



Working together for a strong multicultural community

# connections

November 2006

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## Parents Make an IMPACT

When you first walk into the community meeting room on Maple Avenue, you notice a lively group of about twenty parents and thirty elementary-aged children engaged in an arts and craft project. Looking more closely, you observe some distinct differences from the typical parent-sponsored event in Montgomery County: lots of parents and children from Latino and East African communities are present. Both are groups that local parent teacher associations have struggled to engage and involve. Parents who do not speak English are helping their children create a picture folder of their families, in preparation for meeting their new teacher, a step many in their shoes have avoided or feared before because of language and other barriers. Notably, you learn that the organizers of the event are also parents from these same cultural groups most of whom have never played such a role before.

Sixty parents recently completed IMPACT's groundbreaking *Parent Training Institute*, an eight week session in which parents from diverse cultural backgrounds come together to learn how to be

more involved in their children's education. Parent facilitators from their own cultural group, trained by IMPACT, lead participants in exercises and discussions about how to better communicate with their children. They learn a method called *ask the right question* which helps build skills for meeting with teachers and administrators. They develop a better understanding of the school system, advanced instruction, ESOL and special education. At the concluding graduation, they pledge, among other steps, to check backpacks every night and read to their child for at least twenty minutes every night.

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Rosa Sanchez, with clipboard, a parent facilitator in the Parent Training Institute, recruiting parents for the program at an elementary school orientation

## Leaders Working Together for Change

Working with new and emerging leaders in the community has been one of the most gratifying activities IMPACT Silver Spring has been involved in over the past six years. Our work has supported leaders in building their awareness and skills in order to grow personally and professionally to eliminate barriers, reach new communities and transform organizations. Terry Seamens and Jackie VanCroft are graduates of IMPACT's *Community Empowerment Program (CEP)*,

one of our main opportunities for leadership training and personal development.

After graduating from CEP and increasing her involvement with the Lasting IMPACT network, Jackie VanCroft initiated a small vendor market in her neighborhood to sell the jewelry that she makes and has been appointed to serve on the Long Branch

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# news from the executive director

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If you spent a summer night wandering around downtown Silver Spring, you know that our mixed income, multi-cultural community has achieved one level of true success. The hustle and bustle of people enjoying food, shopping and the public spaces is a true testament to the economic vibrancy of the city. Congratulations to the many community members, leaders and businesses behind this remarkable transformation!

This summer, I was privileged to wander around apartment communities in Silver Spring as I recruited participants for our next leadership program. I met a large number of residents facing serious social and economic challenges, as they work hard to afford housing, health care and education for their children. We've come a long way in Silver Spring, but we have a few large mountains to climb before claiming a higher quality of life for all who live here.

The good news is that we have the talent and resources here in the community to climb these mountains. Graduates of IMPACT Silver Spring's leadership programs are living proof of this claim and they are 200 strong now. I invite you to read their stories in these pages and celebrate their successes in affecting community change with us.

Last year, we found a partner organization, TEAMS, of Oakland California, which also believes in the power of self-determination, meaning that people define their own problems and opportunities and set their own goals. In this concept, people are the

chief "doers" in any change process, designing and implementing the process, and taking control of the resources they need. TEAMS has developed a proven model for bringing teams of low-income people together to pursue initiatives and projects in the community.

This process of self-determination and self-doing is known as authentic leadership development. IMPACT Silver Spring believes this process is a central building block to a successful Silver Spring. We will be using authentic leadership development as a core tool for affecting change that benefits all community members, specifically those who are disadvantaged. Please take a moment to read about our growing partnership with lower income parents in Silver Spring, as one starting point for sparking self-determination and self-doing.

We ask you to help us find other starting points for implementing this approach to leadership development in your community or neighborhood!

Frankie Blackburn  
Executive Director

# impact's board of directors

Members of IMPACT Silver Spring's Board of Directors and staff at an August 2006 work session devoted to resource development.

