

# AUDACIOUS THINKING

## FOLLOWING THE LIGHT

MAKING OPPORTUNITY REAL  
CAN NO LONGER WAIT



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With Thanks and Appreciation

### OSI-BALTIMORE SPOTLIGHT: KAREN E. WEBBER

OSI-Baltimore welcomes Karen E. Webber as the director of the Education and Youth Development program. Previously, Webber was the executive director of the Office of Student Support and Safety at Baltimore City Schools where she worked both on policies and practices that contributed to the school suspension and expulsion rates decreasing dramatically. Before moving to this position with the district administration, she served as a principal in a Baltimore City school.

Prior to her career in education, Webber earned her law degree from the University of Texas School of Law and focused on civil rights. She also served as the executive director of the Open Housing Center in New York and the Public Justice Center in Baltimore.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

# WE NEED TO GET CLOSER



BY DIANA MORRIS

**T**he demonstrations and violence that followed the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody took some by surprise. But to others who have lived in many of Baltimore's neglected neighborhoods, the uprising felt inevitable. With relationships between police and the community broken, unemployment at 40 percent and relentless poverty, they knew that it was just a matter of time for their communities to “blow.”

Without recourse to legitimate opportunity over many, many years, optimism was long forgotten and converted to deeply felt frustration, anger and hopelessness. Segregated housing patterns across our city not only reflected decades of discrimination/privilege and

disinvestment/investment but defined residents' sense of agency, safety and potential. More persuasively than any research paper, our reactions to the Freddie Gray killing brought into sharp relief the radically different life experiences of Baltimoreans. And even

those of us sheltered from the daily assault of concentrated poverty and unjust treatment saw it—the two Americas, the conditions so lacking in comfort, respect and opportunity that they tear at the humanity of their residents.



**"Segregated housing patterns across our city not only reflected decades of discrimination/privilege and disinvestment/investment but defined residents' sense of agency, safety and potential. More persuasively than any research paper, our reactions to the Freddie Gray killing brought into sharp relief the radically different life experiences of Baltimoreans."**

Criminal justice reform advocate Bryan Stevenson, at our most recent Talking About Race event at the Pratt Library, strongly urged an approach to bridge this divide, a first step to developing understanding and the kind of empathy that propels action: be proximate. While this is legal language for which Stevenson—who has won multiple cases before the Supreme Court to restrict the use of the death penalty and the use of life sentences without parole for youth—can be excused, his meaning is clear. Get closer, get involved, recognize the boundaries created by historical and ongoing discrimination in our region and make a decision to transcend them.

The Open Society Institute-Baltimore is a foundation dedicated to improving justice, equality and democratic practice, and we must be "proximate" to do our work well. Our 160 Community Fellows, working with residents throughout the city, help us not only to understand the fears, hopes, ambitions and needs of some of our most marginalized families but also to see patterns—policies and practices—that block opportunity. The Community Fellows, working hand in hand with community members, are developing

innovative approaches to break through the hold of concentrated poverty and bias. And our three program areas—focused on reducing the over-reach of the criminal

**"Our 160 Community Fellows, working with residents throughout the city, help us not only to understand the fears, hopes, ambitions and needs of some of our most marginalized families but also to see patterns—policies and practices—that block opportunity."**

and juvenile justice system, keeping young people engaged in school and learning, and improving the availability of high quality drug addiction treatment—deepen this effort. We know that we must be both strategic and persistent to change the policies and practices that have resulted in the islands of blocked talent and opportunity that define the contours of our city and compromise its prosperity and reputation.

We can't do this alone. OSI-Baltimore, our grantees and our partners need your involvement to be successful. Without public will—public pressure—for change, the deep roots of existing policies and practices will keep us in a stranglehold. The awakening caused by Freddie Gray's death is an opportunity for us all to deepen our engagement and our commitment to change. That is why we established the Baltimore Justice Fund—focused on improving police accountability and police-community relations, reducing the number of Baltimoreans caught up in the criminal justice system, and engaging Marylanders, especially young people, in advocacy for programs to increase opportunity and racial justice—to accelerate our efforts. By being proximate—informing and determining the success of our work by the experiences and perspectives of our most marginalized residents—we will keep our

work focused on changes that truly create respect and opportunity for all Baltimoreans. Please join us.

