



Lake Fong/Post-Gazette

Floyd Jones, executive director of Youth Enrichment Services, takes students McKayla Dixon, left, Anesa Reed, both 16, and Diamond Turner, 15, through the Lincoln-Lemington neighborhood as part of a lead education program.

Tuned in
ROB OWEN

PBS's 'Victoria' continues to reign

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — The only downside to a “Downton Abbey”-sized hit is when it ends. It’s hard for what comes next to measure up.

No wonder PBS’s “Masterpiece” executive producer Rebecca Eaton was sure to point out that the first season of “Victoria” drew 16 million viewers, more people than watched season one of “Downton.”

“Season two of ‘Downton’ picked up [more viewers], and that’s what ‘Victoria’ is going to do,” she predicted.

When “Victoria” returns to PBS in January for its seven-episode second season, it’s 1840 and 21-year-old Queen Victoria (Jenna Coleman, “Doctor Who”) and her husband, Prince Albert (Tom Hughes), confront their newfound parenthood, a war abroad and the Irish potato famine closer to home.

Ms. Coleman said one of the most exciting aspects of the role is exploring the dynamic between Victoria and Albert.

“They’re operating in a marriage as husband and wife, and she wants to be a wife to her husband, but then there’s the political aspect and as soon as Albert tries to take from Victoria’s role, she completely flips,” Ms. Coleman said during a Monday press conference at the Television Critics Association summer press tour.

“You’re constantly operating within the politics of a domestic marriage. The clash of wills is interesting and shifting.”

While there may be conflict in the marriage, showrunner Daisy Goodwin said the pair did remain faithful to one another.

“It’s the first royal marriage where the man hasn’t had a mistress on the side for about 500

SEE **OWEN**, PAGE C-2

FIGHTING LEAD EXPOSURE ON THE HOME FRONT:

Education, blood tests, water pipes and housing remediation

By Jill Daly
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Getting the word out about the dangers of lead, and how it threatens the health of young children and pregnant women, has taken to the streets this summer.

Pittsburgh high schoolers Willie Knight, 16, and Charles Powell, 14, spent a warm afternoon recently tracking customer traffic at two stores in Lincoln-Lemington as research for a lead education program designed and carried out by young people.

They shared the task of counting customers at the Brooklyn Food Market and LA Market, both located near multiple bus stops. The next step will be sharing their results with other teens who may return to talk to people there about preventing lead exposure

and fixing lead hazards in their homes.

“If people know their house has lead paint,” Willie said, “it’s better to fix it when you know there’s a problem.”

The two teens are also part of a team that is using a computerized geographic information system to map neighborhood housing data, which includes the year a home was built, the construction material, its condition and number of floors. Willie, who will be a junior at Westinghouse this fall, showed how he has color-coded the age of properties on a map, accessible on his cell phone, from oldest to new.

The information can be analyzed as part of a report on their research. This summer 20 students are developing the health education outreach as participants in the nonprofit Youth Enrichment Services Learn &

Earn program, according to program director Denise Jones.

“There seemed to be a disconnect between the Allegheny County Health Department and the community accessing information firsthand,” Ms. Jones said. “Students can bridge the gap between the community and the health department.”

Karen Hacker, health department director, said community involvement is important to the lead safety effort.

“We really need them to get messages out there,” she said.

Meeting families in low-income areas with aging housing stock is just part of the communication strategy underway to reduce people’s exposure to lead in homes,

SEE **LEAD**, PAGE C-3

Students learn about lead hazards to help others

By Jill Daly
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

This summer’s Learn & Earn program offered by the nonprofit Youth Enrichment Services is doing real-world research about lead exposure in Pittsburgh’s Lincoln-Lemington community. While developing a health education program, the 20 teenagers — most from Pittsburgh city schools — are improving academic and social skills as well.

