Urban League of
Greater Pittsburgh

Empowering Communities.
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Agency Media Report

September, October, November

2013

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Media Mentions

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9/3/2013	**A Supportive Family: Family Center finds New Life in Leadership Program Graduates**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
9/3/2013	**United Way expands its mentoring program** *Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	New Pittsburgh Courier
9/3/2013	**Pittsburghers reflect on march** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	New Pittsburgh Courier
9/3/2013	**Charity begins at home** *Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
9/15/2013	**Masters of our fate** **Editorial by Esther Bush**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
9/22/2013	**Worn-out Mantra** *Mentions: Esther Bush*	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
9/24/2013	**Sickle Cell Disease** Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh's Health Page	New Pittsburgh Courier
9/24/2013	**Two-way street** *Mentions: Esther Bush*	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
9/29/2013	**Wilson Center a hub of missed opportunities, observers say** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	Sunday Tribune-Review
9/30/2013	**The Progress—Pittsburgh's August Wilson Center Strug-gles** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
9/30/2013	**$7M foreclosure filed on August Wilson Center** *Mentions: Esther Bush*	Beaver County Times
10/1/2013	**High Ranking AT&T exec has local ties** *Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	New Pittsburgh Courier

Media Coverage

Date	Topic	Media Outlet
10/8/2013	**Opportunity of a Lifetime** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	Observer-Reporter
10/15/2013	**Heritage Parade pleases crowd, honors Mosley**	New Pittsburgh Courier
10/19/2013	**Manual against violence lists 748 tactics** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
10/27/2013	**Black leaders call on new generation of activists**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
10/28/2013	**Health sign-up options outlined** *Mentions: Urban League*	Tribune-Review
10/29/2013	**Community Calendar** *Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh* *State of Black Pittsburgh Conference*	New Pittsburgh Courier
11/1/2013	**Branden Ballard** *Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	Pittsburgh Magazine
11/5/2013	**Morial: Make strides in education employment and empowerment**	New Pittsburgh Courier
11/5/2013	**B-Pep campaigns for Black judge on federal bench** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*	New Pittsburgh Courier
11/8/2013	**A look at Peduto's new Cabinet** *Mentions: Urban League*	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
11/10/2013	**Unfinished Business** *Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League*	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Media Coverage

Date	Topic	Media Outlet
11/13/2013	**Ronald H. Brown Leadership Awards Gala**	Suburban Gazette
11/25/2013	**Education of African American Students** **Featured Guests: Esther Bush and Sabrina Saunders**	KQV Radio 1410 A.M. Elaine Effort Show
11/26/2013	**Smoking** Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh's Health Page	New Pittsburgh Courier
11/26/2013	**RMU professor, 49, loses battle with cancer** *Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, BMLDI*	Beaver County Times
11/27/2013	**Conversations on WQED** **Featured Guest: Esther Bush**	WQED Television

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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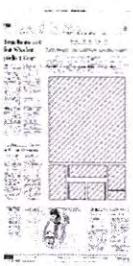
A SUPPORTIVE FAMILY

Julia Rendleman/Post-Gazette

Faith Harfield, family center worker, reads a book to Desiree Pryor, 3, left, and her aunt Neveah Pryor, 5, Tuesday at the Northview Heights Family Support Center. The girls played in the family room while Neveah's mother took a GED placement test at the facility.

Family center finds new life in leadership program graduates



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By Diana Nelson Jones
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

People usually disperse after graduation, but 17 participants in the Coro Center for Civic Leadership's Next Leaders program stayed together after their yearlong training ended this summer.

They had met one mentor who was doing impassioned work in a place that trainee Alex Bard, 32, said "we recognized had incredible need and incredible opportunity."

Obscurely located and underused in Northview Heights — an isolated public housing community on the North Side — the Family Support Center and its leader, Renita Freeman, had captivated Mr. Bard and other Next Leaders to focus their energies there. Each had started the Coro program with 17 project ideas.

Participation in Coro leadership programs isn't supposed to end; the whole point is instill a desire to go forth and make a difference, said Coro CEO Greg Crowley. But a total group commitment — albeit with some commitments stronger than others — to one project for the long haul is unusual.

Next Leaders was a pilot in 2011 in the Hill District to infuse community organizations with new ideas and prepare younger people to become leaders in community advocacy. The recent graduates focused on the North Side.

The Coro trainees begin their yearlong program by networking, meeting mentors, visiting community organizations and coming up with individual projects to implement.

"We saw how passionate Renita is about what she does and she was supportive of our interests," Mr. Bard said.

As one group, they received a $14,400 grant from the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development.

There were three grants available, Mr. Bard said, "and I said, 'Why don't we all go together on this for one big grant?'"

As their first grand ges-

SEE **CENTER,** PAGE B-5

ture, they gathered volunteers and painted the Family Support Center, removed a dangerous metal awning and planted flowers. Then they threw an after-party cookout for residents and gave away 200 book bags to children who were heading back to school.

"We served 398 people" food, Mr. Bard said.

"It was the most people we've ever had here at one time," Ms. Freeman said.

"A lot of people said they didn't know it was here," Mr. Bard said.

"I believe they don't, but they should," said Clarise Pryor, a resident of six years. "I use the center for everything. They're a wonderful resource, from food bank to child care to help with rent. I study there for my GED."

The Family Support Center is operated by the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, one of the league's three such centers in Allegheny County. It has five staff members, including family development specialists and a case manager. It is a drop-in center for child care, provides computers and a library, family counseling, a family room for relaxing and socializing, a play room, a classroom to get children ready for first grade, a kitchen, a small food bank, repasts after funerals and a stage for performances.

One of the Next Leaders wants to be a youth mentor on the site.

"We can give him space," Ms. Freeman said. "Depending on the ages [of kids] he wants to mentor, we can match him with families. I would also love to see a young men's program. We have so many fatherless boys."

Quincy Swatson, 22, of Manchester, a student at the Community College of Allegheny County studying liberal arts, is going to establish a pilot aquaponics system to test in Manchester and transfer to an unused greenhouse at the Family Support Center.

"I wanted a way to involve inner city kids in something positive with a byproduct a sustainable resource," he said. "They can grow produce and fish. We already have a North Side restaurant interested in buying the fish."

Ms. Freeman said the Family Support Center is available not just to Northview Heights residents but also has participants from the Allegheny Dwellings and Fineview.

"We have 50 families, but there is so much more potential," she said.

Mr. Bard, the program events manager at the New Hazlett Theater in Allegheny Center, said he wants to conduct a community survey to make people more aware of the center and to find out how it can get more residents to use it.

"People in public housing often detach themselves" when they live in isolated places like Northview Heights, said Ms. Freeman, who grew up in the community and worked her way through the University of Pittsburgh, where she got a bachelor's degree in communications.

"This place is cut off, and that's a challenge," she said. "A lot of people don't even think about the future much less prepare for it. But we have a mechanism here for people to grow."

Coro is currently soliciting nominees and applicants from Pittsburgh's southern neighborhoods for 2013-14. For more information, visit www.coropittsburgh.org.

Diana Nelson Jones: djones@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1626. Read her blog City Walkabout at www.post-gazette.com/city-walk.

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"A lot of people don't even think about the future much less prepare for it. But we have a mechanism here for people to grow."

— Renita Freeman,
leader of Northview Heights Family Support Center

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United Way expands its mentoring program

by Ashley Johnson
Courier Staff Writer

With school in session this week for students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and surrounding districts, students will have to transition from summer break mode to back-to-school mode. While students in all grades will be making some form of transition, it is even harder for those entering middle school. Most middle school students will be coming from a familiar elementary school to a new middle school, or facing tougher educational lessons or even encountering new peer pressures.

In an effort to reach more students, and to make their transitions easier and keep them on the path to success, the United Way, in conjunction with the Youth Futures Commission and the Mentoring Partnership of Southwest Pennsylvania, has expanded their Be a Middle School Mentor program, formerly known as the Be a 6th Grade Mentor program, to reach students in grades beyond 6th and in more schools.

"From the Pittsburgh Public School, other districts and research, we've heard the middle school (years) are pivotal times for young people," said Damon Bethea, director of Mentoring Projects for the United Way Allegheny County. "Although there are many phases of transition in one's life, middle school is the most significant transition (for young people) and there is a lot going on with young people during this time."

Many say middle school is the most crucial time in a young person's life because it is when development begins. According to Bethea, research says that about 60 percent of youth begin to lose interest in education between elementary school and high school.

By mentors committing one hour a week to their mentees, Bethea said Be a Middle School Mentor: helps students with the transition from elementary school to middle school and ultimately from middle school to high school; helps them to set career goals; gets them ready for the Pittsburgh Promise secondary education scholarship; helps them address peer pressure, and lets them know that there is a caring adult there for them.

The mentoring program, which was first launched in 2009, began by only focusing on 6th grade students, but after a need and a want to reach more youth, Bethea said the program decided to expand its reach. In

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its inception, the program matched 225 sixth grade students with mentors, last year 305 and this year, for the 2013-2014 school year, he said the program projects to match approximately 450 students.

Their goal is more attainable because this year, Be a Middle School Mentor will be in 12 Pittsburgh Public Schools: Allegheny Traditional Academy, Arsenal Elementary School, Pittsburgh Classical Academy, Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, Schiller Classical Academy, South Hills Middle School, Pittsburgh Sterrett, and Pittsburgh South Brook, with Pittsburgh Manchester, Pittsburgh Milliones/University Prep, Pittsburgh Obama Academy and Pittsburgh Westinghouse being added this year.

Mercedes Howze, a mentor at Pittsburgh Sterrett through the Mt. Ararat Community Activity Center and a Pittsburgh Public Schools employee, said she participates in the program because she feels it's her duty to make a commitment beyond the classroom and finds it's a good way to attract and retain families in the district.

She also said, mentoring "provides that additional guidance that many need, not only academically and socially, but mentally, physically and emotionally."

According to a release by the United Way, the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center recently conducted a study evaluating the first two years of the program and found that youth participating in the program made gains in eligibility for the Pittsburgh Promise among the criteria of attendance and GPA. The study reported that prior to participating in the mentoring program, 34 percent of program youth and 51 percent of comparison youth had GPA's that qualified them for the Pittsburgh Promise. At the end of the program, the numbers increased to 57 and 55 percent respectively.

With the program's growing success, Bethea said there is a need for more volunteers, especially African-American volunteers. He said last year 77 percent of its program's mentees were African-Americans and only 15-20 percent of its mentors were African-American.

"Of course we would love to have more. We are working closer with the Urban League (of Greater Pittsburgh) to attain more Black mentors," he said. "There are many in our community that talk about the plight of young people and where they are going. This (mentoring) is one avenue where adults can volunteer to plant a seed to encourage them to stay on the right path, and also be an example and model of how you can be a success and the importance of education."

Along with the Urban League, organizations such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, Communities in Schools, and Mt. Ararat Community Activity Center also partner with Be a Middle School Mentor to bring mentees and mentors together for a lasting relationship.

As for the program's future, Bethea said they will continue to work with Pittsburgh Public Schools and the students to do whatever they can to have a positive effect on their education and in their lives.

For more information on Be a Middle School Mentor, visit www.beamiddleschoolmentor.org.

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A HELPING HAND—Briana Snyder, a student at Pittsburgh Sterrett and participant in the United Way of Allegheny County's "Be a Middle School Mentor" program, with mentor Mercedes Howze. (Photo courtesy of Blender Inc.)

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TO REALIZE THE DREAM—Rev. Al Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Martin Luther King III, Sybrina Fulton and Nancy Pelosi were among those leading the 50th Anniversary March on Washington, Aug. 24.

Pittsburghers reflect on march

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

When Agnes Curry went to the 1963 March on Washington, she wore a button, and the first word on it was "jobs." She wore it again last weekend, because 50 years later, it is still an issue for African-Americans.

"It was a spur-of-the-moment road trip for some of us from Pitt," she said of the 1963 march. "We got on the train and when we got off I was struck with both fear and awe; fear because there were so many police, but they directed us to the right streets, and the awe at seeing all those people.

"I remember Martin and John Lewis. And we thought once the country saw it, this would be the answer. But the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Curry said when she went Aug. 24, she was glad to have family with her this time, especially her great-great-nephew Kenyon Collins, 3.

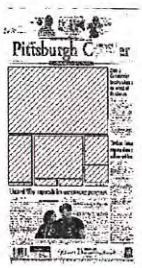
"He asked a whole lot of questions. He was great, and we told him he had to come back in 50 years," she said.

The differences, Curry noticed, were that the crowd was kept away from the reflecting pool on the mall, and well back from the Lincoln Memorial steps. She also said this time there were activists from a variety of groups pushing other agendas like gay rights or global warming, but they did not detract from the main issue—though Blacks have come a long way, there is far to go.

