

*Five cities are improving
the odds for their children.
Here's how.*



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The Urban Health Initiative *is about families.*



It is about cities, neighborhoods, and schools.

It is about making these places better environments for children to learn, grow, and thrive.

It is about making children healthier and safer because they have more options and new opportunities.

It is about changing the way governments and cities work to make them more responsive to the needs of children and families.

It is about building productive, supportive, and symbiotic relationships between and among families, communities, and policymakers.

It is about helping communities work smarter for kids.

It is about all of these things and more.

But, most of all, it is about the children.



The Urban Health Initiative (UHI) is a decade-long, \$65 million national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve the health and safety of children in five cities: Baltimore, Detroit, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Richmond. The Foundation established UHI in 1995 — partly in response to the 1992 Los Angeles riots — to determine whether a concerted, collaborative effort could bring about citywide improvements in multiple measures of child well being.

Certainly foundations, including RWJF, have made previous attempts to change health and safety outcomes for low-income, urban children, but the UHI is trying something innovative: large-scale, citywide change in health indicators for young people. It wants to “move the needle” on pervasive problems like youth violence, drug use, teen pregnancy, and other indicators of the well being of children. And it is doing that by supporting change agents within these cities, organizations dedicated to bringing together those with a stake in the issue and helping them to collaborate successfully — often for the very first time.

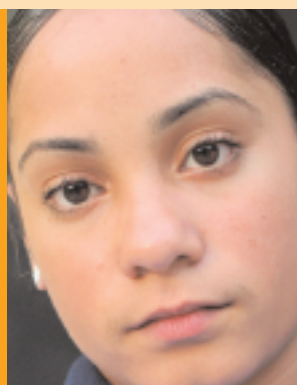
“When UHI was created, there were already multiple efforts underway in these cities to improve indicators for children,” said UHI national program director, Charles Royer, a former mayor of Seattle. “There’s no doubt that most cities work hard on behalf of their children, but what they may be lacking is a trusted convener, an organizer, a coordinator that looks at the big picture and connects the dots among all the different efforts and

players, and helps focus the work and the money in a way that brings about large-scale, sustainable change. That is what UHI is doing.”

With funding from RWJF, each of the five UHI cities created a new entity to be an agent for change. And as change agents in their cities, these organizations have:

- Identified the outcomes local leaders and community members believe are most important to improve;
- Selected the best practice strategies that research has shown will improve the chosen outcomes;
- Secured policy changes and mobilized resources necessary to implement the selected strategies on a scale sufficient to improve outcomes citywide; and
- Relied on sound data to guide their efforts.

In addition, a primary function of the change agent organizations in each city is to build the trust and maintain the relationships that allow the measurable work on behalf of children to get done.



And while there is a necessary level of consistency among the five UHI campaigns, there also is room for each campaign to make its own way, shaped by the unique personality of each city. This latitude allowed for locating the UHI organization differently in each city. In Philadelphia, for example, the UHI campaign was initially housed within the city government, while in Richmond it is part of the city's Chamber of Commerce. The wide degree of latitude also allowed each UHI campaign to determine where the most pressing child health and safety needs lay. Several focus on reducing youth violence, another on improving early childhood development programs and youth literacy. While the cities take differing approaches when tackling targeted health and safety indicators, all approaches are proven, best-practice models.

"The idea behind UHI was simply that real collaboration can lead to real change," said Floyd Morris, RWJF senior program officer. "These sites were charged with finding a new way to do business, one that requires everyone to work together and relies on data to make decisions and research to determine approaches. Significant changes are bound to result from an atmosphere built on trust, collaboration, and the best information available."

As the following pages show, each UHI campaign has contributed to improving the lives of its city's children. They are doing what they set out to do. In 2005 alone, the five UHI sites created, combined, or redirected investments of nearly \$200 million for their best-practice strategies. Systemic change is occurring. Money is flowing in the right direction. Cities are learning to use data and research to work smarter for kids. And, as a result, children and families are benefiting.



Safe and Sound Campaign

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore's Safe and Sound Campaign began in 1997 with a meeting of more than 7,000 city residents who came together to create a plan for significantly improving the well being of Baltimore's children and youth. Since its launch at the Baltimore Convention Center, Safe and Sound's community engagement has continued unabated.

