



United Way
of Central Maryland

NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE IN *Brooklyn*

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS IN SOUTH BALTIMORE

THE UNITED WAY NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE IN BROOKLYN

The United Way Neighborhood Zone in Brooklyn is a prime example of how a united front can transform a community. Based in South Baltimore's Benjamin Franklin High School, the Neighborhood Zone (formerly known as "the Ben Center") emerged from listening to what community members wanted and needed. Our goal: To help residents realize their dreams using their innate strengths and the community assets they cherish.

Urban communities face many serious challenges. Residents often experience barriers to health, safe housing, and opportunity throughout their lives. This neighborhood has historically been geographically and systemically isolated and has limited access to critical resources.

Working with residents, community leaders, nonprofits, and businesses, we co-created a resource hub that has made a tangible and often life-changing impact on the stability and success of residents and the neighborhood.

Focused on multi-generational support, the Neighborhood Zone supports social, economic, and educational advancement. Offerings include an on-site Family Center with childcare for student parents so they can stay in school and graduate; housing and employment assistance; a dropout prevention program; mental health services; access to fresh and healthy food; and more.

A proven success, we have expanded our Neighborhood Zones to other neighborhoods that struggle against economic and social barriers, including Poppleton in West Baltimore, and Columbia in Howard County, where almost a third of households can't afford the area's high cost of living.

The United Way Neighborhood Zone in Brooklyn has attracted national attention and acclaim, and created meaningful, measurable, and lasting change in the community. We invite you to partner with us to help more South Baltimore residents achieve economic, health, and educational equity.



Our Neighborhood Zones help students, their families, and area residents use their innate strengths to succeed.



“More of our students are graduating and have hope for the future. The United Way Neighborhood Zone is a critical link in breaking the cycle of poverty.”

Dr. Sonja Santelises
CEO, Baltimore City Public Schools

THE NEED IN Brooklyn

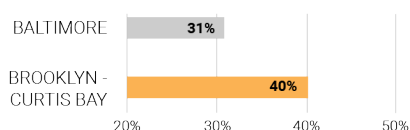


Briana Shaw was a member of the first graduating class of student parents at our Neighborhood Zone in Brooklyn's Family Center. Today, she's a nursing student at Baltimore City Community College, a certified medication technician and nursing assistant, and works for a company that uses plasma to make medications.

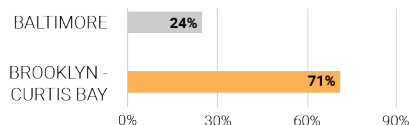
“The Family Center helped me so much. Without it, I would've missed a lot of days of school trying to figure out care for my daughter. My attendance improved, and now I'm attending BCCC for my nursing degree. I miss the Family Center teachers—we had a close bond. I still call Ms. Emily if I need help or guidance, and she's there for me. It really is like a family.”

The Need in Brooklyn and Nearby Curtis Bay

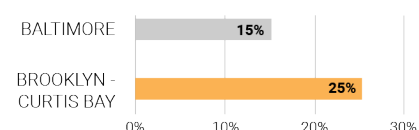
Children in Poverty



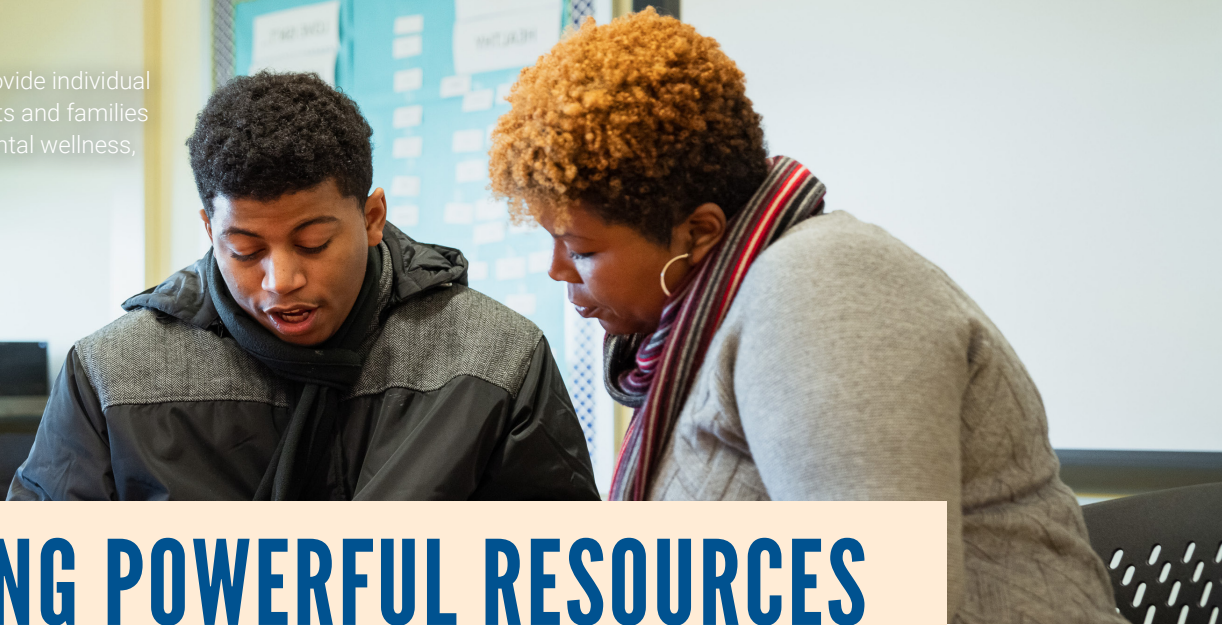
Teen Pregnancy (per 1,000)



Population without HS Diploma or GED



United Way professionals provide individual and group support to students and families to help with school work, mental wellness, and healthy relationships.



