

# Casey in Baltimore

CREATING SUCCESSFUL FUTURES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION** has been working to promote the well-being of vulnerable children for more than 50 years. *Casey in Baltimore* is one in a series of publications designed to illustrate the ways we are working with specific cities to help fashion creative, cost-effective strategies to strengthen families and communities and build better futures for children whose circumstances place them at risk.



## SUPPORTING NONPROFITS THAT HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Terri Maxwell directs the After School Academic Program of the Children's Guild at the Harlem Park Middle School in West Baltimore. Acutely aware that the time after school is potentially the most dangerous for kids, Maxwell and her staff of six have developed a

program that provides constructive social activities for students after school and helps improve their academic skills.

Harlem Park is one of Baltimore's tougher communities. Children living here have to cope with much higher than city

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LETTER FROM DOUGLAS W. NELSON  
PRESIDENT, THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Baltimore is a place we take pride in calling our hometown. Since establishing our headquarters here in 1994, it has been both our priority and privilege to get to know the city's people, issues, institutions, and opportunities so we can target our investments wisely and with maximum effect. In Baltimore, we intentionally chose a city that exemplified many of the challenges we are striving to address in our work nationwide to improve the lives of the children whose odds of success are compromised by poverty and other difficult circumstances. But we also chose a place with a rich history and a resilient and resourceful population deeply committed to giving all families a reason to hope for a bright future for their children. Because we've firmly established roots and a set of special relationships in this city, we have a steadfast commitment to investing more, going deeper, and staying longer here than anywhere else in the country to help ensure the city's children the best possible shot at success.

Over the past two decades, our research and experience have helped us understand that many of the problems experienced by children who don't do well are related to the places they live, that children cannot prosper unless their parents do, and that families need strong and supportive communities in order to thrive. We are engaged in partnerships with the public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors in Baltimore to help children and families reach their full potential by strengthening neighborhoods that have lost power and vitality as a result of discrimination, neglect, and missed opportunities. Casey is contributing resources, technical assistance, and learning opportunities to help people and organizations achieve concrete, measurable, and sustainable results in the lives of families. We also are working to help empower families and communities and reform systems that have not worked well for those who need them most.

This report highlights some of our efforts to increase collaborative efforts to deliver quality services to the city's vulnerable populations; help community leadership flourish; increase young people's access to education and employment; devise a more responsible approach to relocating families displaced by urban revitalization; and provide more affordable, safe housing for low-income residents. In the process, we hope to gain new knowledge about practices and strategies that improve outcomes and can be applied in other settings and in our work nationwide. 🍌



average rates of abuse, drug activity, violent crime, and adult and juvenile incarceration, and they have little access to opportunities and support systems to help them avoid the world of the streets. Eighty percent of the 50 7th graders enrolled in the After School Academic Program live with someone other than their biological parents. The distressed nature of the community is also reflected in the school, which has higher than city average rates of absenteeism and low test scores in reading and math.

Students in the program get academic instruction to improve their reading ability and, just as importantly, they receive instruction in life skills and therapeutic services from a licensed social worker as needed. Staff members take every opportunity to offer praise and positive reinforcement. Monthly dinner events, featuring performances by students, are well attended by the students' families and provide opportunities for staff to discuss the students' progress with parents or guardians.

For Director Maxwell, the children's willingness to attend and participate provides a clear indication that the program is succeeding at its most important goals. Not only is daily attendance quite high, but "even students who don't come to school on a given day will make a point of not missing the After School Academic Program."





The Casey Foundation has provided two years of support to the After School Academic Program through its Baltimore Direct Services Grants Program, which has been at the center of the Foundation's "hometown philanthropy" for the past decade. Since December 1995, the grants program has provided support to more than 300 local organizations that work directly with disadvantaged children, youth, and families, primarily in Baltimore City. The grants, ranging from \$2,000 to \$20,000, have been used to support a wide range of activities, including health care, education, job training, counseling, violence prevention, recreation, cultural arts, and child care. 🍌

**Left, Shykia Crosby and Jacia Brooks at the After School Academic Program, supported by Casey's Baltimore Direct Services Grants Program. Right, Jahon Jones at the Youth Opportunities (YO!) Center run by the Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition.**

## OPENING MINDS, CREATING OPPORTUNITIES, AND BUILDING BETTER FUTURES FOR YOUTH

Jahon Jones was like many other young people in his East Baltimore neighborhood. As he reached his mid-teens, with little exposure to positive opportunities and connections, life on the streets became much more appealing to him than the prospects afforded by continuing his education. He lost focus in high school, passing through three different schools before dropping out. After leaving school, he spent his time smoking marijuana and "just hanging out on the streets," until he came to realize that those streets had "nothing to offer but hassle."