CONVERSATION WITH AN  
OSI-BALTIMORE BOARD MEMBER

# Q&A WITH JAMIE MCDONALD



Jamie McDonald is a force in the field of online charitable giving, working to spur people to give, act and innovate on behalf of communities and causes. In 2011, she launched GiveCorps, an online giving platform connecting nonprofits and educational institutions to digital givers. When GiveCorps was acquired by Network for Good last year, McDonald became Chief Giving Officer for that organization, the nation's largest online charitable giving platform. McDonald also is the founder of Generosity Inc., a Baltimore consulting firm that advises communities and nonprofits on giving movements and digital fundraising.

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*In 2013, McDonald led BMore Gives More, the movement that raised \$5.7 million on Giving Tuesday and earned Baltimore the #MostGenerousCity in America honor.*

*Before becoming an entrepreneur, McDonald was a managing director at Deutsche Banc Alex. Brown, where she enjoyed a 16-year*

*career. Committed to civic engagement, she has been a longtime board member of the Center for Urban Families and led its \$8 million capital campaign. She also is chair of Light City, an international festival of innovation and light, launching in 2016. McDonald attended Cornell University for graduate school, focusing on International*

*Development in a joint program between the College of Human Ecology and the Johnson Graduate School of Management. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Philadelphia University. She lives in North Roland Park with her husband, Tom, and their three children.*



**Q. In the first leg of your career, you were an investment banker. What happened to make you interested in social justice and how did you become someone who wants to encourage generosity of all generations?**

**A.** I was always involved in a lot of nonprofit and political work. When I left Alex Brown in 2003, I wanted to deepen my involvement with organizations I cared about, and in particular, I agreed to lead an \$8 million capital campaign for the Center for Urban Families, an organization I helped start in 1999 with Joe Jones.

That work gave me an insight into the sustainability of nonprofits and the curse of dependence on a few major givers. I led the capital campaign and learned a lot about individual donors and the evolution of technology in the donation process. That got me to start GiveCorps in 2011. It was an intense learning process and incredible to watch the community come together around all the good work being done in Baltimore.

**Q. When did you first become aware of OSI-Baltimore and its approach to solving some of the city's most intractable problems?**

**A.** I've known about OSI since they launched and I've always followed its work. I think Diana and her team are among the more creative thinkers and problem-solvers in the community. Their approach really appeals to me. OSI is one of the few organizations thinking about broad system change, tackling large, challenging problems in a systemic way. That's why I'm passionate about the work.

**Q. How are technology and social media transforming how we are responding to social needs?**

**A.** Technology in many ways has helped to bring social change into the public consciousness. For many years, the social justice workplace was very wonky,

how many millennials will ever care about having their name on a building, because they can be seen on social media by thousands of people with one post.

**"My rule is to focus 90 percent on the story and 10 percent on the data. In the old days, even just five years ago, it was all about the data. If you just overwhelm people with the scale of a problem, they don't know how to help."**

internally-focused and data-driven. Now, the expectation is that if you want to talk about meaningful social change initiatives, you have to highlight the human impact and make the issue relatable and understandable. My rule is to focus 90 percent on the story and 10 percent on the data. In the old days, even just five years ago, it was all about the data. If you just overwhelm people with the scale of a problem, they don't know how to help.

**Q. As someone who is recognized as a guru to engage younger people in social justice via new media, what do you think is different about this generation and their involvement in the issues?**

**A.** It's rapidly evolving. For a lot of young people, they feel that when they "like" something on Facebook they've checked the box and there's no need to do more. That's going to be a challenge for organizations. Over time, they'll need to deepen the engagement and create a more authentic relationship with younger givers. It's going to require nonprofits to think hard about how they communicate and how they engage and build trust with supporters and prospects. I don't know

**Q. What gives you hope about Baltimore City?**

**A.** So many things. The city is evolving before our eyes. There are a lot of physical manifestations of that, including the real estate development in town and the expansion of a walkable Baltimore, from Canton to Locust Point. I walk the six-and-a-half miles from my house to the Farmers Market on Sundays, and there are so many things happening along that walk from Roland Park to downtown. If people want to see what's happening in Baltimore and be hopeful, they should walk. Go walk around our city, and you'll see men and women, rich and poor, living, working and caring for their kids – and their communities. I'd like to see more information being shared about all the positive things happening in the deeper east and west-side neighborhoods. I hope we have the momentum to support more of that.



