

**Open Society Institute – Baltimore
Media Coverage of George Soros Visit**

I. Baltimore Sun (page 3-6)

Soros challenges community to extend institute's work in city

By Lynn Anderson

April 27, 2005

II. National Public Radio, Morning Edition (page 7-11)

George Soros

By Steve Inskeep

May 9, 2005

III. Baltimore Business Journal (page 12)

Who wants to help a billionaire?

By Alan Zibel

May 9, 2005

IV. The Daily Record (page 13-14)

Billionaire philanthropist George Soros wants to invest more in Baltimore

By Joe Bacchus

May 10, 2005

V. WBAL-TV (page 15-16)

Philanthropist Challenges Baltimore to Raise \$20 Million

Billionaire Activist Offers \$10 Million Match

May 12, 2005

VI. Maryland Public Television, Business Connection (page 17)

Interview with Jeff Salkin

May 12, 2005

VII. Associated Press (page 18-19)

Philanthropist offers city \$10 million if city raises \$20 million

May 12, 2005

VIII. Baltimore Sun (page 20)

Soros asks \$20 million match from residents

By Lynn Anderson

May 12, 2005

- IX. The Chronicle of Philanthropy (page 21-24)
Urban Experiment's Next Phase
George Soros is challenging donors to pick up tab for project
By Michael Anft and Ian Wilhelm
May 12, 2005
- X. Baltimore Sun (page 25-27)
At least \$1.4 million raised for Open Society Institute
Soros will give \$10 million if locals meet funding goal
By Lynn Anderson
May 13, 2005
- XI. Baltimore Sun (page 28-31)
A billionaire's vision
Soros spreads the wealth to tackle global, local ills
May 15, 2005
- XII. Baltimore Sun (page 32-34)
Pitching a low-key, effective project
Philanthropy: The Open Society Institute's Diana Morris has until Dec. 31 to raise \$20 million.
By Lynn Anderson
May 15, 2005
- XIII. The Washington Post (page 35)
Soros Challenges Baltimore to Keep Institute Going
By John Wagner and Matthew Mosk
May 15, 2005
- XIV. Baltimore Sun (page 36-37)
The Soros challenge
May 16, 2005



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<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/baltimore.md.soros27apr27,1,982026.story?coll=bal-home-headlines>

Soros challenges community to extend institute's work in city

He'll put up \$10 million if \$20 million is raised to continue urban assistance

By Lynn Anderson
Sun Staff

April 27, 2005

Billionaire financier George Soros - who has spent \$50 million to combat urban ills such as drug addiction and juvenile delinquency in Baltimore over the past seven years - is challenging the community to come up with \$20 million to continue the work of his Open Society Institute in the city.

If the community raises the money, Soros said yesterday, he will ante up \$10 million for a total of \$30 million that would allow the institute to carry on its work in the city for at least another five years. Soros, 74, said he will visit Baltimore next month to officially announce the challenge. He said he is pleased with the work the city's OSI office has done so far and wants it to continue.

"I think it has been a terrific success," Soros said in a telephone interview yesterday. "It is exactly because there have been a number of successful programs that it seemed like such a shame to end it."

Soros, the institute's founder, has given away more than \$5 billion to foster Open Society Institutes in countries across the globe, including in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Baltimore office is unique because it is the only one in the network that focuses on a single city.

When Soros opened the Baltimore office in 1998, he never intended for it to operate for more than five years. He initially committed \$25 million to the effort but ended up spending double that amount. Over the years, the institute has provided the behind-the-scenes impetus for dozens of initiatives, including a high school debate league as well as a community fellowships program, which has spawned dozens of arts and education projects.

"They have done great work in Baltimore," said Mayor Martin O'Malley, who credited the debate league with nurturing young leaders who helped to calm schools hit by arson last fall. "It is hard to quantify the value of that, but those students were extremely important."

O'Malley credited the institute for stepping forward with funds "at a time when federal and state government investments in our people have been in retreat. They have helped us move forward on a number of important fronts. ... If they look at the last five years of progress in Baltimore, I would think they would have to be very proud."