He started attending the Youth Opportunities (or YO!) Center at first for social reasons. Operated by the Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition Inc. and supported in part by grants from the Casey Foundation, the YO! Center provides counseling, education, and employment services for



young people between the ages of 14 and 22 who, for the most part, have dropped out of school, lack employment, or

have been involved in drugs. Spending time at the center, Jones renewed his interest in continuing his education and finding work. Over the span of several months, he got a job at a downtown hotel and studied for, passed, and received his GED.

Jones's experience at the YO! Center also helped stimulate his entrepreneurial interests. Together with his cousin Vander Young, another YO! Center member, Jones came up with the idea for *Coterie*, a clothing line that combines style with an important social message. Recognizing the need to educate youth about the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, the *Coterie* continued on page 4

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line features undergarments that encourage safe-sex practices. Supported by a small grant from Youth as Resources, a community-based program sponsored by the National Crime Prevention Council and the Casey Foundation, Coterie's products have been successfully marketed at schools and social events. Buoyed by their initial success, Jones and Young have set their sights on expanding their operation and eventually developing a full line of sportswear for the urban youth market. In the more immediate future, Jones plans to attend Morgan State University.

Jones and his cousin are two of more than 3,800 young people served by the YO! Center since its inception in 2000. The center's full-time staff work closely with teens and adults and provide on-site literacy and GED preparation classes as well as programs in job readiness, life skills, leadership development, and job placement

and retention. The center also offers social and recreational activities and referrals to other needed programs and services. Over the past four years, the center has placed more than 1,400 young East Baltimoreans in full-time employment, educational programs, or skills training.

Numbers only tell part of the story, though. As Jones's story illustrates, the biggest challenge to, and most important success of, the YO! Center's work lies in connecting young people to opportunities that will help them to build the skills and confidence they need to succeed. 🙌

## My Sister's Circle

pairs academically promising 5th grade girls living in underserved Baltimore neighborhoods with committed, trained, professional women to mentor and tutor them through their adolescent years.

The program is funded by Casey's Baltimore Direct Services Grants

Program, which since 1995 has provided support to more than 300 Baltimore organizations that work with children, youth, and families.

Above, Kathleen Houser mentors Romeka Morton.



## WORKING TO SUPPORT AND SERVE YOUNG FATHERS

**d**arryl Green, male services facilitator for the Baltimore division of Casey Family Services, met Rudolph Chester when Chester was 19, unemployed, and the father of an infant daughter. Today, Chester credits Green and Casey Family Services' Young Parenting Program, launched in 1995, with turning his life around and stoking his desire to be a supportive, dedicated role model for his three young children.

"It's not easy," he said, "but I don't want them to go through what I went through with my father."

Casey Family Services, the Foundation's direct services operation, provides supports and services to children and families at risk of entering or already involved with the child welfare system. The Baltimore division was established shortly after the Foundation made Baltimore its headquarters in 1994. Since then, Casey has provided a wide range of services for children and their parents, including counseling, crisis intervention, intensive family preservation, case management, family advocacy and support, after-school programs, support groups, and several other educational and recreational activities for both children and parents.

Fatherhood services, facilitated by Green and Family Support Specialists Fred Slade and Anees Abdul Rahim, is a comprehensive effort that combines home visits, group work, and educational programs. Dads 101 is a six-week program that provides young fathers with information about pregnancy and how to care for their babies. It also offers them a chance to share experiences and talk about relationship issues and the challenges and responsibilities that come with fatherhood. In many cases, the young men in the program have had deeply troubled relationships with their own fathers and are at risk of repeating these patterns with their own children. As Green puts it, "they do what they know." A core goal of the program is to break that cycle and help cultivate more positive and enduring relationships between young men and their children.

Chester is one of more than 100 young men who have benefited from Casey's fatherhood services. His involvement with Casey not only helped inspire him to be a dedicated father, but also helped set him on a path to better support his family. For more than three years, Chester has worked as a dietary technician at University of Maryland Hospital. He hopes eventually to be able to buy a home.

