

# PLASE & POINT

FALL 2011

Published by Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment)



1814 Maryland Ave.  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Tel: 410.837.1400  
Fax: 410.837.6130  
www.projectplase.org

### Our Mission

Project PLASE, Inc. addresses homelessness by providing transitional housing, permanent housing and supportive services to homeless adults. We serve the most vulnerable and underserved, including persons with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, addiction, developmental disabilities and ex-offenders.

### Our Vision

To eliminate homelessness.



Please designate Project PLASE at your workplace using the following codes:

- United Way of Central Maryland **141**
- Combined Charity Campaign **8141**
- Maryland Charity Campaign **8141**
- Combined Federal Campaign **56982**

## PASSION TO SERVE

Each year Project PLASE hosts several permanent volunteers (i.e. young persons who devote a year's service to non-profit work) who come to PLASE from all over the United States and Germany. They may not have had experience in service with homeless men and women before, but one thing they all have in common is the passion to serve and share their skills with Baltimore's most vulnerable citizens. They work in a variety of capacities, such as direct counseling service, grant writing, event planning, volunteer coordination, and intake coordination.

Each year-long volunteer was touched in one way or another by a person they met or a story they heard. To highlight just two of our volunteers:

**Lauren Stoler**, who is from Towson, served as PLASE's Community Projects Coordinator this past year. In this role Lauren engaged the community through a unique combination of organizing, and direct and indirect service. She learned a great deal about homelessness, but most importantly, she "learned to see this as an issue that affects people, people with aspirations, people who are worthy of more, and people I know."

**Kendra Alison**, from Kansas, made a huge impact on Project PLASE through stepping in wherever and whenever she was needed, whether as the Executive Director's administrative assistant or a GED tutor. Kendra reflected on her time at PLASE, "I learned a lot about the depths of homelessness – it isn't just the physical part of not having a permanent place to stay – but not having a phone to keep in touch with friends and family, not having a place to take a shower or store your things. Being homeless affects every part of your life - physically, mentally, and emotionally - so being able to help make life a little easier for someone has been a great experience. Being a positive part of someone's life has been a real blessing to me."

Project PLASE thanks the year-long volunteers for generously giving their time, experience and service to all of us!



*Left* • Kendra Alison, from the Mennonite Voluntary Service, served as GED Tutor and Administrative Assistant; Kerry Casey, a Public Allies Maryland member was PLASE's Volunteer Coordinator  
*Right* • Leon Buschina and Simon Brendel, both Brethren Volunteer Corps members from Germany, served as Maintenance Assistant and Intake Coordinator



The bagpipes skirled and warmed things up at Fell's Point Fun Fest

quickly snapped up by festival-goers. We were also very fortunate to have several dedicated volunteers who generously gave their time to help run our booth. Thanks to Betty, Brittany, Caville, Chris, Elaine, Elinor, Erik, Hope, Jesse, Jennifer, Kristina, Laura, Mary McQ, Mary, and Sonal!

*We are looking forward to our next "Purses for PLASE" event, at Mount Vernon's 2012 FlowerMart. Mark your calendars for May 4th & 5th, 2012 and we hope to see you there!*

*If you would like to host a "Purse Party" to collect donations for Project PLASE, or organize your own purse drive, please contact Faith at 410.837.1400 ext. 36.*

## ON FELL'S POINT

"Purses for PLASE" returned to the Fell's Point Fun Festival for a second year this Fall. "Purses for PLASE" is an opportunity to offer new and used purses for suggested donations. The Fell's Point Fun Festival is the largest street fair in Baltimore, and we were excited to be part of the events again this year. Despite the chilly and forbidding weather, there were a lot of attendees at the fair, and we raised over \$1,600!

We couldn't have done this without the wonderful help of purse donors, purse sorters, van drivers and our hardy booth volunteers. Several community members organized purse collections at their workplace or church. These drives brought in hundreds of beautiful purses which filled our booth and were

# RECOVERY: A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING

On a sunny September afternoon, Project PLASE hosted a cookout for clients and community members in celebration of **National Recovery Month**. Each year the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration designates the month of September to “promote the message that recovery in all its forms is possible.” This year Project PLASE chose to add our support for Recovery Month by hosting our first annual Recovery Celebration.

