

# PLASE & POINT

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Project PLASE has been serving homeless people in Baltimore for thirty years. We help our city's most needy citizens move out of homelessness through a comprehensive program based on true caring and respect.

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## Love Baltimore, Support Project PLASE

Mary C. Slicher

Perhaps you've seen the new Project PLASE bumper stickers. Maybe you saw us at the Orioles game on August 21. Maybe you even saw the Project PLASE commercial on TV.

All of this activity is part of our "Love Baltimore, Support Project PLASE" campaign, launched as part of our celebration of 30 years at work in the Baltimore community. We're

getting the word out about how the housing and services Project PLASE provides to our city's most vulnerable people are vital to the health and stability of the whole Baltimore community.

Consistent with our values these three decades, we know that if the needs of those most in need

are addressed, we are all being taken care of. We are all a bit more whole.

The Love Baltimore campaign makes the point that we are all in the same boat—we are one community, even when we don't always think about it.

When we make choices for ourselves as a community, the effect is positive beyond measure. It ripples beyond oneself and

the other—to the larger family, and changes for the better the air we breathe, the convictions between us.

So please rejoice with us as we celebrate being able to make a difference in so many lives—make a difference in such a great city—for thirty

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## Special Thanks to Picnics by Gerard

Each week, Gerard, owner of catering company *Picnics by Gerard*, personally brings food to the Project PLASE facilities. Sausage and peppers, turkey, ham—each dish is a fresh, flavorful delight, slow-cooked over an open flame. He has been bringing these feasts to PLASE clients for more than two years. Between April and October, *Picnics by Gerard* caters corporate and private gatherings with the personal touch of cooking on location. After each party, he offers his clients the opportunity to donate surplus food to Project PLASE.

Gerard first learned about Project PLASE through his friend, Katie Allston, PLASE's Senior HIV Outreach Worker. Believing in the Project PLASE mission, he began donating food from events. His deliveries have become the highlight of the week for many clients. The care he shows in not only preparing the foods, but also delivering them to our facilities himself, boosts the morale of PLASE clients and shows that others care. PLASE would like to express its gratitude to Gerard for keeping us in his thoughts each day and making such a difference in our clients' lives.



Gerard and Shelter Manager, Dianna Hood.

If you would also like to make a donation, please contact [szic@projectplase.org](mailto:szic@projectplase.org). If you would like to find out more about Picnics by Gerard, please visit the company's web site at [www.picnicsbygerard.com](http://www.picnicsbygerard.com).

# Pillar of the Baltimore Community Completes Term as PLASE President



Dorothy Critcher completed her term as Project PLASE's board president on October 11th this year. She passes the baton to Dr. Gregory Branch, M.D. And although Dorothy will continue to serve on PLASE's board of directors, it is with an enormous amount of gratitude that we mark the end of her two-year term as our president.

Dorothy Critcher is among that courageous and steadfast group of people who have dedicated their lives to creating and working hard in nonprofit organizations in Baltimore during the last four or five decades. Like the others in this group, Dorothy has recognized needs in our community and worked to make sure they can be met. During her many years working with the YWCA, Dorothy established seven day-care centers for the "working-mom" demographic in the 60's and 70's allowing countless women to realize their dreams and

bring much-needed income to their families while their children were in good hands. Dorothy has been instrumental in establishing several transitional housing programs for homeless women and children in Baltimore, including a 24-hour residential facility for children whose parent(s) are in treatment for substance abuse. She won YWCA's Community Service Award in 1988, and the Sarah's Circle Award from Notre Dame College in 1994. A tireless fighter for social justice, Dorothy continues to work to establish services in Baltimore for women suffering from addictions and their families.

As president of the board at Project PLASE, Dorothy spearheaded the effort to write and begin implementing a three-year strategic plan. Under Dorothy's guidance, PLASE has nearly completed the rigorous process of applying for the MANO Standards For Excellence Seal. Dorothy brought on new board members and set a new standard for PLASE. Thank you Dorothy. Your experience and wisdom helped lay the groundwork for our continued growth. And your spirit, your quiet competence and your steadiness gave direction to a dedicated group of board members and, in turn, to the whole Project PLASE community during the past two years.