Chester is one of a number of previous graduates who stay in close touch with Green and other staff. In visits to Dads 101 sessions, he encourages participants to recognize the importance of "stepping up to let our kids know that we love them and will always be there for them." 🍌



Above, Male Services Facilitator Darryl Green of Casey Family Services works with Rudolph Chester's cousin, Dennis Williams. From left, Kai Chester, Dennis Williams, and Rudolph Chester, Jr.







The **Living Classrooms** Foundation specializes in providing hands-on education and job skills training for students from Baltimore's underserved neighborhoods. It uses maritime settings, community revitalization projects, and other challenging environments to foster career development, community service, self-esteem, and multicultural exchange. Casey has supported and partnered with Living Classrooms in a number of ways, most recently in operating the School-to-Career Partnership program in Baltimore.







## DEVELOPING A MORE RESPONSIBLE APPROACH TO RELOCATION

In January 2001, the city of Baltimore announced its plans to raze and redevelop an 80-acre swathe of the Middle East neighborhood, just to the north of the Johns Hopkins University and Hospital, for a new, mixed-income community and life sciences research park. Although Middle East suffered from neglect, abandonment, and declining investments, it was still home to approximately 800 homeowners, renters, and their families who would all have to be relocated. Since 2001, the Casey Foundation has worked closely with both community residents and East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI), the nonprofit project management entity created by the city to develop an approach to relocation that

would ensure that all of those who are displaced by the “New East Baltimore Community” receive maximum benefit from it. Casey has committed itself to “doing whatever it takes” to see that families who are displaced from this project not only receive an adequate level of monetary benefits to relocate to a safe and decent home, but are provided with the transitional assistance that will ensure that they receive all the support and services they need to improve their lives. The Foundation is also committed to ensuring that relocated residents have a chance to move back to Middle East should they choose. A central component of this transitional assistance is the provision of Family Advocates, trained social service professionals who work

with families before, during, and up to three years after their relocation.

In addition to ensuring that families receive the financial benefits, support, and services they need, the Foundation is deeply committed to ensuring that residents are involved meaningfully in the creation of a more responsible approach to relocation. Residents and community-based organizations have played an important role not only in developing both the relocation plan and the process used to implement it, but also in many other aspects of the project, including the design and housing strategy for the New East Baltimore Community and a public health safety-conscious approach to demolition.

As of late June 2005, approximately 200 households have been relocated. One of the affected residents is Enid Fung, a retired schoolteacher and immigrant from Guyana, who lived in a two-story formstone row house on North Washington Street that she purchased in 1992. The neighborhood had deteriorated markedly in the intervening decade. As her neighbors moved out, many of the surrounding homes were boarded up rather than reoccupied,

**Rosa Burenstine (photo next page), president and executive director of the Baltimore Community for Environmental Justice, has been working hard to ensure a smooth and safe relocation process for East Baltimore residents affected by the redevelopment of the Middle East neighborhood.**



and the area became an illegal dumping ground for garbage from all over the city. The abandoned homes and the trash piled up in streets and alleys created a prolific breeding ground for rats that tormented Fung and others who remained. As the value of her house plummeted, Fung—who lives on a fixed income—couldn't afford to move.

The relocation of Middle East residents began in January 2004. In the meantime, living conditions became increasingly intolerable for Fung because of the rats. One morning she awoke to find a rat nibbling on her toes. She brought her situation to the attention of EBDI, who determined that, although she was technically in the second phase of the project, her circumstances warranted priority relocation. In July 2004, Fung moved into a two-bedroom detached single-family home in Hamilton, a neighborhood in the northeastern part of Baltimore City that is known more for its rabbits and occasional red fox than its rats. She refers to her new dwelling as her “dream home” and has been most satisfied with the relocation process.

It is anticipated that the remaining 165 families in the project's first phase will be moved by the end of 2005. The Foundation continues to play an active role in monitoring the progress of the relocation effort and believes that the approach developed for East Baltimore could well serve as a model for relocation efforts nationwide. 🐾

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Real Time Community Change is designed to help residents exercise **their voice** and decision-making skills in addressing issues of concern in their neighborhoods.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

**C**onstance Johnson had a dream. Concerned about the prevalence of domestic violence in her community, the limited opportunities for assistance, and the reluctance of many victims to seek help, the East Baltimore resident and part-time pastor was inspired to create a program that would provide a safe environment for battered women and their children. “Women are all too often silent about abuse,” she notes, “because they are afraid to reach out for help.” What was needed was a program that could help allay women’s fears and provide temporary shelter and counseling for families seeking to escape domestic violence, as well as referrals to organizations for long-term housing and other kinds of sustained supports. She called her idea the House of Refuge.

