Young Fathers United (YFU), a program of the Institute for the Development of African American Youth (IDAAY), Inc., teaches parenting skills to fathers ages 14-25, and offers them empowerment sessions to help them be both better parents and young men. This unique parenting collaborative addresses the emotional, educational and practical parenting needs of approximately 100 young fathers in South, Southwest, West and North Philadelphia.

Participants attend workshops that help fathers communicate and interact with their children; understand positive parenting and improve their parenting skills. YFU also offers mentorship programs to help fathers develop positive relationships with their children.

Celestine Mosley: On the Pathway to Success

GreatVine winner Celestine Mosley’s character exudes the idea that, “It’s not where you came from, but where you are now!” Celestine dropped out of school in her early teens, only to realize she was shorting herself. She concedes, “I kept on failing because I didn’t know how smart I truly was.” Celestine remembers hanging out with a group of girls who encouraged her to drop out of school. Looking back, she realizes that they didn't really have her best interests at heart. She’s glad she was able to separate herself from their self-defeating mindset and get back on the pathway to success.

After eliminating the negative influences in her life, Celestine went back to high school and once again got involved with the Village of Arts & Humanities in North Philadelphia. She participates in the Village’s theatrical productions, takes video production classes and is part of the step team. Celestine is grateful that her mentor...
Philadelphia, won a Freddie Award in the Adolescent Health category of the International Health and Medical awards.

In this Year 3, the campaign leverages its momentum toward achieving the goals of the original ten-year plan to reduce youth homicide and gun violence in Philadelphia. The Blueprint’s profile will be increased at three levels: media, which has the potential to reach the widest audience with violence prevention messages; peers, which often proves to be the message channel with the most influence for youth audiences; and parents and other community adults, who have the most power to reach and influence decision-making among our youth.

Collaboration is a central theme of this year’s messages and activities. New radio ads promoting collaboration among the individuals and organizations funded to fight violence in Philadelphia will begin airing on top radio stations in early spring. Other components for the year include a series of radio PSAs featuring “lifers” at Graterford Prison, urging youth to think differently about the consequences of their choices; enhancements to the Blueprint Website; and intensified promotion of its GreatVine sub-section telling the positive story of Philadelphia youth.

An indication of the Blueprint’s success is that it has spawned or inspired many community-initiated activities. This year, the campaign will continue to deliver key messages to the primary target audiences, while also moving forward to include Philadelphia’s more mainstream residents, who may perceive themselves as unaffected by violence.

Get Connected

Blueprint Hotline: 1-888-570-BLUE
(1-888-570-2583)

The hotline is professionally staffed to answer questions, provide referrals to applicable services, and to link interested individuals with volunteer opportunities.

Mondays – Thursdays: 8:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Fridays: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Saturdays: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Visit www.phillyblueprint.com for continually updated information on the Campaign.

For more upcoming events, view our online calendar at the Blueprint Website.
Reducing Youth Violence: What You Can Do

Everyone in the Delaware Valley region can take a role in reducing youth violence in Philadelphia. Each person’s time, talents and “treasure” is invaluable. The Blueprint Campaign presents some ideas on how people from all walks of life can make a contribution.

Do one of the “3 D’s”

Display Blueprint materials at your workplace, church, organization or business.

Disseminate Blueprint materials to residents who come to your facility for programs or services, or include them in your mailings to clients and constituents.

Dialogue with your family, friends, colleagues and the community about the causes and solutions to youth violence. Help them understand that it affects us all, even if not directly.

Become a Blueprint Campaign Partner

More than 500 organizations across Philadelphia, including CBOs, schools, churches, recreation centers, clinics and other programs have become official Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Campaign Partners. Partners become part of an exciting, culturally-relevant and community-focused campaign committed to stopping youth violence and helping make the city a better place for everyone.

Official Campaign Partners can receive: campaign print materials (brochures, posters and postcards), available in both English and Spanish; the bimonthly newsletter, The Blueprint; invitations to Blueprint-sponsored community forums, town meetings and other events; copies of the Electronic Resources Directory with information on after-school, summer and other youth opportunities; and more. All the campaign asks in return is that partners distribute campaign materials or make them available at their sites and participate as they can in Campaign-sponsored events.

Becoming a Blueprint Campaign partner is easy. You can sign-up to become an official Blueprint Campaign Partner online by visiting www.phillyblueprint.com. Or contact Jasmine Kraybill at (215) 829-4920 or by e-mail jkraybill@meeproductions.com to join this exciting initiative that is making a difference.