## MICA Supports Project PLASE

Emily T. Finton

Project PLASE's administrative offices and facility for medically fragile residents at 1814 Maryland Avenue have recently taken on a new function—serving as exhibition space for fine art donated by alumni of Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). As one of the Baltimore nonprofits selected by MICA to participate in the Community Outreach Project entitled The Art Connection at MICA, PLASE was the fortunate recipient of six original works of art.

Sponsored by MICA's Alumni Association, the concept of The Art Connection was inspired by The Art Connection of Boston, a nonprofit started by MICA alumna Fay Chandler in 1995. One of the intentions of the MICA project was to bring the positive influence of original art into the lives of individuals who often do not have the opportunity to enjoy it.

PLASE staff helped select the art that would hang in their hallways by voting on their top choices from photos of all donated works. They determined which ones would mesh with the agency's mission and surroundings. MICA reviewed the choices and compared them with those of other organizations, and on June 5th, 2004, grouped by recipient organization, all of the work went on exhibit in the Meyerhoff Gallery of MICA's Fox Building.

After the exhibition closed, the pieces were installed at the recipient organizations around Baltimore, including PLASE. Since then, PLASE clients, staff and visitors have had the opportunity to view and enjoy them. "The art has made our hallways so lively and thought-provoking," says Executive Director, Mary C. Slicher. The positive feedback about the artistic acquisitions will be heard for years to come.

Thank you to the generous donor artists: Nathan Danilowicz, Margaret Loftis, Stacey McKenna, Mary Deacon Opasik, Greg Otto and Tara L. Parr.



Mary Deacon Opasik:  
"The Matriarch"



Greg Otto: "Baltimore Foursome"

# Cornerstone of a Second Chance

Allison JB Herrmann

The department of Labor calls business ownership the “cornerstone of the American Dream”—and for good reason. Small businesses drive this nation’s economy. Project PLASE is proud to highlight the life and work of one of its graduates who has not only become a hard-working member of the Baltimore community again, but has also become one of those 10.5 million small-business owners in the United States who is creating jobs.

Albert F. owns Westside Concrete, a small, Baltimore-based contracting service with almost more clients than he can handle. Westside Concrete specializes in fence, block, and brickwork, as well as carpentry and general construction. Albert is living this “cornerstone of the American Dream.” Westside Concrete is a small-business success story, but Albert’s personal triumph is greater.

The man who came into Project PLASE a couple years ago and the entrepreneur of today are nearly two different men. When Albert entered PLASE in August of 2002, he was at a low point in his life. Once a skilled laborer and contractor, he was unable to work and was overcome by his addiction. He was on the brink of separation with his wife and had lost the respect of his children. He describes feeling “lost in the world” and that he was not “focusing on what [he] need[ed] to be doing.” His addiction had become so disruptive that he would choose a night on the street rather than a warm bed at his daughter’s house.

Al came to PLASE through a referral. Although skeptical, he grew to have faith in the people of Project PLASE. Though he had experienced similar programs like the one PLASE offered, he somehow felt that this time would be different. Like so many others who passed through our doors, Al received case management, access to community services and help overcoming an addiction—but he also received something more valuable. Although he appreciates all that PLASE offered him, his motivation to change his life came from two very special staff members—Diana Hood and Martha Moiforay. “Diana and Martha always encouraged me and inspired me and kept me strong.” Their faith in him helped him to have faith in himself. Al persevered throughout his time here and overcame his addiction—reclaiming his life. He had a transformation.

Once a devout follower of his addiction, he was now a free and firm believer in a higher being. And although Project PLASE is not a faith-based organization, Albert developed a strong faith in Christianity during his stay at PLASE and began going to church on a regular basis. His renewed faith helped him to realize more of who he

wanted to be and what he wanted from life. “The Bible shows you how to live and made me understand more of how to live,” Albert says with elation.

As he progressed through PLASE’s program, Albert began to reunite with his family. He and his wife began to work out their issues. Albert’s new-found enthusiasm for religion, faith and the Bible moved his wife to renew her faith as well. They have since reconciled and renewed their love.