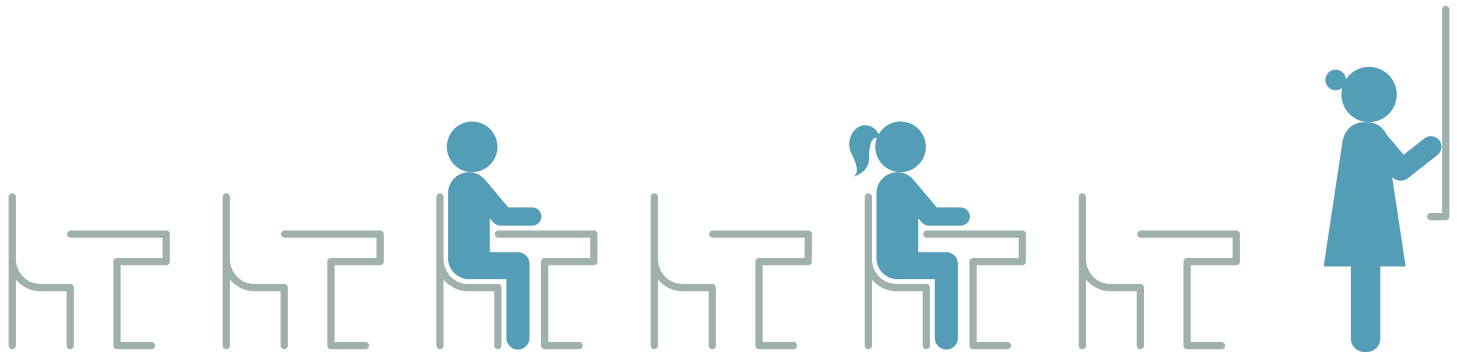
CONVERSATION WITH AN OSI-BALTIMORE BOARD MEMBER

# Q&A WITH JAMES DEGRAFFENREIDT



**J**ames H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr. is immediate past chairman of the Maryland State Board of Education and former chairman of the board and chief executive officer of WGL Holdings, Inc., the parent company of Washington Gas. He also served as chairman and CEO of Washington Gas, the natural gas utility serving over 1 million customers in the Washington metropolitan area and surrounding region.





*In addition to serving on the boards of the Walters Art Museum and the Maryland Science Center, DeGraffenreidt is in his second term on the State Board of Education.*

*DeGraffenreidt received his Juris Doctor and Master of Business Administration from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale College. He has four children and lives in Cedarcroft with his wife, Dr. Mychelle Farmer.*

**Q. As the former chairman and CEO of a large company, what made you interested in education policy in Maryland?**

A. I'm not an educator but I come from a family of career educators. I was born one year before the historic Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling, and that was a big deal in my house growing up. Educational pursuits were considered the key way for black folks in general—and my family in particular—to advance.

**"We started looking at what was driving these suspensions and one road led to another road. We found out that the vast majority of suspensions had nothing to do with violent infractions. And what was even more alarming was that the overwhelming majority of suspensions for those infractions—for things such as 'disrespect'—were for African American students."**

**Q. You have been a champion for reducing suspension, recognizing that it often deters children, most often those of color and those with disabilities, from returning to school with a desire to participate. How did you first learn that suspension—a practice that has long been used to discipline behavior and make students learn how**

**valuable education is—could have the direct opposite result?**

A. While I was chairman of the Board of Education, we heard a case about a female student who had been suspended for fighting. The penalty was supposed to be for 30-60 days. We got the case nearly a



year after the incident. The child had not attended school for that entire time—for nine months. And she had not received any educational services during her out-of-school suspension time. We said to ourselves—there's something very wrong here. So we started looking at what was driving these suspensions and one road led to another road. We found out that the vast majority of suspensions had nothing to do with violent infractions. And what was even more alarming was that the overwhelming majority of suspensions for those infractions—for things such as "disrespect"—were for African American students. As you can imagine, this started us on a very interesting journey.