"There are things that have gotten worse—voting rights was supposed to be secure," she said. "That's why I had my 'jobs' button on. And a White guy saw it, came over and hugged me because he'd been there in '63. There's a picture of us on Facebook, but now, I've forgotten his name."

Curry said the experience would not have been possible without the Urban League of Pittsburgh, which took two buses to Washington, D.C., for the anniversary.

"They took us to the Hyatt so we could get refreshed and there was a pre-rally with Marc Morial (National Urban League CEO) and Rev. Jesse Jackson, and then over to the March," she said. "That was the real difference. As some-



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one said, we're not fighting Jim Crow, now it's James F. Crow III Esq."

Pittsburgh Urban League President and CEO Esther Bush said she was pleased the National office had arranged things so smoothly for groups from across the country. She was also pleased that one of her board members paid for one of the buses herself.

"She had been to our national conference, so when the time came she just handed me a check and said do it," Bush said. "The national office had t-shirts waiting for us, snacks. It was very well organized."

Of the experience itself, Bush said it was a mixture of excitement and sadness.

"It was about celebrating the past, but also about the work yet to be done," she said. "It was gratifying to have young people from our Education and Youth Department and our Black Male Leadership Institute—a couple of them took a photo with Dick Gregory."

"But again, it's sad because you work so hard to achieve job equity, voting rights, and you have to go back to win it all over again with new people."

NAACP Pittsburgh Unit President Connie Parker, who took a busload of 50 to the anniversary, agreed, saying it was a beautiful day and an invigorating experience seeing so many people, but the fact that they had to be there showed there is much left undone.

"I found a nice spot where I could see the crowd, all ages, all colors; there were a lot of people with other issues, but it's the anniversary of an event that gave them the opportunity to do that," she said. "And some of the issues are universal. I don't know how happy Dr. King would be especially with the state of Black education, and the shootings, and the out of control police. As far as that goes, it might as well be 1963 or worse."

Chase Patterson, who along with the Adonai Center for Human Capital Development, took a bus of 50 people—most between the ages of 15-24, said it was a great experience—especially having his 7-year-old niece and 8-year-old godson along.

"I've learned a lot about the original march, and it was great to feel the power I'd heard people talk about and to be part of history," he said. "But it wasn't just the experience, it was the charge—we've come a great distance but are still far from fulfilling the dream.

"It was great to see 100,000 people empowered, and to know that when I'm 80, these kids can come back and remember. Hell yeah, I'll go with them—but I'll be riding a push buggy."

Black Political Empowerment Project President Tim Stevens actually had an old college friend, John Robison using a scooter, on the trip.

"The Merton Center was wonderful. The neat thing about it was all those people supporting each other. We had 9-year-olds and someone 87. Evelyn Hawkins, who used to be on WDUQ, came from Michigan to ride with us," he said. "It was great to make a statement that the work of 1963 is not done, and to know you're not alone."

Other groups, including B-PEP and the Thomas Merton Center also took buses to the event.

Lois "Toni" McClendon, who rode with them, said she remembers watching the original March on television, so it was a pleasure to attend the anniversary.

"I've been an activist for a long time, and it was an experience to be with so many young people, and old people, and women. It was part of history."

There were a total of 10 buses from Pittsburgh.

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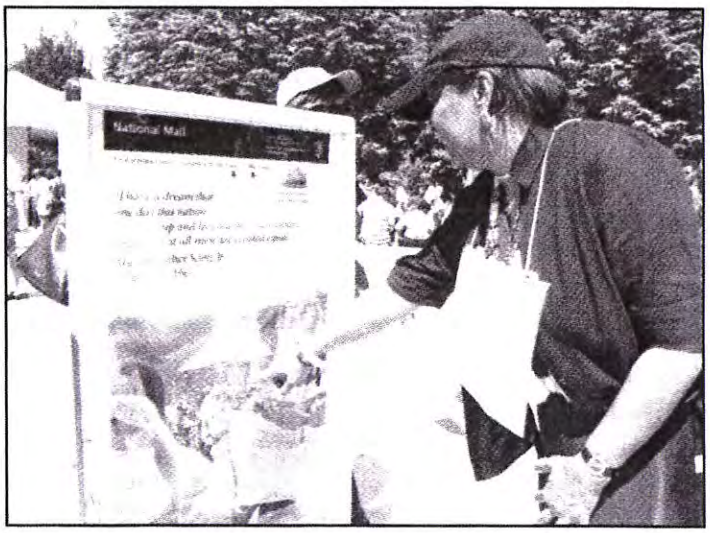

LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY—Sharon Ambush, of Washington, D.C., points to herself in a photo taken during the 1963 March on Washington. She was among those returning for the 50th Anniversary. (Photos by J.L. Martello)

MAKING US PROUD—Members of the Pittsburgh NAACP and others who rode their bus to Washington, D.C., show their pride in front of the WWII Memorial. (Photos by J.L. Martello)

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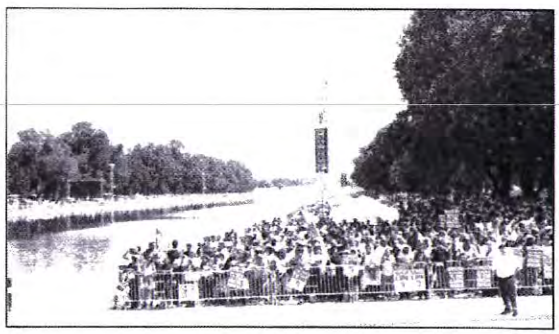
Pittsburghers reflect on March on Washington

GET ON THE BUS—Pittsburghers on one of the many buses from the city that traveled to D.C.

GETTING READY FOR SPEAKERS—Pittsburghers sitting, with Washington monument behind them, on the grass preparing for the speakers start to speak.

ON THE FRONT LINE AGAIN—Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, co-founder with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and former president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1977-97, rolls in his wheel chair in the march. He was a key figure in the Civil Rights struggle and the 1963 March on Washington.

ON THE MARCH—Marchers coming down Independence Avenue headed to the Washington Monument.



AND THE PEOPLE GATHERED

LET THE MARCH BEGIN—Media standing in front of the people who are going to march.

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Lake Fong/Post-Gazette

From left, Amy Carpenter, staff attorney at Neighborhood Legal Services Association; Doreen Mitchell, an intake specialist; Edward Van Stevenson, Jr., a managing attorney; and Christine Kirby, a development director, hold a staff meeting at their Downtown office on Thursday.

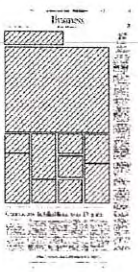
Charity begins at home

Faced with a 25 percent drop in funding since 2011 that has resulted in staff and service cuts, **Neighborohood Legal Services** has been taking a hard look at creative ways to generate support

By Joyce Gannon
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Katie Kenyon has never been at ease asking people for money — even for wrapping paper sales that benefit her children's school.

So Ms. Kenyon, a partner with Downtown law firm Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti, admitted she was a bit squeamish at recent training sessions where she and other board members of Neighborhood Legal Ser-



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vices Association learned how to appeal for donations.

"I myself wasn't all that comfortable and I'm sure a lot of people around the table said, 'I'm not sure this is what I signed up for,'" said Ms. Kenyon, treasurer of the nonprofit organization that provides free legal help for individuals in need.

Faced with a 25 percent drop in funding since 2011 that has resulted in staff and service cuts, the association's board has been taking a hard look at creative ways to generate support and decided to start with its own members.

"At the core of it, I think there was a consensus among the lawyers and officers and executive committee that the board needs to be asked to do more," said Max Laun, president-elect of the legal services association board and general counsel for Alcoa. "In some nonprofits, there's almost the expectation that if you're on the board, you'll get involved in fundraising. But we've never had that and never been in the position to say, 'Please fundraise for the organization.'"

As NLSA and other nonprofits scramble to make up deep funding shortages in the wake of the economic recession and government cutbacks, many have looked inward for fundraising, said Peggy Morrison Outon, executive director of the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University.

Among those the Bayer Center has worked with to provide staff and board members with fund development skills, she said, are the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh; Transitional Services Inc., Homestead; the Community Foundation of Greene County; and the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Washington, D.C.

"For lots of nonprofits, the rules of the game have changed so dramatically. They haven't been promoting themselves and now have to supplement their revenues," Ms. Outon said. "They have to find a way to become more competitive in a tremendously crowded marketplace."

For the Neighborhood Legal Services Association, the Bayer Center conducted a day-long retreat focused on fundraising and encouraged staff and nearly 40 board members to "tell their stories in ways more compelling than social services normally do."

To that end, the staff has produced vignettes about clients and what kind of services the association provides. Then board members and staff will spread those stories — in the form of YouTube videos or print and electronic newsletters — to foundations, individuals and other potential or existing donors.

For instance, an upcoming newsletter will feature the story of a World War II veteran who was denied Social Security retirement benefits because he was orphaned as a baby and didn't possess an official birth certificate. The association took the case and the man was awarded almost $90,000 in accrued benefits.

The video testimonials feature clients telling their own stories of how NLSA attorneys helped resolve other civil court issues such as elder abuse, mortgage fraud, child custody and disability benefits.

"Storytelling gets deeply into why you matter," Ms. Outon said. "People want to know if what you're doing matters or if it makes things better."

Aside from pitching their message to traditional nonprofit funding sources such as foundations, the association's board and staff members are being trained to deliver their message to people they already know and with whom they interact regularly at their churches, offices or children's schools, Ms. Outon said.

"They represent NLSA in the community and can be more directly an advocate by taking the opportunity to speak up and say, 'Here's what we do.'"

The organization has taken a dramatic hit from state and federal funding cutbacks, including the recent federal sequestration, said Robert Racunas, executive director.

Its annual budget fell from $5.5 million in 2011 to less than $4.2 million this year, he said. Total staff was slashed by the equivalent of 19 full-time positions during that time period.

Meanwhile, client demand hasn't wavered.

The Neighborhood Legal Services Association handled legal issues for about 11,000 clients last year in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler and Lawrence counties.

While the staff of about 30 lawyers worked on the majority of cases, volunteer attorneys picked up about 2,000.

The association reduced office hours for clients at its Pittsburgh office a year ago and is currently examining possible reductions of services in Butler and Lawrence counties, Mr. Racunas said. "We've tried to do a lot of innovative things like a very sophisticated help line so [clients] can call in and don't need to come in. And we're trying to maximize service for those that do come in with a paperless intake system."

As for the board and employees pitch-

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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ing in on fundraising duties, he believes it's a critical step toward generating more donations.

"They are acting as ambassadors to let people know we are a community service that everyone should have a stake in. Sometimes because of necessity, you become creative. I think our staff, because they are in the trenches and see the clients, can be very effective in communicating our message."

At the retreat and training sessions for the association, Ms. Outon picked up on the fact that fundraising made some board and staff members nervous. "Some of them would rather have their back teeth extracted than think like fundraisers."

Despite her own apprehension about appealing for donations, Ms. Kenyon expects the group will rally for the cause. "Everyone has such belief in NLSA that they will push themselves for the greater good."

Joyce Gannon: jgannon@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1580.

"For lots of nonprofits, the rules of the game have changed so dramatically. They haven't been promoting themselves and now have to supplement their revenues"

— Peggy Morrison Outon,
executive director of the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University

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Section: Forum
Keyword: Esther L. Bush

Masters of our fate

African-American students in Pittsburgh will do fine if we give them great teachers, argues the Urban League's **ESTHER BUSH**

I recently returned to Pittsburgh from Washington, D.C., where I celebrated and was challenged by the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. I am humbled thinking about how far we've come and how much we have left to do.

In our schools, we still see inequities that existed in 1963 despite measurable progress in African-American student achievement. During the original march, Whitney Young Jr., president of the National Urban League, pointed out that black children were confined to "congested, ill-equipped schools, which breed dropouts and smother motivation." In many places, they still are — including right here in Pittsburgh.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, last year three out of every four black children still attended mostly segregated schools that received significantly fewer resources than majority-white schools. In Pittsburgh, the number of black students performing at grade level in 2012 was 30 percentage points lower than white students; their graduation rate was 15 percent less than white students.

These gaps are not inevitable; they are a result of choices made over time. We can make different choices that raise the bar for all of our students, black and white. The mistaken choices of the past have led to a poverty rate for African-Americans that is higher in our region for children under 5 than any other major urban region in the country.

As president of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and a former teacher, I know the devastating impact that poverty has on children. Just like those who marched 50 years ago, I still believe that the best anti-poverty program for any child is a quality education. And, as researchers tell us, at the core of quality education is a great teacher.