The most inspiring part of this tale, however, occurred after Al left PLASE to move back home with his family. He left PLASE with a new sense of self-worth and new aspirations. Al had experience as a skilled laborer and previously worked for

“PLASE will always be in my heart because that’s what changed me.”

other contracting companies. He decided that this time, however, he wanted to go into business for himself. Within a week of leaving PLASE, he bought a truck—a milestone for his new life and career. He began with a handful of side jobs, but news of his work spread quickly by word of mouth and now, less than two years later, he has cultivated substantial clientele.

Since leaving PLASE, Al has truly reclaimed his life. His family is now closer than ever, he has a flourishing business, and he feels in control of his future. He remains strong in his faith and continues to go to church with his wife on a weekly basis. He has also regained the respect of his son and daughter and has become very close with them. Most rewarding, however, is that his son, who was ambivalent about his future career plans, has begun working with his father and developed a strong work ethic as a result.

Because of his renewed sense of self-worth, faith and determination to overcome great obstacles, Albert is not just a small-business success story; he is a husband, a father and a role model to his children.



## Our Mission

Project PLASE addresses homelessness by providing transitional and permanent housing and supportive services to homeless adults, particularly the most vulnerable and underserved (i.e., people with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, addictions, developmental disabilities, ex-offenders, etc.) and by treating the whole person and empowering each individual to function at the highest possible level.

## Our Vision

To eliminate homelessness by providing a comprehensive continuum of facilities and supportive services and by working alongside impoverished persons advocating to positively affect the causes of homelessness and poverty.

## STAFF

Mary C. Slicher  
**Executive Director**

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**Comptroller**

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# Random Acts of Kindness: Notre Dame Nursing Students Host Spring Health Fair

**“When asked to identify one new thing they learned, the responses from the PLASE residents floored us: ‘love,’ ‘kindness,’ ‘that other people still care...’ We were not expecting that level of response.”**

Isn't it wonderful when a group of people has a great “random act of kindness” idea and then they manage to make it a reality? That's exactly what

happened one Saturday last April, when a group of nursing students from the College of Notre Dame held a day-long health fair for the residents of Project PLASE.

“We wanted the day to be educational, relaxing and fun,” said Dr. Joanne Gladden, Associate Professor of nursing at the college, and by all accounts, they met their mark. The students arranged presentations, door prizes, food and even two massage therapists for the health fair, which was held at St. Michael and All Angels on St. Paul Street. Presentation topics included stress management, living with Hepatitis C, and living with HIV/AIDS. The students offered blood pressure, diabetes and hearing screenings; “Ask the Pharmacist” sessions in which residents could bring their medications and ask questions; and tips about smoking cessation, nutrition and women's health issues. During

the health fair's planning stages, the students asked for support from the Baltimore community and got it: Chesapeake Quality Traders provided much of the food. Roche pharmaceuticals donated \$1,000 for speaker fees and resident educational projects.

“The students outdid themselves with the food, decorating, gifts and health booths,” said Gladden. “The attendance was good. We opened the fair up to other people on the street because we had so much food and they loved it.” Gladden went on to say that “when asked in an evaluation to identify one new thing they learned, the responses from the PLASE residents floored us: ‘love,’ ‘kindness,’ ‘that other people still care,’ ‘unity,’ ‘God is good.’ We were not expecting that level of response. I looked at people's faces and the level of interaction and energy in the room and I was pleased. The experience also gave our students an important, new perspective about the causes and effects of homelessness.”

Project PLASE offers their heartfelt thanks to the Notre Dame nursing students, Roche Pharmaceuticals, Chesapeake Quality Traders and all who supported this great idea. You gave our residents a marvelous day, and showed them that “people still care.”

## Inspiration From PLASE Has Overseas Reach

If we were to tell you about all of the amazing things our counselors do beyond just working with the residents of Project PLASE, we'd have to write a book. Some are pursuing master's degrees, for example, others are teachers, one is reviving a chess program for at-risk teens he started years ago and one

of our counselors has begun making the long trip from Baltimore to Africa each year to bring his expertise to people in need in Nigeria.

Inspired by the work we do at Project PLASE, Ihenacho Odinma and several of his

friends and family members established a program called Project Love in Action. The group brings much needed medicine, vitamins, food, health screenings and health education to a village called Ubakala, in Igboland, in southeastern Nigeria.