Left to right: Chan Park, Robert Middleton, Lori-Christina Webb, Myriam Torrico, Raj Chawla, Linda Kahn, Noelle Haile, Robert Jepson, Laura Steinberg, Frankie Blackburn and Aurelia Martin



# impact in the schools

## Parents Make an IMPACT from page 1

*When I first attended IMPACT's Parent Training Institute last Fall, I never imagined that I, an immigrant parent, might be able to initiate and plan a project which helps our kids. I also never imagined being able to work on a team with Latino and African American parents.*

*Misrak Zeleke*

At one of these ceremonies, Beletu Baruda a shy Ethiopian mother of two explained, almost in tears, what a struggle it is for parents like her who do not speak English. "Our kids have stopped asking or looking up to us because they assume we are not equipped to help them." She shared that the training has "been a glimmer of hope, illuminating a path to follow even if the journey ahead still looks long and difficult."

As parents continue to build their skills as advocates for children's education, they participate in empowerment retreats during IMPACT's program aimed at realizing their leadership potential and the power of working collectively. Out of the 60 parents who graduated from the *Parent Training Institute*, 11 parents formed a *core parent action team* to identify and pursue changes in their local school. Parents made a mutual commitment

to participate in the action team for one year. At bi-weekly team meetings, parents develop their leadership skills further, exchange school and community news and resources, as well as give and receive support for individual and collective goals aimed at improving their quality of life.



Graduates of the *Parent Training Institute* who formed the core parent team committed to a year-long leadership development process.



Mr. Bertram Generlette, Principal of Piney Branch Elementary School, explaining the implications of the achievement gap at the orientation for IMPACT's *Parent Training Institute* in September.

### The IMPACT in the Schools Initiative

launched into this school year on September 21st with the *Parent Training Institute* (PTI). The PTI offers six workshops targeted at minority parents focused on building their awareness of the achievement gap, increasing their understanding of the school system and strengthening their capacity to support their children's education. PTI workshops are offered in English, Spanish and Amharic and take place at Piney Branch Elementary School.

### Authentic Leadership Development

IMPACT Silver Spring is implementing a leadership development model in our work with local minority and immigrant parents originated by TEAMS, a group working in Oakland, California. It involves five core elements:

- Peer support to build the basis for ongoing teamwork
- Goal setting with mutual accountability
- Learning through action and continual assessment
- Financial education and action to create direct access to resources
- Building a broad network to impact common regional and national issues

Parents commit to participate on small teams of ten or twelve people for a year and attend bi-weekly meetings. The meetings follow a standard format:

1. Check in and announcements
2. Report back on goals
3. Group reports on action steps
4. Leadership training topic
5. Peer consultation
6. Support group

# impact in the community

## Leaders Working Together for Change from page 1

**My experience with IMPACT helped me to realize how much of an investment volunteering is. It can be compared to a stone thrown in a pond. The ripple effect extends far beyond ones imagination.**

*Jackie VanCroft*

Citizen Advisory Committee. As a result of her CEP experience, Jackie, a single and working mother, expresses that she feels “a new sense of confidence and inspiration, both to pursue her dreams and raise her concerns.”

Using skills acquired through the CEP training, Terry Seamens developed the *Takoma Park Community Action Group* along with fellow community team members. Terry now leads the group located in the Maple Avenue area of Takoma Park. The main focus of the group is to strengthen the community by matching residents’ needs to available resources and to cultivate social engagement and self-sufficiency.

In an illustration of the synergies of IMPACT’s work, Terry and Jackie worked together this fall to create *Celebration of Diversity: Maple Avenue Cultural Fair* to

introduce the *Takoma Park Community Action Group*. According to Terry, “The cultural fair was a great success in that it generated a great buzz about the organization’s aim to address the community’s social needs while building enthusiasm among team members.” Terry acknowledged Jackie’s enthusiasm and valuable ideas that helped bring vendors to the culture fair and structure to the organization.