Had you wandered over to the St. Mark’s Lutheran Church parking lot on St. Paul and 21st Street that Friday afternoon, you would have seen folks enjoying the delicious food, good weather and table displays of community partners such as Peoples’ Community Health Center, Reach Mobile, the Family Recovery Program, and STAR. These organizations donated their time and resources to join us in promoting and celebrating the journey to recovery.

When I asked Eric Johnson, our Narcotics Anonymous speaker for the event, to tell me about his journey, he told me that it started more than forty years ago—Eric first used when he was thirteen. Growing up on Pennsylvania Avenue, Eric experienced “insanity,” as he calls it, at an early age. Jumping buses led to pick-pocketing, stealing and eventually his first “high” in the basement of a Baltimore row house. “I began a destruction of my life that took me about forty years to get out of,” Eric says.

Eric is living in recovery now after having spent twenty-one consecutive years in prison, with never more than four months clean. “It was always drugs,” he reflects. “I lived in two different worlds, in two different lives: the drug world, and the real world.” During his time in prison, Eric earned a bachelor’s degree in business, but he says that it took getting clean to remember what he learned—he was using while he got the degree.

Upon release from prison, Eric spent time in and out of recovery programs, in and out of the courts, and on and off the streets. He reflects now that “being clean and recovery are two different things; I wanted to stop using, but I didn’t know how”. It took hitting bottom for Eric to get “tired.” Three years ago he finally committed to recovery. “I got into treatment and dotted every i and crossed every t.”

Three years clean, Eric says that it’s “not the quantity of clean time, it’s the quality.” Every morning, Eric starts his day with his program meeting. When he lost his mother earlier this year, Eric said that he went to his program before going to his mother’s funeral. “NA has saved my life.” He now lives in an apartment that has his name on the lease; at fifty-five years old, it’s the first time that has ever happened. Eric could not be more proud of where he is right now. “I help people on a daily basis,” he says, “I don’t get paid, but I do get paid...I love what I do.”

As we witness every day here at PLASE, every step of recovery is progress. 73% of clients who entered PLASE last year had some level of Alcohol or Substance Abuse. Far from being just an effort to remain clean, recovery involves the whole body and mind, an opinion that Project PLASE strives to reflect in the work we do. As we work with our clients on the road to recovery, we are mindful of the fact that recovery is a holistic endeavor with valuable support from caseworkers, community members and those who are in recovery themselves. As Eric’s journey shows us, the effort is worth it. With a voice full of emotion he says, “for the last two years of her life, my mother got to see the man she always wanted me to be...I’m grateful [for all of this] because I was able to put some peace back in my mother’s life.”

*Submitted by Elinor Landess, Advocacy Counselor at Project PLASE through Lutheran Volunteer Corps*



Mary McQuilkin, 2nd from left, PLASE’s new nurse, served as a Peace Corps member in Uganda

## NURSE NEWS

In late August, Project PLASE welcomed our new nurse, **Mary McQuilkin**. Mary grew up in San Francisco. When asked about her passion for nursing, she states that it grew out of three distinct experiences. At age 16, she volunteered to care for sick or wounded animals at the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, CA, where she learned to provide hands-on health care to seals and sea lions. This veterinary experience led Mary to pursue an internship at a local hospital, where she observed professionals representing all aspects of healthcare. The episode that finally confirmed her

desire to enter the healthcare field was a two-week hospitalization. The effort and concern of her nurses, above the doctors or specialists, inspired her to pass that care onto others.

Mary studied at the University of Washington in Seattle and received her nursing degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing in Baltimore. After graduation Mary, an avid cyclist, biked 4,000 miles across the U.S in support of the cancer awareness group 4K for Cancer. Days after finishing the trip, she left for Uganda to volunteer in the Peace Corps as a health educator. She lived and worked in a community where over 43% of the population was infected with HIV, and where most of the public lacked a basic understanding of how one contracts the virus. At Project PLASE, Mary provides medical care and advice to our clients, people living with cancer, diabetes, renal failure, hepatitis, and more. 70% of PLASE clients are HIV positive.

