Lindsey, 12, of Chartiers during tryouts for a May concert.

Community forum on public schools draws Jewish interest

By **ADAM REINHERZ**

Chronicle Correspondent

There is a deep bond between the Jewish community and Pittsburgh Public Schools, and Marshall Dayan recognizes it.

"Our community has traditionally been educated in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and Pittsburgh Public Schools are critical to our community," the PAJC president said.

Karen Hochberg, executive director of PAJC, sees it, too.

"Historically, many of the teachers in the Pittsburgh Public Schools have been members of the Jewish community. That's why we have Rosh Hashanah and Jewish holidays off in the city schools."

Yet even with historical ties, current efforts are under way to strengthen the relationship.

PAJC, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh Community Relations Council, the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition and Pittsburgh Public Schools presented an engagement session last week, titled, "The State of the Pittsburgh Public Schools: Whole Child Whole Community Dialogue."

The meeting, which was held at East End Cooperative Ministries, enabled participants to learn more about Pittsburgh Public Schools from Linda Lane, superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools, and several of her staff.

Through lectures and breakout sessions, attendees familiarized themselves with Lane's plan for Pittsburgh Public Schools. Specifically, Lane wants all area children to graduate from a two- or four-year college, or receive a workforce education; and she wants this accomplished in a financially responsible fashion.

While Pittsburgh Public Schools holds regular meetings, this event was designed to disseminate Lane's message to new audiences.

"We have been targeting different communities to reach different demographics," said Erika Fearby Jones, special assistant to the superintendent.

"We are trying to listen to the community and get feedback regarding Dr.

Lane's plan."

Prior to meeting in the East End, Pittsburgh Public Schools held open dialogues in the West End and North Side, at the Urban League of Pittsburgh Charter School (located in the old Congregation B'nai Israel synagogue on Negley Avenue in East Liberty), and with After-School community partners.

Perhaps because of locale, topic, or PAJC and Jewish Federation's sponsorship, the East End venture drew several members from the Jewish community.

Mimi Botkin, a longtime educator, enjoyed hearing about Lane's work, and applauded the meeting's format.

"I like that it was broken into smaller sessions, but I wish that it was longer," she said.

Other participants appreciated the chance to speak with Lane directly, but questioned the absence of students from the program.

With so much communal interest in Lane's plan, efforts are under way to learn more.

PAJC has been studying public education in Pittsburgh, and already held several events on the topic, Dayan said. "We have a huge stake in the success of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and it's important for us historically and continuously."

Added Hochberg, "There's nothing that would make us happier than to be the number one public education system. And the way to do that is to engage parents."

Lane said she welcomed Jewish support for the school system.

"The benefit of this city is the diversity of its communities," she said. "We're really excited about getting this opportunity to engage with people. We hope to continue that relationship."

(Adam Reinherz can be reached at adamr@thejewishchronicle.net.)





Pittsburgh Public Schools photo

Linda Lane



ESTHER BUSH

Colon Health

These monthly pages focus on health disparities in the Pittsburgh region. They educate readers about key health issues and inform them about research opportunities and community resources. All articles can be accessed online at the New Pittsburgh Courier Web site. The monthly series is a partnership of the New Pittsburgh Courier, Community PARTners (a core service of the University of Pittsburgh's Clinical and Translational Science Institute—CTSI), the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the UPMC Center for Engagement and Inclusion.

This month, the "Take Charge of Your Health Today" page focuses on colon health—understanding the importance of screening and early detection to prevent colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon or rectum). Marcus A. Poindexter, LSW, HSV, health advocate at the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League, sat down to talk about the importance of early detection to prevent colorectal cancer.

MAP: Good afternoon, Ms. Bush. It's always a pleasure to see you. I appreciate talking with you and hearing your perspective on important health issues that affect our community. This month the Courier health page is focusing on colon health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African American men and women are more

likely to die from colon cancer than any other race or ethnic group. The American College of Gastroenterology strongly recommends that African Americans get a colonoscopy (a screening of the large intestine) at age 45 to detect any polyps or tumors.