A great teacher for a child, whether black or white, poor or rich, can have an impact that lasts a lifetime. A December 2011 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research on the long-term impact of teachers showed that children who experience great teaching in just one year of schooling increase their chances of going to college, earn more over their lifetimes and avoid getting pregnant as teens. Closer to home, a Mathematica Policy Research report shows that our most effective teachers in Pittsburgh produce gains in student achievement that, if accumulated over several years, could erase the achievement gap between black and white students.

To achieve Martin Luther King's dream, our children need to be able to achieve — no matter what their circumstances — and we need to support them by providing a great teacher in front of them every day.

Thanks to an initiative by the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers to define, measure and improve teaching quality, we know that a little more than 200, or 15 percent, of the teachers who received the new ratings are "distinguished" — the kind of teachers who do whatever it takes to help their students succeed. Yet nearly one of every 10 current teachers (9.3 percent, or about 130) is "failing." When you add in those who were rated "needs improvement," that number jumps up to 15 percent.

Initial estimates by Pittsburgh Public Schools show that more than 5,000 of the district's African-American students had at least one teacher who was considered failing over the course of their school day. Sadly, many of these teachers won't be removed anytime soon. The new evaluations are "no stakes" this year, which means it could be three

SEE **BUSH,** PAGE B-4

more years of ineffective teaching for some of our neediest students.

Let's not hide from this information. Instead, let's use it to get teachers the support they need to improve or help them transition to new jobs. Our children deserve the very best and we cannot be complacent in accepting schools that don't deliver on that promise. Our fight must be to provide great teaching for our children, as education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Let us take the fate of public education into our own hands and demand the best from our students and teachers. As President Barack Obama said, "The March on Washington teaches us that we are not trapped by the mistakes of history, that we are masters of our fate."

Esther Bush is president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh (ulpgh.org).

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Section: Forum
Keyword: Esther L. Bush

Worn-out mantra

In response to Esther Bush's Forum article ("Masters of Our Fate: African-American Students in Pittsburgh Will Do Fine If We Give Them Great Teachers," Sept. 15): As a public school teacher who works regularly with primary source documents, I encourage my students to check the author of the documents under study. In this way, they are better informed of the writer's intent. Thus, I was more than surprised when the PG failed to inform readers that Esther Bush is a strong proponent of charter schools, while she laments the fact that 15 percent of the teaching force in Pittsburgh won't be removed "anytime soon."

Ms. Bush goes on to repeat the same mantra we hear from so-called education reformers, that is, it's the sole responsibility of a "great" teacher to impact a child's life. Teachers certainly must do as much as they can. But it is also the responsibility of the community, politicians and school administrators. It takes a village to raise a child. I would encourage your readers to dig more deeply into the debates that are affecting the city and schools — especially the so-called reform efforts that are undermining public education, very often in the interest of private profit and corporate gain.

If we love our city and region as much as I think we do, we'll fight to keep our schools open and to keep our teachers in the classrooms, as opposed to rating and firing them based on suspect data methods. Poverty and segregation are the twin-evil enemies facing our urban youth. Recognizing and working to end those injustices, as opposed to vilifying teachers, should be the rallying cry of all who care about our children.

KATE DAHER
Wilkinsburg

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NEW PITTSBURGH COURIER

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Section: Lifestyles
Keyword: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

ESTHER BUSH

Sickle Cell Disease

These pages focus on health disparities in the Pittsburgh region. They provide important health information, as well as information about research opportunities and community resources. All articles can also 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 Inclusion.

This month the "Take Charge of Your Health" page focuses on a disease with which many African Americans are familiar. Last week, Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, chief of adolescent medicine at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League, sat down to talk about sickle cell disease.

EM: Ms. Bush, it's nice to see you again. I know you have a strong interest in the health of all of us living in the Pittsburgh region. This month's topic is sickle cell disease (SCD). I know that the Urban League has been concerned about SCD for decades, having started what we now know as the Sickle Cell Society, a freestanding nonprofit organization in Pittsburgh.

EB: Yes, what a great overview. September is National Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Month, so it's fitting that we're focusing on this disease that affects many people. I was surprised to see from Dr. Krishnamurti's overview that one in 12 African Americans suffer from this painful genetic disease.

EM: Yes, SCD is an inherited disease. Because of research and medical advancements, we know a lot more about this disease. We also know more about how to treat it so that people living with the disease can have a better quality of life. In your opinion, what can people who suffer from SCD do to improve their health?

EB: If you have SCD, or know someone who does, know that there are many resources available in Pittsburgh. The Ryan Clark Cure League, as well as the Sickle Cell Society Inc., offer information, resources and support. As highlighted this month, a lot of sickle cell disease research is happening at the University of Pittsburgh. Children who are born with SCD can begin treatment immediately. The right treatment can help people who have this disease live longer. As always, regular visits with your primary care physician are important, as are following instructions for prescribed medications, eating healthfully and drinking plenty of water.

EM: Very true. Thank you, again, for your time, Ms. Bush. We look forward to next month when we discuss health literacy and the Affordable Care Act. For more information, please contact the Community PARTners Core at 412-624-8139.

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Keyword: Esther L. Bush

Two-way street

HARRY C. WARD JR.
Schenley Heights

Regarding "Masters of Our Own Fate" (Forum, Sept. 15) by Esther Bush: It was good in that it was well-written, informative, enlightening and inspiring. I am not an expert on education. It is a broad topic, where much has been researched, written and discussed. What I do know is there must be parental and child involvement. What are their responsibilities? Ms. Bush puts the onus of learning solely on the teacher and that will not work. Teaching and learning are a two-way street where teachers teach and students study.

When I was a student at Schenley High School, I attended an assembly where an educator said he did not believe learning is easy, that it requires hard work. When I attended college, I was informed that for every hour in class, two hours of study are required.

In April 2004, I attended an event marking the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education at Carnegie Music Hall. A conservative lady who was on the panel said African-American students spend five hours a day watching television. A liberal lady later stood up and said she was outraged by that statement, and the audience responded in a loud uproar. I thought how could the achievement gap be narrowed if students are watching that much TV a day.

When President Barack Obama accepted the Democratic Party nomination for president in 2008, he spoke regarding aid for education. He said government cannot do it all. "Turn off the TV set," he has said. His wife, Michelle, sets a good example by not allowing their two daughters to watch television during the week because they are required to study.

Regardless of a student's level of education, they should study.

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Wilson Center a hub of missed opportunities, observers say

Criticism abounds: Ties to playwright limited; revenue streams overlooked; city disengaged

BY **DEBRA ERDLEY**

Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson recounted his love-hate relationship with his hometown of Pittsburgh many times before his death in 2005.

"It's somehow harder to do almost anything you want to do in Pittsburgh than it is anywhere else," Wilson told the New Pittsburgh Courier in 1992. "But it's who I am. The city has molded and shaped me, in large part, to who I am. I cannot divorce myself."

Wilson's prickly relationship with the city seems to be replaying in the struggles of the financially strapped Downtown cultural center that bears his name.

Four years after it opened to rave reviews and high hopes that it would draw international audiences, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture has some people wondering whose culture it reflects.

Interim Director Oliver Byrd, a retired bank executive and former board member who became the center's third director in four years, earlier this month issued a detailed letter explaining the center's challenges.

Byrd declined to elaborate on plans for this story.

CENTER · A4

"Our focus is on delivering results, and our experience in responding to hypothetical things people say about what it takes has not been particularly fruitful," Byrd told the Tribune-Review.

On Thursday, Dollar Bank notified the Allegheny County Sheriff's Office that it planned to foreclose against the center for defaulting on a $7.06 million mortgage. The bank said the center hasn't made payments since January and asked a judge to appoint a receiver. The center ended fiscal 2013 with a $1.8 million deficit.

Wilson, born in 1945, grew up in the Hill District as one of six children of a black cleaning woman and a white German immigrant baker who was absent for much of Wilson's life. When his father died in 1965, Wilson, born Frederick August Kittel, took his mother Daisy's maiden name.

A self-educated writer who left Pittsburgh's Central Catholic High School amid racial taunts, Wilson rose to fame by writing plays known as the Pittsburgh Cycle while living in St. Paul and Seattle. He left Pittsburgh in 1978.

His plays "Fences," "The Piano Lesson" and "Jitney," soaring poetic works grounded in the day-to-day lives of blacks in the Hill District, shone a laser on the cancer of racism. Through them, "The Hill" became famous on Broadway and beyond.

Four months after Wilson's death, a group that spearheaded the construction of a black cultural center in Pittsburgh added his name to it, vowing to honor the playwright's spirit.

Yet except for an interactive art and history exhibit, the August Wilson Center bears little trace of Wilson, whom some consider the 20th century's greatest American playwright.

A gift shop that carried Wilson's works and mementos of black artists and athletes is shuttered and locked. The street-level café is vacant, its empty tables and chairs reminders of absent patrons.

Although Wilson returned to Pittsburgh often and immersed himself in the city's arts community, he lived in Seattle. He is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in O'Hara.

The grave's headstone is modest. Designers of the August Wilson Center, on the other hand, spared little to produce the ultramodern, $40 million facility. The center, built in the Cultural District about a mile from the Hill, includes a theater, a gallery, classrooms and a dance studio. On a recent weekday afternoon, a security guard at the front desk was the only person in the center.

Its newest tenant, Orchard Hill Church, a largely white Wexford megachurch, will rent the center on Sunday mornings for the next year.

Orchard Hill spokesman Kevin Cotter said 100 church members pledged to trek into the city as the church seeks a toehold among Downtown's growing residential population.

"It's a leap of faith, an answer to prayer," Cotter said.

Wilson's niece Kimberly Ellis, who directs the Historic Hill Institute and runs Fierce Star Media, said it sounds like a steady stream of income.

"That's funding (the center) can depend upon every Sunday," she said, likening the church attendees to season subscribers.

A $7.1 million debt dating to unforeseen construction costs and significant declines in contributions between 2010 and 2012 forced the center's board to scrutinize its budget and operating staff. Several employees lost jobs in the spring.

Ellis is helping her brother Paul promote renovation of the three-story brick row house in the Hill where Daisy Wilson raised her family. Ellis

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said she has volunteered to help with the center's digital marketing strategy.

"I want them to succeed for sure. I don't want the August Wilson Center to be just a shell, a building where there is no meaning," Ellis said.

Ellis isn't on the center's board and said she's not privy to its operating problems.

Many civic leaders who are active in the city's arts community declined to comment, saying they know nothing about the center's operation. Some acknowledged their hesitancy to be quoted about a touchy issue with racial undertones.

Others were blunt.

Eric A. Smith, managing director of Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, said center officials must promote the building to black Pittsburghers and local artists.

Bypassing local artists sends a message to outsiders about what Pittsburgh values, and that is the wrong message, Smith said.

Esther Bush, president of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and a former member of the center's governing board, remains its staunch supporter.

"But it might be time to sit down and re-evaluate the mission and vision of the center and re-evaluate the audience they are trying to bring in," Bush said.

Popular shows, such as the play written by actor-producer Tyler Perry that Bush attended at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum in Oakland, can draw large crowds.

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"The center is a wonderful place. It has great acoustics and gallery spaces. It could be utilized a lot better than it is," she said.

Dan Martin, dean of the College of Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon University and former director of the university's Institute for the Management of Creative Enterprises, said many arts venues initially founder.

"It is based on the mentality of the movie 'Field of Dreams,' that if you build it, they will come. It's a great movie theme, but it's a terrible strategy for operating a place like the Wilson Center," Martin said.

Martin urged center officials to market rental opportunities aggressively and host a variety of creative arts.

"What has to happen is the creation of a sense of relevancy in the stakeholders so people see value in it and want to contribute to it," he said.

Former Pittsburgh Councilwoman Tonya Payne said center officials were not interested in accepting her business when she called several times last year to book a Christmas party.

"I thought maybe it was just because it was me calling, so I asked someone else to call. They never got back to her either," Payne said.

Others related similar stories, but bookings suggest that unresponsiveness may be changing.

On Saturday, the center will offer a daylong schedule of activities following the city's African American Heritage Day Parade. Later in October, it will host Zimmerman & DePerrot, a corps of five circus artists and dancers presented by the Pittsburgh Dance Council.

NEED, a scholarship program for black students, will hold its gala there on Oct. 19, and the Women and Girls Foundation will host its annual function on Nov. 16.

Bill Strickland, who founded the acclaimed Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in the North Side to bring art and jazz to the community, said he knows little about the center.

"But I have great admiration for their objectives and goals," he said, urging center leaders to "engage the community."

Mario Garcia Durham, president of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters in Washington, said venues across the country experienced similar growing pains, including Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami and the Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco.

"In the best-case scenario, the organization assesses what its assets are in the community and looks at how it is operating," Durham said. "All of the organizations I listed pulled out (of their trouble) and are doing OK, if not thriving.

"We all hope it works itself out. You have a wonderful building and a wonderful community that wants to make this a success."