"Safe and Sound's strengths are its knowledge of the issues, its planning, and its mobilization of the community," observed Muriel Gates-Cromwell, director of Baltimore's Success By 6® Partnership, one of several strategic initiatives that Safe and Sound helped develop in Baltimore. The Baltimore City Health Department, the Family League of Baltimore City, and the United Way of Central Maryland are all partners in Success By 6, which is designed to ensure that infants are born healthy, live in safe and nurturing families, and are ready to learn when they begin school.

Other long-term strategies that Safe and Sound Campaign has helped nurture include Reading By Nine, Baltimore's After-School Strategy, and Operation Safe Kids. Safe and Sound has helped persuade political leaders to invest in these and other initiatives that it believes make a difference in the lives of children. As just one example, in 2005, the city put more than \$12 million additional dollars into strategies advocated by Safe and Sound.

To help policymakers base decisions on solid data, Safe and Sound Campaign spearheaded the creation of the Baltimore City Data Collaborative, which collects statistics that help gauge the progress made toward improving the lives of Baltimore's children. Through its website, the Data Collaborative makes available citywide summary data and community-specific data for use in policy and planning decisions.

Safe and Sound Campaign's newest strategy involves creating "Maryland Opportunity Compacts" with the state government. The compact concept is based on the idea that prevention of or early intervention in a problem, such as substance abuse, is more effective and less costly to taxpayers than letting the problem fester until it requires high-cost state custodial care, such as prison, foster care, or juvenile detention.

The first compact is designed to reduce the amount of time that children of parents who are substance abusers spend in foster care. The expectation is that a more effective treatment program will reunite children with their families more quickly, thereby reducing foster care costs. A program in San Diego on which the Baltimore program is based has achieved that result. Under the compact concept, the state agrees to funnel a significant proportion of any money saved into programs designed to give youngsters a good start and to give adults a second chance. Said Hathaway Ferebee, executive director of Safe and Sound Campaign: "We expect to get better outcomes for less money and claim the savings for further investment in opportunity and prevention."



Barbara Squires,
Assistant Commissioner,
Baltimore City Health Department



There is a lot of work around family support going on in Baltimore. Safe and Sound pulled it all together into a big system with all the holes plugged so families across the board receive the supports they need to do well. The whole effort, which includes the Success By 6 strategy, has made a difference to families.

Many of the moms we work with are very isolated. They are trying to raise their kids by themselves, often in difficult situations. Safe and Sound, through the Success By 6 strategy, has helped overlay on top of the support effort a focus on school readiness. I see a real galvanizing around the city of folks like me who now understand that not only are we working to make sure babies enter the world in good health and that families are in a good position to raise their children well, but that parents are given the resources and encouragement to serve as their child's first teacher.

As a community, we put together research-based strategies like Success By 6, Countdown to Kindergarten, and Reach Out and Read that have contributed to a 48 percent increase in the number of Baltimore children entering kindergarten ready to learn — jumping from 27 percent in 2004 to 40 percent in 2005.

Barbara Hughes, Program Manager,
DRU/Mondawmin Healthy Families,
part of the Success By 6 Strategy



One of the best ways to impact families is to work with pregnant moms. We contact women any way we can. There are times when we are driving down the street, see someone who is pregnant, stop the car, and hand the person a flyer. We work intensely with a family for the child's first year and continue to visit until age five, focusing on health and child development.

We have several families who, if they did not have a family support worker, their children would not be seen for speech difficulties and other problems. All of our workers are trained to do a screening questionnaire to check on a child's development. When we go into a home, we look to see what strengths a family has. We ask them what they want to do and how they think they can accomplish that. We help them write out goals and determine the steps needed to reach them.

Recently, we graduated seven families who had been with the program at least four years. One mother was certified as a pharmacy technician a week later. She was so motivated. She said, 'I don't want my girls to think they can't accomplish these things.' Safe and Sound has advanced our work as an integrated strategy that has improved birth outcomes and vulnerable families' chances to stay together. Reported incidences of child abuse are down 32 percent and Baltimore's infant mortality reached its lowest level ever in 2003.

Gwendolyn Tires,
Mother of 3-year-old Kemont'e



I heard about Success By 6 in the hospital after I had my son, and I signed up. Cynthia Collins, my family support worker from DRU/Mondawmin, started coming to see my son. She used to visit twice a month and now comes every month. She wants to make sure he is coming along the way he is supposed to.