Mary’s goal since high school has been to become a public health nurse, and she comes to us with valuable experience and anticipation for the job ahead. What drives Mary is her awareness of the inequalities and social injustice provided by her past experiences. Her personal mission statement is “to improve access to healthcare for urban medically under-served communities.” Project PLASE staff and clients are glad to have Mary join our team!

*Submitted by Laura Good, Client Administrative Liaison at Project PLASE through Mennonite Voluntary Service*



The day was February first in 1960  
When four students sat down  
To have some coffee  
And even though they spent money  
They were cut no slack  
Refused the privilege of coffee  
Just because they were Black.

Now what would you have done  
If this had happened to you  
And You were living in the land  
Of the red, white and blue?

*An excerpt from Tony Ransome’s  
Poem ‘It’s Not Over Yet’.  
Tony Ransome is a client of  
Project PLASE and a published  
author of poetry and prose.*



# LANNY SCHUSTER JOINS THE BOARD



*Left* • Lanny Schuster, new Board member, Mary C. Slicher, Executive Director and Eloise Bridges, former Board member and active supporter of Project PLASE

*Middle* • PLASE staff, clients and volunteers played together in the Percussion Band

*Right* • Dr Branch, PLASE's Chairman of the Board, presented Dorothy Critcher the 2011 Individual Donor award

Project PLASE is extremely pleased to welcome **Lanny Schuster** to PLASE's Board of Directors. Lanny is CEO of United Sanitary, a Baltimore company which carries a full line of janitorial supplies and cleaning equipment. He is an active community member of the Station North Arts District, and has already become a valuable Board member for Project PLASE. Lanny lent his resources, time, and connections for our **2nd Annual Donor and Volunteer Thank You Event**.

The Thank You Event took place on June 1st at the Load of Fun Gallery and was a night to celebrate the individuals and organizations that have supported PLASE through their donations, time, and efforts over the past year. Lanny was instrumental in procuring the venue, musical performance, and catering for the event. If that was not enough, Lanny's wife **Alma** graciously and generously donated an assortment of her photographs to be used for fundraising for PLASE's programs. With the help of the Schusters, as well as other PLASE staff, volunteers, and supporters, the 2011 Donor and Volunteer Thank You Event was a wonderful evening enjoyed by all.

*Submitted by Jordan Silverman, former Development Associate and AmeriCorps VISTA member at Project PLASE*

## UNSHELTERED BUT NOT UNCOUNTED

The **Baltimore Homeless Census** reports that every night over 4,000 individuals in Baltimore City are homeless persons. The Baltimore Homeless Census is conducted every two years and is managed through a partnership between Baltimore's Office of Human Services and Morgan State University's School of Architecture and Planning. Results from the latest Baltimore City Homeless Census, conducted in January 2011 show:

- An increase of 19.7% in the number of homeless individuals in the city
- A 45.5% increase in the "unsheltered" population, which includes those sleeping in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or places "not intended for human habitation"
- A 1.5% increase in the "sheltered" population (those who stay in homeless shelters)
- Veterans now make up 23% of the homeless population
- Homeless households with children decreased in number

The increase of 19.7% in the number of homeless individuals in the city is remarkable because the national increase is only 3%.

To collect this data, over 150 volunteers deployed during a night shift and a day shift interviewed both unsheltered individuals at night and those using community resource centers by day. As an incentive, participants were given a \$5 gift certificate for volunteering to be interviewed.

The census asked several questions in order to pinpoint specific populations and issues that are affecting those who are homeless. I personally participated in the Homeless Census, administering questionnaires and interviewing people during the day shift outside Our Daily Bread on Fallsway. Most homeless people I met were willing to participate and volunteer their personal information – the gift certificate was certainly an incentive. The

questionnaire itself was extensive, and interviewees were able to volunteer as little or as much information as they wished, and were aware that they could end the interview at any time. The questions covered housing, mental and physical health evaluations, history of substance abuse, level of education, and service in the military. It also posed open-ended questions, such as "Name the top three things you personally need to end your homelessness." I was both surprised and humbled by how open and honest participants were – how readily they told me about personal experiences and their own history.

