Constant Care venture wins widespread community support

Constant Care Community Health Center, Inc., announced this week its participation in a joint venture with the West Baltimore Community Health Center Corporation, Inc., and Bon Secours Hospital Baltimore, Inc., which will enable Constant Care to preserve its identity and unique health care delivery style.

Rob Secours and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Maryland, Inc., have agreed to work together to provide financial assistance for both community health programs.

The new structure and related agreements are subject to approval by the boards of the four organizations involved. A detailed business plan, subject to regulatory approval, will be completed this summer.

The announcement ends months of uncertainty about Constant Care's future and guarantees continuity of care for 18,000 Constant Care patients. The crisis arose when Constant Care, a non-profit, federally funded organization, was unable to meet the requirements of a two-year-old state insurance law, in order to remain licensed as a health maintenance organization for state Medical Assistance recipients (HMO-MA).

The new arrangement, effective July 1, 1987, involves the loss of Constant Care's HMO-MA license and the assignment of responsibility for the Constant Care HMO-MA patients to the West Baltimore Community Health Care Corporation.

With this consolidation, West Baltimore's HMO-MA census will stand at approximately, 12,000 enrollees, making it the largest Medical Assistance HMO in Maryland. Constant Care will contract with West Baltimore to deliver care to its Constant Care-based HMO-MA patients.

A separate health services corporation will be created to provide management and administrative services to both the Constant Care and West Baltimore health care delivery organizations. To be headed by Michael Rashid, executive director of West Baltimore, the new management corporation will be a merger of key personnel selected from Constant Care and West Baltimore. Gregory J. Williams, Acting Director of Constant Care, will become Deputy Director of the management corporation, and its board of directors will consist of members nominated by Constant Care, West Baltimore, and Bon Secours.

"The joint venture combines the strongest features of both organizations and makes health services more uniformly available in the West Baltimore area," says Gregory Williams. "It's a workable solution to Constant Care's problem and, best of all, our new partners understand our comprehensive approach to health care."

Michael Rashid says the joint venture will help insure the long term survival of both organizations. "The health care business in the Baltimore is becoming increasingly high-powered," said Mr. Rashid. "Small health centers have a better chance of surviving in this competitive environment if they form coalitions, not only with each other, but with stronger institutions as well. I am very excited about the participation of Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Bon Secours Hospital. It means we are now free to concentrate on serving the patients who depend on us."

Edward J. Muhl, the State Insurance Commissioner, has begun reviewing the proposal and is hopeful that the financial data will warrant approval. "During the long process of working things out with Constant Care, our single goal has been to assure health care for the 18,000 Constant Care patients. If the numbers work out, and we are optimistic that they will, our patience and efforts will have paid off and that goal achieved," he said.

The financial participants in the joint venture are likewise enthusiastic about its potential. "We are delighted to be a participant in the agreement for several reasons," said Ned Vadakin, Senior Vice President of Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Maryland.

"Nearly 3,500 customers from our Columbia-Fre e State Health System are treated as Constant Care facilities and we are interested in ensuring that those services are continued. We are also interested in preserving the unique position that Constant Care offers to Baltimore."

Victor Broccolino, Chief Executive Officer of Bon Secours Hospital, feels the hospital's participation is a natural progression from its close, long-term relationship with West Baltimore.

"Our commitment to the heretofore medically underserved citizens of Baltimore City is a matter of public record," said Broccolino," and now that Constant Care and Blue Cross/Blue Shield will be joining us, the hospital can serve more people, more effectively. We are very pleased to have been in a position to help preserve Constant Care."

Baltimore City officials are relieved that the matter is being resolved and that continuity of care to Constant Care patients will be maintained.

Mayor Clarence "Du" Burns called the agreement "the best possible solution" to Constant Care's problems.

"As Mayor of this City, I place top priority on the health of our citizens, and I am satisfied that under the new arrangement, Constant Care patients will continue to receive excellent health services. I also feel that this coalition has all the elements to produce a strong community health care delivery system, and I intend to do everything in my power to support it." he said.

Fourth District City Councilman Dr. Claude Hill is also on the medical staff of Bon-Secours. "Everybody wins in this one, especially the community," says Dr. Hill.

He too, is pleased by the joint venture "because in today's health care delivery environment, independent organizations are vulnerable and they need to form associations with stronger organizations"

Dr. Hill continued, "this union is particularly appropriate, because it involves institutions already serving inner city residents, because the community boards remain intact, because the leadership remains in place, and because of the strengthening financial support of Blue Cross/Blue Shield. I am especially grateful for the stabilizing influence of Bon Secours Hospital."