Celestine knows that exploring positive options can keep her from taking a path that can lead to a dead end. “People may be doing bad things,” she says, “because they know no other way.”

But she also believes that it’s a stereotype that people in low-income communities don’t want to change. She says that young people, in particular, “need to know other people do care and there are resources for them.” Giving youth the same exposure to travel that she has had, could also make a big difference in leading them away from self-destructive behaviors, she believes. “They need to get the youth out of their neighborhoods and show them there is a world outside of North Philadelphia,” she said.
**Reducing Violence, Continued**

Educate yourself and others about the issue of youth violence—and how we can prevent it

Host a community forum on violence at your organization or institution. The Blueprint campaign will provide the speakers and you provide the people! Learn more about youth violence issues in our community and what you can do to help. You can also invite a speaker from a Blueprint partner program to your place of worship or a community/civic meeting. The Blueprint Website, www.phillyblueprint.com, has a list of grantees, partner organizations and other local resources that have been studying and working to prevent violence. Another way to learn more about violence prevention is to come to one of the many events sponsored by the Blueprint campaign. (See the Calendar page on the Website for complete, updated listings).

Engage in advocacy

Advocate on the city, state and federal levels for policies and programs that can prevent violence “on the front end” by funding improved public education, after-school and summer enrichment programs and more jobs. Talk to policymakers and public officials who represent you about the desire for preventive rather than punitive, criminal justice-driven models for dealing with violence. Demand that they make violence prevention priority number one. In addition, let decision-makers in the media know that ending youth violence is important to you, and to other viewers and listeners. Also, help the Blueprint promote the good things that young people in Philadelphia are doing. Nominate positive youth for the GreatVine by visiting: www.phillyblueprint.com/TheGreatVine.

**Offer employment to local youth and young adults**

Provide after school and summer jobs and internships to inner city youth and youth adults. Keep them off the streets, improve their life chances, and strengthen the local economy. Contact WorkReady Philadelphia to find out how.

**Volunteer your time and talents**

The Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Campaign can find things for you to do that fit with the amount of time that you have available. We’ll also give you all the support you need to get involved. For example, you could volunteer with a local community-based or non-profit organization to learn more about violence prevention and provide direct services to local youth and families. You could become a mentor and role model for a local teen, or work with a youth choir two nights a month. You could become a tutor or help with a reading/literacy class one afternoon or on the weekend. Or take youth to a ball game or do some coaching.

**Make donations or raise money**

Support the violence prevention programs that work “on the front end” and are making a difference—those, for example, that encourage education and positive conflict resolution. Without your support, non-profit agencies doing important violence prevention work cannot exist. Sponsor, organize or participate in fundraising drives and events for local agencies and CBOs that are doing effective violence prevention work. Make a donation to a local CBO or other non-profit group working to prevent violence or to support its victims. Sponsor a dance or drill team or a team in a youth athletic league. These activities provide an alternative to the streets and give young people something constructive to do. Plus, they teach essential skills needed for life, such as working with others toward a common goal, discipline and responsibility, all while building self-esteem.

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**Fathers United, Continued**

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The program also offers individual and group counseling sessions, mentoring, guest speakers and field trips and referrals for job training and other educational and social service programs. Like other IDAAY programs, Young Fathers United is designed to empower young males to become part of the solution in their community and see their life situations as an opportunity, rather than a problem.

**For more information about Young Fathers United, contact Program Director Tyrone Jessie, at (215) 572-7252 or tjesse@idaay.org.**
MEE conducted expert interviews as part of a MEE research project focused on the need for culturally-relevant mental wellness promotion in the African American community. MEE believes that because of the stresses and challenges they face in their daily lives, African American families living in poor and at-risk communities need a strong mental wellness support system. Yet the public health field has faced ongoing and numerous challenges in de-stigmatizing and normalizing the seeking of mental health services as a way to cope with trauma and constant stress.

MEE explored relevant mental health issues with these two experts as part of the foundation for formative audience research to begin later this year. These men, among the most respected names in public and mental health, reflect a breadth of experiences and backgrounds. In the interviews, we examined some of the issues African Americans in underserved communities deal with on a daily basis: the impact of racism; the stress of balancing work and family issues; depression; self-medicating through overeating and substance abuse; other coping mechanisms and post-traumatic stress related to constant exposure to violence, both in the home and on the streets. The feedback from these interviews will determine the most relevant areas of focus and inquiry during MEE’s upcoming audience research with African American parents and young adults.

