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REV. RICKY BURGESS

## 2013 Priorities Rev. Burgess banks on land

by Christian Morrow  
Courier Staff Writer

Pittsburgh Councilman Rev. Ricky Burgess will tell you his philosophy has essentially always been "go big or go home."

He said as much again during a Jan. 4 meeting with the New Pittsburgh Courier editorial board arranged by state Rep. Jake Wheatley, adding that his latest "big" plan for his district is a land bank plan that would allow for wholesale redevelopment and blight removal via a regional Community Development Corporation.

"Imagine Homewood with no abandoned, overgrown lots or derelict housing. Just the physical difference in blight reduction would change how people feel about their community," he said. "I have the money to do Homewood South and Larimer."

Reverend Burgess said he has the money to "recycle" former Homewood-Brushton Revitalization Development Corp. properties that have fallen into disrepair, to clean vacant lots and to hire a director for a new regional CDC that could evaluate housing stock for demolition or rehabilitation.

"My focus going forward will be economic development. I advocate for Black communities and am dedicated to making structural change," he said. "A regional CDC for African-American communities can create opportunities of scale not only with development by with ongoing property management."

With himself serving on the board of the Housing Authority of the city of Pittsburgh, Councilman R. Daniel Lavelle on

SEE BURGESS A3

## Bid deadline for Schenley

A group of Alumni with private investors will be among several other bidders trying to purchase the Schenley High School building. All bids are due to the school district by Jan. 18. The number of bidders and amounts are not yet known.

The group of alumni and private investors plan to remodel and open a new charter or private school and would like to rename the School. The Andy Warhol School of Visual and Performing Arts.

Schenley High School has a tradition of more than 90 years of academic and artistic excellence producing notable alumni such as Andy Warhol, George Benson, Liz Berlin, and Bill Nunn Sr., Jr., and II. It won more city and state basketball championships than any other city school during the past 40 years.

## Gateway introduces Black males to healthcare field

by Renee P. Aldrich  
For the New Pittsburgh Courier

Picture this, 48 African-American males between the ages of 12 to 15 gathered, not at a sporting event, not in a park, and not engaging in some negative activity. Instead they are in suits and ties, taking their turn at the podium to present information on scientific and/or medical projects they've been researching.

Their topics ranged from preserving ecosystems, to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in youth, to explaining the differences between tornadoes and hurricanes as well as showing how the skills used in mastering video games can be transferred to what one needs to perform brain surgery. Such an

image is not a fantasy, or a figment of the imagination, but real life from UPMC's Eye and Ear Clinic.

It was here where these boys participated in the graduation services as part of the "Journey to Medicine" mentorship program of the Gateway Medical Society. This hands on approach to ushering young African-American males into possible health careers is part of the program mission—to educate and mentor minority pre-adolescent males in the art and science of medicine. It also hopes to inspire and guide them as they matriculate through secondary education and beyond. The three year program is part of the GMS's Youth

SEE GATEWAY A6



R. DANIEL LAVELLE

## 2013 Priorities Lavelle focusing on community

by Christian Morrow  
Courier Staff Writer

Since the funding to begin construction on the Centre Feldman Shop 'n Save was finally secured, Pittsburgh Councilman R. Daniel Lavelle is thankful he doesn't have to answer questions about the project every day on his way to work.

But with development projects along the rest of the Centre Avenue Corridor proceeding, and development of the 28-acre former Civic Arena site looming, Lavelle's concentration is on making sure residents of the Hill District enjoy the fruits of this revitalization.

SEE LAVELLE A3



FUTURE DOCTORS—Ninth grade students receive their medical jackets after finishing the program. (Photo by J.L. Martello)

## Mental health services key to reducing violence

by Rebecca Nuttall  
Courier Staff Writer

On Jan. 12, advocacy group Action United held a vigil in memory of Ka'Sandra Wade, a 33-year-old mother who was shot and killed by her boyfriend Anthony Brown on New Year's Day. The following day Brown shot and killed himself after police surrounded the building where he lived.

This recent local tragedy is just one of many similar incidents over the past year, including the murder-suicide involving Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher, who killed his girlfriend and later shot himself last December.

In searching for answers in these tragedies, many are advocating for stricter gun laws and programs to address domestic violence. Others are advocating for increasing access to mental health services.

According to a 2009 study of murder-suicides, published in the Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, these incidents most commonly involve a man killing his wife, girlfriend, ex-wife or ex-girlfriend. The study, found that depression was the leading diagnosis found in murder-suicide perpetrators.

Despite the apparent link between murder-suicide and depression, African-Americans are less likely than other racial groups to seek help when dealing with depression.



LIFE LOST—Pastor Joyce Stoudemire of Mt. Pisk Church leads a vigil march for Ka'Sandra Wade. (Photo by Rossano P. Stewart)

According to a 2007 study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry that surveyed more than 3,500 Black respondents, only 45 percent of those in need of treatment for depression received it.

There are many barriers that keep African-Americans from acquiring mental health services including the stigma of mental illness in the Black community, and for some, a lack of health insurance. However, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services is working to reduce these barriers.

"We've been doing a couple special projects like our behavioral health inclusion project working with churches to do more education with the ministry about acceptance, specifically for ministry in African-American churches," said Mary Jo Dickson, administrator for the Bureau of Adult Mental Health Services, DHHS Office of Behavioral Health. "Anything we can get out there to the public helps in making people understand there are services available to

SEE MENTAL A3

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James Clingman says  
'All My Babies Mamas' may be scrubbed!