The increase in the homeless population in Baltimore is due to several reasons. There has been an actual increase in the homeless population due to the economy, the job market, and home foreclosures. This year, there was also an improved method of gathering data. The census report for 2011 states that "in this report, the research team expanded the area for the street count and visited key hospital emergency rooms...[and] also sought out sites outside the central city that were reported to be homeless encampments. Because of these improved methods, the census accounted for more of the unsheltered homeless population than it did in 2009."

It is clear from these numbers that both additional emergency and transitional housing are needed to curb the rate of homelessness, and Project PLASE's mission to eradicate homelessness is as relevant now as it has ever been.

*Submitted by Faith Savill: Faith conducted surveys as part of the 2011 Baltimore Homeless Census, and has joined Project PLASE as our new Volunteer Maryland Coordinator*

**To download a copy of the 2011 Baltimore Homeless Census, go to [www.projectplase.org](http://www.projectplase.org) To help end homelessness in Baltimore please support PLASE at [www.projectplase.org/give](http://www.projectplase.org/give)**

### PLANNED GIVING

**Have you thought of making a bequest to PLASE in your will?**

Because you care about ending homelessness please consider including PLASE

as a beneficiary in your estate plans:

Project PLASE, Inc.

Federal tax ID: 23-7367331

Call 410.837.1400 x15

[info@projectplase.org](mailto:info@projectplase.org)

### KEY STAFF

Mary C. Slicher  
Executive Director

Robert Ovesen  
Controller

Andy Dubosky  
Director of Communications and Development

Christine Strohecker  
Director of Transitional Housing

### BOARD OFFICERS

Gregory W. Branch, M.D.  
President

Betty Wilson-Jones  
Vice-President

Betty Caret  
Secretary

Charles A. Phillips Jr.  
Treasurer



Project PLASE is  
a nonprofit you can trust



1814 Maryland Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410.837.1400  
www.projectplase.org

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
BALTIMORE, MD  
PERMIT NO. 6950

## ONE VILLAGE

This summer, a dozen middle school students in the 2011 LINK Summer Program at the **Village Learning Place** created artworks for Project PLASE. Village Learning Place is a Baltimore neighborhood library, learning center, computer lab, and community garden. The students painted bright and cheerful posters to share with the residents of our Transitional Housing facility at 1814 Maryland Ave. These posters now decorate the dining room at PLASE's medically fragile facility at 1814 Maryland Ave. The students in



Happy Smiley artwork from one of the kids attending LINK Summer Program

the LINK summer program attend the following schools: Afya Baltimore, Forest Park High School, Polytechnic Institute Elementary, K.I.P.P. Ujima Village Academy, Windsor Mill Middle School and Margaret Brent Elementary.

One student commented in a blog: *“My favorite activity was working on our painting for Project PLASE, because we were helping people and making where they live look more like home.”*

We're so grateful for the colorful addition to our residences!

## OLD SHAKY RETIRES!

Project PLASE was recently awarded a Capacity Building Grant from the **Maryland Food Bank** and a **United Way of Central Maryland's** Community Response Grant. With these two grants we were able to buy a “new” used cargo van for the organization to replace our 25 year-old maintenance van which had been fondly nick-named “Old Shaky.” Old Shaky was a pivotal member of the Maintenance Team and the Furniture Donation Program for many years at Project PLASE, but its time was up! Even in its demise however, Old Shaky is working to support PLASE through V-DAC: Vehicle Donation to Any Charity.

Through V-DAC, any individual or organization is able to donate their vehicle to support Project PLASE. So now, Old Shaky has been auctioned off with the proceeds benefiting PLASE's Transitional and Permanent Housing programs and ultimately providing housing and supportive services to Baltimore's most vulnerable homeless individuals and families.

*If you are interested in donating your vehicle to benefit Project PLASE, you can visit our website <http://projectplase.org/donate/vehicle.php> or contact Andy at 410.837.1400 ext. 15.*



Old Shaky benefited Project PLASE as a vehicle donation