Dr. Carl Bell

According to Dr. Carl Bell, tough times and traumatic experiences are nothing new for many African Americans. “I’m very convinced that Black people experience more trauma from violence than probably anybody else [besides] Native Americans,” he said. Because of this, they are more resilient in recovering from “life’s hard knocks.” “As I read the national surveys on mental health and trauma...there’s some suggestion that Black people actually have better health outcomes than white people.”

Dr. Bell says that societal attitudes towards young Black males undermine our willingness to collectively pull for their success. “We’re so busy demonizing and criminalizing and castigating...we don’t see their potential, their creativity and humor, their spirituality, their every action. We see it all as negative.” However, he says that being born in poverty, facing a broken family, or being surrounded by violence does not automatically consign one to a life of failure. “Risk factors [in one's life] are not [necessarily] predictive factors, because of protective factors.”

A strong social fabric is one of the reasons low-income African Americans may withstand the effects of negative situations. “They know their neighbors, they talk to people, and they are connected to people in their community. Because that’s all they’ve got.” Bell says that rebuilding the village is critically important to Black survival.

— Mental Health, Continued on page 6
“Connectedness, having social skills, having a sense of self-esteem is important.”

Dr. Bell also cited built-in protective factors such as spirituality and resilience. The most powerful of these protective factors is a keen sense of self-efficacy. “There’s a sense of ‘I can figure this out, I can do something about this, I can fix this’ whether you actually can or not.” Feelings of helplessness, Dr. Bell says, make any trauma feel more dangerous.

Young males who witness or are victims of trauma begin to feel that there’s a possibility that they are not going to live forever, says Dr. Bell. That can affect them in either of two ways, he says. “That either messes them up in terms of [increasing] risk-taking behavior,” he said, “or it increases their spirituality or both.” Some males, he said, decide they better learn to fight so that they will no longer be victimized.

Barriers such as fears of stigma, along with perceptions of institutional racism, keep young African American males, in particular from seeking out and accessing mental health services. “Black people go in and they get insulted,” he said. He believes that most mental healthcare providers are unwelcoming to Black youth. “They see all of them as gangbangers or violent.” He says that providers may also be culturally insensitive and lack evidence-based interventions that are specifically tailored to the needs of Black males.

He added that African Americans are also misinformed and are being misled about the benefits of mental health services. “There’s a huge amount of anti-psychiatry rhetoric out there. You’ve got these crazy, off-the-wall... people who are running around telling Black people that psychiatrists want to kill them all, put them all on drugs.”

Family members, peers and spiritual leaders, Dr. Bell says, must develop and maintain solid relationships with Black males in order to help them cope with traumatic experiences. “You can’t tell anybody anything if you don’t have a good relationship,” he said. They must also avoid demonizing Black males. “If the family, the grandmothers, the old-heads look at young Black males in a more positive light,” he says, then they will be more willing to coach and mentor, and less inclined to “throw up their hands and turn the child over to a juvenile justice or foster care system.”

Bell calls for completely revising the medical model on which mental health care is built. “The American model is focused on what’s broken, instead of how to strengthen [people] and prevent [them] from ever breaking.”

—Dr. Carl Bell

“The American model is focused on what’s broken, instead of how to strengthen [people] and prevent [them] from ever breaking.”

Dr. Joe White

In his decades of work in psychology, Dr. Joe White has consistently said that young Black males in our society face many challenges that make the journey to healthy adulthood a treacherous one. He describes the state of mental health of Black men as “dismal.” Even in the same neighborhood, he says, women do better. While girls and women seem to do well in school

—Mental Health, Continued on page 7
and later in the workforce, Black males face a tougher struggle to lead successful lives. They are being raised in a society that is both hostile and non-supportive to Black males. White says that much of the resulting struggle is due to a search for identity. Men are asking, “How do I define myself?”

He also links mental health issues with a lack of connectedness. “Even in slavery,” he said, “we had each other.” Now he believes that societal messages to and about Black men have convinced them that the primary goal should be control over and domination of others. He also says that men with mental health issues “handle” them by either denying that they exist by “tuning them out” or by self-medicating with drugs and alcohol.

Protective factors that make some people able to survive extenuating circumstances include, Dr. White says, an ability to come up with their own responses to tough times. “These boys that don’t seem to fall victim,” he said, “develop alternatives to being victimized by violence, alternatives to drugs, alternatives to gangs.” He says that having a strong support system at home could be one reason for such sourcefulness.

