



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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## **Philanthropist George Soros Gives \$5 Million to OSI-Baltimore To Provide Relief from Recession for Baltimore's Most Vulnerable**

*Soros's Local Gift is Part of National Effort to Assist Those Most Hurt by the Recession*

**BALTIMORE** – Philanthropist George Soros is giving \$5 million to Open Society Institute-Baltimore to provide services for thousands of the city's most vulnerable residents who have been particularly hurt by the recession.

As homelessness in Baltimore has increased by 12 percent over the past year, Soros's funding will provide grants for a range of services, including jobs and employment training for disadvantaged youth, urgent dental care for homeless people, drug addiction treatment for the indigent, and housing, counseling and job training for formerly-incarcerated people. The Family League of Baltimore, for example, will receive the largest single grant: \$1 million to create year-long jobs for 200 youth, including 40 juvenile-court-involved youth who will be trained in construction trades and 50 youth aging out of foster care who will learn to plant, sell, prepare and serve food at Fresh Start Farm.

The \$5 million in grants for Baltimore's most vulnerable residents comes from the Special Fund for Poverty Alleviation, a new national fund created by Soros in response to the economic downturn. Soros's foundation, the Open Society Institute, is using the fund to make grants to states and national organizations across the country, including Baltimore, to provide relief from the recession for low-income people. In New York, for example, Soros funded back-to-school supplies for low-income children whose families receive temporary assistance or food stamps.

"Mr. Soros wants to provide an immediate lifeline for the most underserved people in our community who are struggling to find jobs and keep their families healthy," said Diana Morris, director of OSI-Baltimore. "Many jobs have vanished at a time when their families need the income most. For some people, the need is drug addiction treatment and very basic medical care. These grants form a safety net for the most vulnerable."

The OSI-Baltimore board of directors recently approved half of the \$5 million for 10 Baltimore organizations. OSI will award the other half by early 2010 but is not soliciting new funding proposals.

The grants require each group to secure a 1-to-1 match. Most of the matching funds are coming from public dollars and will bring substantial additional, new investment to Baltimore.

"Being part of a national foundation enables us to periodically tap special funds and resources for the greater benefit of Baltimore," Morris explained. "All of these new grants support our intertwined local goals of tackling drug addiction, reducing over-reliance on incarceration and helping youth stay connected to school and on the road to success."

Soros founded OSI-Baltimore in 1998 and since then has invested more than \$60 million, the largest single investment an individual has made to Baltimore to help those suffering from poverty and discrimination.

This new \$5 million investment is separate from the challenge Soros issued to Baltimore in 2006 when he said he would give \$10 million more if local donors contributed an additional \$20 million. To date, OSI-Baltimore has raised more than \$12.5 million, and that fundraising campaign continues. All of the \$20 million raised from the Baltimore community will go directly to the program areas. Soros will continue to underwrite the local foundation's operating expenses.

At its most recent meeting, the board approved \$2.6 million in new grants from the Fund for Poverty Alleviation. Those grants were awarded to nine Baltimore nonprofits and one city agency:

**Baltimore City Health Department** -- \$200,000 to provide more methadone and buprenorphine treatment slots to people dependent on heroin, thus reducing the waiting list for treatment provided through the city's needle exchange vans. The funds also will enable a case worker to enroll more transgender clients, who often have difficulty accessing health care and addiction treatment, in public health care benefits so they can receive treatment.

**Baltimore Health Care Access** -- \$368,000 to pay for the fees for ordering homeless clients' identification documents, which are required to apply for public medical assistance, including drug addiction treatment. The funding will provide emergency dental vouchers because Baltimore has virtually no free dental care. The funding also will enroll 5,000 people in primary care services so they can continue drug addiction treatment and receive basic medical care.

**BELL Foundation** -- \$80,000 to prevent further layoffs and retain its staff of 140 teachers, tutors and paraprofessionals who offer nationally-recognized, highly-effective after-school and summer learning programs for 1,600 disadvantaged students.

**Chesapeake Center for Youth Development** -- \$100,000 to provide employment training and placement services for 80 court-involved youth in construction, food service, recreation, landscaping, and warehouse work. Fourteen youth will participate in a one-day forklift certification class. The funding will provide stipends to 12 youth for 40 weeks and paid employment for eight youth for at least six months at the Hollywood Diner or Harbor City Services.

**Family League of Baltimore** -- \$1 million to create new jobs for 200 disadvantaged youth and to hire two job developers to add to the number of jobs available for needy youth. Forty juvenile offenders will be trained in the home-building and repair trades and 50 youth aging out of foster care will work at Fresh Start Farm, where they will learn to plant, harvest, market, sell, prepare and serve food. Another 110 jobs will be provided by organizations that train young people for careers and teach them various skills.

**Fund for Educational Excellence** -- \$400,000 to hire youth outreach workers to calm the city's most chaotic schools by mediating disputes, teaching new ways of resolving conflicts and supporting fearful students. The youth workers have "street credibility," derived from their own experience in juvenile detention or prison. The effective program has been operating in four schools.

**Health Care for the Homeless** -- \$160,000 to provide food, pay utility debts, furnishings and telephone bills for homeless people who are moving into stable, subsidized housing. Many of those homeless individuals are struggling with addiction and mental illness.

**Living Classrooms Foundation** -- \$100,000 to enable 30 court-involved youth to pay for state identification cards, enroll in technical schools, community colleges, training programs and driving schools, purchase bus passes, program uniforms and tools and pay fees for computer and forklift operation certification. In addition, 10 court-involved youth will participate in a six-week work-study program.

**Marian House** -- \$80,000 to provide transitional housing and job readiness training for up to 55 women, all of whom were incarcerated and are currently homeless. The funds also will provide counseling services, emergency food, clothing, GED fees, housing security deposits and furniture when they leave transitional housing.

**National Women's Prison Project** -- \$80,000 to support a pilot project that will provide services for 125 women returning to Baltimore from prison. Among the services it will offer are life skills training and help with basic needs, such as housing security deposits, public transportation passes, mental health treatment and clothing.

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*OSI-Baltimore was started in 1998 by philanthropist George Soros as a laboratory to better understand and solve the most intractable problems facing urban America. OSI-Baltimore is a private operating foundation that focuses its work exclusively on the root causes of three intertwined problems – drug addiction, an over-reliance on incarceration and the obstacles that keep youth from succeeding inside and outside of the classroom. OSI-Baltimore also sponsors the Baltimore Community Fellows, now over 100 members strong, who work to create opportunity and bring justice to people in the city's most underserved neighborhoods.*