Denise Jones, YES program director, serves as project manager. The students are divided into community engagers (who have conversations with residents and build relationships with them); investigators (who interview families and develop and produce health education materials); disseminators (who put together flyers and pamphlets to share information with the community); and analyzers (who use a computerized geographic information system in as they collect and then ana-



Lake Fong/Post-Gazette

Charles Powell, left, 14, a sophomore at Barack Obama Academy, and Willie Knight, 16, a junior at Westinghouse High School, use a geographic information system to track information to see how the environment influences lead exposure.

lyze data on how the environment influences lead exposure, such as the age and quality of housing, by location).

Willie Knight, 16, a Westinghouse Academy junior this fall, said the goal of the analyzers is to understand how the built environment influences lead exposure in Lincoln-Lemington and also to understand how people socialize in the neighborhood. Together with Charles Powell, 14, a Barack Obama Academy of International Studies sophomore, they were counting patrons of two neighborhood stores at a busy intersection one recent afternoon.

“We’re setting up for other

groups; it’s a step before they go house to house,” Willie said.

He said a trip to Flint, Mich., in June taught him a lot about the water crisis there, how corrosive chemicals led to contaminated water. And how rescue efforts sometimes fell short: “One man with two kids got six cases of water a day, but it wasn’t enough.” They had hands-on experience in a community garden there and learned about the process of replacing water lines containing lead.

Now, he said, he would tell people to protect themselves: “Get lead levels checked if you move

SEE **SERVICE**, PAGE C-3

Health care future causes uncertainty for health center

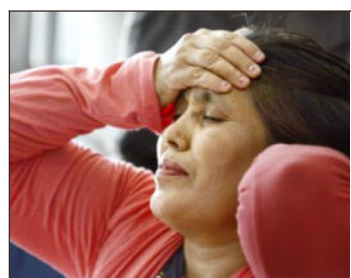
By Arturo Pineda
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

While the uncertainty over the future of health care in the U.S. has many people on edge, it’s been particularly stressful for operations like the Squirrel Hill Health Center, whose growing immigrant clientele is heavily dependent upon federal help.

Any large cuts in Medicaid funding — which has been proposed in various Senate plans — could mean the end to at least one of its two locations, health center officials said. Forty-four percent of the center’s overall revenue comes from Medicaid. After the Senate’s hopes of replacing the Affordable Care Act with an alternate plan collapsed Friday, it’s unclear what will happen now but the threat against federal funding weighs heavily on operations like the Squirrel Hill Health Center.

“If Medicaid were to be cut, we would have to shut down,” said Susan Friedberg Kalson, CEO of the center. “If we shut down, people are going to die.”

The center, opened on Browns Hill Road in Squirrel Hill in 2006, expanded to a second site in 2015 at Brentwood Towne Square to



Darrell Sapp/Post-Gazette


Bhima Poudyel, from Bhutan and a resident of Carrick, last year goes through exercises at the Squirrel Hill Health Center in Brentwood.

better serve the influx of Bhutanese refugees in the South Hills. It also has a medical mobile unit.

Since then, the center — at its two locations — has seen a steady rise in patients, and it will be launching a pilot program for opioid treatment in the near future.

Overall, the patient base at the center’s two sites is 30 percent Bhutanese, 20 percent immigrant and other refugees, and 50 percent native English speakers — most from Pittsburgh. About 60 percent

SEE **CLINIC**, PAGE C-3



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Program fights lead exposure on homefront

LEAD, FROM C-1

soil and water throughout Allegheny County.

In the past year county agencies have begun a project to remediate older homes with lead paint and dust, which includes training contractors on lead-safe remediation practices. Dr. Hacker said a recent \$300,000 Hillman Family Foundation grant will allow the health department to expand lead blood level testing in county health clinics for those without insurance and provide other resources and educational materials for parents and pediatricians. Next year universal testing of blood lead levels in children will be required in the county.

The health department expects to hire a staff epidemiologist in August to collect and analyze lead data, Dr. Hacker wrote in a recent email, adding that the job will establish what systems are needed "for ongoing reporting and assessment of the universal screening regulation."

