



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE

Baltimore City Council President

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Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.

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CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT KICKS OFF EXPERIENCE CORPS FOR 2009-10 SCHOOL YEAR

BALTIMORE—Today at City Hall, Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake saluted principals and volunteers from twenty schools for this year's Experience Corps program. Joined by Experience Corps CEO Lester Strong, Baltimore City School System Commissioner Jerrelle Francois, and representatives from Greater Homewood Community Corporation and Johns Hopkins University, partners in the program, Rawlings-Blake presented each participating school a Ceremonial City Council Resolution acknowledging their contributions to improving schools.

"Our older adults in Baltimore City are one of our most treasured resources," Rawlings-Blake said. "The more than 300 volunteers Experience Corps places in our highest needs elementary schools make a real and measured difference in students' ability to learn; in the positive climate of the schools, and in their own personal health and well-being. This is a triple win."

Now in its tenth year, the Baltimore Experience Corps has teams of older adult volunteers in twenty schools throughout the City. Jointly operated by Greater Homewood Community Corporation (GHCC) and Johns Hopkins Center on Aging and Health (COAH), the program has placed over 300 older adults in K-3 classrooms to work with teachers to enhance the classroom learning experience. EC's annual budget of \$1.6 million includes Americorps grants, which pay small stipends to volunteers. Additional major funding partners are the Weinberg Foundation, other local foundations, the City of Baltimore, and participating schools.

GHCC operates the program, and COAH is doing a multi-year NIH research project to study Experience Corps's impact on the health of the volunteers and on the students and their schools. Attending today's event are Karen Stokes, Executive Director of GHCC, who helped the program grow beyond its initial six neighborhood schools into a citywide effort, and George Rebok of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Linda Fried, now Dean of the Mailman School of Public Health-Columbia University, co-Principal Investigators for the NIH study.

Lester Strong, the National President of Experience Corps, also joined the Council President. Baltimore is one of 22 areas around the country operating programs. Baltimore County also operates its own Experience Corps program in southeastern Baltimore County. According to Strong, "Baltimore City's program is a gold standard for us. Not only do they run a high performing model, we anticipate that the research they are doing will help guide and drive future older adult volunteerism programs for many years."

Experience Corps Baltimore City is still recruiting older adults for this year's program. Persons interested in volunteering can call 443-728-9400.

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