**Q. When did you begin to first hear about the work of OSI-Baltimore?**

A. Well, OSI-Baltimore was very much involved in this work. Unlike a lot of others, OSI understood the value of giving time for all the stakeholders to talk to each other. And they actually put up money to provide people who were skilled in facilitating, so that we could create a process where everyone who cared about this issue could work together and come up with the best practices that were replicable across the state. OSI staff appeared on panels, submitted comments for the board to consider and, on their own initiative, they funded and facilitated the workshops that got all the stakeholders together to reform the school discipline policies. Until then, I had vaguely heard about OSI; I'd read about them, but I didn't have any personal knowledge of or interaction with them. But during that process, I became quite impressed. I realized OSI had a lot to say about this issue and was very sharp about it. And then I realized that many smart people I liked and admired were on OSI's board, such as Judge Andre M. Davis, Chesapeake Bay Foundation President Will Baker and

attorney Robin Wood. So I joined the board in September 2014.

**Q. Now that you are on OSI-Baltimore's board—and you're getting to know more about our work—what have you learned that has impressed you?**

A. I like the fact that OSI thinks about and puts its resources to support initiatives that start with people, but with a view toward benefitting a much broader community. They don't just fall into the trap of, 'Oh, that's a nice idea.' They're disciplined about asking questions of every grantee, every idea: What are the outcomes? What's the benefit to society? What are we going to have at the end of this project or this program? And why does it matter?

**"OSI staff appeared on panels, submitted comments for the board to consider and, on their own initiative, they funded and facilitated the workshops that got all the stakeholders together to reform the school discipline policies. "**

**Q. Is it fair to say you are most interested in OSI-Baltimore's education work because of your hard work in the field of education?**

A. That's the beauty of it—I don't think you can segregate any of their priority areas out. I think they're all interrelated. What attracts me to OSI is that I get to help work on all of those things. OSI doesn't allow undisciplined advocacy arguments—they want to know what the data shows. Their approach is data-driven and results-focused and I think that that serves Baltimore well.

PROFILE OF A BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FELLOW

# ZINA MAKAR



In the United States, people charged with a crime are known to be innocent until proven guilty. But many of those who are accused spend up to a year in jail awaiting trial because of what transpires during an initial step in the criminal justice process: the bail hearing. There are many problems with bail in Maryland. As a result, many low-income city residents are assigned high bail amounts, or denied bail altogether. OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow Zina Makar is in the beginning months of her fellowship, in partnership with the Public Defender's office, to help change that.



Her goal is to represent poor defendants by employing the power of habeas corpus—a legal procedure that keeps governments from holding people indefinitely without showing cause.

Already she is seeing results, some of them unexpected. Starting in January, Makar had filed 22 petitions for writs of habeas corpus, at a pace of about two a week. But then, during the aftermath of recent protests as a

**"I'm seeing the analyses changing a little bit; judges questioning the state, holding the state to heightened burdens of proof when denying bail. And that makes me really happy. Educating the bench has been a big part of this for me."**

result of Freddie Gray's death, hundreds of citizens were arrested for alleged crimes such as "disorderly conduct."

Those jailed reported deplorable conditions and treatment by city police. Some said they were held without being charged at all. Makar—whose work to date had been with indigent Baltimore City residents—now found herself an expert in wrongful bail determinations and how they could be corrected.

The day after the worst of the unrest, Makar, with help from others, wrote and filed 82 writs of habeas corpus for imprisoned protestors—men and women from all walks of life. The following day, police announced that 101 of the 250 people arrested were being released without charges. The mass release of protestors was a huge win, earning Makar media attention, but Makar is the first to tell you that her personal convictions and careful legal work alone have not always proven so effective. "I've lost more hearings than I've won so far," Makar says. "But I can never say the judge didn't hear me out, and I can't say that the hearings haven't been fair."