Debra Erdley is a Trib Total Media staff writer. Reach her at 412-320-7996 or derdley@tribweb.com.

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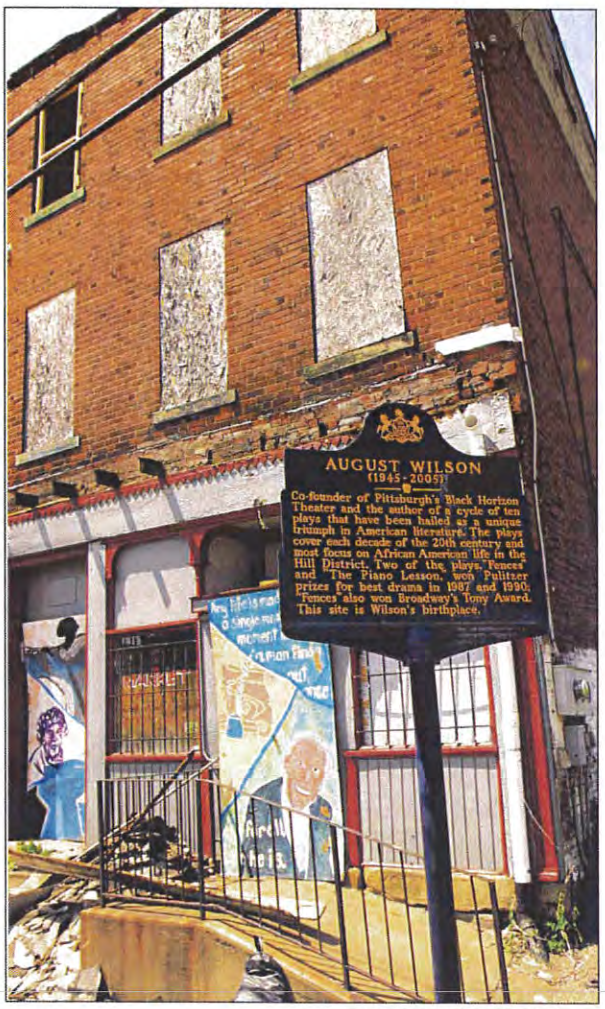
DAN MARTIN

DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

PHILIP G. PAVELY | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

August Wilson is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in O'Hara, but he spent most of his time in St. Paul and Seattle, where he died of liver cancer on Oct. 2, 2005.



KEITH HODAN | TRIBUNE-REVIEW FILE

Wilson's boyhood home on Bedford Avenue in the Hill District was named a historic landmark on May 30, 2007. His nephew, Paul Ellis, hopes to transform the building and adjacent property into a creative space for artists.

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Pittsburgh's August Wilson Center struggles

By Debra Erdley
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson recounted his love-hate relationship with his hometown of Pittsburgh many times before his death in 2005.

"It's somehow harder to do almost anything you want to do in Pittsburgh than it is anywhere else," Wilson told the New Pittsburgh Courier in 1992. "But it's who I am. The city has molded and shaped me, in large part, to who I am. I cannot divorce myself."

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"I thought maybe it was just because it was me calling, so I asked someone else to call. They never got back to her either," Payne said.

Others related similar stories, but bookings suggest that unresponsiveness may be changing.

On Saturday, the center will offer a daylong schedule of activities following the city's African American Heritage Day Parade. Later in October, it will host Zimmerman & DePerrot, a corps of five circus artists and dancers presented by the Pittsburgh Dance Council.

NEED, a scholarship program for black students, will hold its gala there on Oct. 19, and the Women and Girls Foundation will host its annual function on Nov. 16.

Bill Strickland, who founded the acclaimed Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in the North Side to bring art and jazz to the community, said he knows little about the center.

"But I have great admiration for their objectives and goals," he said, urging center leaders to "engage the community."

Mario Garcia Durham, president of the Association of

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Performing Arts Presenters in Washington, said venues across the country experienced similar growing pains, including Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami and the Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco.

"In the best-case scenario, the organization assesses what its assets are in the community and looks at how it is operating," Durham said.

"All of the organizations I listed pulled out (of their trouble) and are doing OK, if not thriving.

"We all hope it works itself out. You have a wonderful building and a wonderful community that wants to make this a success."

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REGION

$7M foreclosure filed on August Wilson Center

BY DEBRA ERDLEY
PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

PITTSBURGH — Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson recounted his love-hate relationship with his hometown of Pittsburgh many times before his death in 2005.

"It's somehow harder to do almost anything you want to do in Pittsburgh than it is anywhere else," Wilson told the New Pittsburgh Courier in 1992. "But it's who I am. The city has molded and shaped me, in large part, to who I am. I cannot divorce myself."

Wilson's prickly relationship with the city seems to be replaying in the struggles of the financially strapped downtown cultural center that bears his name.

Four years after it opened to rave reviews and high hopes that it would draw international audiences, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture has some people wondering whose culture it reflects.

Interim Director Oliver Byrd, a retired bank executive and former board member who became the center's third director in four years, earlier this month issued a detailed letter explaining the center's challenges.

Byrd declined to elaborate on plans for this story.

"Our focus is on delivering results, and our experience in responding to hypothetical things people say about what it takes has not been particularly fruitful," Byrd told the Tribune-Review.

Dollar Bank notified the Allegheny County sheriff's office on Thursday that it planned to foreclose against the center for defaulting on a $7.06 million mortgage. The bank said the center hasn't made payments since January and asked a judge to appoint a receiver. The center ended fiscal 2013 with a $1.8 million deficit.

Wilson, born in 1945, grew up in the Hill District as one of six children of a black cleaning woman and a white German immigrant baker who was absent for much of Wilson's life. When his father died in 1965, Wilson, born Frederick August Kittel, took his mother Daisy's maiden name.

A self-educated writer who left Pittsburgh's Central Catholic High School amid racial taunts, Wilson rose to fame by writing plays known as the Pittsburgh Cycle while living in St. Paul and Seattle. He left Pittsburgh in 1978.

His plays "Fences," "The Piano Lesson" and "Jitney," soaring poetic works grounded in the day-to-day lives of blacks in the Hill District, shone a laser on the cancer of racism. Through them, "The Hill" became famous on Broadway and beyond.

Four months after Wilson's death, a group that spearheaded the construction of a black cultural center in Pittsburgh added his name to it, vowing to honor the playwright's spirit.

Yet except for an interactive art and history exhibit, the August Wilson Center bears little trace of Wilson, whom some consider the 20th century's greatest American playwright.

A gift shop that carried Wilson's works and mementos of black artists and athletes is shuttered and locked. The street-level cafe is vacant, its empty tables and chairs reminders of absent patrons.

Although Wilson returned to Pittsburgh often and immersed himself in the city's arts community, he lived in Seattle. He is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in O'Hara Township.

The grave's headstone is modest. Designers of the August Wilson Center, on the other hand, spared little to produce the ultramodern, $40 million facility. The center, built in the Cultural District about a mile from the Hill, includes a theater, a gallery, classrooms and a dance studio. On a recent weekday afternoon, a security guard at the front desk was the only person in the center.

Its newest tenant, Orchard Hill Church, a largely white Wexford-area megachurch, will rent the center on Sunday mornings for the next year.

Orchard Hill spokesman Kevin Cotter said 100 church members pledged to trek into the city as the church seeks a toehold among downtown's growing residential population.

Wilson's niece Kimberly Ellis, who directs the Historic Hill Institute and runs Fierce Star Media, said it sounds like a steady stream of income.

"That's funding (the center) can depend upon every Sunday," she said, likening the church attendees to season subscribers.

A $7.1 million debt dating to unforeseen construction costs and significant declines in contributions between 2010 and 2012 forced the center's board to scrutinize its budget and operating staff. Several employees lost jobs in the spring.

Ellis is helping her brother Paul promote renovation of the three-story brick row

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house in the Hill where Daisy Wilson raised her family. Ellis said she has volunteered to help with the center's digital marketing strategy.

"I want them to succeed for sure. I don't want the August Wilson Center to be just a shell, a building where there is no meaning," Ellis said.

Ellis isn't on the center's board and said she's not privy to its operating problems.

Many civic leaders who are active in the city's arts community declined to comment, saying they know nothing about the center's operation. Some acknowledged their hesitancy to be quoted about a touchy issue with racial undertones.

Others were blunt.

Eric A. Smith, managing director of the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, said center officials must promote the building to black Pittsburghers and local artists.

Bypassing local artists sends a message to outsiders about what Pittsburgh values, and that is the wrong message, Smith said.

Esther Bush, president of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and a former member of the center's governing board, remains its staunch supporter.

"But it might be time to sit down and re-evaluate the mission and vision of the center and re-evaluate the audience they are trying to bring in," Bush said.

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High ranking AT&T exec has local ties

by Diane I. Daniels
For New Pittsburgh Courier

At a time when his alma mater, Edinboro University and other member universities in the State System of Higher Education in Pennsylvania are calling for reductions in faculty and programming, Xavier D. Williams is suggesting that young people should be looking at higher education as a way to advance in today's society.

While growing up in Washington, D.C., Williams says his parents stressed the significance of education and encouraged him to do well while in high school. As a result he received an athletic and academic scholarship to attend Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration in 1989. From there he attended the University of Pittsburgh where he earned his MBA from the Katz School of Business. In 1990 the senior vice president-service management at AT&T began his career with the company where he has held a variety of positions within a 23-year span of time.

A humble and low keyed gentleman, not one to boast on his longevity at AT&T, a company that is considered a premier communications holding company or the accomplishments he has made throughout his career, Williams says he just works hard and tries to do the right thing.

"I have had good people in my life that placed high expectations on me," he explained.

He said his father was an entrepreneur and mother was an educator. He has been married for 21 years and has two children.

"The work that I do and any accomplishments that I have made only is a validation that I have to work harder to live up to those expectations," he said.

Giving back is just one of the expectations people have placed on him and he has placed on his self that he feels he is living up to.

He recently established the Xavier D. Williams Business Speaker Series Endowment at Edinboro University. With the goal to bring experienced business leaders and entrepreneurs to share insights and wisdom with students, providing a rewarding educational experience, the speaker series provides Edinboro students with the opportunity to meet outstanding business leaders, while exploring issues affecting business today, according to Edinboro officials. Williams said creating the endowment is his way of continuing his involvement with Edinboro to help the students learn the best ways of approaching business opportunities, and how they can make a difference in the business world.

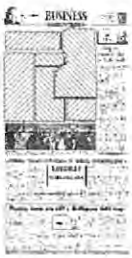
Williams is also an advocate for people development and diversity. He is on the advisory board of Asian Pacific Islanders for Professional and Community Advancement and sits on the advisory board for the National Sales Network and is a member of the Executive Leadership Council.

Proud of his ties to Pittsburgh, Williams said he helped organize the Urban League of Pittsburgh Young Professionals group and serves as a charter member.

Williams was listed as a 2013 Diversity MBA Top 100 Under 50 Diverse Executive Leaders by Diversity Magazine and has been listed as one of the most influential African Americans in Business by Profiles in Diversity Journal. He is the recipient of the Eagle Award from the National Eagle Leadership Institute for his outstanding leadership achievement, was recognized by USA Freedom Corps for his dedication to volunteerism in the community, while also being named the first recipient of the AT&T

SEE AT&T C2

Corporation Chairman's Diversity Award. He has also received the Distinguished



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Alumni honor from Edinboro University as a tribute to an extraordinary alumnus who has used his Edinboro University education to bring excellence to his professional achievements, vocational accomplishments, and his community service to others.

At AT&T, Williams has global responsibilities for the client interface on all customer service functions inclusive of service delivery, service assurance and billing for all retail customers. He has served as senior vice president—public sector and healthcare, senior vice president-business communications services for AT&T Southwest, federal sales vice president for AT&T government solutions, and HR training vice president. He also has held positions in finance, product management, business planning, human resources and sales.

A multinational telecommunications company AT&T is also a leading provider of wireless, Wi-Fi, high speed Internet, voice and cloud-based services. It is the third-largest company in Texas and twenty first largest mobile telecom operator in the world, with more than 107.9 million mobile customers.

While giving back to society, Williams says he strives to be an influence to young people and to help others. He often advises young people and those looking to go into the work force to have strong communication, verbal, written and social skills.

"You can't limit yourself," he stressed. "Whatever you want to do you can't quit until you accomplish it. Don't be scared to fail or to be great."

Williams also suggested that it is important to be involved with and members of organizations that can help in furthering ones education or career. Though he was not able to attend the Pitt Black MBA Network Homecoming Events he said they are important.

PBAN convenes twice a year during Homecoming and Black History Month. This year's event was kicked off by a welcome reception that was held Sept. 26 at the Wyndham Pittsburgh University Center.