If it weren't for her, I don't know where my son would be with his hearing because I found out he was deaf at age one. I asked Ms. Cynthia: 'Shouldn't my son be saying something?' She asked me, 'What do you mean?' I told her that he wasn't talking. She set up medical appointments. They found his adenoids were draining into his ears and keeping him from hearing. He had two surgeries — they took out his adenoids and tonsils and then put tubes in his ears.

Today my son is talking and hears like he is supposed to. He gets speech therapy and has come a long way. I stay on top of things. I didn't want my son to fall through the cracks in the system. I want him to get the medical attention he needs so he can learn. Ms. Cynthia helps me with where to go for help, and helped me set my goals for my life — to get my own place and to get a job. She is like a mother figure.



Mayor's Time

Detroit, Michigan

Mayor's Time is an integral part of Detroit's civic community. Originally called The Youth Connection, the name change is indicative of the way city leaders have embraced the organization and its work. Its annual After-School Fair, held at the downtown convention center, is a major event that attracts thousands of students and parents looking for an after-school program that meets their needs and interests. The fair, which draws some 250 providers of after-school programs, is the most visible manifestation of the decision by Mayor's Time to focus on significantly increasing student participation in after-school programs. Mayor's Time embraced that mission after examining research which showed that keeping young people engaged in constructive activities after school would reduce youth violence, substance abuse, and teenage sexual activity.

Since it adopted this focus in 1999, the proportion of Detroit students attending after-school programs has risen dramatically and is approaching the organization's goal of 50 percent participation among all Detroit school children. Freddie G. Burton, Jr., Wayne County Judge of Probate and longtime chair of the Mayor's Time board, said: "We aren't vain enough to take all the credit for increased participation, but people keep telling me that before Mayor's Time came along they didn't know these after-school programs existed." In addition to holding the fair, Mayor's Time works with a variety of organizations to disseminate information about after-school programs and hosts a website that contains information about 800 programs.

But Mayor's Time does far more than serve as a matchmaker between providers and parents. It has established an information system used by hundreds of after-school providers. To participate in the annual fair, providers must agree to collect and provide data about their programs. That information can be used to evaluate program effectiveness on a large scale and analyze the relationship between participation and student outcomes.

Mayor's Time has also played a key role in bringing \$40 million into the region from foundations, government, and the business community to support after-school programming. One source of these funds is Detroit's Skillman Foundation. Carol Goss, president of the Foundation, says that thanks to Mayor's Time "parents and kids now have an understanding about after-school programs. They know where to go to look for them and even demand certain kinds of programs that offer quality and diversity of activities. We have created a landscape where everybody can talk about after-school programs and where people expect them to exist in all kinds of settings."

Mayor's Time worked closely with the Skillman Foundation and state and city agencies to use federal funds to provide free breakfasts and lunches to youth participating in summer programs, most of which are extensions of after-school programs.

The organization has also been active at the state level, playing an important role in obtaining legislative passage of a resolution that led to the formation of the Michigan After-School Partnership, whose long-term goal is to provide after-school programs for all school-age children in the state.

While Mayor's Time has accomplished a great deal, it is not resting on its laurels. Said Executive Director Grenaé Dudley, "We have to stay on top of things to maintain what we have achieved."



Lindy Buch, Director, Office of Early Childhood Education & Family Services, Michigan Department of Education



With so many parents working, after-school programs are more important for kids than when I was growing up. We have to have opportunities for kids when the school day ends. Otherwise, some of them will come home to an empty house — an electronic baby sitter is not a good option.

When it comes to after-school programs, nobody in Michigan is as organized as Detroit, thanks to Mayor's Time, which is a huge partner with the state. Because of Mayor's Time, we are way ahead of where we would be otherwise. Anything we do in the state, if we don't do it right in Detroit, we just fail. We have our most vulnerable children there.

Mayor's Time has helped us understand what the issues are in Detroit — and those issues change over time. Without Mayor's Time, Detroit would be a place with a lot of after-school programs but with no emphasis on connecting the right program with the right kid and getting information to parents about what is good for their child. We would have an *unsystem*. Parents need some way to find out what their choices are and how to access the programs. Mayor's Time systematizes things for parents and makes programs accessible.