From each hearing—win or lose—Makar has learned something useful for future hearings, she says. And

more importantly, she's started to notice subtle but important changes in circuit and district court judges—changes that might mean she is losing some battles but ultimately winning the war.

Why? During bail hearings, judges are supposed to state why they set the particular bail amount or why they deny bail altogether. But Makar says many use vague phrases when stating their rationale. "It makes it very

hard to challenge" the bail amounts, when reviewing the court records, she says. And she notes that during pretrial bail hearings, judges are required to determine whether the state has proven whether a defendant needs to be detained or assigned bail for safety or other reasons. But in

Maryland, she says, too many judges simply accept the prosecution's allegations as true and routinely assign high bail or no bail, keeping poor defendants in jail.

Since Makar has started challenging judges' decisions about bail, she has noticed a shift. "I'm seeing the circuit court judges creating proper records, articulating their thought processes better," Makar says. "I'm seeing the analyses changing a little bit; judges questioning the state, holding the state to heightened burdens of proof when denying bail. And that makes me really happy. Educating the bench has been a big part of this for me."

Makar admits there is a long way to go before true bail reform is underway. But she is optimistic that it will happen and that she is already making a difference.

"I'm learning every step of the way, even when I lose," she says. "If you come in with good, viable arguments, the judges are willing to listen and they let me know what they think was an appropriate argument. I feel we've really opened a dialogue with judges and it's helping so many clients—and not only my clients, but future clients will benefit from this."

PROFILE OF A BALTIMORE  
COMMUNITY FELLOW ALUMNA

# REBECCA YENAWINE



After nearly a decade of art and media production and social justice activism, OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow alumna Rebecca Yenawine and the young people with whom she works continue to breathe new life into an organization as organic as their grassroots ambition. Kids on the Hill, an after-school arts program that Yenawine established during her OSI-Baltimore fellowship in 1999, has grown and evolved into New Lens, a youth-driven, social justice nonprofit.



**New Lens's enterprising young videographers have developed training videos for the Baltimore City Police Department to encourage empathy and positive interactions with youth in the community—a need that became abundantly apparent in the aftermath of Freddie Gray's death.**

They've reimagined how educators might teach other young people about healthy relationships. And they've disrupted the narrative around conventional youth employment with their work-for-hire model; New Lens's participants get paid for video work they're hired to produce for outside clients—a non-traditional youth employment strategy.

Now, they're tackling the local economy in their new series, "Blackonomics."

"We want to explore how we build economic infrastructure and structure in black communities so we can create thriving economies, and the students are taking it even further," Yenawine says. "They're saying, 'Well, we can't look at economic strategy without looking at culture, so how do you build an economy if you feel that nothing else binds you other than oppression?'"

Out of that question, "Blackonomics: Black Identity" was born. The video is the first episode in the "Blackonomics" series. In it, residents across age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds are asked how they define black communities. The

larger goal of these young people is to spur dialogue and ignite ideas about advancing truly authentic economic development. Through this process, they hope to discover what this idea can look like and how it can be attained.

"I can have an idea, but then the students come back to me with something else, and it's always smarter than what I have in my head," Yenawine says.

Facilitating a youth-led organization can be difficult, she admits, but she says more traditional structures don't interest her. This kind of advocacy is different than trips to the Maryland State House or direct lobbying. New Lens, she says, starts with a conversation.

"What we do best is get people together. We're a convener of smart people and community people, and we create spaces where everyone can share really great ideas," Yenawine says. "With young people, if their voices aren't in it, then it's just a mistake."

Yenawine does more than talk about youth engagement—she believes in it and practices it. That's why New Lens is, and always has been, a youth-led operation. "I'm elected every year," by the New Lens students, she says. "They could decide not to bring me back. These young people are learning how to be business owners and managers and thinkers."

Since launching the organization, New Lens's enterprising young videographers have developed training videos for the Baltimore City Police Department to encourage empathy and positive interactions with youth in the community—a need that became abundantly apparent in the aftermath of Freddie Gray's death.