According to Tricina Cash, vice president of administration and president and chief consultant for Osmosis Group LLC., the PBAN is an affinity group of the University of Pittsburgh Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business. The group consists of Black graduates of the MBA programs full-time, part-time, and executive spanning as far back as the class of 1971. She calculates that the University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Business has graduated more than 300 Black people.

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LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS—High ranking AT&T official, Xavier D. Williams believes in giving back to society.

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'Opportunity of a lifetime'

Panelists discuss ways to develop workforce for future

By Michael Bradwell
Business editor
mbradwell@observer-reporter.com

PITTSBURGH – A group of manufacturing and labor leaders agreed Monday that the oil and gas derivatives being produced in the Marcellus and Utica shales are creating the "opportunity of a lifetime" for economic development in the region.

But of the 20 people who participated in three panel discussions moderated by Bill Flanagan of the Allegheny Conference, nearly all concurred much remains to be done with workforce development to meet current and future job demands.

The occasion was the Pennsylvania Energy and Manufacturing Summit, sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic division of the Consumer Energy Alliance, a nonpartisan group that links energy producers and consumers. The daylong event was held at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers headquarters on Pittsburgh's South Side.

One of the day's first speakers, Peter Molinaro, senior adviser for government affairs at Dow Chemical Co., said the wet gas, in particular, is viewed as "the opportunity of a lifetime," noting that it already has caused the chemical maker to reverse its plans to close an ethane cracker plant in Louisiana and to invest in a new cracker facility in Texas.

He noted that Dow uses the oil equivalent of 850,000 barrels a day around the world to make chemicals, an amount equal to Australia's daily energy consumption.

With ethane becoming a domestically sourced fuel for petrochemical feedstock, Molinaro noted the United States is about to eclipse Russia as the No. 1 energy producer in the world.

With cheap abundant natural gas, many U.S. industries, including aluminium, chemicals, fabricated metals, fertilizer, glass and iron and steel, become more competitive globally, he added.

Despite that ability to create jobs in the manufacturing sector, Molinaro reminded the audience of about 100 people that the United States has lost about 6 million positions in manufacturing since the 1990s.

Rob Boulware of oil and gas exploration company Seneca Resources Corp. cited a study conducted by Bentek Energy for America's Natural Gas Alliance that said the current output of domestic natural gas, especially from the Marcellus and Utica shales, is creating a positive story for supply to the power generation, manufacturing and transportation sectors, with supply staying ahead of demand, even with reduction of new well production while the industry waits for infrastructure to be built to carry gas to new markets.

While the shale boom and its related job creation is a well-known story in Southwestern Pennsylvania, Robert Powelson, chairman of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, said abundant, locally produced natural gas also has been responsible for a 52 percent drop in power prices across the commonwealth.

The wet gas also helped to reopen Sun Oil Co. refineries in southeastern Pennsylvania.

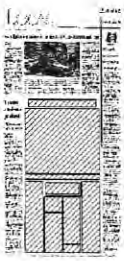
From a purely economic impact standpoint, Powelson said job creation from energy in Pennsylvania totaled 600,000 positions in 2010, and is projected to be 870,000 by 2015, with an average annual salary of $81,000.

"The shale gas industry will generate $900 billion in federal, state and local taxes over the next 25 years," he added.

But everyone who spoke Monday said solving workforce challenges – from encouraging young people to consider skilled trades to getting schools to understand that many good-paying jobs require only a two-year degree to repositioning manufacturing as a place where rewarding careers can be built – will have to be met if the region and the country are to realize the full dividends of domestically produced energy.

Please see Panel, Page B2

In his opening remarks, Jim Cooper, of the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, noted



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that in the last four years, the abundance of dry gas for home and commercial heating, as well as that of the "wet gas" and its ability to supply feedstock for the petrochemical industry, has had many positive implications for the region's job picture.

"But if we don't solve the workforce issue, just having all that gas down there isn't really going to do us much good," he said.

During a roundtable discussion on developing a skilled workforce, Rebecca Lucore, chief of staff for Bayer MaterialScience, acknowledged that the company is seeing shortages of qualified workers.

"A lot of these great manufacturing jobs only require a two-year degree," she said, adding that some of the openings remain vacant for eight or nine months.

Jim Kunz, business manager for International Union of Operating Engineers Local 66, said the union recently invested $8 million in its training site to meet demand for its members who run bulldozers and cranes on many construction sites, including work on gas pipelines.

While the union provides ongoing training for its members, Kunz said "trying to convince school districts and guidance counselors that there are family-sustaining jobs is a bit of a challenge."

Anne Pastor, program manager for the PA Steel Alliance, said education may be at a crossroads when it comes to putting a value on training.

"I think education will become more career-driven rather than education-driven," she said.

While some labor leaders said the country may have to look to immigration as a way to fill the job demand being created by energy and manufacturing, other panelists said they believed there were enough Americans to fill the openings.

Esther Bush, chief executive officer of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, said unions and employers need to bring more of their opportunities to minorities, noting that many don't have driver's licenses to get out to job-training sites or apprentice programs.

Cooper of the AFPM said his group will announce next month a new initiative to create a national discussion to provide education about jobs in the manufacturing and supply chain sectors.

The discussion will include academia, labor and workforce development leaders, think tanks and environmentalists.

"We have to find a balance in the next couple of years," he said, "or we can kiss this opportunity goodbye."

"IF WE DON'T SOLVE THE WORKFORCE ISSUE, JUST HAVING ALL THAT GAS DOWN THERE ISN'T REALLY GOING TO DO US MUCH GOOD."
JIM COOPER, OF THE AMERICAN FUEL AND PETRO CHEMICAL MANUFACURERS

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MICHAEL BRADWELL / OBSERVER-REPORTER

Bill Flanagan of the Allegheny Conference poses a question to a panel of workforce and labor officials Monday during the Pennsylvania Energy and Manufacturing Summit. At far right is Andrew Browning, executive vice president of the Consumer Energy Alliance, which sponsored the event.

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Heritage Parade pleases crowd, honors Mosley

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

Though the morning started damp and gray, by the time Ebenezer Baptist Church Senior Pastor Rev. Dr. Vincent K. Campbell gave the invocation, the sun was shining on the crowd and participants of the annual African American Heritage Day Parade.

"The rain stopped, the sky opened and the people came out," said parade Chair Doris Carson Williams," It was a great parade, and really showed off the pride and aspirations of many groups and young people. And the Masons; there must have been 75 of them, all led by the Most Worthy Grand Matron. That's the largest contingent since Harvey Adams was chair. So that was really nice."

The other highlight, Williams said, was honoring world renowned sculptor and Pittsburgh native Thaddeus "Thad" Mosley, who at 87, served as parade Grand Marshal.

"He had a great time," she said. "He received proclamations from (Pittsburgh Councilman) Danny Lavelle and (Allegheny County Executive) Rich Fitzgerald. They presented him with a beautiful crystal plaque. We wanted to thank him for his lifetime of work. It's been a while since anyone has and that's the point I wanted to make."

In addition to Mosley, the dignitaries and the members of the Prince Hall Masons of Grand Lodge #7 and the Most Worshipful Hiram Grand Lodge AF & AM, parade participants included personnel from the Pittsburgh Bureaus of Police and Bureaus of Fire, Allegheny County Police and Mounted Police,

SEE **HERITAGE** A4

the Allegheny County Sheriff's Office and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

They were joined by Miss Ebony Teen Taylor Whitley and Miss Ebony Princess Amaris Martin. Also marching were representatives from multiple faith and community groups, sponsoring organizations, marching bands, drum corps and social clubs.

These included:

The Empowered Step Team; Pentecostal Temple COGIC; Highmark; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity; Rosedognook/Dorrance Publishing; Small Seeds Development; Penn State African American Alumni Organization of Pittsburgh; the HACP/BJWL After-school Program; Center for Family Excellence; Children 2 Champions & North Shore Stallions; Macedonia Face; Soldiers & Sailors 6th USCT Drum Corps; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Kyle's Hope; the Pittsburgh Black Media Federation; Pretty Young Ladies; Obama Academy Eagles P.E.P. Marching Band; Girl Scouts of Western PA; B-PEP; GTECH Strategies; United Rays Corvette Club of Pittsburgh; Touching Families Inc.; Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh; Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; Westinghouse High Steppin' Marching Band; National Council of Negro Women; Gamma Lambda Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority; Lambda Lambda Zeta Chapter; Stand up Now Network; Allegheny County Housing Authority; Reading is Fundamental; African American Special Emphasis Committee; New Sisterhood Motorcycle Club; Hill District Consensus Group; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity—Iota Phi Chapter; National Black United Front; Brother Ash Productions; National Society of Black Engineers Pittsburgh Professional Chapter, and Movie Scene Queen.

All followed the traditional parade route beginning at the Boulevard of the Allies, turning onto Stanwix Street, passing the review stand and proceeding up Liberty Avenue to the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, where refreshments and various presentations were available, including a health fair, line dancing, and a performance by Roger Humphries.

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)

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WORKING THE CROWD—Members of the incomparable Obama Academy Marching Band get the crowd going during the Oct. 5 African American Heritage Day Parade. (Photos by Rossano Paul Stewart)

AIN'T IT GRAND—African American Heritage Day Parade Grand Marshal sculptor Thaddeus Mosley receives a proclamation presented by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and American Urban Radio Network Manager Ty Miller.

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Manual against violence lists 748 tactics

Volunteers shared ideas over six years

By Amy McConnell Schaarsmith
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

After years of work by hundreds of volunteers, leaders of a local anti-violence group have released a handbook on preventing violence and reducing the number of homicides among young African-American men.

Members of the Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence, which developed the manual that was released Friday, said they hope the community, from schools and churches to businesses and individuals, would use the manual to begin making real changes to reduce violence.

Even those pressed for time can help simply by reading and implementing the group's suggestions to become active in the community and to strengthen the role of the family in teaching, guiding and supporting children to become responsible adults, the group's leaders said at Friday's launch ceremony at the Community College of Allegheny County's North Side campus.

"Our feeling was that if people would absorb those two sections closely and to the heart, it would greatly impact the atmosphere of our community," said Tim Stevens, chairman of the Black Political Empowerment Project, which organized creation of the manual, including a special edition for schools and youth programs and a community services directory.

The manual, which will be distributed locally, also is being distributed by the

SEE **VIOLENCE,** PAGE A-10

National Urban League to its 100 affiliates around the country after Esther Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, sent a copy to national leaders for consideration, Mr. Stevens said.

The manual-writing project was begun by the B-PEP in 2007 after a report that year identified Pennsylvania as leading the nation in homicide rates among African-Americans.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer, a former family court judge for Allegheny County, said his current duties include reading into the record the verdicts in homicide cases, including death penalty cases. The cases "break your heart" because they often involve minority-on-minority crime by young people fighting over drugs and sometimes women, he said.

But following the steps in the manual could make a real difference, and hopefully save lives, Justice Baer said.

"With gentle persuasion, relentlessly applied, you can cure this problem with 10,000 baby steps," he said.

Between 2009 and 2012, hundreds of volunteers — pastors, police officers, judges, social workers, wardens, teachers and laypeople from all walks of life — shared their thoughts on the materials being developed, with their suggestions helping shape the final outcome. Even the children at Shuman Center were given a chance to review the material and offer their comments about what might help them or young people like them, said former Shuman director Jack Simmons.

"A lot of the kids responded positively," Mr. Simmons said. "It's a tough population at Shuman, but they really wanted to delve into the production."

The manual includes 748 strategies — B-PEP vice chairwoman Valerie Dixon counted — for preventing bullying, domestic violence, gun crimes and gangs and other social ills while also cultivating education, health, civic engagement, financial literacy, employment and responsible family relationships.

"When you ignore a problem, it grows and reaches your home," she said.

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Black leaders call on new generation of activists

Take aim at city's high poverty rate for black children

By Joe Smydo
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Cities such as Pittsburgh that are working to reinvigorate themselves must not only promote their accomplishments but "confront what is bad," such as childhood poverty in the black community, the chief of the National Urban League said Saturday at a conference Downtown.

Marc H. Morial, who became president and CEO of the Urban League during a visit here 10 years ago, returned to Pittsburgh to address the local affiliate's annual State of Black Pittsburgh Conference.

Mr. Morial, who is credited with lowering crime rates and unemployment as mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002, took aim at the unusually high poverty rate among Pittsburgh's black children.

He challenged Pittsburghers to "confront this and say as a community, 'We're going to move the needle on this issue.' "

In a May story in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Harold D. Miller, president of Future Strategies LLC and adjunct professor of public policy and management at Carnegie Mellon University, said census data for 2011 indicated that the Pittsburgh area had the nation's third-highest poverty rate among working-age black residents and the sixth-highest poverty rate among black children.