EB: I'm glad that we're addressing colon health in the Courier this month. Colon cancer is an aggressive disease that is highly preventable. However, it can be treated if detected at an early stage. Unfortunately, African Americans tend to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer at more advanced stages of this disease. This decreases their chances of being cured and surviving the disease. Personally, I know the value of screening for colorectal cancer. A few years back, my doctor had a conversation with me about my risk of developing colon cancer. He shared the importance of having a colonoscopy to make sure I was clear of any unusual growths. I wasn't so much worried about the outcome. I didn't have any of the common symptoms, which can include continued stomach pain, blood in stool or unexplained weight loss. However, it was still important for me to be screened to determine my colon health. I encourage all African Americans over the age of 45 to have a colonoscopy.

MAP: As the health advocate for the Urban League Health Education Office, I always talk about risk reduction. These are actions that can decrease the likelihood that a person will experience disease. It's something that's very important to me. Often times African Americans forgo preventative treatment or screenings like the colonoscopy because they are unsure about what the experience will be like.

EB: Yes, and it's critically important to know how to plan and prepare for this screening as it can take both time and the use of family and friends to complete the prep for this procedure. African Americans should talk with their doctors about the specifics of a colonoscopy. Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification. I'd encourage people to also talk with their health care providers about any concerns like transportation or scheduling that would prevent them from being screened for colon cancer.

MAP: I agree, Ms. Bush. I know



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this topic is one that can be uncomfortable to discuss, but it's important to maintain a healthy colon. Thank you for encouraging African American adults to take a preventative attitude toward their colon health. I know that these health segments help all of us stay informed about health topics important to our communities. If anyone has any questions about the information on this page, email PARTners@hs.pitt.edu.

Even most careful consumer can be duped

post your
problems

LAWRENCE WALSH

Stacey Keacher stopped by the Better Business Bureau's table at the City-County Building earlier this month to look at some of the free printed material that was being offered to consumers.

"I look at your website on a regular basis," the Baldwin Township resident said to Caitlin Driscoll, the bureau's public relations director. "It's very helpful."

Ms. Keacher was referring to www.pittsburgh.bbb.org, one of the best places for local consumers to stay up to date on the latest scams that crooks use to cheat them out of their hard-earned money.

The BBB's table was one of nine set up on the first floor of the building to showcase consumer education resources as part of a four-hour Consumer Fair, hosted by Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane. The fair was part of National Consumer Protection Week March 2-8.

Also participating were the state Bureau of Consumer Protection; AARP; Allegheny County's Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging and the county treasurer's office; the state Department of Banking and Securities; Public Utility Commission; Social Security Administration; U.S. Postal Service; and the Urban League of Pittsburgh.

"Consumer protection education is promoted every week at the Better Business Bureau," said Warren King, president of the BBB chapter that serves 28 Western Pennsylvania counties.

"Together with the resources of our federal, state and local governments and consumer groups, we can reach out and inform more people about the importance of making smart

marketplace decisions as well as avoiding scams and fraud that can be financially devastating."

Topics discussed at the fair included tips on how consumers can protect themselves against identity theft and how to safely shop online, spot fiction in advertisements, maintain good credit, make wise buying decisions and get out of debt.

Ms. Driscoll said the BBB is warning cell phone users about the "One Ring" scam that can result in unauthorized charges and international fees.

She said crooks program computers to send thousands of calls to random cell phone numbers and only ring once before disconnecting. They hope the calls will pique the interest of the recipients enough to prompt them to return the call from a number they don't recognize.

If the victims' curiosity gets the better of them and they re-

turn the calls, they often find themselves connected to music and advertising messages, an international adult entertainment service or chat line.

Later, when they get their wireless bills in the mail, they discover that they have been charged \$19.95 for the international call fee and an additional \$9 a minute. Victims said the calls come from area codes originating in the Caribbean Islands, including Antigua (268), British Virgin Islands (284), Dominican Republic (809), Grenada (473) and Jamaica (876).

Mr. King said One Ring scam victims should immediately notify their cell phone providers and monitor their wireless bills for any unauthorized charges. He said the earlier the fraud is detected, the better the chance

of having some or all of the charges removed.

He said the best way to avoid this scam is to never answer the phone if you don't recognize

the number, especially if the area code is from out-of-state or from a different country. Don't return the call. If it's important, the caller will leave a message.

But consumers also have to be wary about "emergency" messages that appear to come from family members or friends who need help because of an emergency of some sort — an accident, an arrest, a robbery, etc. Be suspicious.

The BBB also is encouraging consumers to examine monthly credit card statements for any unexplained charges and challenge them by calling their bank or credit card company. Use the number on the back of the card.