Through funding to local advocates, the institute has helped to increase the number of people receiving drug addiction treatment from 16,000 in 1999 to 24,000 in 2004. The state responded by increasing its funding for drug treatment from \$22 million in 1999 to \$49 million this year. The institute's work also helped to cut the rate of fatal drug overdoses.

'Willing to take chance'

"They have been particularly willing to fund innovative things," said the city's health commissioner, Dr. Peter L. Beilenson, who has worked closely with the Open Society Institute on a number of drug addiction and health care issues. "They are one of the first foundations you think of when you have an idea that may be out there. They are willing to take a chance."

The institute funded a two-year program to train 560 heroin addicts to use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and to inject Narcan, an antidote that can revive someone who is near death from an overdose. Beilenson called the program a success - participants have reported 52 successful interventions so far - and said that many other foundations might have balked at the project.

"At first blush, training addicts to treat other addicts may seem a bit odd, but they were very willing to fund it," he said.

The institute's risk-taking attitude can be traced back to Soros, a currency speculator and financier who once made \$1 billion in a single day betting that the British pound was overvalued. He also made a fortune in risky investments called hedge funds. Forbes has estimated his personal wealth at \$7 billion.

After he launched the Baltimore office, Soros handed off operations to the board of directors and a small staff. The board, which is made up of community activists and leaders, meets once a month and has full authority to award grants.

'Focused on advocacy'

"We have had a different approach to philanthropy," said Clinton Bamberger, a retired University of Maryland law professor who has served on the board since 1998. "We are

focused on advocacy and enlisting the public. I think that has made a difference. I think there is a general improvement in a lot of things in Baltimore."

Bamberger credited Soros, whom he has met several times, with having the wisdom to create such an organization.

"He has put a lot of money into Baltimore because he cares about cities and societies in which everyone has the ability to participate," Bamberger said. "He always seems very interested in the people we are talking to and what they are doing. He just seems to be a decent man. We could use more of them."

Not everyone is a Soros fan. Political conservatives call him a hypocrite for spending millions of dollars lobbying for campaign finance reform and then using tax-exempt special interest groups to funnel more than \$12 million in soft money mostly to Democrats during the 2004 election. He also paid for newspaper ads that blasted President Bush for using fear to win support for his war policies. In his most recent book, *The Bubble of American Supremacy: The Cost of Bush's War in Iraq*, he urged people not to re-elect the president.

Soros, who retired recently as head of Soros Fund Management LLC, started his philanthropic work in 1979, when he began providing funds so black students could attend the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Today, the OSI network includes offices in more than 50 countries, all of them tasked with "building and maintaining the infrastructure and institutions of an open society."

Diana Morris, director of the Open Society Institute in Baltimore, said the office has been successful in part because the staff and board of directors knew they had limited time and resources. She said a focus on five key areas - addiction treatment, criminal justice, work force development, education and youth development, and access to justice - has also helped.

"We have had wonderful results," Morris said. "We have a track record now that is seven years long and we have learned a lot along the way. At this juncture we have an option, we could write up what we have learned and end, or continue with initiatives that are the most promising for the future of Baltimore."

If Baltimore can raise the \$20 million needed to meet Soros' challenge, Morris said, the city's office would work to expand drug addiction treatment in the city, create more education opportunities for youth to keep them out of juvenile detention centers, and aid adults who have been incarcerated.

"We've got to help those who have spent time in prison to find housing and drug addiction treatment," she said. "If they get this kind of help, the rate of recidivism will be cut."

Morris said the office is already working with the state to expedite the parole process. Some day soon, drug treatment could be offered in lieu of incarceration, she said.

Soros said he would hate to see the momentum of the past seven years broken. He said he believes that Baltimore will rebound.

"I think the city has made a lot of progress," he said. "It is encouraging how much can be accomplished. The idea is that if this can be kept alive, then perhaps other community foundations in other cities could look at Baltimore as a model."