# REIMAGINING JAIL IN BALTIMORE CITY



TARA HUFFMAN

DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL AND  
JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM

Americans are increasingly aware that the United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation in the world. What is not well known is that far more people spend time in local jails than in state and federal prisons, and the overuse of jails is just as prevalent and as damaging as the overuse of prisons.

Baltimore is no exception. In fact, Baltimore is one of the worst offenders when it comes to overusing and misusing its jail system. On any given day, almost 4,000 people are jailed in Baltimore, giving Baltimore the distinction of incarcerating more of its residents than the other 19 largest jails in the nation. More than 90

percent of these individuals are awaiting trial, as compared to a national average of about 63 percent.

Almost 90 percent of those jailed in Baltimore are African American. Thus, the overwhelming majority of people sitting in Baltimore's jail system are people

of color who have not been found guilty of the crime for which they are accused.

The fair and just purpose of pretrial detention is to protect the community from someone who may continue to be a threat while s/he is awaiting trial or to guarantee the appearance at trial of someone who

is a potential flight risk. If Baltimore were using its jail system correctly, then we would have to believe that more than 3,000 people jailed in Baltimore today fit within one of these categories.

The research, however, tells us that hundreds of people are sitting in Baltimore's jail system not because of safety or flight risk concerns. They are there because of systemic inefficiencies, external profit motives and institutional biases that work to unjustly and unnecessarily incarcerate people. Many of these individuals could safely be released back to their families, their jobs and their communities.

The people of Baltimore deserve better, and recent developments—including a 2012 court ruling to make bail hearings fairer and a comprehensive report by the Governor's Commission on Pretrial Reform in 2014—hold great promise for reimagining the way Baltimore uses its jail system. With the winds of reform at our backs, here are just three ways Baltimore and Maryland can immediately leverage existing resources and emerging best practices to make more effective and more just utilization of Baltimore's jail system:

### **1. Eliminate commercial bail and take the injustice out of pretrial detention.**

In Baltimore, whether a person gets to maintain their job and their family while they await trial often turns on his/her ability to pay the set bail amount. This "pay or stay" approach is fraught with potential for abuse and bias. The U.S. Department of Justice found that African Americans are twice as likely to be jailed pretrial because they are unable to pay bail.

Proponents of money bail argue that it helps guarantee the defendant's appearance at court. But research shows

## **On any given day, almost 4,000 people are jailed in Baltimore. More than 90 percent of these individuals are awaiting trial, as compared to a national average of about 63 percent.**

that money is a poor proxy for risk. A 2014 study of bail decisions made in Baltimore found no relationship between the risk a defendant posed and the bail amount set by the court. In fact, lower risk defendants were often subject to higher bail amounts than higher risk defendants. Citing the injustices of commercial bail systems, New Jersey recently joined Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon and Wisconsin as states that have eliminated commercial bail in lieu of more effective and more just alternatives. Baltimore and Maryland should be next.

### **2. Adopt a validated risk-assessment instrument to guide release/no release decisions.**

In Baltimore, court commissioners make the initial determination to release or detain someone pretrial. The commissioner's decision, however, is not currently informed by a risk assessment instrument that uses objective criteria to decrease the potential for bias and increase the commissioner's ability to more accurately judge a person's public safety or flight risk. The Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention is already piloting such an instrument in certain counties, with promising results. Baltimore should move swiftly to adopt this tool and provide court officials with the necessary training and supports to maximize its benefits.

### **3. Make expanded and better use of pretrial services.**

Detaining people within Baltimore's jail system costs an average of \$129 a day. Providing community-based supervision and services before trial, however, cost an average of only \$2.50 per day. In addition, Baltimore's Pretrial Release Services Program, which is responsible for monitoring people to ensure they show up for their court dates and adhere to the terms of their release, has a very high success rate: 94 percent of people under its supervision show up for court, and only 4 percent are arrested for a new charge while pending trial. The Justice Policy Institute, an OSI grantee, estimates that releasing 1,000 people from Baltimore's jail system and placing them under community supervision while they await trial could save Maryland taxpayers almost \$3 million per month—money that could be used to help people succeed in the community instead of languish in overcrowded jails.