Opinion A4





8TH GRADERS RECEIVE THEIR COATS (Photos by J.L. Marfello)

## Gateway introduces Black males to healthcare field

CONTINUED FROM A1

Program Initiatives and targets males because the numbers indicate the need is far more pressing than it is for females. According to GMS President Dr. William Simmons, the numbers show that in Pittsburgh, the graduation rate for Black males is about 56 percent while that of their White counterparts is 88 percent.

The program, which commences at the end of February begins when the boys are about mid-way through the 6th grade.

"The reason for starting with 6th grade is because studies have shown that generally between kindergarten and 5th grade African-American students and White students do about the same; the gap begins to develop somewhere after fifth grade and progressively widens through to 12th," Simmons said.

As such we see beginning with 6th graders a smooth execution of the program goals which are 1. To mentor and build a strong sense of confidence in our pre-adolescent participants; 2. To stress the early importance of achievement in mathematics and science; and 3. To introduce a broader view of all disciplines of medicine, and allied health professions, including but not limited to: nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, physician assistant, pharmacy, dentistry, and podiatry."

Fourteen year old David Harris Jr from Woodland Hills School District has been in the program from the beginning. He is currently a sophomore and gave a power point presentation on "Parasitic Mind Control in Insects." David was in the first group of students which started the program, said his father, David Harris Sr. He was attending Sherrett Elementary School, and the math teacher suggested to the family that he may be a good candidate for this program. They were looking for students throughout the city schools with an interest in science who were outstanding in areas of academics, behavior, and overall in school performance. Young Harris aspires to become a cardiologist.

"I am able to stay on track academically because of this program and because of my father's influence on me, and I'm interested in cardiology because my mother died after having a heart transplant when I was in 6th grade," he said.

Other parents on hand were Cecil Watkins of Forest Hills and Pittsburgh School Board Representative Mark Brentley. Watkins' two sons: 14-year-old Benjamin, whose presentation was "Quantum Spin—A New Way to Magnetism," and 13-year-old Joseph, who presented on "Scientific Methods to Preserve Collapsed Ecosystems," are both in their first year.

"Having successful children is not about the neighborhood, but about the methods used in the home," Watkins said. "We've had successes because of our (my wife and I) commitment to focusing on excellence and establishing a simple life in the household. For example, there is no cable or flat screen TV in our house. The entire family uses one computer, so no one is plugged into the computer 24/7."

The son and nephew of school board member, Mark Brentley, 14-year-old Langston Thurgood Brentley and 13-year-old Rowman Ramsey, are both participants in the program. Langston, a 9th grader at Pittsburgh Obama, presented on the "Rise of Glaucoma" in America, and Rowman an 8th grader in Allegheny Traditional

Academy presented on "All about Hurricanes." Both aspire to be physicians, and say the most outstanding part of the program for them was the opportunity to work in simulated situations where you could take actual temperatures and blood pressures on lifelike mannequins.

Rowman who is interested in psychology said, "I think if I become a psychologist I can understand what happens to a person's mind that would make them do drastic things. I am excited about beginning again, I can say this program has done nothing but help me."

Mark Brentley said, "When my son and nephew got involved in the program I was amazed at the professionalism, the organized structure, and the time, effort and attention that these doctors give to the young men. I can only imagine the impact this could have within the school system if more young men could have this kind of exposure."

The students not only get to present in front of their family and peers, but there are awards given by Dr. Simmons, and awards are distributed for the best presentations. Also, participants shift to the next level.

According to Dr. Simmons, for each year of attrition, a new curriculum is created; each one different and each one progressively more challenging. Simmons also said the two major priorities for the staff and participating physicians, are first, really working hard with these boys to see that they have the academic accomplishment that they will need to pursue these health fields, and two, is keeping them interested.

"Maintaining their interest level comes by getting involved in their lives, this means engaging them in other activities such as trips to the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, or to the Science Center on the North Side," he said.

Many of the doctors actually mentor three or four students. The activities can be as simple as a movie, a ball game, or just conversation. "This time is essential as there are many social issues" in their lives that must be overcome to insure the success of an individual student in such a comprehensive program," he said.

The program whose lead funder is the Heinz Foundation, is also supported by Highmark and UPMC, and has three paid staff members. All the rest are physicians giving of their time, talent, and energy.

"But continued and increased funding will be what it takes to take the program to the next level," Simmons said. "By the time the inaugural group who entered the program in 6th grade get to 11 and 12th grade, because we add on about 20 boys per year, we will be up to 140 participants. It is keeping the stream of funding that will help us be able to optimize the program."

Brentley said this program is so phenomenal that it is a mistake that the Pittsburgh School Board is not endorsing and fully supporting what GMS is doing with these boys.

"As a school District board member, I find it disappointment in the fact that I have been unable to convince neither Dr. (Linda) Lang nor my colleagues on the board to embrace and even partner with them in this program," he said. "While I am happy, of course, that my son and my nephew are involved, in the long run it is not about that, it is about the hundreds who want and need what this program has to offer."



7TH GRADERS RECEIVE THEIR COATS

# NEW Pittsburgh Courier

# FAB 40 2013



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