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SHOW: Morning Edition 11:00 AM EST NPR

May 9, 2005 Monday

LENGTH: 1401 words

HEADLINE: George **Soros**

ANCHORS: STEVE INSKEEP

BODY:

STEVE INSKEEP, host:

This is MORNING EDITION from NPR News. I'm Steve Inskeep.

The billionaire George **Soros** is considering his next moves after spending a piece of his fortune on last year's presidential campaign.

Mr. GEORGE **SOROS** (Philanthropist): I mean, I saw it very clearly that I ought to oppose President Bush. It was clear to me that that's the best thing I could do. Now that he's been re-elected, exactly how to get America back to its founding values, it's not so clear.

INSKEEP: George **Soros** sat down for a talk in New York City at the investment firm that made him rich. A single word in silver letters hangs behind the reception desk, the founder's last name. He's a Hungarian native who lived through the Holocaust and went on to become a currency speculator. Now he's spending his fortune on philanthropy, dispensing \$400 million last year alone. What requires some explanation is that **Soros** shares a goal with the president he tried so hard to defeat, the spread of democracy.

(Soundbite of music)

Unidentified Singer: (Singing in foreign language)

INSKEEP: When demonstrators forced a change of government in Ukraine, George **Soros** was there or rather his money was. Branches of Soros' Open Society Institute have worked with opposition groups in authoritarian countries. His many other causes include

educational programs from Central Asia to central Baltimore.

Unidentified Man: Because it's your case, that's your question to answer.

INSKEEP: Just last week, inner-city students in a **Soros**-funded debate program discussed assistance to refugees.

Unidentified Student #1: If where they used to live is still blown up and bombed down, we basically want to throw them back in front of a bullet?

Unidentified Students #2: That's what we're arguing, that the US has made a commitment. Why should they be able to slack and, you know, let all these lives be lost?

INSKEEP: The sponsor of that discussion once told a biographer that he wanted to be the conscience of the world.

Mr. **SOROS**: Yes, I did say that and actually I stand by it. I think the world very much needs a conscience, not me personally, but I want my foundation network to be the conscience of the world, to support civil society that is critical of the state and of the government.

Mr. MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN (Biographer): It wasn't vanity speaking entirely.

INSKEEP: That's the biographer, Michael T. Kaufman.

Mr. KAUFMAN: He's not a blowhard, but there is vanity in the man. There's no question he wants to signify. He let me know once that he would gladly give up his entire fortune if he could write a work of philosophy that would exist for a thousand years. I mean, his ambitions are not small.

INSKEEP: Kaufman says **Soros** has realized some of his ambitions, though he failed last year in his goal of defeating President Bush. He spent \$27 million on a variety of efforts including commercials. In the conference room where we met, a windowsill held 11 books, a **Soros** critique of the Bush administration as translated into 11 languages. He's been described as the only private citizen with his own foreign policy.

Mr. **SOROS**: I'm, you know, thrilled to see the president embrace the spreading of democracy. I'm worried about it because I think he's going about it the wrong way. It has to be the citizens who are standing up for certain principles, and then I feel good about helping them. That's a somewhat different approach than, for instance, imposing democracy by military means.

INSKEEP: Although at the same time, it does seem that there are occasions in which your policy, if we can call it that, and the US government's policy seem to be the same. And, in fact, you seem to be working together. It's my understanding that in...

Mr. **SOROS**: Yeah.

INSKEEP: ...Uzbekistan, the Open Society Institute was actually receiving grants from the US State Department and spending millions of dollars of US government money on various programs.

Mr. **SOROS**: That is correct.

INSKEEP: This may surprise a lot of people who are aware of your public opposition to the Bush administration.

Mr. **SOROS**: Yes, but after all, the Open Society Foundation has the same objectives as the State Department, except we concentrate more on promoting democracy than the State Department. On the other hand, there's also quite a vocal political group that is out to persecute me personally and indirectly the foundations.

INSKEEP: George **Soros** is not entirely comfortable in the spotlight he turned on himself. Because of his spending in last year's election, he faces regular criticism on conservative television. A conservative newspaper recently gave him a new label based on a court case.