Odinma, a native Nigerian, and his colleagues have made the trip to Ubakala twice since 2002. When they arrive in the village, the group holds day-long health clinics and seminars for the villagers. The group's central focus is teaching the villagers about preventive medicine. Their dream is to build a permanent health clinic in the village some day. Without the proposed clinic, and visits from Mr. Odinma and his group, vital health care for the village will continue to be out of reach. “And yet,” says Odinma, “the people are grateful and hopeful.”



**Health clinics in the Nigerian village include blood-pressure screenings and counseling about the results.**



**Project PLASE Outreach Counselor, Ihenacho Odinma, (center, wearing traditional garb) with members of the Love in Action team and several Ubakala villagers.**

## Love Baltimore

years. Whether you are a business owner, an individual, a member of a faith community, school, sorority/fraternity or a family, "Love Baltimore" by helping Project PLASE make our community stronger. Here are some ways you can support our work:

- Become a Baltimore Business Sponsor for Project PLASE.
- Join PLASE's Ambassador's Program.
- Volunteer at Project PLASE.
- Make a one-time or ongoing financial pledge to Project PLASE.
- Sponsor PLASE's forum on understanding homelessness and poverty and our response to these issues.
- Give us a call and order one of our attractive Love Baltimore, Support Project PLASE bumper stickers for your car. (Contact Emily Finton at 410-837-1400 x42.)

Thank you so much and please feel free to call Sarah at 410-837-1400 x15 for more information about any of the choices above. And check out our web site at [www.projectplase.org](http://www.projectplase.org)

## PLASE Announcements

### Project PLASE Open House and Holiday Party

You are cordially invited to the Project PLASE Open House and Holiday Celebration on Tuesday, December 21, from 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., at 1814 Maryland Ave., in Baltimore. Take the chill off this first day of winter (or a break from last-minute holiday shopping) and sip a little cider with the Project PLASE community. We will be giving tours, telling you about the latest developments in the work we do and letting you know how much we appreciate your interest in Project PLASE.

### PLASE is Going to the Hippodrome

Have you reserved your tickets for "The Lion King," on stage at the Hippodrome this summer? It's not too early to save your seat for this terrific show, and what a great gift idea! But wait! Come see "The Lion King" with Project PLASE and you will not only be supporting an good cause, you'll also get a fun evening of wine and cheese, a silent auction and great seats with lots of other PLASE friends and supporters! Call Sarah Waters Zic at 410-837-1400 x15 for details.

### PLASE to Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On Friday, January 14, Project PLASE will hold its annual celebration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Please join us for this free program of inspiring music and words at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1900 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD, from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Please call Bonnie Rohr at 410-837-1400 x20 for more information or if you would like to make a financial contribution to this event.

## Project PLASE would like to thank our generous, fiscal-year 2004 donors:

Your gifts brought food and decent housing, case management, education, hope and stability. It is only through caring people like you that we can continue to serve our city's homeless citizens and make Baltimore a stronger community.

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**Organizations:**

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 Vanguard Communications

# Give the Gift of Hope and Stability

You can support Project PLASE's continuing efforts to meet the needs of Baltimore's most vulnerable homeless adults in a variety of ways.

## Financial Support

We always welcome your financial support.

- ▶ Do you know someone who is celebrating a birthday or anniversary? Someone who is just a really great person? Instead of buying that person a gift, make a cash contribution in his/her honor to Project PLASE. We will send them a card notifying them that a gift has been given in their name.
- ▶ Memorial gifts are another way of honoring someone who has been very close to you, your family or the community. Send a cash contribution in honor of that person and we will send a card to the family notifying them of the memorial gift made in honor of their loved one.
- ▶ Make a monetary contribution to Project PLASE. You can designate the particular program or building you would like your donation to fund. Or you can mark your contribution as unrestricted and let us allocate it appropriately.
- ▶ Does your employer have a matching gift program? If you are not sure, you can contact your Human Resources department and they will give you the paperwork. Send the paperwork to us with your contribution and we will do the rest. For every dollar you donate, your employer will match

at a designated level. What better way to make your contribution to a great cause go even further?