Alicia Villarreal,
President and CEO,
Latino Family Services



Mayor's Time has helped us build our capacity to give youth opportunities they would not otherwise have. There was a young man in a migrant family who came here. We taught him to maintain the computer lab. He updated the software daily. His family is in Florida now because they go where there is employment. But some day he could become a computer engineer, although we'll never know. Had it not been for Mayor's Time, he would never have had that opportunity.

Mayor's Time has also helped us collect demographic data. They showed us the value in that and helped build our capacity to collect information. Lots of funding sources hand you a report and say 'figure it out,' but not Mayor's Time. The information we collect has made a difference in our ability to serve our community and has enabled us to tell our story more effectively. As social workers, we are visionaries who want to save the world. When you have the data to go with the passion, you are really powerful.

When it can, Mayor's Time helps make special events accessible to community groups. It gave us tickets to FanFest, which was held in Detroit when baseball's All-Star game was here. The kids were so excited to meet the players and thrilled to get autographs from "Pudge" Rodriguez. Together, we and Mayor's Time are making a difference. We are impacting our youth.

Luis Cartagena,
Father of 6-year-old Adam



My aunt and uncle in Detroit, who raised me, didn't speak any English so I never had any help with school when I came here from Puerto Rico. I don't read or write. I have been on my own since I was 16. I have been surviving my way through life. Because of that, I knew I would have a hard time educating Adam. I needed help and got it from Latino Family Services and its summer and after-school programs.

Adam has been through a lot. I thought if I could get him around a group of children his age that would be good for him. He looks forward to coming to the after-school program. He is here from 3:30 until 6:00 five days a week. He has a chance to learn things, to be social, and to pick up skills. He plays on a computer. The staff help him with his reading and homework. They do arts and crafts and take the children on field trips. The program has helped interest him in learning, and he has learned how to get along with other children. His behavior has dramatically changed since coming here.

If this place wasn't here, I wouldn't have known what to do. I'd be lost. This place gives him a better chance to succeed than I had.



Safe Passages

Oakland, California

Like the UHI campaigns in other cities, Oakland's Safe Passages is a convener, an organizer, an agent for change — the crucial link between public and private organizations that serve children and families and the policymakers whose decisions impact the success of those organizations.

Safe Passages represents an unprecedented partnership in Oakland among the city government, the County of Alameda government, the Oakland Unified School District (which is administered by the state of California), the private East Bay Community Foundation, and a variety of community-based organizations. Under the leadership of Safe Passages, all have come together successfully in the spirit of cooperation to focus on an overwhelming need in Oakland: reducing the impact of exposure to violence on children and youth. And they're succeeding.

Oakland's youth are disproportionately affected by violence, according to Josefina Alvarado-Mena, Safe Passages' executive director. Safe Passages' strategy is to "blanket" Oakland's youth with the supportive services they need to help them lead healthy, productive lives. Its research-based strategies include: an early childhood intervention program that promotes reading, language skills, and positive social interactions among pre-school children; a middle school strategy that intensively targets middle school youth with comprehensive support services on campus, including case managers and mental health counselors; a youth offender strategy, called Pathways to Change, that pairs repeat offenders with case managers; and an after-school strategy to help keep kids off the streets.

As a result of these efforts, suspensions due to violence in Safe Passages middle schools decreased 72 percent between 1998 (when the program began) and 2005, and between the 2001-02 and 2003-04 school years absenteeism was reduced 28 percent. In addition, more than 7,500 middle school students received a menu of social services at school in 2003-04. Further, a six-month follow up study of the Pathways to Change program

found a 45 percent decrease in recidivism among youth who completed the program, and violence-related school suspensions among youth in that program dropped 78 percent in one year. Also, an additional \$14 million in funding has been invested in Oakland after-school programs.

"I don't think there's ever been anything like Safe Passages in Oakland," said Safe Passages' Alvarado-Mena. "Its success lies in the commitment that key public officials have to collaboration. Together we have won the trust of so many critical players. We have the city, the county, the schools, the police and probation agency, elected officials, everyone who needs to be coordinating this effort, they're all at the table." As just one example, Safe Passages' efforts to promote cross-collaboration among these entities has resulted in an additional \$10 million in previously untapped Medicaid funds being funneled to the schools to support mental health services.