Lead is especially harmful to the developing central nervous system of children, and no level of lead in the blood is considered safe, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Concerns about lead in local drinking water in particular continue to challenge public officials, as the city works to replace water pipes containing lead and the county's new Lead Task Force of health and policy experts, led by Dr. Hacker, has a six-month deadline to recommend a science- and data-based strategy against childhood lead exposure from paint, soil and water.

Dr. Hacker said the department continues to urge people to take additional precautions to protect themselves from lead in water (advice can be found in the "Low Down on Lead" PDF on the department's website: www.achd.net/safehomes/pubs/pdf/Low-Down-on-Lead.pdf). If people are concerned, they should get their



Lake Fong/Post-Gazette

Diamond Turner, left, 15, a sophomore at Westinghouse Academy, distributes a survey about lead exposure to Joshua Thornton, 33, outside the Lincoln-Lemington Family Health Care Center.

water tested, run cold water from the main drinking and cooking tap (directions can be found at www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm) and use NSF filters or bottled water, especially when preparing infant formula.

Some progress has been noted after partial lead line replacement was blamed for a spike in water lead levels at some homes served by the Pittsburgh Sewer and Water Authority. Some sites measured more than 15 parts per billion for lead, the level that brings action by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Those residents were contacted by the health department to make sure they were following the recommended precautions, Dr. Hacker said.

PSWA in July reported reduced levels of lead in tap water that bring the authority's water supply back into compliance with federal rules. Samples taken in June at 128 residential sites revealed 77 percent were below 10 parts per billion for lead, with 90 percent at or below the 15 ppb.

The blood testing in children was put into law by county council on July 5. All children must be tested by the time they are 6 years old, starting Jan. 1, 2018. The schedule of testing starts at the age of about 9 to 12 months and repeats at about 24 months of age. If they

haven't been tested by that point, it should happen as soon as possible after 24 months and before 72 months of age, or before entering kindergarten, whenever is sooner.

The ordinance says lead levels of 5 micrograms or more per deciliter of blood found in a needle-prick (capillary) test will call for the child to have blood drawn from a vein (venipuncture) to be tested further. Since November, the state recommends early intervention for children with 5 micrograms and home investigations for those with 10 micrograms or above.

Universal testing, according to the health department, will discover where children are being exposed to lead. Although awareness may exist in scattered low-income neighborhoods, specific residences still need remediation of the peeling paint and dust that pose lead hazards. It's expected more families will be found with elevated blood lead levels, and they will have access to both child early intervention services and housing remediation programs.

The lead remediation demonstration project is called Lead Safe Homes, run by the county's Economic Development Department. It will use \$4 million in federal, county

and city funds, and is expected to pay for work in about 200 housing units.

"The idea is to put infrastructure in place so we can do it long after the money is gone," Dr. Hacker said of all the initiatives now underway.

The health department's Housing and Community Environment Program has expanded outreach for families with children who have confirmed elevated blood lead levels, according to David Namey, program chief.

Since November, the department has been conducting home investigations for children with blood lead levels of 10 micrograms per deciliter or above. Before that, the level had to be 15 micrograms or above.

Mr. Namey said recently that there has already been an increase of families requesting inspections, expected to number 75-100 this year. Also since November, letters have been sent to more than 200 families with children with lower blood lead levels, confirmed at 5 to 9 micrograms, giving them information about the home remediation program and referring them to both the Safe and Healthy Homes program and early intervention.

Starting in June, the health department began calling an estimated 300 families with children at the 5-to-9-microgram level.

"We tell them about measures they can do to prevent their children from being exposed," Mr. Namey said. "Over the phone we tell them how to keep their children safe."

Dr. Hacker said experts have told her it can take years to remediate homes and replace water lines sufficiently to make a difference. However, she said, "It's a good time to get commitment to get lead levels down in all sources We should ultimately be able to prevent this."

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Is Barbie only for girls?