Mr. Morial said a new generation of activists must build on the accomplishments of Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders, black and white, of the 1960s. As head of the Urban League, he has made the narrowing of economic gaps a key focus of today's civil rights agenda.

On Saturday, he stressed the related goals of better educating youth and expanding employment opportunities. "Emphasizing education is more than emphasizing it in rhetoric," he said, criticizing officials who say they support education even as they lay off teachers, cut arts programs and eliminate after-school programs.

Mr. Morial praised Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, with running one of the most vibrant affiliates in the nation. In her own address, marking the local organization's 95th anniversary, Ms. Bush called on members to rededicate themselves to the goals of economic sufficiency, parity, power and civil rights.

She said an incident in Homewood in June, in which a city police officer was accused of needlessly accosting a teacher and freelance photographer, underscored the work still to be done. "We need to look at police-community relations," she said.

The audience of hundreds, which included ninth-graders from some of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, was encouraged to take a personal interest in the civil-rights movement. Speakers said young people could join the Urban League Young Professionals or take a stand on injustice as what Richard Morris, the Urban League of Pittsburgh's housing director, called "everyday heroes."

Joe Smydo: jsmydo@post-gazette.com.

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Health sign-up options outlined

Dozens attend to learn how to get coverage

BY **JOHN D. ORAVECZ**

People struggling with the problematic online access to the federal health insurance marketplace have alternative ways to sign up, a field organizer for a national group told churchgoers on Sunday.

Several dozen members of Second United Presbyterian Church in Wilkinsburg listened as Gabby Jones-Casey talked about getting help from health centers and toll-free calls during a weekend of outreach by 150 organizers in 10 states, leaders said.

Jones-Casey is one of three in Pittsburgh for a campaign called Get Covered America, which encourages the uninsured to sign up. Despite problems with the Web portal at HealthCare.gov, there are alternatives that work, she said.

"Our campaign is about education and outreach," Jones-Casey said after the service. "We will direct you to a certified application counselor or a navigator" who can help individuals apply and shop for coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

Consumers must apply for coverage by a Dec. 15 deadline that will put insurance in effect on Jan. 1. Individuals must enroll or draw penalties by March 31.

The campaign is run by Enroll America, a Washington-based nonprofit coalition of health care providers and advocates. It is running the multimillion-dollar campaign using social media, paid advertising and grass-roots organizing to encourage people to sign up, Anne Filipic, a former Obama administration official who is president of the organization, has said.

Enroll America raised tens of millions to support its work from charities, hospitals and insurance companies, said national spokesman Justin Nisly, who added that it pledges to release details by year's end.

Bill England, state director in Philadelphia, said organizers and volunteers worked on Saturday and Sunday to meet people and provide information.

"We've never tried anything like this in America," England said of the law, commonly called Obamacare. "We want to reach as many consumers as we can."

The Rev. Deborah Warren said it was worthwhile for Jones-Casey to speak to members, but Sunday's attendees were mostly older and have health insurance coverage.

"We want to reach our younger, food pantry clients and others," Warren said, so Jones-Casey will return next month.

Jones-Casey, 26, of Lawrenceville said she started work on the campaign in August on getting a master's degree in social work and community organizing from the University of Pittsburgh in April. She is a native of Brooklyn, N.Y.

> *"We've never tried anything like this in America. We want to reach as many consumers as we can."*
>
> **BILL ENGLAND**
> GET COVERED AMERICA STATE DIRECTOR

She talked to more than 100 people on Saturday at an Urban League-sponsored job fair in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, an event in the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers offices in the South Side, and by canvassing on the street in Lawrenceville. She said she talked to 31 who were not insured.

Enrollment services are available at 10 health centers in Allegheny County and from "navigators" under a program run by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Two full-time and two part-time navigators are in place, and more are being trained, she said.

People can call the marketplace — 800-318-2596 — and talk to staffers who will help them understand, enroll and choose plans that suit their financial circumstances.

John D. Oravecz is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 412-320-7882 or joravecz@tribweb.com.

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JASMINE GOLDBAND | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Enroll America field organizer Gabby Jones-Casey, 26, of Lawrenceville cites ways to get health coverage under the Affordable Care Act during a meeting on Sunday in Second United Presbyterian Church in Wilkinsburg.

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Community Calendar

State of Black Pittsburgh

OCT. 26—The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh will host the State of Black Pittsburgh Conference 2013 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, 1000 Fort Duquesne Blvd., Downtown. National Urban League President & CEO Marc Morial will be the keynote luncheon speaker. There will be a job and resource fair, various workshops, followed by the 95th Anniversary Luncheon. There will also be a kids and youth track for ages 4-18. Pre-registration is required for the luncheon. For more information, call 412-227-4229 or email development@ulpgh.org.

Children's Halloween Party

OCT. 26—The WEMCO Club will host its Children's Halloween Party from 12-3 p.m. at 7325 Frankstown Ave., Homewood. This is for children 12 years old and under, a costume is required, and all children must be accompanied by an adult. For more information, call Mike Nichols of 412-660-4805.

NAACP Banquet

OCT. 26—The NAACP of Beaver County will host its 16th Annual Human Rights Banquet at 6 p.m. at the Beaver Falls Holiday Inn, 7195 Eastwood Dr., Beaver Falls, Pa. This year's guest DeWitt Walton, of the United Steelworkers, will speak on the topic of "Personal Responsibility." There will also be a special presentation honoring the Beaver County Tuskegee Airmen. Reservations are required. For more information, call 724-378-2882.

Blood Drive

OCT. 30—Christian Home Health Care will host a Blood Drive from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at 801 Vinial St., North Side. All registered donors will receive a pair of movie passes to the Southside Works Cinema. Registration is requested. For more information, call Natalia Petruilli at 412-209-7082.

Empowerment Symposium

NOV. 2—Softer Side Seminars Inc. will host its 6th Annual Women to Women Empowerment Symposium from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Blakey Program Center, 1906 Wylie Ave., Hill District. Winter Ramos will be the special guest. Registration is required. For more information, call 412-606-5807 or email reneea@softersideseminars.com.

Health & Energy Blast

NOV. 7—G-Tech and ReEnergize will host an East End Health & Energy Blast from 5:30-8 p.m. at the Kingsley Center, 6435 Frankstown Ave., East Liberty. The theme is "A healthy home breeds a healthy life." This is an opportunity to learn more about cost saving energy programs and home improvement services for homeowners, renters, seniors, low-income residents and more. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call Rhonda Sears at 412-805-0584 or email ReEnergize.Homewood@gmail.com.

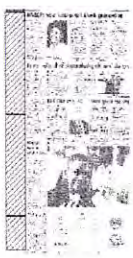
Basketball Day Camp

NOV. 9—The Kenny Durrett Youth Organization will host its 2013 Basketball Day Camp from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Barack Obama Academy, 515 N. Highland Ave., East Liberty. Darnell Dinkins, a Schenley High School alum and former NFL Player, will be the guest speaker. Registration is required and a waiver must be signed. For more information, call 412-977-9496 or email kennydurrettyouth@gmail.com.

Financial Aid Workshop

NOV. 11—Surface Stripe-ing Painting LLC, the Hill House Association, The Hill Education Council and NeighborWorks will host a Financial Aid Workshop from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Blakey Center, 1906 Wylie Ave., Hill District. This workshop is for middle and high school students and their parents with the belief that the provision of early and accurate information can support students who are thinking of higher education opportunities. Registration is requested. For more information, call Emma Lucas-Darby at 412-391-1886.

(To have items listed on Community Calendar, send information at least two weeks in advance to: 315 E. Carson St., Pittsburgh, PA 15219; Fax: 412-481-1360 or email: newsroom@newpittsburghcourier.com.)



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Joe Vennare [27]

CO-FOUNDER, HYBRID ATHLETE LLC; CO-FOUNDER, FITTSBURGH; STORYTELLER, TEDXGRANDVIEWAVE

Joe Vennare is going to break it down for you: "Everything you think about fitness is wrong, and I mean that in the nicest way possible. It's not about a gym; it's not about a diet; it's not about what you wear; it's not about a machine." For Vennare, fitness is greater than all that. It's about pushing through discomforts to find new abilities. When he was 22, Vennare and his brother Anthony set out to transform local fitness. They opened Hybrid Athlete, a gym with no mirrors and almost no equipment; instead their place offers personal and group training sessions that are designed to encourage growth. Today, TheHybridAthlete.com posts free healthy-living tips and exercise videos to its site. Earlier this year, the Vennare brothers also launched Fittsburgh (GetFitPgh.com), a website that aggregates information about local places where fitness buffs can eat, train and shop. Through this site and the brothers' free, public pop-up workouts, the Vennares aim to make Pittsburgh the healthiest city in the nation.

Alexis Miller [32]

PROJECT ANALYST, UPMC HEALTH PLAN

Alexis Miller's level of community involvement changed after she bought a vacant house in Polish Hill and started a two-year project to gut and renovate it. "There's such a sense of satisfaction from having created something and giving new life to the neighborhood," she says. As she worked on her abode and settled into the rhythms of Polish Hill, the neighborhood and its people increasingly became a part of her life. In 2009, she joined the board of directors of the Polish Hill Civic Association, of which she is now president. She clarifies that this role is more like an acting executive director, as she is responsible for fundraising, grant applications and budgeting, among other duties. Miller also sits on the board of directors for Construction Junction, the advisory board for Highmark First Night Pittsburgh and the Greenroom Committee for City Theatre, which provides young professionals with opportunities to see theater performances at a discounted rate, meet cast members and mingle with other arts fans.

{ Vennare | Ballard | Miller | Smythe-Leistico }

"Everything you think about fitness is wrong, and I mean that in the nicest way possible."

» JOE VENNARE «

Branden Ballard [29]

MANAGER OF RECRUITMENT, PUBLIC ALLIES PITTSBURGH; PRESIDENT, URBAN LEAGUE OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Branden Ballard commits his time in both professional and volunteer capacities to help develop and retain young professionals in Pittsburgh. By day, he works at Public Allies Pittsburgh, an AmeriCorps program that places young adults with nonprofit organizations to help start their careers. As a manager of recruitment, he works to enroll young people who are dedicated to giving back. He also seeks out organizations that are willing to take on someone who may not have entry-level skills but does have drive and passion to learn. His commitment to young professionals carries over to his service with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh; he is president of the Urban League of Young Professionals, a philanthropy and service group of people ages 21-39. In Ballard's words, "It's all about the cultivation of young talent and making sure that young talent has the platform to do the things they want to do in order to better themselves, their communities and their careers."

Ken Smythe-Leistico [37]

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT; FOUNDER, READY FREDDY

Ken Smythe-Leistico's passion wasn't always kindergarten. When he graduated college, he ran a group home for delinquent teens, but after witnessing the effects of all of the traumas those kids experienced, he said to himself, "We've got to find a way that they don't end up this far down the road." Smythe-Leistico says research shows that poor kindergarten attendance is one of the earliest indicators that a person will drop out of high school, so kindergarten became his cause. "We're sort of trying to raise this banner: 'Kindergarten is a big damn deal!' ... but we try to tone it down," he says with a laugh, "because it's kindergarten, after all." In his role as assistant director of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, he tackles all issues surrounding kindergarten attendance — from poor walking paths to overburdened mothers. He created Ready Freddy, an initiative that encourages children and families in low-income neighborhoods to get excited about school through engagement, programs and resources such as its kindergarten club curriculum for both parents and children. "All parents love their children, and they want something more for them," he says.