Crooks charge stolen credit card numbers for a small amount of money in the hopes that the victims won't notice the relatively small charge and credit card companies won't pursue such a small sum. Recent victims were all charged \$9.84, but the thieves may change that amount.

Consumers who check statements carefully see that the source is an unfamiliar website. They check the Web address and discover that it's not a business website. It turns out to be a generic landing page that claims to offer "Customer Support."

The wording promises to "refund 100 percent of your last payment" and provides a phone number and email address. Victims who call receive verbal assurances that the charge will be canceled. Don't believe it. Call your bank, report the charge and ask for a new credit card.

"Your credit card information has been compromised and



its likely the scammers will be back for more," the BBB said.

Lawrence Walsh can be reached at pyp@post-gazette.com and 412-263-1488. Please include your day, evening and cell phone numbers. Due to volume, he cannot respond to every email or phone call.

NURSING FOCUS

Beyond the Bedside

UPMC Nurses' Impact on the Communities We Serve

By Carrie Stevenson

Community service is at the core of UPMC's mission, and nowhere is this commitment better exemplified than through the community projects and leadership positions of UPMC nurses. Our nurses care deeply about the communities they serve – the people, places, and organizations that make western Pennsylvania great. UPMC nurses take their care and compassion beyond the bedside out into their communities, to help, to heal, and to lead.

UPMC nursing has a system-wide professional practice and nursing inclusion councils dedicated to both driving quality patient care and supporting community service projects. The members support local organizations through volunteerism, donations, and other initiatives. UPMC nurses strive to bring awareness to health, safety, and wellness initiatives. These are just a few of their stories:

Motivated by childhood memories of carefree fun at summer camp, 16 nurses at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC partnered with respiratory therapists, physicians, social workers, and the Woodlands Foundation to create Camp INSPIRE – a weeklong summer camp for children living with ventilators and tracheotomies. "As a PICU nurse, I tend to see kids at their worst. They are sick and miserable," says Ann Miller, RN, BSN, of Children's Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. "Camp INSPIRE allowed me to see these children as they usually are: happy, imaginative, funny, and playful." Camp INSPIRE reminds the nurses why they chose their profession in the first place – to make a lasting difference in the lives they touch.

A few years ago, UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing decided to take an innovative approach to the clinical experience in their maternal-child nursing course. Nursing instructors wanted to work with children and families in a community setting, and to emphasize health maintenance and promotion. They partnered with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School, and in the fall of 2012, nursing students started working with the school nurse, teachers, and young students within the Charter School setting. "The experience is designed to build the nursing students' knowledge of an inner-city pediatric population and to identify health care needs," says Sandy Lake, RN, MS, Shadyside School of Nursing.

In 2010, rates of homicide in Wilkinsburg soared to some of



Another river to CROSS

Pittsburgh knows how to provide educational opportunity for everyone; let's get on with it, urges

Pitt's **JEROME TAYLOR**

In the cultural and spiritual traditions of African-Americans and of Africans wherever they may live, river banks metaphorically convey contrasting realities — the near shore represents today's troubles and the distant shore tomorrow's solutions. In the city of Pittsburgh, there have been famously unexpected crossings from near to distant shores.

Fifty years ago, who would have predicted that Pittsburgh would be named the most livable city in the United States, the fifth best city in which to retire and the third most secure place to live? Who would have thought that Pittsburgh would now be ranked as America's smartest city and fifth most literate? Fifty to 75 years ago, who would have thought Pittsburgh today would rank among the top five cities in percentage of happy workers or that the average happiness of Pittsburgh residents would exceed the na-

tional average?

Yet there remain rivers in Pittsburgh where we stand shamefully on the near shore of despair, desperation, brokenness and ruin: Our high school dropout rate is about twice as high for blacks than whites; our unemployment rate is at least one and one-half times higher for blacks as for whites; our incarceration rate is nearly six times higher for blacks than whites, and our homicide rate is more than four times higher for blacks than whites.

Pittsburgh stands mournfully along this near bank, ashamed, because it otherwise has a storied history of deep and innovative caring for its young.

Pittsburgh's Jonas Salk brought an end to the scourge of childhood polio. Pittsburgh's Rex Spears, Margaret McFarland and Elizabeth Elmer introduced new ideas and methods for healing the emotional wounds of our children. Pittsburgh's Benjamin Spock broke the yoke of oppressive practices in child rearing. Our beloved Fred Rogers was a friend of every child in the world, of whatever color, gender or ethnicity.