Safe Passages' coordinating successes are evident in the schools as well, where its efforts are being implemented and tested every day. "Schools see reforms passing through all the time; hundreds of reforms come and go," said Alvarado-Mena. "They're very skeptical, and rightfully so. But we're succeeding with them because we didn't say 'here's this idea to improve school climate, go and implement it.' We partnered with them on implementation and, most importantly, gave them the resources — the funding, training, and personnel — to do it."



Dave Kears, Director,
Alameda County Health Care Services
Agency and Safe Passages Board Chair



I've been the director of the county health department since the beginning of Safe Passages, and I was involved in deciding how to make UHI work in Oakland. When we (the Safe Passages partners) first came together, the city was floundering over youth violence. But UHI forced us to work through it, to look at the data and determine how we were really going to make a difference.

We realized that we needed to make change along the whole continuum, targeting the most at-risk kids as well as those who are likely to become at-risk. And we knew we needed to take our efforts to where the kids are, into the schools, into the juvenile court system. Before Safe Passages, we always talked to each other, but the conversation was always 'what can I do **for** you' not 'what can I do **with** you'. We each had our own turf and could easily walk away. I like to say it's no longer like a shopping center where everyone gets to operate their own store. There's been a kind of sea change in perspectives, from service providers to elected officials. We all work together now.

But are we there yet? No. We can't rest because it's an evolving process of constantly bringing people along. We've begun to institutionalize some of the financing that supports these programs, but we're not there yet with the culture change. That still has to happen; then we'll know we're there.

Art Mola,
School Site Services Coordinator,
Madison Middle School



We need to teach this generation how to handle conflict. This is one of the biggest components of our middle school strategy and my biggest project this year. What makes my job easier is that Safe Passages and its leaders have a good reputation throughout the district as being folks you can trust. Our community understands that Safe Passages only gets involved with things that are going to improve lives.

Madison Middle School has a large population of students that, for a variety of reasons, are lacking the necessities. They come to school carrying on their backs things that they experience at home — significant issues like transitional housing or domestic abuse. For them, these problems are far more serious than whether they are going to pass a math test or did their homework.

Because my foremost responsibility is to students and families, I see myself as an advocate. Our students and their families need advocacy, intervention, and structure to help them achieve their goals. Sometimes, students need case management just to get them through the day, and I and my two colleagues — a case manager and a mental health counselor — are some of the few adults the students may be able to confide in. They look to us to protect their rights or help them communicate what it is that they have been through. When I look at it this way, everything else is easy to figure out.

Dorothy Thompson, Grandmother to
Jay, a Carter Middle School student



Jay is very popular; the kids love him. We all love him. But he has some real difficulties. When we came to Carter Middle School, I was worried that he'd struggle like he has at other schools. Good people have tried to help him in the past, but here they're really doing it.

When we came here, they pointed me to Ms. Diamond. She's his case manager. I was surprised; we never had anyone like her before to help us out. I didn't know what she could do for us, but she made me comfortable and helped me see that Jay could have some improvement. No one had ever laid it out for me before. We had a "School Success Team Meeting" to make a plan for him. She pointed me to things I didn't know about; things that could help Jay. I feel like someone finally understands his needs. He meets with a counselor here, he has people helping him, he plays football, and he does his homework more.

I hope Jay will finish high school and go to college. I always tell him to focus on college. I think he's getting there, he knows he has to do better, and now we know he can.



Philadelphia Safe and Sound

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia Safe and Sound began as part of city government, and though it has since become an independent non-profit, its roots have uniquely positioned it to partner with political and business leaders in the City of Brotherly Love. The organization is a “think tank” for the city, a place to which government and private sector leaders turn for research and best practice information.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound is known citywide for its annual *Report Card*, which provides a snapshot of the well being of local children and youth. It contains data on child poverty, abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, juvenile crime, and other key indicators. A companion document, called *The Children’s Budget*, measures and analyzes government spending on children and youth. “Prior to Safe and Sound, nobody knew how much the city spent for children’s services,” observed Ernest Jones, longtime chair of the organization’s board. All the information gathered by Philadelphia Safe and Sound is used by officials to guide them in allocating resources.