Ask Natalie

NATALIE BENCIVENGA

DEAR NATALIE: My son just turned 5 and is an only child. We went to the toy store the other day, and he begged me to get him a Barbie doll. I caved and bought him one, but my husband and I had a big fight about it. He believes that by giving him a doll, we may end up "turning" him gay. I don't know what to think, but whenever I try to take the doll from my son, he cries hysterically. I feel terrible and don't know if I made a big mistake. — **BANISH BARBIE?**

DEAR **BANISH BARBIE:** First of all, you can't "turn" someone gay. Clearly, your husband has some issue with homosexuality, even though he probably talks to, engages with or works with those in the LGBTQ community every day and doesn't even realize it. A deep-rooted fear, perhaps? That if he were to pick up the Barbie himself he may start to look at Ken a little differently? Sound ridiculous? Yeah, because it is. Toys should not be categorized by gender, anyway. There is nothing wrong with your son wanting to play with Barbie. Barbie is cool. She can be anything, from an astronaut to a fashion designer to a race car driver. She has awesome friends, the best clothes and lives in a mansion. Sounds like your son has great taste in toys. And if he does come out to you one day as queer or gay or questioning, know that you made the right choice in giving him space and freedom to explore the world in a nonjudgmental way. As for your husband? Sounds to me like he could use a visit to Therapist Barbie.

DEAR NATALIE: My boyfriend and I got into a stupid fight last night and today I was on Facebook and noticed he changed his sta-

tus from "in a relationship" to "it's complicated." It was one fight! What is he trying to tell me? — **IT'S VERY COMPLICATED**

DEAR **IT'S VERY COMPLICATED:** Sounds as though you and your boyfriend had a miscommunication of some sort, and he decided to act out by airing his dirty laundry in public. He's behaving like a big baby, and clearly whatever the issue was that you were arguing over really took a bigger emotional toll on him than you.

Call him (don't text him, for the love of all that is holy) and ask him to meet you so you can talk about it. Let him know that you didn't realize he was still so upset, but that it isn't cool for him to change his status on Facebook, thereby clueing everyone in to the fact that the two of you are having problems. Whatever your issue is, you didn't take it public and you don't think he should have either.

Let him explain why he is still upset, what exactly feels unresolved. He needs to have more clarity, apparently. So, figure out how to move past this so you can get beyond "it's complicated" and back to "in a relationship." But, note this as a red flag. Any guy who is so into drama that he would change his status over a fight is probably making things all about him all of the time. And that's a great way to get "unfriended" in my book.

Natalie's Networking Tip of the Week: Try a new hobby! Have you ever been rock climbing, taken a cooking class or joined a softball team? These could be great ways to make some new friends and some new professional contacts.

Natalie Bencivenga is the Post-Gazette's Seen and society editor. Send questions to nbencivenga@post-gazette.com. Follow her on Twitter @NBSeen and on Instagram @NatalieBenci.

Helping others learn about lead encourages students

SERVICE, FROM C-1

into a house. For an older person, it's not an issue."

Charles said he's familiar with the hazard of lead in paint through his father's work with the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

"They ask if there are young children in the home. People taking old paint out wear masks," he said. "They use power hoses to clean out the dust," he said, describing the wet cleaning method that is the standard for lead-

safe home remodeling.

By late July, the group had already been instructed about the health hazards from lead exposure by Karen Hacker, director of the Allegheny County Health Department. In the Flint trip, they talked to people affected by the lead contamination in the water supply there, and to those who worked to bring solutions to the crisis, including the mayor, urban gardeners, contractors and community activists. They learned about the context in which the crisis happened, Ms. Jones said.

"As soon as the students understood the social inequity, the marginalization of different communities, they could see the impact more directly ... When they engage with the [Lincoln-Lemington] families they will learn more."

The teen investigators plan interviews with 20 families in the neighborhood, she said. Pulling the information together, the students plan to present a health education forum Aug. 5 at the regular monthly Lincoln-Lemington community meeting.