Baltimore's jail system has become famous for all the wrong reasons. We, however, have the opportunity to put Baltimore's jail system on the map for all the right reasons. OSI-Baltimore firmly believes that, using common sense approaches, we can enhance public safety, make more responsible use of our resources, and reduce the damaging effects mass incarceration has on families and communities in Baltimore.



WITH THANKS AND APPRECIATION

# JANE SUNDIUS





After 16 years as Director of OSI-Baltimore's Education and Youth Development Program, Jane Sundius is stepping down. Sundius's work to enhance access to high-quality learning opportunities for all of Baltimore's youth, both in and out of school, has been a much-lauded success. Progress in Baltimore's schools has been noticed by educators, policymakers and news outlets nationwide, and Sundius is widely recognized as an important voice for school reform and youth opportunity in the city and around the state.

The transformation in Baltimore's schools is well-documented. Dropout rates are down and high school graduation rates are up. Fewer children are being suspended. More families are choosing city public schools for their children.

The progress has been hard-earned, coming after years of work by educators, advocates, parents, foundations and

others. And Sundius, working with OSI-Baltimore grantees and partners, has been involved in much of it.

Sundius started at OSI-Baltimore 16 years ago, when the office was newly open. A longtime believer in the responsibility of a community's adults to care for their children, Sundius was the second person hired by newly appointed director Diana



Morris when the office was located in a small office on Read Street with only two phone extensions. She remembers those early days fondly.

Since then, OSI-Baltimore has grown in size and scope as well as in influence and reputation, particularly when it comes to its work around education.

“Jane was one of the first staff to join us when we opened our office in Baltimore,” says Diana Morris. “Her creativity and strategic thinking have been a winning combination. She has taken calculated risks, helped to build coalitions, and reframed issues—all to develop practices, policies and structures that would truly change the opportunities available to our youth and that would be lasting.

“The efforts made under Jane’s leadership have influenced policy in our state and nationally. Using her astute analysis, we have shared what did and did not work, carrying our role as a social laboratory. In short, Jane has been a terrific asset to us as we have sought to focus on the children most at risk at being pushed out of school and denied the right to a high quality education.”

When Sundius’s tenure began, OSI-Baltimore’s main thrust for its Education and Youth Development Program was improving and increasing out-of-school time opportunities for the city’s youth.

**OSI-Baltimore recognized a crucial gap: too many children were missing too much school and, when they were not in school, they had very few options for activities.**

**The city has been recognized nationally for reducing total suspensions from 16,739 to 8,620 over six years and increasing student achievement. Dropout rates for African-American boys decreased by 49 percent and graduation rates increased from about half to about two-thirds.**

Although many in the city were focused on bettering school instruction and curriculum at the time, OSI-Baltimore recognized a crucial gap: too many children were missing too much school and, when they were not in school, they had very few options for activities.

Sundius believed a robust and engaging after-school program would encourage curiosity and inspire students to attend school more often. Based on that assumption, the foundation funded programs to systemically change the way after-school programs were conceived and implemented. OSI-Baltimore was a lead funder of the city-wide effort to provide after-school programs to all children. OSI-Baltimore’s early \$6.2 million grant to the Safe and Sound Campaign helped to leverage funds that grew to over \$48 million.

Throughout her tenure, Sundius’s approach has been to bring as many resources to city students as possible because she believes that education is the one universal opportunity program that we offer to all children in this country. She has focused on the underlying issues that have crippled the system over the years by advocating for changes to school funding formulas, introducing innovative instructional approaches, and pursuing new models for high school reform. Under her leadership, OSI-Baltimore’s support to the ACLU led to the State’s decision to address aging and neglected city schools with renovated and new buildings—a decision that brings a billion dollars to city kids’ futures.

But her work with grantees, advocates and partners kept circling back to school absences. The glaring fact that students weren’t in class seemed to contribute to so many other education-related problems.

“During the era of the ‘War on Drugs,’ there has been a ‘tough-on-crime, three-strikes-you’re-out’ attitude, and the schools adopted that philosophy,” Sundius says. “Teachers suspended kids or kicked them out of the classroom, believing that’s what they should do and society agreed.