Barriers to accessing mental health services include stigma and fears of being perceived as weak. In street culture, he says, “A strong man does not need to be counseled by a professional,” he said. “That’s an admission of weakness.” In addition, people don’t want to feel analyzed and labeled, he said. Yet, that is just what happens at many mental health service providers. “When you go to a mental health clinic, they do an initial evaluation and then they pull out their diagnostic book and give you a label.” This, he says, contributes to people’s fears about being stigmatized as “crazy.”

The formal training of many mental health service providers, White says, is based on a Eurocentric tradition that may not be culturally relevant in urban communities. He says these providers need additional training to allow them to garner trust in African American communities. “We have to infiltrate training institutions and give them better models, so that they have a clue to how the community functions and what the needs of Black people are.” He also says that service providers cannot sit in their offices waiting for clients to come to them. Instead, he says, providers have to get out into the community, wherever the clients are.

White says that mental health service providers should meet resistance from Black youth about accessing services with a therapeutic approach that emphasizes an individual’s strengths rather than “what’s wrong with you.” “Rather than focusing on illness and negatives,” explained Dr. White, “I’m focusing on the strengths from day one.”

White says that the African American community needs a safety system that Communications and outreach efforts that will work with Black men include not labeling mental health services as such. Dr. White described a book club sponsored by a local Probation Department in which men discuss books that deal with issues that regularly confront African American men. By discussing how people in the books handle anger, stress and other problems in their lives, the men in the group are also provided an opportunity to discuss their own issues.

He also cited a “drop-in center” that used Marvin Gaye’s theme song “What’s Going On?” and met at a neighboring cultural center rather than the formal counseling center site. He said that men felt more comfortable coming there because of the perception of a more informal interaction with the counselors.

Dr. White said that men need to see mental health professionals as part of their community, so they will feel more comfortable talking to them. “They need to see them buying groceries, going to church, going to meetings. They need to see how they look, how they walk, how they talk, so they’re not strangers.”

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White says that the African American community needs a safety system that

— Mental Health, Continued
— Mental Health, Continued

monitors youth to ensure their protection without demonizing them. “It doesn’t have to be flagrant, with police going around scaring everybody. But responsible adults can be peeking out windows, and walking up and down the street,” he says.

The role of key influencers in improving access to mental health services is based on them first understanding the signs and symptoms of mental illness, says Dr. White. He says community education forums where ministers, social workers and family leaders come together to learn more about issues such as depression and suicide can prepare the community to step forward when someone needs help. Family members, peers and spiritual leaders must also understand how they can support existing protective factors. “We need to teach...resilience training to give these young people some of the strengths and skills they will need.” He believes that learning “problem solving, opportunity-finding skills, how to bounce back from setbacks” gives young people the strengths to head off problems before they start or become serious.

Promoting mental wellness in the African American community will mean decreasing stigma and raising community-wide awareness. “We need to have conferences and mini-symposiums on the challenges facing Black males as they grow up in America.” Then, he said, the community needs to talk about what strategies and strengths men will need to successfully master those challenges.

White says talking with young people can help individuals recognize the strengths and resiliency they possess. He said he starts by talking about some of the ways they are currently handling stress (drinking, drugs, violence) and then begins to expose them to the possibilities of some alternate, more constructive ways that they can deal with their challenges. He says that youth need to hear more from adults about how to nurture and protect both their outer and inner selves. “They need to know that there's a public self,” he said, “but also an inner self, that self you hear in the morning when you wake up, before you go to sleep at night, when you’re alone.” Teaching at an early age that both of those selves need to be taken care of prepares children to journey to adulthood embracing mental wellness as an important goal for themselves.

Messages to promote mental wellness among young males should incorporate rap music and lyrics, White believes. “We should try little jingles like 'Feeling blue...what must I do?’”

Collaboration: That’s the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia

A Blueprint Initiative tenet is that the community will be more effective in preventing and reducing youth violence if organizations coordinate their efforts, collaborate and build effective partnerships to develop and implement violence prevention strategies. This year, the social marketing campaign will include new radio ads and print materials that strongly encourage grantees funded under the Blueprint initiative and other community-based organizations to collaborate “in unity for our community.” Such coordination minimizes duplication of efforts, maximizes the use of the available resources and allows colleagues to benefit from the expertise and lessons learned of those whose strategies have been successful in preventing youth violence.