PROVIDING POWERFUL RESOURCES

FOR STUDENTS, THEIR CHILDREN, THEIR FAMILIES, & NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS



FAMILY CENTER: Provides quality early childhood education, full-day care for children, and professional support and resources for expectant and parenting students to help them strengthen their parenting skills. A professional Family Services Coordinator helps parents increase their stability in education, health, housing, and employment.



SOCIOEMOTIONAL SUPPORT: Supports mental wellness and skill building to increase student attendance and school achievement through individual, group, family, and school-level services.



COMMUNITY SCHOOL COORDINATORS: The United Way Community School Coordinators at four schools in Brooklyn/Curtis Bay help break down barriers to student success by strengthening teacher, family, and peer relationships; leveraging resources; and building on the strengths of the student, school, and community.



HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM: Helps families with school-aged children who are on the brink of homelessness with services to keep them housed, to keep the children in school, and to provide tools to help them avoid a future housing crisis.



HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS: Brings healthy options like fresh produce directly to the students and their families. With no nearby grocery stores, local residents are often dependent on convenience stores and lack access to healthy food.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Improves economic stability and prosperity by addressing barriers to consistent employment, including skills development and industry-specific knowledge. Programs identify long-term strategies that benefit both employees and employers.



ON TRACK 4 SUCCESS: An early warning intervention program for students who may be off track due to poor attendance, behavior issues, and/or poor grades. On Track 4 Success helps these students get back on track to graduate high school.



211 MARYLAND UNITED WAY HELPLINE: A 24-hour, 365-days-a-year information and referral service that connects families and individuals to important resources such as food, housing, job training, free tax preparation, mental health support, and more.

PROVEN

SINCE PROGRAM
INCEPTION

Success



70%

of teen parents at the Family Center graduated high school, compared to 40% nationally



45

student parents have graduated high school, including 8 graduates in the 2019-2020 school year



172

expectant and parenting students and young Brooklyn and Curtis Bay residents have been supported by the Family Center



82

children received high-quality, early childhood education



96%

of families facing homelessness remained housed



99%

of children avoided a disruptive school transfer when their families were forced to move



19%

increase in median household income in the neighborhood



26%

decrease in percentage of adults without a high school diploma

Download a [summary](#) and the [full report](#) on the benefits of and return on investment in the Family Center.



United Way professional staff provide enriching early learning programs for children in the Family Center.

Janet dropped out of her Howard County high school after her twins were born. Time went by, and at 20, she would soon be too old to return to school and graduate. In 2019, Janet specifically chose Benjamin Franklin High School so that she could enroll her daughters in the Family Center and start classes again.

It wouldn't be easy, though—Janet was working full time, and would have to juggle work, school, and caring for her family. The Family Center and school staff helped her balance her responsibilities, and Janet attended classes after work. The twins, who'd shown some developmental delays, made progress and received additional support through the Center.

Today, Janet is a proud 2020 graduate of Benjamin Franklin High School and planning for the next steps in her life, and those of her children.



“ In 2013, my family and I were going through some really hard times. Being 63, no one wanted to hire me. I wasn’t working a regular job, I was about to lose my house, the utilities were turned off ... they were pretty hard times.

United Way, they had all these programs—health, nutrition, monetary things, a lady to help you with your resume, to get a job, help you get your credit right ... they had like 10 or 12 programs I participated in.

Up at Ben Franklin High School, they were starting the Family Center, and I said, ‘I’ll be your janitor, I’ll do whatever you need me to do.’ They needed a bus driver to bring the students and their kids to school. Turned out to be a great job.

We’re making it through this virus thing—it’s kinda kicking on everything, but I’m still forging ahead and doing the best I can do and being the best I can be.”

- Paul Highfield, Neighborhood Zone Bus Driver and United Way advocate



OUR PARTNERS

BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GREATER
Baybrook
ALLIANCE

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Support*



Educational materials,
equipment, and
technology



General Educational
Development (GED)
classes and support



Ongoing operational
support and
transportation
expenses



Client incentives,
field trips, and barrier
removal for participants



Healthy lunches for
families and support for
socioemotional group
sessions

Our Neighborhood Zone in Brooklyn helps families like Janelly and Vinnie Garcia and their children. Janelly is a 2016 graduate of the Family Center.



Join us to support educational, economic, and health equity for children,
families, and residents in Brooklyn and Curtis Bay.

Learn more: uwcm.org/UnitedForBrooklyn

For more information, please contact:
Heather Chapman 410-895-1362
heather.chapman@uwcm.org