Mr. **SOROS**: They're now beginning to call me convicted insider trader George **Soros**.

INSKEEP: **Soros** calls that wording unfair since he is appealing that French court ruling from a case dating back to the 1980s. Still, a Republican congressman is happy to mention it.

Representative ERIC CANTOR (Republican): Mr. **Soros** was convicted in a French court for insider trading.

INSKEEP: Eric Cantor is a leading House Republican and he accuses **Soros** of underwriting a radical agenda.

Rep. CANTOR: Mr. **Soros** harbors ideas that are far outside the mainstream of America: drug legalization, assisted suicide, needle exchanges, voting rights of felons. The list just goes on.

INSKEEP: That list has a measure of truth. **Soros** does, for example, support needle exchanges for drug users and the use of medical marijuana. He contends that other claims are oversimplified and add up to a distortion.

Mr. **SOROS**: Because I consider myself a mainstream American of Hungarian origin, but the way I'm depicted is some kind of an extremist that is a traitor to America and American values and so on which is when I'm actually here to preserve those values.

INSKEEP: **Soros** argues that since the September 11 attacks, the values he supports

abroad are being eroded at home. He says he wants to encourage the kind of political debate in which people actually learn from each other.

Mr. **SOROS:** President Bush simply rejects the idea that he may be wrong. Now he's profoundly religious and I think that religion is very much part of an open society, but that kind of religion, when you feel that you've been anointed by God, that I think is a danger.

INSKEEP: And yet you can make a case that while denying error publicly, this administration has repeatedly reversed course, changed tactics in places like Iraq, even if they're not willing to admit it publicly for political reasons.

Mr. **SOROS:** Absolutely. You're absolutely right, and there's been some very noticeable shifts and I welcome them. I don't condemn everything that President Bush does as wrong, but I know that I may be wrong and he won't acknowledge that.

INSKEEP: You feel that it's important to admit the possibility that you're wrong why? So you can learn from your mistakes?

Mr. **SOROS:** Absolutely.

INSKEEP: Was your involvement in the 2004 election a mistake?

Mr. **SOROS:** No. I think it was absolutely the right thing. I think I raised important issues and I will continue to raise those issues.

INSKEEP: The people who advocate campaign finance reform will argue that the evil, if you want to call it that, is that one person or one small group of people should not be able to contribute so much money that it distorts the system.

Mr. **SOROS:** I was torn on that issue.

INSKEEP: Why were you torn?

Mr. **SOROS:** Because discussions should be based on the merit of the discussion, not on the amount of money you put behind paid advertisements, but there was a tremendous disparity about the amount of money that President Bush had to the Democratic opposition. And by taking the stance that I did, it helped to balance the money.

INSKEEP: Can we assume that you will be involved in the next election or the election after that and trying to be more effective next time?

Mr. **SOROS:** Yes. But, you see, I would like to get away from party politics. I can't help being in a partisan position. I won't renounce it, but my ambition would be to be less partisan because one of the troubles that everything has been politicized, this us against them, and they are not right. It doesn't make us right.

INSKEEP: After spreading his millions through so many nations, George **Soros** says the fight that matters to him now is here. He argues that Americans have to restore civility to their own democracy if they want to set an example to the world.

This is MORNING EDITION from NPR News.

LOAD-DATE: May 9, 2005



Baltimore Business Journal

LATEST NEWS

Baltimore Business Journal - 1:54 PM EDT May 9, 2005

Who wants to help a billionaire?

[Alan Zibel](#)

Staff

George Soros, the billionaire philanthropist and investor who has donated \$50 million to charitable causes in Baltimore since 1998, is looking for some money.

Soros is challenging Baltimoreans -- individuals, foundations and companies -- to raise \$20 million to support the efforts of his Open Society Institute in Baltimore. If that money is raised, Soros will contribute an additional \$10 million.

The Hungarian-born Soros, 74, is scheduled to be in Baltimore Thursday to officially announce the challenge grant with Mayor Martin O'Malley, according to a statement by the institute.