The organization is engaged in other research efforts including drilling more deeply into the data contained in its *Report Card* in order to provide comparable reports for 12 Philadelphia neighborhoods. These *Community Report Cards* will pinpoint local problems and make it possible for the city to more precisely target resources. Philadelphia Safe and Sound is also developing an integrated data information system that will combine the records of multiple social service agencies. This will allow the agencies to coordinate their services better and serve clients more effectively.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound is transforming research into “best practice” initiatives to improve the health and well being of Philadelphia’s children. It researches programs across the country that are achieving the best

outcomes for children and applies them locally. The result is a proven track record of success. The initiatives include a multi-agency violence reduction partnership to reduce the incidence of youth homicide. This effort, which combines intensive supervision with an array of support services, has reduced youth homicides by 50 percent in the three police districts where it is located.

Other initiatives involve working with city agencies to manage and provide technical assistance for after-school and youth development programs. These include more than 120 after-school programs, Teen Centers, and Beacon Schools. Beacons are located in 23 Philadelphia public schools and represent a strategy for building and strengthening communities and improving the academic success of children. In another effort to help parents and children, Philadelphia Safe and Sound has developed an Online After School and Child Care Program Finder, which contains information on more than 700 programs.

The results of these multi-faceted efforts have gained Safe and Sound wide recognition. Said Vik Dewan, Wachovia Bank’s Regional President for Philadelphia and Delaware: “Safe and Sound has been nothing short of a lifesaver for Philadelphia’s children. It has revolutionized the way government contract funding is used to address children’s needs. It is a catalyst for systems reform and has proven that a well-executed comprehensive approach to child welfare can yield impressive results.”



Julia Danzy, Director,
Philadelphia Department
of Social Services



In formal public systems, we often are more reactive than proactive, and don't always have time to analyze the quality of our performance and determine next steps. Philadelphia Safe and Sound fills that need. We can tell them we see a rise in youth violence and they are able to compile data to give us a comprehensive picture of where hot spots are in relation to our services. They also can zero in and say that in one area the problem is among 13-to-16-year-olds and in another among 16-to-24-year-olds. That allows us to become more focused in directing our services.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound is involved in a number of areas, including after-school programs like the Beacon Schools. It is definitely an agent for change. But from my perspective, development of an integrated data information system, which is almost complete, is one of its greatest contributions.

The data system will enable agencies to treat a client in a holistic way instead of operating independently of one another, which can result in their working at cross purposes. Right now, when a client comes into child welfare services, if the client doesn't say, 'Here is a card I got from the mental health office,' the case worker has no idea that the client is getting that kind of help. Developing a comprehensive service plan will give our clients a better chance to succeed.

Patricia DeCarlo, Executive Director,
Norris Square Civic Association



It used to be that 74 percent of the children in this community did not graduate from high school. The board of the civic association felt we needed to do something. We came up with the idea of older youth tutoring younger neighborhood kids. We thought the younger kids would get the help they needed and older kids would build self esteem and the commitment to stay in school and do well. It worked.

Eventually, that idea evolved into the Beacon School in our community, which now enrolls about 360 kids. The program keeps our local school open until nine at night, with instruction for parents and children. We've had kids who came from Puerto Rico to Philadelphia, and the Beacon School has made them comfortable. There are always some staff who speak Spanish and who make them feel welcome — 71 percent of the community is Latino.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound is passionate about the Beacon Schools. It helped with staff training. Unlike some organizations that simply give funding and check in after 12 months, Philadelphia Safe and Sound provides ongoing oversight. We are always brainstorming with them to figure out how to make Beacon broader. Another thing that Philadelphia Safe and Sound does well is listen. They take notes. This makes them highly effective.

Iris Santos, Mother of Christina, 17;
Marisol, 16; Angela, 13; Staci, 11;
and Selena, 6



Our community Beacon School is very important to my family. My daughter, Marisol, and I work there after the end of the regular school day. She helps second graders with homework, and I work with first graders. My daughters and I also take evening classes there. They have classes in such things as salsa dancing, computers, and karate.

A lot of kids who come to the Beacon School need help with reading. We help them to read their homework, to make their own sentences, and to spell words. If they don't understand English, I translate their homework into Spanish. We also help them understand their math. They get the guidance they need instead of being on the streets. That's why it's great for my kids. Instead of being home watching TV, they are at the Beacon School. My daughters like to play basketball there, and I'm proud to say that this year they each won championship trophies.