Members of Lasting IMPACT and partner organizations exchanging ideas at a recent community “Swapmeet” held at IMPACT.

## Collective Action Tool Kit

IMPACT Silver Spring believes first and foremost in the power of working with others. Often committed community members strike out on their own, seeking to start a new project or advocate for a policy change. They may encounter many barriers or realize they do not have enough time outside of work to pursue their interest.

The central component of our work is encouraging these committed people to team up with others to overcome barriers and share the workload. However, working in teams can be very difficult and create additional roadblocks. Our new *Tool Kit for Collective Action* provides some great advice and guidelines to address these issues and help energized folk get started.

Here is a preview of the contents:

- Clarifying Your Action Idea
- One-On-One Conversations
- Holding A Community Action Team Kick-off Meeting
- Making a Decision to Take Action
- A Strategy for Effective Action
- Team Action Plan
- How to Deal with Persistent Complaining
- What to Do When There’s Too Much Silence
- How to Address Team Discord and Conflict
- What to Do When Leadership is Struggling

If you are interested in a copy please contact us at (301) 495-3336 or email [info@impactsilverpring.org](mailto:info@impactsilverpring.org).

## local heroes

IMPACT Silver Spring salutes twelve nonprofit leaders who teamed up to learn from each other during our pilot *Nonprofit Leadership Initiative!*

Jeredine Williams, *Director, Migrant and Refugee Cultural Support*

Becky Wagner, *Executive Director, Community Ministries of Montgomery County*

Desire Agbozouhoue, *President, D.C. Society*

George Jones, *Executive Director, Bread for the City*

Yen Le, *Executive Director, Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association*

Theresa Cameron, *Executive Director, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County*

Kim Dung Nguyen, *Director, Boat People SOS*

Kathryn Stephens, *Deputy Director, Higher Achievement*

Martha Ochieng, *Executive Director, Digital Bridge*

Julie Chapman, *Executive Director, NPower*

Esther Park, *Executive Director, Korean Community Services*

Jane Kornblut, *President, Third Sector Services*

## Finding our Turf: Giving Youth a Voice

The graduates of IMPACT's Community Empowerment Program had a dream for how to better engage low income, minority youth in determining the future of Silver Spring. To make this dream real, they teamed up with the Polinger Foundation, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council and a group of local nonprofits serving youth. The result was *Finding Our Turf*.

This summer, a team of 14 local teens completed a four-week project to hear the voices of youth in Silver Spring. Using microphones and video cameras to interview young people who relax and socialize in the new downtown Silver Spring area, the group's mission was to understand the popularity of the accidental teen hang-out spot, A.K.A., the Turf. The culmination of the project was the August 4<sup>th</sup> release of *Finding Our Turf*, a 22 minute video of their findings, suitably screened on the astroturf.

College student Lisa Jaeggi, working with local nonprofit Gandhi Brigade, teamed up with YMCA youth development worker Segun Aje to recruit a group of local teens reflecting the area's diversity. They trained this teen group on how to operate video cameras and conduct interviews with other teens.

According to Jaeggi, 21, "Teens have mixed feelings about downtown Silver Sprung. On the one hand it is the cool place to hang out

with your friends; on the other hand most of the attractions are commercial and teens are not welcome when they stop spending money. We wanted to use this video to show adults that teens are full downtown partners and to show teens that they have more influence than they think."

In this first phase of the project, along with youth and Frankie Blackburn of IMPACT, participating Community Empowerment graduates included Barbara Ott, Richard Jaeggi, Kathy Stevens and Sissy Kegley.

The second phase of the initiative, called Firestarter, led by Community Bridges, is a leadership development experience for these young filmmakers and others as they attempt to plan and implement a proposal for youth space downtown. Congratulations to CEP graduate Valerie Whiting for her new position as Program Director of Firestarter and Community Bridges.



Youth filming the *Finding Our Turf* video on the Astroturf in downtown Silver Spring.