Seventh District Congressman Kweisi Mfume was also enthusiastic about the new direction for Constant Care. "I am extremely heartened that this new joint venture was worked out through the foresight and cooperation of the local community. This is an example of the kind of grass roots leadership that makes Baltimore great," he said.

Congressman Mfume says he is particularly thankful to Bon Secours Hospital for its positive stance throughout the crisis period. "I am also happy that there will be no loss of service to Constant Care patients, and I am hopeful that through this new joint venture, the community can continue to look forward to many worry-free years of quality health care," said Congressman Mfume.

The Maryland Legislative Black Caucus welcomes the joint venture because it retains black leadership and broadens the health care delivery network in West Baltimore.

Delegate Larry Young (D-39), Chairman of the Baltimore City delegation and former Chairman of the House Environmental Matters Committee, said his main concern was "that Constant Care would remain viable so that it could continue its services to the people . . . I wanted to ensure the preservation of an institution that has been the object of Black Pride. We did not want to lose another black institution. Also, given the competitive nature of health care in the City, we are very fortunate to have this alliance with Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Bon Secours."

State Senator Clarence W. Blout (D-41st) has mixed feelings: "Of course, it is with deep regret and a sense of sadness that I accept the fact that Constant Care will no longer exist in its present form. I thought Constant Care was exceptionally well run and served the black community's needs. However, under the circumstances, I am glad that the services provided by Constant Care will still be available to the Black Community . . . Constant Care will retain basically the same doctors and other employees, and that's reassuring to me.

"The joint venture probably augurs well for the black community because it brings in new capital thereby adding strength and performance to what was, and shall hopefully continue to be, a high quality health provider," said Senator Blout.

"Constant Care's emphasis on high quality care makes it an endangered species, "says Delegate Tony Fulton (D-40th). "As I see it, there are three inseparable issues which confront Constant Care at this time, namely liquidity and resolution of the impairment, continuity of care and high quality care . . . I want to emphasize my high regard for Constant Care which I have supported and will continue to support. We've been successful in stablizing Constant Care in the short run. In the long run, it becomes a question of whether Constant Care will recover enough to reapply for its license or whether it will eventualy be merged."

Mrs. Cecelia Tilghman, Chairman of the Constant Care Board of Directors, hails the joint venture as an outstanding demonstration of what happens when individual priorities give way to higher commitment.

"Our goals were to save Constant Care, to maintain services to our patients, and to keep our personal, community-oriented health care delivery style . . . it's just beautiful what mutual trust and cooperation can accomplish," she said.

Marylander wins national business award

Eleven Marylanders have been selected to receive recognition for their contributions to the small business community and for individual achievements in various aspects of small business activity in Maryland through the U.S. Small Business Administration's National Award Program.

One of the winners, Lisa Renshaw, owner of Penn Parking in Baltimore, has been named the Outstanding Young Entrepreneur of the Year for the United States, by the SBA.

Award announcements were made by Charles J. Gaston, Director of SBA's Baltimore Office.

Gaston noted that "each year, in conjunction with national small business week, SBA honors outstanding small business owners and advocates at the state and national levels."

This year, President Reagan has proclaimed the week of May 10-16 as Small Business Week. Small Business Persons of the Year from each state, together with eleven national award winners will be invited to Washington, D.C. for recognition and announcement of the National Small Business Person of the Year.

"We think all of the Maryland awardees are special, but we are honored and excited over the selection of Lisa Renshaw for national recognition," commented Gaston.

Renshaw, at the age of 21, started the first woman-owned parking facility management firm in Baltimore. In spite of the tremendous odds against her, Lisa now operates three parking facilities, including Amtrak's lot near Penn Station in Baltimore.

In 1962, a seventeen year-old discovered the world.

Back when Patricia Lightfoot got interested in space flight, cars had fins, movies had double features and mathematically gifted Black girls had limited career prospects. But 1962 was the year Patricia Lightfoot won a scholarship to Howard University. And on the way to becoming a math teacher, she discovered a world of opportunities.

In the unique environment that historically Black colleges provide, Patricia Lightfoot learned that her dreams of becoming a mathematician were achievable. "At Howard," she says, "I learned how to learn. A Black college gave me confidence... and a support that was always there when I needed it."