If friends of mine are not sure about leaving their kids at a Beacon School, I tell them it's a good program. This year, we are seeing a lot more kids than last year. Word must be going around that the kids get help — and it keeps them out of the streets.



Youth Matters

Richmond, Virginia

When Youth Matters began in Richmond in 1995, more than 40 percent of the city's third graders were not reading at grade level. Today, that number has been cut almost in half. Youth Matters has taken an unusual approach to improving child health and safety outcomes by, first, focusing on improving beginning literacy skills and, more recently, enhancing the quality and quantity of early childhood development programs. And it is rallying Virginia's business community to support its efforts.

"The research showed that for every one dollar spent on early childhood education, there is a savings of approximately seven to eight dollars to society down the line because you're helping kids succeed in school and avoid trouble," said Lynn McCashin, executive director of Youth Matters. "So our goal is to help the business community connect the dots between support for children's programs — especially early childhood programs — and economic development and quality of life issues."

Youth Matters is unique among the UHI sites in that it is situated within the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and has many influential business leaders on its advisory council, including representatives from Capital One, Verizon, and the Federal Reserve Bank. According to Katherine Busser, a Capital One vice president, "Investing in human capital is smart economic development — and it leads to a satisfying quality of life. You get the most payoff the earlier you invest."

And investing early in children is what Youth Matters is all about. While its most easily identifiable goal is ensuring that all third graders in the Richmond metropolitan area are reading at grade level by 2010, Youth Matters focuses on a broad range of strategies to improve the region's early childhood development system, including: helping to found and lead

Richmond's 150-member Early Childhood Development Coalition, which focuses on developing and sustaining community partnerships that enhance the quality of early care and education; creating a central Book Bank for the city of Richmond, which has collected and distributed 85,000 children's books to at-risk children since its founding in 2001; and advocating for and supporting home visitation programs and enhancing those programs by sponsoring the inclusion of the "Raising A Reader" initiative, which enables home visitors to bring children's books into low-income homes and teach parents how to read with their children.

"It feels like Youth Matters is hitting its stride," said McCashin. "State and local legislators know us and trust us, the business community knows us and trusts us, and everyone is starting to see the benefits of collaborating on policy and funding decisions. Certainly children and families are benefiting from things like improved childcare standards and more funding for home visitor programs. We're working in partnership on many fronts to improve early childhood programs."



Kathy Glazer,
Public Relations/Marketing Manager,
Virginia Department of Social Services



Youth Matters may be a Richmond-area effort, but we're very interested at the state level because its success could provide a model for working with the statewide business community in new ways. One of my roles at the Department of Social Services is to coordinate the Governor's early childhood initiatives, and the work of Youth Matters and Richmond's Early Childhood Development Coalition is helping to shape some of that.

Last May, we helped sponsor a summit meeting of state business leaders to bring attention to the idea of making economic investment in early childhood programs. We're now trying to make statewide the argument that Youth Matters makes locally, that the private and public sector need to work together on this issue. That idea seems to have struck a chord, and we're beginning to talk to other Chambers of Commerce in the state about it.

Youth Matters has really changed things around here. It's got everyone thinking smarter, thinking in new ways about how to fund early childhood services. We've all known for years and years what's good for kids, but still we've just inched along, not really moving the needle. But Youth Matters has figured out how to connect what happens in the legislature to what happens in business to what happens with children — there's a synergy now that's bound to move things forward.

**Barbara Fleming, Executive Director,
Children's Health Involving Parents
Home Visitor Program**



Children's Health Involving Parents helps poor families with young children get better access to health care, and it's done through home visitors. We assign both visiting nurses and/or lay home visitors to families, depending on their needs. Some need help with specific health care issues, while others need help making decisions, accessing programs, and finding resources. We do both. We help families make better use of community resources to improve not only health but well being; it's been a very successful model.

And the Raising A Reader program fits right in with that. Most of our families don't have a high school diploma or even have books or other printed materials in the house. Because Youth Matters helped the corporate community understand the benefits of investing in home visitation and early childhood development programs, we received the resources to implement Raising A Reader.

Both our home visitors and our families love the program. We've found that instead of the program being one more agenda item to get through with an already overwhelmed family, the books are a way to open up conversation and build relationships. Parents sincerely appreciate the effort made on behalf of their children.