- ▶ Designate Project PLASE as a recipient in the United Way of Central Maryland giving campaign. Our United Way number is 0141.

For further information, contact the Main Office at 410-837-1400 or visit our web site at [www.projectplase.org](http://www.projectplase.org) to donate through Network for Good.

## In-Kind Donations

We gladly accept household items and furniture in good condition based on our current needs.

We always accept clothing and accessories, food, personal hygiene items (soap, razors, shampoo, shaving cream, toothpaste, toothbrushes), DVDs, exercise equipment and Christmas gifts.

For more information, contact Sarah Waters Zic at 410-837-1400 x15.

## Volunteer

We need you and all your talents! Some examples of ways you can help are: repairs or oil changes to the van, cook a meal, teach computer skills, resume writing, or art.

For more information, contact Piper Leigh-Daniels at 410-837-1400 x36 or [pdaniels@projectplase.org](mailto:pdaniels@projectplase.org).



## A Gift of PLASE

- (\$1,000 & above) Hope Society
- (\$500 - \$999) Kinship Circle
- (\$250 - \$499) Circle of New Life
- (\$100 - \$249) Friend of PLASE
- (\$1 - \$99) PLASE Supporter
- I would like to give my time. Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.
- I would like to donate goods and/or services. Please contact me with more information.

Name:

Address:

City:  State:  Zip:

Phone #1:  Phone #2:

Email:

Gift given in memory/honor of:

Card to:

Address:

City:  State:  Zip:

To support the food, shelter and services Project PLASE provides for homeless men and women, I am enclosing a gift of:

Project PLASE, Inc. is a 501(C)(3) not-for-profit organization, contributions to which are tax-deductible in accordance with the law. A copy of our latest financial statement is available upon request by contacting Project PLASE at 1814 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21201. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401 for the cost of copying and postage.

## PLASE Highlights

Last Spring, PLASE was pleased to announce that it was among six awardees of a grant from the Johnson & Johnson Community Health Care Program. This grant was not only greatly needed and appreciated, but will position PLASE to better meet the needs of homeless citizens experiencing various levels of health concerns. We are also very honored and humbled to have our work nationally recognized. The following has been determined for the first 6 months of the Johnson & Johnson program:

- ▶ The clients housed and served by the Johnson & Johnson program suffered from the following physical conditions: Liver disease, congestive heart failure, back/spinal problems (herniated disc), shoulder problems that required surgery, and mental health issues that manifested into physical issues.
- ▶ 100% of clients in the program accessed crucial primary medical treatment within 2 weeks of entering Project PLASE.
- ▶ 80% of clients with substance abuse issues (who were in PLASE's Johnson & Johnson program at least 30 days) were enrolled in and/or compliant with substance abuse treatment.
- ▶ Of the four clients who left the temporary housing part of the program, 50% still maintain contact and connection with Project PLASE.
- ▶ 75% moved into unsubsidized permanent housing.

## Thanks & Anniversaries

Project PLASE thanks its dedicated staff for their time, effort and expertise. We would like to recognize those celebrating their five- and one-year anniversaries with Project PLASE:

### Five-Year Anniversaries

Yvonne Gross, Advocacy Counselor, celebrated five years at PLASE on October 6.  
Sandra Alark, Advocacy Counselor, celebrated five years at PLASE on October 12.

### One-Year Anniversaries

Patrese Lee, Advocacy Counselor, May 14;  
Barbara Watkins, Overnight Counselor, June 18;  
April Griffith, Office Assistant, Aug. 5;  
Sharon Blue, Advocacy Counselor, Aug. 13;  
Elana Pressman, Advocacy Counselor, Aug. 18;  
Robyn Boettner, Advocacy Counselor, Sept. 1;  
Mike Coram, Shelter Manager, Sept. 11;  
Belinda Gaines, Advocacy Counselor, Oct. 27;  
Sheila Morgan, Advocacy Counselor, Nov. 1;  
Nakita Quinn, Advocacy Counselor, Dec. 1.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Web: [www.projectplase.org](http://www.projectplase.org)  
Fax: 410.837.6130  
Tel: 410.837.1400  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
1814 Maryland Avenue



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