Reflecting this historical spirit of Pittsburgh exceptionality, beams of hope stream toward us from the distant shore.

SEE **TAYLOR**, PAGE B4

Dr. Doris Brevard, former principal of the predominately black and primarily poor Vann School of the Hill District, showed how to close and reverse racial-, socioeconomic-

and gender-achievement gaps. The late Dr. Barbara Sizemore-Milliones studied how to accelerate the achievement of African-American students in several Pittsburgh communities under the leadership of legendary principals such as Louis Venson, Robert Mungin, Carolyn Davis and Regina Holley. At this moment, principal Kevin Bivins of Pittsburgh Fulton Elementary School and principal Gail Edwards of the Greater Pittsburgh Urban League Charter School have nearly closed or actually reversed these achievement gaps.

Is it not now time to figure out how to make these exceptionalities commonplace? To lead the nation toward that distant shore — liberty with justice for all, where dropout, incarceration, unemployment and homicide disparities are as exceptional as they now are commonplace?

For the nation's sake, isn't it time for another river crossing in Pittsburgh?

As we approach our destination, lessons learned undoubtedly will accrue to the benefit of all children, whose parents will come to view Pittsburgh as an exceptional place, a place where they choose to raise their families. Is this Pittsburgh's time to make history — again?

Jerome Taylor is chair of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Africana Studies, chair of the Brain Trust of the Hill District Educational Council and president and founder of the Center for Family Excellence Inc. (taylor@pitt.edu).



Urban League: Blacks worse off

Underemployment is higher for blacks than for whites, Hispanics

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new report from the National Urban League says underemployment is a bigger obstacle for blacks than it is for whites or Hispanics.

The league's annual State of Black America report says the underemployment rate for African-American workers was 20.5 percent, compared with 18.4 percent for Hispanic workers and 11.8 percent for white workers. Underemployment is defined as those who are jobless, and those working part-time jobs but desiring full-time work.

National Urban League President Marc Morial says the post-recession economy is leaving too many people behind.

The Urban League is pushing for several economic measures to address these issues, including an increase in the minimum wage.



Associated Press

This Aug. 28 photo shows National Urban League President Marc Morial speaking at the Let Freedom Ring ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. While unemployment has been a major impediment to African Americans' economic progress, underemployment is a bigger obstacle for them than it is for whites or Hispanics, the National Urban League says in its latest State of Black America report. The annual report, called "One Nation Underemployed: Jobs Rebuild America," noted that African Americans are twice as likely as whites to be unemployed.



African-American Leaders to Host Candidate Forum to Address Community Issues

Some of the greatest concerns among members of the African-American community are poverty, income inequality, inadequate educational opportunity and rampant narcotic and gun trafficking within the neighborhoods of Pittsburgh.

These "often deplorable" conditions have prompted a coalition of leaders from within the city to form the African-American Gubernatorial Candidates Forum Coalition, to seek answers to their concerns from the candidates in May's Primary election to choose a Democratic candidate to oppose incumbent Republican Governor Tom Corbett.

The Coalition has invited the four candidates to participate in a public forum on Tuesday, April 22 at 6 pm at the Central Baptist Church to publicly discuss their responses to a set of pre-submitted questions, as well as take questions submitted by those in attendance at the meeting.

Sala Udin of the Pittsburgh Black Political Convention, who has been instrumental in developing the candidates forum, says that asking the candidates to answer the questions in person affords an opportunity for voters to "hear not just 'pat' answers, but hear what kind of innovative thought, and priority, they intend to bring to Western Pennsylvania and the African-American community."

The Coalition is non-partisan, but Reverend Victor Grigsby, Convenor of Hill District Ministerial Alliance, says experience has shown that the incumbent is opposed to tenets the group finds most significant.

"For example, we were extremely disappointed to see the Governor's recent budgets reduce education, which we think should be a priority, rather than an optional budgetary line item," Grigsby says. "Education in the Commonwealth is funded primarily by property taxes, which for urban centers is problematic as urban property values have declined in recent years." Grigsby says the group hopes to discover "what innovative ideas do these candidates bring to funding education in the Commonwealth," as well as what plans they may have to close the academic achievement gap and lower the high school dropout rate.