Sharnena Davenport,
Mother of Dayvon, 6; Déja, 5;
Dayquan, 3; and Dayshawn, 6 months

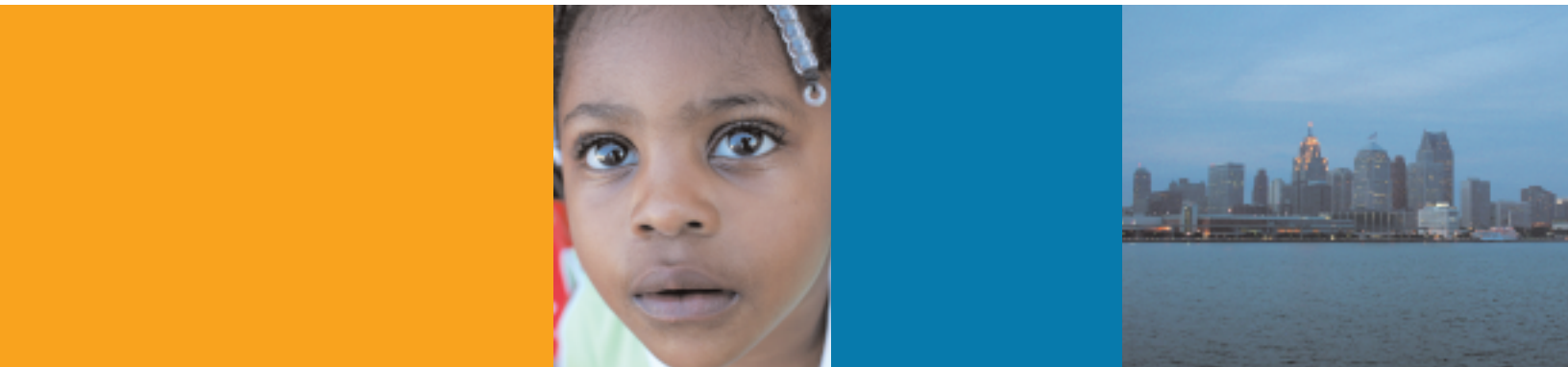


I found out about a year ago that I could get home visiting help through my Medicaid insurance. Since then, Ms. Walker (Lavater Walker from Children's Health Involving Parents) has been coming to my house to help me with just about everything. She helped me to get my oldest, Dayvon, enrolled in kindergarten. I hadn't done it because I didn't know how. But we got him enrolled, and we got my daughter into pre-school.

And I have a job and house that I didn't have before. Ms. Walker, she just helped me to sort things out, to see that I can do all these things. And she's helped me with my kids too. She started doing the Raising A Reader program with us and is bringing them new books to read every few weeks. She has shown me how important it is to read with them every day, even with everything else that is going on.

We learned a lot about Dayvon with those books. He just opened up. He learned his colors and shapes and ABCs. The books helped him with things he was learning at his new school. One day he came home and told me he had read a story to his class. That was amazing. I hadn't expected that.

For *More* Information



More detailed information on UHI, including a series of “lessons learned” papers, is available through the national program office and the UHI website.

**UHI National Program Office
Institute for Community Change**
316 Occidental Avenue South
Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206-812-1193
www.urbanhealth.org

Or, for more information on a specific UHI campaign:

Safe and Sound Campaign
2 East Read Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Phone: 410-625-7976
www.safeandsound.org

Mayor's Time
333 West Fort St., Suite 1230
Detroit, MI 48226-3150
Phone: 313-963-3660
www.mayorstime.com

Safe Passages
250 Frank Ogawa Plaza,
Suite 6306
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-238-4458
www.safepassages.org

Philadelphia Safe and Sound
1835 Market Street, Suite 420
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Phone: 215-568-0620
www.philasafesound.org

Youth Matters
201 E. Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23219
Phone: 804-783-9352
www.grcc.com

Additional information on the UHI may be obtained from RWJF:

**The Robert Wood
Johnson Foundation**
College Road, East
PO Box 2316
Princeton, NJ 08543
Phone: 1-888-631-9989
www.rwjf.org

The Urban Health Initiative (UHI) seeks to improve the health and safety of children. Funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the UHI is a collection of campaigns in five large U.S. metropolitan areas. Each campaign is unique, based on local challenges and opportunities, but all are united by a commitment to help their cities make the policy and investment decisions that will have the greatest results for kids.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful, and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.**