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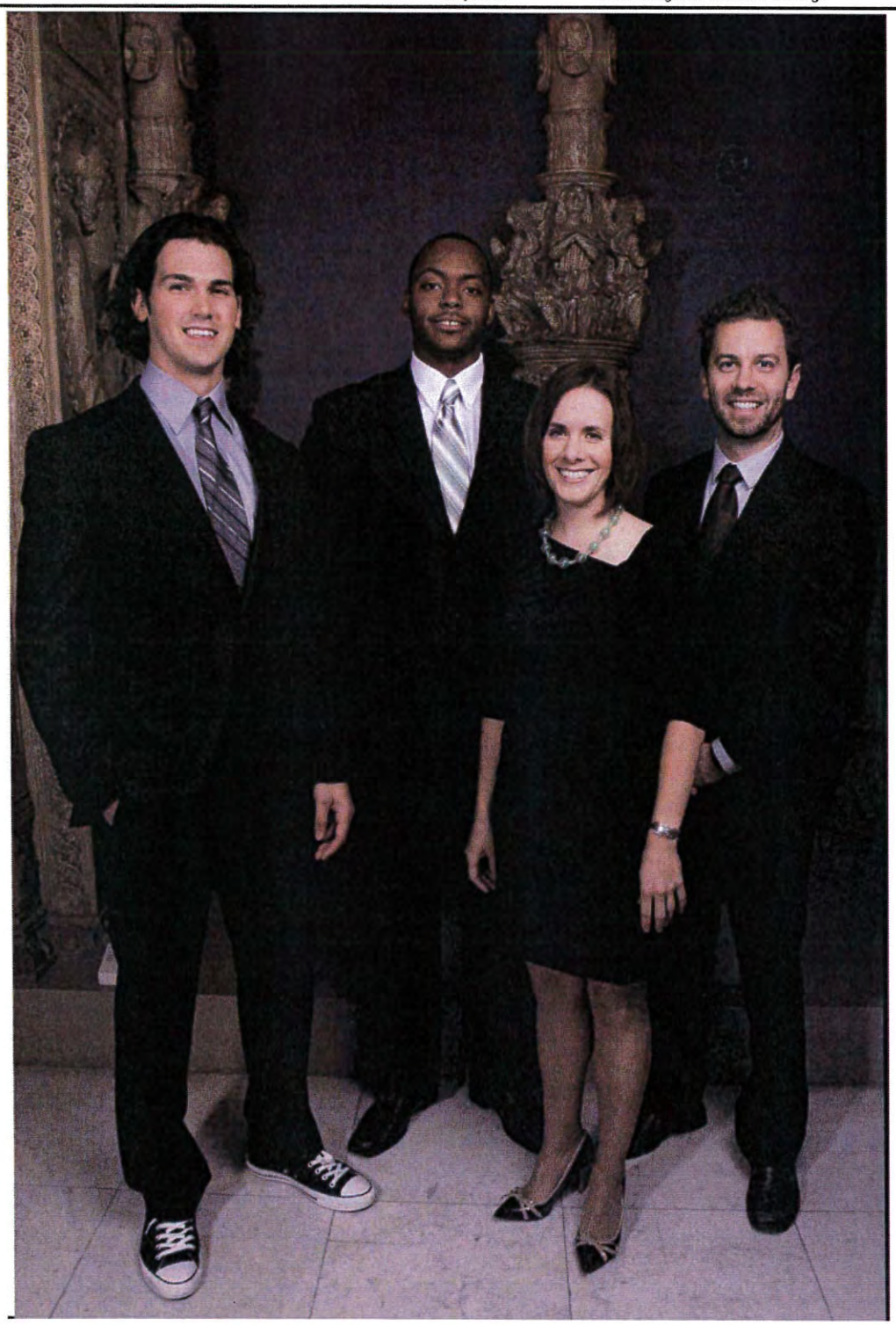

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Morial: Make strides in education employment and empowerment

by Renee P. Aldrich
For New Pittsburgh Courier

Ten years after his first visit as president of the National Urban League, Marc Morial returned to Pittsburgh as the keynote luncheon speaker for the 95th Anniversary celebration of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh.

In his remarks on the State of Black America, Morial called Pittsburgh the "back bone" of industrialization and a city that continues to transform itself, adding that the State of Black Pittsburgh is not unlike the state of America, intrinsically intertwined and linked one to the other.

And while he said he saw progress, he also said much needs to be done. And one of those things is for African-Americans to own some of their problems.

"I also see unemployment, tension between police and community, dismal

SEE **MORIAL** A4

poverty rates; I see the kind of crime that destroys families," he said. "The challenge for us as a people is to not try to hide this stuff or sweep it under the rug."

Morial said African-Americans need to make strides in education, employment and empowerment to have the ability to be truly independent. And political leadership should be held accountable to this.

"You cannot say you want to fix and reform education then layoff teachers, deny students the option to study arts because funding for them has been cut, and invest more money in building jails than schools," he said.

On employment, Morial said leaders need to facilitate opportunities for all able-bodied people who want to work.

"Economic independence and the ability to be self-reliant are paramount in economic growth," he said. "This country will not know optimum economic growth until all those who desire it are able to secure a good job."

Finally, with respect to empowerment, Morial again said African-Americans must take responsibility.

"To be achievers, to have hope in the future and to embrace a can-do attitude is the responsibility of all of us," he said. "We need to be encouraging and empowering each other as we have been encouraged and empowered."

Esther Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, said it was an honor to have Morial help commemorated the chapter's milestone.

"This was so significant that Marc Morial has joined us to celebrate our 95th anniversary," she said. "He brings the presence of national participation, assuring that the Urban League can continue to play a role throughout the country as relates to the overriding issues that we as a people face here in Pittsburgh and beyond."

In her own remarks, Bush praised the volunteers who made the event so memorable and assured the hundreds who attended all the workshops and meetings at the David L

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Lawrence Convention Center that her work would continue.

"The Urban League will provide bold leadership and innovative programs, services and policies which will contribute to the strength of the greater Pittsburgh region," she said. "The Urban League will serve as a premier advocate for economic opportunity and justice that leads to significant improvement in the quality of people's lives."

ESTHER BUSH, Pittsburgh Urban League president & CEO, gives her annual address on the state of the city's Blacks.

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RICHARD HARRIS, Urban League director of housing, calls on young activists to take a stand.

MARISA C. BARTLEY, National Urban League of Young Professional vice president, gives a youthful address.

REV. BRENDA J. GREGG opens the event with a prayer

ANNIE HANNA CESTRA, Urban League board member, delivers the welcome. (Photos by J.L. Martello)

MARC MORIAL

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B-PEP campaigns for Black judge on federal bench

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

As part of its continuing efforts to promote diversity, the Black Political Empowerment Project has initiated a campaign to have an African-American appointed to the US District Court for Western Pennsylvania.

The court has been without a Black judge since Chief Judge Gary Lancaster suffered

SEE B-PEP A4

a fatal heart attack in April.

When he was appointed to the court in 2009, Lancaster was the only African-American serving on any U.S. District Court.

In a letter dated Oct. 14, Tim Stevens, B-PEP president, began soliciting support from a variety of sources requesting President Obama make a new appointment, among those contacted are U.S. Sens. Bob Casey and Pat Toomey--who will ultimately make recommendations to the president, US Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Pa.; Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl; Democratic mayoral candidate Bill Peduto; and both Allegheny Democratic Party Chair Nancy Mills and Republican Party Chair Jim Roddey.

The effort also has the support of both Esther Bush and Connie Parker, Presidents of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the NAACP Pittsburgh unit respectively.

"Part of B-PEP's mission is that those in political office expeditiously and effectively meet the needs, aspirations and concerns of African-Americans. One of those needs and concerns is to have an African-American presence on the courts at all levels of government, locally, statewide and nationally," Stevens said. "With the disproportionate number of people of color coming before the courts throughout this nation a significant expansion of the numbers of African-Americans on the bench remains a high priority of our organization."

Pittsburgh Council President Darlene Harris not only supports the initiative, she took it a step further by introducing a "Will of Council" resolution calling for the appointment of an African-American female to the court.

"I not only want to see an African-American on the bench, but an African-American woman," she said. "Because there has never been an African-American woman on that court and it would be nice to be the first." The resolution passed unanimously.

"I was very pleased to see that and welcome council's support," said Stevens.

Coincidentally, Stevens said, Harris' push for a female candidate may be fortuitous because all the Black candidates he is aware of are female.

"The three African-American candidates I know of are Asst. U.S. Attorney Rebecca Haywood, U.S. Public Defender Lisa Freeland and attorney and former Common Pleas Court candidate Rosemary Crawford," he said. "Both Superior Court Judge Cheryl Allen and Common Pleas Judge Dwayne Woodruff have told me they are not interested."

All of the supporting recommendations will, or have been, forwarded to attorney Laura Ellsworth of Jones Day, co-chair of the search committee to fill Lancaster's seat. Once the interviews are completed, she will in turn forward the committee's choice to Casey and Toomey.

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)

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A look at Peduto's new Cabinet

KEVIN ACKLIN, chief of staff, chief development officer

Mr. Acklin, 37, is a partner at the Saul Ewing law firm Downtown, top adviser to the Peduto mayoral campaign and chairman of Peduto's transition team. The scion of a family of city firefighters, he previously ran for a Republican Allegheny County Council seat and as an independent mayoral candidate against Luke Ravenstahl in 2009, before becoming a Democratic committeeman in Squirrel Hill. He will be the mayor's top aide and chairman of the Urban Redevelopment Authority. He is married with three young children.

GUY COSTA, chief operations officer

Mr. Costa, 59, formerly the city's public works director and most recently manager of the Peduto mayoral campaign, will oversee his old department; the parking authority, which he also formerly directed; parks and recreation and the Pittsburgh Waterand Sewer Authority. Before heading the campaign, he was an Allegheny County economic development official. The Duquesne University graduate lives in Squirrel Hill with his wife and son.

VALERIE MCDONALD-ROBERTS, chief urban affairs officer

Ms. McDonald-Roberts, 58, formerly a District 9 city councilwoman and Allegheny County recorder of deeds, has served since 2008 as the appointed manager of the county's real estate division. The Homewood native and supporter of Mr. Peduto's mayoral bid will oversee nonprofit, faith-based and housing matters, including the city housing authority. The married mother of four grown children has 10 grandchildren.

DEBRA LAM, chief innovation and performance officer

Ms. Lam, 32, is an environmental sustainability expert at London-based consultants Arup, and has worked in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The daughter of Chinese emigrants graduated from North Hills High School and Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and received a master's in public policy from University of California, Berkeley. She will oversee the city's technology division and finance and will work with the state's two fiscal oversight boards. She is returning to the city from New York with her husband.

CURTISS E. PORTER, chief education and neighborhood reinvestment officer

Mr. Porter, 73, is chancellor of Penn State University Greater Allegheny in McKeesport, not far from where he grew up in Braddock. He called his resume "unique." He has served in the U.S. Air Force, holds a doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh and has worked for H.J. Heinz Co. and the Urban League.

DEBBIE LESTITIAN, chief administration officer

Ms. Lestitian, 48, of Brookline, is an attorney, accountant and an assistant treasurer at Carnegie Mellon University. She served alongside Mr. Peduto on the stadium authority after being appointed by Bob O'Connor in 2006 and was removed by Mayor Luke Ravenstahl three years later after she opposed development plans on the North Shore. She holds an accounting degree from Washington & Jefferson College and a law degree from Duquesne University.

LOURDES SANCHEZ RIDGE, solicitor and chief legal officer

Ms. Sanchez Ridge, 52, will leave her job as an attorney for Clark Hill Thorp Reed, where she focuses on white collar criminal defense, to join the Peduto administration. A native of Cuba who was raised in the United States, she holds an accounting degree from the University of Miami and a law degree from the University of Florida. She previously served as a state prosecutor in Florida and was an assistant U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C. She is the former president of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

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U.S. Attorney David Hickton hopes to turn a cross-burning incident into a case study in police-community reconciliation

Unfinished business

By Rich Lord
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When David Hickton got a call from Pittsburgh Public Schools superintendent Linda Lane telling him that a cross had been burned into grass outside a city school, it was a reminder that his central mission as Western Pennsylvania's top prosecutor was far from done.

The August incident outside Pittsburgh Mifflin Pre-K-8 school in Lincoln Place came three years — almost to the day — after his confirmation as U.S. attorney. His signature initiative since then has been the creation in October 2010 of a Civil Rights Section, and to him the symbol scorched into the lawn of an elementary school was a call to double down.

"Clearly, when you use the

SEE **RIGHTS**, PAGE A-11

notorious sign of hate of a cross burning, you're sending a message," Mr. Hickton said last week. "And we're going to get after it," he added, noting that Civil Rights Section chief Shaun Sweeney is personally leading the investigation, along with the FBI.

As Mr. Hickton enters the fourth year of the civil rights push, he hopes to turn Homewood into a case study in police-community reconciliation, and expand existing efforts to curb human trafficking.

His approach to civil rights enforcement has featured a handful of prosecutions — including several for cross burnings — but has been characterized as much by lawsuits and consensus building. This year, his office sued the City Rescue Mission of New Castle for refusing to allow a blind man to bring a guide dog to a shelter, and wrapped up meetings involving police and neighborhood activists with a public airing of hopeful initiatives.

He won't promise civil rights indictments — and that bothers some observers.

"If we were to be naive, we would say there must not be any violations of the civil rights of our citizens going on out there," said Joel Sansone, one of the attorneys representing Jordan Miles, a Homewood man who has sued three Pittsburgh police officers in relation to a 2010 encounter. "It continues to disappoint not only me, but I know many people in the legal community, that police officers are not held to the same standard as citizens regarding the use of deadly force."

Civil rights prosecutions, though up from levels during President George W. Bush's administration, are still relatively rare nationwide.

"I think it would be fair to say they're tough cases," said Mr. Hickton. "They require intensive investigations."

He's quick to point out that everyone in his office works "for the Department of Justice — we don't work at the department of prosecution."