Johnson is one of 16 neighborhood leaders, called “spark-plugs,” who have received small grants to develop and implement such projects as part of the Foundation’s Real Time Community Change (RTCC) program. The program—designed to help residents exercise their voice and decision-making skills in addressing issues of concern in their neighborhoods—offers

financial support and intensive technical assistance for innovative projects in five areas: Education, Health and Safety, Youth at Risk, Economic Development, and Community Building.

In 2002, Johnson and her House of Refuge received an award from the RTCC program, which included training in program development from the Rensselaerville Institute. After a year of organizational development, Johnson received a second year of RTCC funding in 2004. This funding allowed for the House of Refuge to receive the services of a coach and a trainer and to begin providing services for a small number of families seeking assistance. Johnson also was successful in negotiating referral arrangements with larger organizations, such as Brown’s Shelter and Turnaround. In January 2005, the House of Refuge held an open house to create greater awareness of its activities among both residents and a broad spectrum of community organizations.

RTCC programs have had a positive impact on more than 360 families during the first two years of the effort. Projects in the current RTCC funding cycle include one that helps incarcerated mothers communicate with their children through audiotapes, a reading club for parents and children ages 9 to 12, and a number of other economic skill-building and after-school activities aimed at fostering connections between children, families, and their communities. 📌

*“Women are all too often silent about abuse.”*



## USING DATA TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

Using good data to inform policy and practice is a core value of the Casey Foundation. In 2000, the Casey Foundation and the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers helped convene a group of citywide nonprofit organizations, city government agencies, neighborhoods, and foundations to form the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. Under the leadership of former director Odette Ramos, the alliance forged a mission to promote and support the use of accurate, reliable, and accessible data to allow persons and agencies to make better decisions that will improve the quality of life in Baltimore.

In 2002, the alliance undertook a comprehensive community-driven process to develop a set of 40 outcome indicators, called “Vital Signs,” that would be used to measure progress in seven areas: Children and Family Health, Safety, and Well-Being; Education and Youth; Workforce and Economic Development; Housing and Community Development; Sanitation; Urban Environment and Transit; and Neighborhood Action and Sense of Community. This is the only indicators project of its kind that is updated annually and provides data at the individual neighborhood level as well as for the city as a whole. The alliance also provides training to groups to use Vital Signs data as part of a results-based approach to decision-making that is user friendly and offers “One Stop Shopping” access to needed data.

Over the past three years, Vital Signs reports have been used by more than 100 public, private, nonprofit, and community-based groups in Baltimore, including the Casey Foundation, to shape action strategies, policy decisions, and funding priorities. 📊

## OTHER CASEY INVESTMENTS IN BALTIMORE

*Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope—the CASH Campaign* A centerpiece of Casey’s efforts to help promote family economic success, the Baltimore CASH Campaign in 2005 helped almost 4,200 people receive more than \$6 million in 2004 income tax refunds, including \$3.2 million from the Earned Income Tax Credit alone. Working out of 12 sites citywide, the CASH Campaign also offers free tax preparation and training programs in financial literacy, homeownership, and other means of building savings and assets.

*Getting Children Ready to Learn and Succeed in School* The Foundation is involved in a variety of efforts to improve educational opportunities in Baltimore. These include supporting new model schools, joining other funders in high school reform work, helping to engage parents around educational initiatives, working to improve children’s readiness to succeed in school, and ensuring that early childhood programs and schools serve all young children effectively. An example of this work is the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program, a collaborative effort with government, nonprofit, and community leaders that uses data to drive decision-making about ways to improve school readiness.

*Helping to Create a Reason to Believe in Baltimore* The Reason to Believe enterprise is an effort by Casey, other foundations, and other private and public entities to bolster support and improve outcomes for the city’s most vulnerable populations. Since its launch in March 2003, Reason to Believe has raised more than \$28 million toward its goal of \$30 million. It also has forged the Compact for Sound Government, which encourages state agencies to invest public funds in programs that improve opportunities for these vulnerable populations and that, by addressing problems before they escalate, will decrease the need for more costly public expenditures in the future.





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The Casey Foundation works with a wide range of public, private, nonprofit, and community partners in our hometown to better the outcomes of Baltimore's children. Clockwise from top, women on a stroll in East Baltimore, 4th graders touring the Baltimore Museum of Art, and a child enjoying himself at Maryland Public Television's "Backyard Bash."