"Education is the civil rights issue of our time," says Esther Bush, President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh. "History has taught us that change and equality happen in classroom. All American children can change, and achieve equality in the classroom. I am pretty certain that the classroom is where our future lies."

"We have to continue to teach them and to educate them, because they are our future," Bush says. "This is a civil rights issue, not something that would be nice to do for our children."

While academics are only one subject area the group hopes to address, voter education is also a significant factor in the creation of the Coalition, which plans to widely disseminate the candidates positions on issues throughout the community.

"It's about [voter] education, so we can be informed voters," Bush says. "So we can choose the right candidate."

Rick Adams of the Western Pennsylvania Black Political Assembly says the group is also concerned with the candidates' economic positions.

"The issues of economic development, of unemployment, community development are paramount," Adams says. "They too are civil rights issues, especially one's ability to provide food and clothing and shelter for the family. Those are central to all of our existences, and the government has a tremendous largesse in terms of funds that can come to the cities. Urban areas are facing tremendous challenges."

"We are interested in what role the new Governor would play, whoever he or she may be, in terms of helping us develop our communities and making sure the people who traditionally live in these communities are able to stay there, to find employment, to own or rent homes there, and live like all the Commonwealth's citizens," Adams says.

"Another concern is that, too often, people in Western Pennsylvania feel that we are not attended to at the level of those in the east," says Tim Stevens of the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP). "We want that corrected. Will they respond to Western Pennsylvania the way they respond to Central Pennsylvania. Will they be willing to meet with our collective leadership here in terms of our concerns and aspirations?"

Reverend Glenn G. Grayson, Pastor of the Wesley Center AME Zion Church and a member of the Hill District Ministerial Alliance, says it is important to note the collaboration between the organizations.

"To have them come together under one umbrella shows the wonderful undergirding of us working together under one accord," Grayson says. "This is an array of wonderful leadership for the African-American community coming together."

"We believe historically that this is one of the strongest coalitions this city has seen as far as political empowerment is concerned," says Grigsby. "We stress that the invitation has been extended to all four of the candidates," although frontrunner Tom Wolf and Allyson Schwartz have indicated that scheduling conflicts make them unable to attend. Rob McCord and Katie McGinty have committed to be in attendance, and, Grigsby says, they hope that those who cannot attend will send surrogates as well as respond to the seven-question survey prior to the April 20 deadline set by the group.

In addition to the Ministerial Alliance, the Urban League, B-PEP, the Black Political Assembly and Black Political Convention, members of the Coalition are the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania, the African-American Leadership Association, African-American Women for Political Change, the Alleghenians, Ltd., the Alliance for Police Accountability, the Community Empowerment Association, the Homewood Advisory Board on Urban Affairs, and the Pittsburgh Justice Collaborative.

"We stress that this is to provide an education, so that we can be informed voters about issues that are important to us," Bush says. "Whether it's housing, education, incarceration, voting rights — the list goes on and on, and we want to be more informed and want all of our constituencies to be more informed with us."

McIntosh new Urban League VP

The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh announced that Monique McIntosh has joined the organization as the new vice president of Programs and Services. McIntosh is a former senior director of Programs/director of YWCA Home-

trator with a comprehensive background in program development and evaluation, outcomes management, budgeting and human resource development. She is a highly experienced professional and a valuable new asset to our organization,"

said **Esther Bush**, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, in a press release.

Monique McIntosh said, "My interest in nonprofit organizations has been driven by my desire to empower people with education and skill development, to lead them into the economic and social mainstream. I am honored to have been selected to join the leadership team of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh with their mission of enabling African Americans to achieve economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights."

McIntosh served the YWCA in various job titles since 2007, she has a Master of Education degree from the Department of Early, Middle and Special Education from California University of Pennsylvania; a Bachelor of Arts-Communication degree from the University of Pittsburgh; and also earned a Multimedia Technology Graduate Certificate from the Department of Applied Engineering and Technology at the California University of Pennsylvania. McIntosh is an Advisory Council Member of the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Academy Fire Project.

The Pittsburgh Urban League serves more than 20,000 individuals in educa-



MONIQUE McINTOSH

tion, health advocacy, housing, early childhood and youth development, hunger services, employment, career training, counseling, and economic empowerment. "Monique is a results-driven adminis-

trator with a comprehensive background in program development and evaluation, outcomes management, budgeting and human resource development. She is a highly experienced professional and a valuable new asset to our organization,"