Martha Ochieng (right) talking with County Council staff member Valerie Ervin, currently the Democratic candidate for the District 5 Council seat. After graduating from *Community Empowerment*, Martha participated in IMPACT's *Nonprofit Leadership Initiative*. This work helped strengthen her organization, the new nonprofit Digital Bridge, and enabled her to lobby successfully with County Council staff for seed funding for this group which provides computer literacy skills to the West African community.

## Community Empowerment A Big Success

MP Associates completed an in-depth evaluation of IMPACT's *Community Empowerment Program* in June 2006. Through interviews with program graduates and focus groups, the external evaluation team collected feedback from those connected with the program. In addition to providing an excellent evaluation and recommendations for the future, the results gave clear indications of the success of IMPACT's work. Among many successes, we are proud to report that as a result of the program graduates:

- Increased their community involvement and/or places they volunteer in the community
- Experienced a personal or professional change because of the program
- Expanded their community and feel more connected to it
- Have changed behavior and/or attitudes
- Work with other graduates on community issues
- Regularly communicate with classmates

For more information or a copy of the report please contact IMPACT at (301) 495-3336 or email us at [info@impactsilverspring.org](mailto:info@impactsilverspring.org).

# impact supporters

## IMPACT Silver Spring greatly appreciates the generous

*I have chosen to commit significant time and resources to IMPACT Silver Spring because I believe their groundbreaking approach to leadership, diversity and collaboration is the foundation for building a new and successful multicultural Silver Spring and Montgomery County.*

*William G. Robertson  
President & CEO  
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We recognize the significance of your contributions and the value of your commitment to IMPACT Silver Spring's work. Thank you.

For their generous donation of our office space, IMPACT also gratefully acknowledges

**Foulger-Pratt Management**

# thank you

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**IMPACT's CFC code is 7668**

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Scott Brumburgh  
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David Hunt  
*Trainer & Facilitator*  
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*Lasting IMPACT Organizer*  
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### IMPACT Needs Your Help

*As a longstanding supporter or first time donor, we need your support as we work to build a strong and thriving multicultural community. Please donate. Use the DONATE NOW button online at: [www.impactsilver.org](http://www.impactsilver.org)*



Working together for a strong  
multicultural community

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## IMPACT Silver Spring Creating Tomorrow's Leaders Today

IMPACT Silver Spring's *Community Empowerment Program* is a unique and intensive leadership development and community action program that is offered each year to members of the greater Silver Spring community. This year, the program's objective is to help spark specific community improvement initiatives within rental communities.

Over the past six years, 120 community members have graduated from the program. These graduates encompass a wide range of backgrounds reflecting the ethnicity, incomes and culture of the area. They are each contributing to building a thriving Silver Spring through their leadership in schools, businesses and neighborhoods. Empowered with new skills and relationships developed through the training program, graduates have created many continuing initiatives which have added voices and shared power in our community. This year's *Community Empowerment Program VII*, consists of 11 participants who will enhance their leadership skills, explore ideas to foster positive change within their rental communities and engage in action to better the quality of life for Silver Spring residents.

For more information about our next *Community Empowerment Program* contact us at (301) 495-3336 or email [info@impactsilverspring.org](mailto:info@impactsilverspring.org).



**Community Empowerment Program VII participants and facilitators included (name and apartment community)**

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Monica Buitrago</b>    | Long Branch              |
| <b>Mita Chakraborty</b>   | Courts of Madison        |
| <b>Benita Griffis</b>     | Nob Hill                 |
| <b>Gretchen Hilburger</b> | Northwest Park           |
| <b>Delilah Marrow</b>     | The Oaks at Four Corners |
| <b>Emie Mercier Cadet</b> | Northwest Park           |
| <b>Lamia Mukhtar</b>      | The Blairs               |
| <b>Lisa Bradley</b>       | YMCA Youth Services      |
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| <b>Catherine Pharr</b>    | Park Ritchie             |
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