Tough to prosecute

Mr. Hickton's decision not to prosecute the officers accused of beating Mr. Miles may remain the best-known decision he's made in the civil rights arena, and it will reverberate into next year if, as expected, the encounter becomes the subject of a second civil trial in March. The first ended in a hung jury.

"I meet with people every single day who have been the victim of violence which seems to be unwarranted," said Mr. Sansone. "If Mr. Hickton wants to have a real effect to his initiative, he ought to go at the heart of the problem and make sure that those who are supposed to protect and serve do so.

"The cops aren't very afraid of civil damage," he said. "What they're afraid of is going to jail."

Before that trial starts, Mr. Hickton's office will make two bids to put former law enforcement professionals in jail for depriving others of their civil rights.

On Dec. 20, former Allegheny County Jail officer Arii L. Metz, 35, faces sentencing for punching inmate David Kipp in 2010. On Jan. 16, the future of 32-year-old Mark E. Thom Jr. — formerly of the Springdale Borough police force until he threatened, punched and shocked motorist Gary Cahill with a Taser — will be in the hands of U.S. District Judge Mark R. Hornak.

Mr. Hickton said his office also has a role in an ongoing federal review of the State Correctional Institution Pittsburgh, driven by allegations by inmates of sexual abuses on F Block. Two former SCI Pittsburgh officers are serving probationary sentences handed down in state court.

Nationally, roughly 100 to 130 pure federal civil rights prosecutions are brought in a typical year. That's not much more than one for each of the 94 court districts. Far more allegations of criminal civil rights violations — roughly 500 to 700 per year nationally — are investigated but do not lead to charges.

"I think you often have to show intent in those cases, sort of intentional animus, which makes it very difficult to do," said Witold Walczak, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania.

"When things happen that really are clear violations of civil rights, there should be an outcry, there should be a response, and there should be prosecution," said Pastor Sheldon Williams of the Allegheny Center Alliance Church, who is a former city police officer and now sits on a five-member "crisis team" created by Mr. Hickton to defuse police-community

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tensions. He added that it would be even more effective to reduce the number of incidents through "behavior changes."

Crisis continues

Following his decision not to prosecute the officers in the Jordan Miles incident, Mr. Hickton launched a series of "listening sessions" in which law enforcement leaders and neighborhood activists aired their beefs. The effort progressed to surveys, public meetings and the creation of the crisis team.

That team includes Pastor Williams, Sheriff Bill Mullen, Pittsburgh police Assistant Chief Maurita Bryant, Urban League CEO Esther Bush and the Rev. John C. Welch, dean of students at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

The team has been activated twice — following the shooting by police a year ago of 19-year-old Leon Ford in East Liberty, and the July arrest of teacher Dennis Henderson in a disagreement with an officer in Homewood. Mr. Hickton called it "very helpful."

Has it been enough?

"It's difficult to say sufficient," said Ms. Bush.

"Any time you start a process with the police and the community, being as far apart as we are here in Pittsburgh, it takes time," she said. "The fact that David Hickton is addressing it I think is very important, and it gives us an opportunity to address our concerns to him."

Mr. Walczak took time off from suing the city and other municipalities over alleged civil rights breaches to participate in the police-community dialogue.

"It's difficult to see that it has led to any substantial improvements in relationships," the ACLU lawyer said. "One of the problems that confronts Hickton now is that the police department is rudderless."

The department has been led by acting Chief Regina McDonald since February. The former chief, Nate Harper, awaits sentencing for conspiracy and tax violations following prosecution by Mr. Hickton's office.

Mr. Hickton sent Mr. Sweeney to train police leadership and recruits on civil rights, and has tried to keep the dialogue going. He "realizes that before you can improve relations, you need to bring an open mind and a listening ear to the table," said Assistant Chief Bryant.

Planting a seed in Homewood

At a public meeting in April, Mr. Hickton presented an array of efforts geared at better police-community relations, begging the question: What next?

The Dennis Henderson incident answered that question.

"Homewood, since we had our community-police relations meetings, has been the site of renewed and continuing community-police tension," Mr. Hickton said. So he's launched tentative — and so far separate — discussions with police brass like Assistant Chief Bryant on one hand, and community leaders on the other.

He held a second meeting with the neighborhood contingent on Thursday. So far, he's got more questions than answers.

"Can we assemble 20, 30, 50 people who will look at the future?" he asked, rather than dwell on past slights. "Are we going to develop a community intolerance for illegal guns? Are we going to develop a recognition that violence against police officers is as endemic as community violence?"

Pittsburgh Councilman Ricky Burgess, who represents Homewood, said the process should also send messages to police — and to Washington.

"Fundamentally, [police] have to believe that they have to partner with the community," said Mr. Burgess. "Our police force, that's not their priority. Their priority is simply law enforcement, not partnering with the community.

Talk isn't enough, he said.

"We also need a disproportionate investment of resources — not just police resources, but economic development resources in that community to turn it around," the councilman said. "I think [Mr. Hickton's] voice would be pivotal to the business community, and to federal dollars."

If efforts to ease tensions in Homewood work, the model might be replicated in places like McKees Rocks and the Mon Valley, Mr. Hickton said.

"I'm trying to help," he cautioned, "but the communities are really going to be masters of their own fates."

Jamming human traffickers

Mr. Hickton argues that among the worst civil rights violations are those against children. The section includes prosecutors Jessica Lieber Smolar and Carolyn Bloch, whose caseloads are heavy with child pornography charges.

They've begun to broaden their efforts to human trafficking, a global problem rarely aired in an area courtroom.

Last month Ms. Smolar won a guilty plea to a human trafficking charge against William C. Miller, 38, of the Hill District. That case involved the transportation and harboring of a 15-year-old prostitute, but human trafficking can also involve workers kept in slave-like conditions.

"We're going to make human trafficking a huge initiative in 2014," Mr. Hickton said. His office already works with the 8-year-old Western Pennsylvania Human Trafficking Coalition, which aims to meet the needs of trafficking victims. A challenge is finding the victims and getting their cooperation.

"Many trafficking victims find themselves, by their oppressors, put in the Hobson's choice of complying, or going home," where desperate situations may await them, said Mr. Hickton.

Where can a prosecutor find sources motivated to fight injustice, capable of advocating for the downtrodden and tapped into the dark corners of society? Among lawyers, Mr. Hickton hopes.

Top officials of the Allegheny County Bar Association recently approached him to explore bringing the lawyer group into the human trafficking effort.

"We can get involved as attorneys once we know who a vic-

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tim is," said Nancy Heilman, an attorney at Cohen & Grigsby and president of the association. "We also want to determine how we can provide a voice for the victims."

Mr. Hickton said that much of what he does — meeting sophisticated lawyers and vociferous community leaders, suing mortgage companies and rescue missions, and trying to put former guards and officers in prison — continues to focus on a single goal. "I aim to make this district," he says, "an unwelcome place for civil rights violators."

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U.S. Attorney David Hickton with Pittsburgh Public Schools superintendant Linda Lane.

Ms. Lane's call about the cross burning was a reminder that Mr. Hickton's central mission as Western Pennsylvania's top prosecutor was far from done.

Pam Panchak/Post-Gazette

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Leadership Awards Gala

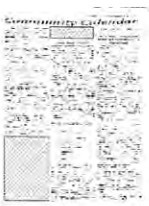
The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh is pleased to announce the 2013 Ronald H Brown Leadership Award recipients: Chris Moore of WQED, Drs. Jerlean and Jack Daniel, and Enterprise Holdings (Pittsburgh) represented by Regional VP & General Manager Tim Nettles. During this 95th Anniversary Year of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the Ronald H. Brown Leadership Awards Gala will be held on December 6th at the West Lounge, Heinz Field.

Honorees have been asked to gather for media access and photo opportunities at 5:30 PM on December 6th at the West Lounge, Heinz Field.

The Ronald H. Brown Leadership Awards Gala honors outstanding individuals, organizations or corporations in the Greater Pittsburgh community who exemplify leadership in improving the quality of life for African Americans while directing nearly 80 cents of every dollar of gross proceeds to the continuation of vital human services we provide to the community.

Endorsed by the Ronald H. Brown Foundation, this premier event highlights the relationship of mutual respect and partnership between the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the corporate community. This signature celebration accounts for a large percentage of the Urban League's annual operating budget.

For more information regarding the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the 2013 Ronald H Brown Leadership Awards, visit www.ulpgh.org



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NEW PITTSBURGH COURIER

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ESTHER BUSH

Smoking

These monthly pages focus on health disparities in the Pittsburgh region. They educate the reader about key health issues, and they inform readers 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 Clinical and Translational Science Institute—CTSI), the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the UPMC Center for Inclusion.

This month the "Take Charge of Your Health" page focuses on smoking—a national health problem, but also a Pittsburgh health problem. Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, chief of adolescent medicine at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League, sat down to talk about smoking.

EM: Good afternoon, Ms. Bush. It's great to see you again. I always appreciate talking with you and hearing your perspective on important health issues that affect our community. This month the Courier health page focuses on smoking.

EB: I'm so glad we're talking about smoking. I travel quite a bit and have many meetings in cities around the country. It always seems to me that people in Pittsburgh smoke more than in other cities around the U.S.

EM: Yes, that's true. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 21 percent of men and 16 percent of women smoke nationwide. As our new Allegheny County Health Department Director Dr. Hacker mentioned, in Allegheny County 24 percent of men and 23 percent of women smoke. That is definitely higher than national averages. The national average of African Americans who smoke is 19 percent, while here it is more than 35 percent.

EB: What an unfortunate, big difference! I have never smoked myself. However, I know many people who struggle with smoking, even though they know it's bad for their health and that it may have long-term side effects. What can people who smoke do to improve their health?

EM: That is a great question, Esther. The doctor side of me wishes that those who smoke would quit as soon as possible. But we all know that's easier said than done. One thing I like to tell my patients, and those I meet in the community, is to practice "harm reduction" with cigarette or tobacco use. "Harm reduction" means minimizing the use of cigarettes. If people smoke one pack a day, they could make a goal to cut back to two-thirds of a pack each day. If people smoke only when they get upset or stressed, they could try to find another way to relieve stress, such as taking a walk, listening to music or talking with a trusted friend or family member.

EB: Good point. We all make health decisions every day. It's a process to change the health behaviors we develop over time. Not only does UPMC have a free smoking program that anyone can join, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has a 24-hour, toll-free Quit Line. Anyone can call 1-877-724-1090 for more information about how to quit smoking. I encourage Courier readers who smoke, or know someone who smokes, to think about why they smoke and what resources they or those they care about may need to quit smoking. Talk to your healthcare provider. If you do not feel comfortable talking to your doctor, call the confidential phone number above.

EM: It's obvious how much you care about our community, Esther. Thank you, once again, for your valuable insight. Next month our health page will feature current information about HIV/AIDS. With any questions about the information on this month's page, readers can e-mail the Community PARTners Core at partners@hs.pitt.edu.

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RMU professor, 49, loses battle with cancer

BY JENNY WAGNER
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MOON TWP. — Rex Crawley, a Robert Morris University professor of communication and the assistant dean of the School of Communications and Information Systems, died Monday at age 49 from complications associated with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Crawley, a Moon Township resident, joined the Moon school in 1999 after earning his doctorate degree in intercultural communication at Ohio University, and was known by colleagues and students as an outstanding professor.

He served in many important roles on the campus over the years, but most recently, Crawley helped to establish the Uzuri Think Tank, a research center within the communications school that focuses on black male educational success.

Photo courtesy of Robert Morris University
Rex Crawley

Crawley, who served as endowed chair and executive director of Uzuri, told The Times in a 2012 article that the idea for the center was the culmination of a 12-year journey that began when he was studying black masculinity in graduate school.

Crawley said his goal for the center was to focus on black males' successes, not deficits.

"There's lots of research on black males but most of it identifies the problems," Crawley said in an interview before the center's fall opening. "You read all of this literature and you hear all of these terrible and horrific things. When your lived experience doesn't connect to that, it makes you stop and say, 'What about the successful guys?' Maybe that information will help us be able to mentor and educate and nurture more African-American men to be successful."

Crawley mentored, educated and nurtured many African-American men himself over the years, touching many lives through his work as co-director of the Black Male Leadership Development Institute, a year-long program for young black males sponsored by the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and RMU.

RMU President Gregory Dell'Omo said Crawley had a "profound and lasting" impact on hundreds of young men throughout the Pittsburgh region.

"Rex will be missed greatly as he was such an integral part of the RMU family," Dell'Omo said in a statement.

Crawley was first diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma — a cancer of the lymph tissue — in 1991. When his cancer reappeared in 2011 and 2013, he documented the experiences in online blogs.

Crawley is survived by his wife Daria Crawley, who is an associate professor of management at RMU, and their two young sons, Xavier and Vaughn.

Funeral arrangements were still pending on Monday afternoon.

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