Medicaid cuts threaten future of Brentwood clinic

CLINIC, FROM C-1

of Brentwood's patients are Bhutanese alone. If you were to walk in you'd probably hear a mix of English, Spanish, Arabic and Nepali being spoken by patients and staff alike.

The Bhutanese people fled a government purge, most to refugee camps in Nepal, where some lived in refugee camps for up to 25 years. The first waves of refugee resettlement began in 2010 and only slowed down because of President Donald Trump's recent executive order, which suspended the Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days.

Since the Brentwood location opened, there's been rapid growth at the center, with a combined total of 4,700 unique patients being seen in 2015. The center expects to see more than 7,200 unique patients by the end of this year, and more than 8,000 expected in 2018.

To handle this growth, the staff has doubled in size since 2006, and the center now employs more than 70 full- and part-time employees. The center has hired two Nepalese-speaking registered nurses from the community with one of them being a Bhutanese refugee himself.

A recent trend among the patients is a high dependency on Medicaid. In 2015, 20 percent of both centers' patients were on Medicaid, but after Medicaid expansions through the Affordable

Care Act, enrollment shot up to 65 percent this year, Ms. Kalson said.

The high rate of Medicaid indicates that the most needy populations are being served, she said. The thought of losing that revenue is grim.

The ability to provide health care for a needy population boils down to money, explained Andrea Fox, the center's chief medical officer.

"We want to see patients who are insured, but that will be a larger financial burden on us," Dr. Fox said. "We would have to shut down one of the locations to keep the other open."

The Bhutanese refugee population is vulnerable because of language barriers and lack of cultural assimilation, but also mental health concerns. A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the suicide rate in Bhutanese communities is almost double the U.S. average, and depression rates are triple.

The center expanded mental health services in 2016 to better serve the community, said Dr. Fox. All staff members are trained on how to recognize mental health issues to ensure that signs are being noticed.

In addition to therapists and psychiatrists, the center has integrated cultural practices into the services offered, said Jonathan Weinkle, a physician at the center. Without mental health ser-

vices in the refugee camps it was common for refugees to see a friend as a confidant and pseudo-therapist to provide support, he said.

Based on these experiences, the center developed a peer counseling system, where trained community members talk people through their issues in the comfort of their own homes.

Yoga has a strong cultural significance in Bhutan, so the center offers low-intensity and high-intensity yoga sessions in Nepali. After the sessions, people report feeling less stressed and more calm, Dr. Weinkle said.

The center's work has improved the mental health of the community, said Upenra Dahal, program director at the Bhutanese Communication Association of Pittsburgh. He believes the center's close relationship to the community has been a crucial reason for the success.

"The center is the preferred destination for health care," he said. "People feel comfortable there, and they love that community members work there."

The future of health care providers should be a public concern, said Ms. Kalson. The center provides preventive and primary care to reduce the number of emergency room visits, which saves millions of dollars for the state.

It goes beyond money for Ms. Kalson. Providing health care for those in need has always been a core part

of Pittsburgh's identity.

"Pittsburgh is a city where we take care of one another," she said. "The center is about the strength of Pittsburgh's people helping one another when they need it."

Arturo Pineda: apineda@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1448.

3-D mammography machines on display

A new type of 3-D mammography machine that aims to improve the comfort for patients is coming — to the PPG Paints Arena.

It won't be there permanently — the permanent installations will come to West Penn and Allegheny General hospitals in late September — but it will be on display to the public on the arena's floor from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday.

The machine, called Senographe Pristina, aims to reduce the discomfort some women experience during mammograms. From armrests and rounded corners to a thinner image detector designed to make less contact with patients' ribs and a button for patients to control compression, doctors hope the machine's design will cause fewer women to avoid exams.

"It's designed for patient comfort and for breast cancer screening precision," said William Poller, director

of breast imaging at West Penn Allegheny Health System.

— Alex Weidenhof, Post-Gazette.

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