That confidence helped Patricia master higher mathematics, computer science, graduate school and her own destiny. Today, as head of the Spacecraft Control Branch of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, she directs the design and development of ground support systems for vital satellite projects.

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AMERICA'S BLACK COLLEGES ARE YOU SMART ENOUGH TO GO?

Treatment of crime victims, witnesses offered in brochure

Gov. William Donald Schaefer and the State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services are reaching out for Marylanders who have become victims or witnesses of crime.

The Maryland Crime Victims and Witnesses brochure is being distributed to criminal justice and law enforcement agencies in both the public and private sectors statewide. The brochure offers guidelines for the treatment of and assistance to crime victims and witnesses. These guidelines were contained in Senate Bill 274 which became state law on July 1, 1986.

This law requires that all local and state criminal justice agencies follow certain guidelines, when dealing with victims or witnesses of crime. In accordance with these guidelines, every crime victim or witness should:

—Be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity;

—Receive emergency help as needed;

—Receive notification of court dates or cancellation of those dates;

—Be advised of law enforcement protection available from harm arising out of presecution and law enforcement efforts;

—Be provided a waiting area apart from the accused;

—Be informed of any available financial assistance or social service;

—Receive help with bill problems occurring as a result of the crime;

—Be assisted with prompt property return;

—Be able to participate through a written statement (victim impact) and/or oral address (allocution) in the sentencing phase of trial;

—Be informed of restitution procedures and information;

—Receive speedy handling of the case in which you are involved.

In addition, the following is available to you, when requested in writing:

—The progress of your case from the police and the state's attorney;

—The prompt return of property by law enforcement agencies;

—The reading of victim impact statements at any hearing that considers a release;

—To know when the convicted offender is scheduled to be released from prison or jail; or

—To know when the offender escapes or receives a mandatory release from prison.

"The brochure offers Marylanders much needed basic information about a very complex criminal justice system," Gov. Schaefer said. "It enables victims and witnesses of crimes to become fully informed about the nature and extent of these important guidelines," the Governor said.

Bishop L. Robinson, secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, agrees. "This brochure represents an important effort by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to better educate the public about our criminal justice system," said Secretary Robinson.

The Governor's Task Force on Victims Services, the Maryland Victim Assistance Network, the Stephanie Roper Committee, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, and the Maryland Coalition Against Crime contributed to the development of the Maryland Crime Victims and Witnesses brochure.

Dr. Myers to address Coppin graduates

Delivering the keynote address at Coppin State College's 87th Commencement Exercises will be Dr. Samuel L. Myers, president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO). The Commencement Exercises will be held on Sunday, May 24 at 3 p.m. at the Baltimore Arena. Degrees will be awarded to approximately 215 undergraduates and 65 graduate students.

Attorney George L. Russell, Jr., partner in the law firm Piper and Marbury, will be awarded an honorary degree, making him the first Coppin awardee in 12 years. Russell, a long-time supporter of the college, served as chairman of Coppin's first Annual Fund Campaign. Russell was the first black in Maryland to sit as a judge on the circuit court level and the first black to serve as Baltimore city solicitor.

Dr. Myers, who has been president of NAFEO since its inception in 1977, has devoted much of his professional career to higher education. Prior to assuming the NAFEO leadership post, he was president of Bowie State College for a decade, 1967-77. He has also been a professor and chairman of the social sciences division of Morgan State University, employed as a research associate at Harvard University, and has held various federal government positions. Among his many professional affiliations, the NAFEO president serves as a member of the Commission on Higher Education for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

The baccalaureate ceremony will be held on Sunday, May 17, 5 p.m., Johnson Auditorium on the campus. The Rev. Douglass Sands, minister, Howard Park United Methodist Church, will give the sermon for this inspirational service.

Writing test scores drop

(UPI) — After rising steadily for three years, scores on the state's mandatory writing test for high school students have dropped slightly.

This year, only 67.1 percent of the state's ninth-graders passed the test, compared to 68.5 percent last year. The decrease of 1.4 percent comes after scores increased from 51.4 percent in 1984 to 54 percent in 1985.

State School Superintendent David Hornbeck attributed part of this year's decline to a change in the date of the test.

The Maryland Writing Test was given in April in the past, but schools found it difficult to get scores back in time to place students who need help in remedial classes in the fall. So this year, the test was given in January.

Hornbeck said as a result, students were given three months less instruction in writing before taking the test than students in past years.

The functional writing test, along with mandatory tests for reading, math and citizenship, is a graduation requirement for this year's 10th graders.

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