"But we started to realize that if the students weren't in the classroom, it didn't matter how good the instruction was," she continues. "The answer became clear: we had to get those students into the classrooms."

By looking closely at attendance, another problem in the research emerged: a troubling number of students were missing school because of school discipline policies. In other words, many students weren't opting to stay away from school; the schools were actively shutting them out.

In the 2006-2007 school year, more than one in 10 students was suspended from school in Baltimore City. Those students missed a total of 106,285 days of school to suspensions—many of them for minor,

the table to focus on OSI priorities and supported them in forging common goals and plans to carry them out. She has made a huge contribution toward reforming school discipline practices across the state, including working with us in making changes to reduce dramatically the number of school suspensions in Baltimore."

The city has been recognized nationally for reducing total suspensions from 16,739 to 8,620 over six years and increasing student achievement. Dropout rates for African-American boys decreased by 49 percent and graduation rates increased from about half to about two-thirds.

"OSI-Baltimore was instrumental in this work," says James H. Degraffenreidt, Jr., who serves on the Maryland State Board

Sixteen years later, there are many challenges that have not yet been met, Sundius says. And she does not mince words about her frustration with the slow pace of progress and the lingering ramifications of housing segregation, concentrated poverty and a growing wealth gap here in the city.

Poor communities lack commerce, she notes, while developers get tax breaks to build in affluent areas.

"It says something that a stadium gets funded while we wait in line for schools to be repaired. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that we are so much better off now," she says. "The schools have been transformed—but they need to be transformed yet again."

And even though she is leaving OSI-Baltimore, Sundius is committed to the future of children in the city and in Maryland and will continue her work through consulting and research.

**"It says something that a stadium gets funded while we wait in line for schools to be repaired. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that we are so much better off now," she says. "The schools have been transformed—but they need to be transformed yet again."**

non-violent infractions such as "disrespect." Working with the Maryland State Board of Education, advocates and others, OSI-Baltimore engaged in an effort to radically change school discipline regulations and codes of conduct in school systems around the state. In Baltimore City alone, the results of the school discipline overhaul are impressive.

"Jane is strategic and inclusive" Says Bebe Verdery, director of ACLU of Maryland's Education Reform Project. "She brought a lot of different groups and leaders to

of Education and was its president during this period. "Now Maryland is recognized as a national leader on this topic."

Similar things can be said about many of the educational changes that have taken place in Baltimore and around the state since OSI-Baltimore opened its doors. Much of the credit goes to Sundius's strong leadership, expert facilitation and exhaustive knowledge of the research and best practices that contribute to student and school success.



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## AUDACIOUS THINKING FOR LASTING CHANGE

OSI-BALTIMORE.ORG



PHOTO: COLBY WARE

# SAFE ALTERNATIVES FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION

OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow Van Brooks' program, Safe Alternatives Foundation for Education (SAFE), runs a free flag football league called "Yards for Success" for 25 middle school children from Franklin Square/Poppleton. The students play 7-on-7 games against neighborhood police officers, firefighters and community

leaders to build relationships with and instill a sense of trust in authority figures.

The football games have been particularly poignant in the wake of Freddie Gray's death and subsequent uprisings. Many of Brooks' participants have expressed to him an unsettling disconnect between what they now know to be true about police and authority figures and what society and the media seems to indicate.

"In the city and this community a lot of kids grow up being taught that you don't associate yourselves with police officers. Police officers are bad," Brooks says. "We want them to know they're not what they're always depicted to be."

See the rest of this photo essay at [osi-baltimore.org](http://osi-baltimore.org).

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE-BALTIMORE focuses on the root causes of three intertwined problems in our city and state: drug addiction, an over-reliance on incarceration, and obstacles that impede youth in succeeding inside and out of the classroom. We also support a growing corps of social entrepreneurs committed to underserved populations in Baltimore. Before we make a single grant, we analyze the root causes of a problem, cull research and examine current practices. Because we aim for lasting sustainable solutions, we engage public and private partners from the start. It is only then, with a clear picture of the problem, that we begin to focus our approach and diligently craft a roadmap for change.