The Open Society Institute's Baltimore organization has focused its philanthropic efforts on education and drug dependency.

Its programs include an urban debate league, which operates in 26 Baltimore high schools. The institute also sponsors 70 community fellows who aim to help poor city neighborhoods.

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The Daily Record (Baltimore, MD)

May 10, 2005 Tuesday

HEADLINE: Billionaire philanthropist George **Soros** wants to invest more in Baltimore

BYLINE: Joe Bacchus

BODY:

Billionaire philanthropist George **Soros**, who already has pumped \$50 million into Baltimore over the past seven years, wants to invest more.

On Thursday **Soros** will announce a \$10 million challenge grant for his Open Society Institute-Baltimore. In return for the donation to continue funding for the office, **Soros** will ask that the community donate an additional \$20 million.

Soros will make the announcement at 11:30 a.m. at City Hall.

The Open Society Institute is a think tank and foundation with interests ranging from human rights to social reform. There are seven institute offices throughout the United States and the rest of the world.

Soros has used the Open Society Institute to invest \$50 million in Baltimore since 1998. Money from OSI-Baltimore has gone toward, among other things:

- * An urban debate league;
- * More treatment for drug abusers and reducing fatal overdoses;
- * Boosting reading achievement in public schools;
- * A juvenile justice coalition that has publicized abuses at juvenile facilities and secured funding for community-based alternatives.

Among the seven institute offices, Baltimore's is the only one whose focus is a single

city, said Director Diana Morris.

The office opened in 1998 as a way to gain better insight into the particular needs of "urban centers." While it was meant to stay open for only five years, its effectiveness and the community's responsiveness led to an extension to eight total years, she said. The eighth year ends this December.

"A lot of people know " what some of the ills are that affect Baltimore," she said. "We offer people the chance to get to the root causes of those problems."

Morris said she hopes the \$30 million will help OSI-Baltimore continue its work in four main areas: tackling drug addiction with treatment programs; helping ex-convicts integrate back into the work force and stopping recidivism; improving the public education system to help keep kids out of the juvenile justice system; and awarding fellowships to "social entrepreneurs" who have visions on how to improve the city.

Thomas Wilcox, president of the Baltimore Community Foundation, said his group is in constant contact with OSI-Baltimore and will do what it can to help it reach its goal. The Baltimore Community Foundation is a collection of more than 400 charitable organizations that do work in the Baltimore region.

Wilcox added that grants from philanthropists such as **Soros** are especially vital to community growth because they often come with stated objectives that can drive up interest.

"We're very lucky to be graced not only by [**Soros**'] dollars, but by his vision," Wilcox said.

LOAD-DATE: May 10, 2005



WBAL-TV

Philanthropist Challenges Baltimore To Raise \$20 Million Billionaire
Activist Offers \$10 Million Match

POSTED: 5:57 pm EDT May 12, 2005
UPDATED: 7:38 pm EDT May 12, 2005

BALTIMORE -- Billionaire activist George Soros has spent \$50 million since 1998 on his Open Society Institute in Baltimore to address the city's ills. Now, he wants local donors to help keep the institute going.

WBAL-TV 11 News reporter Lowell Melser said when Soros opened the institute's Baltimore branch in 1998, his goal was simple: "To demonstrate that it is possible to turn around a city that is sinking and make it rise," Soros said.

Soros visited the city Thursday to pledge up to \$10 million to the institute, a private operating and grant-making foundation, but only if the community can raise another \$20 million.

With so much accomplished and much more to achieve, the institute finds itself at a crossroads, Melser said. The organization's funding runs out this year and needs at least \$30 million more to ensure five more years of service.

Melser reported the money would be used to continue improving education, providing drug treatment, revitalizing communities and increasing public safety.

Soros believes that there are people of wealth in the city, and with connections to the city, who want to see it thrive.

"To be successful, we need people to buy into the funding as well," he said.

Melser reported some may recognize Soros for his anti-Bush attitude, or for allegations of insider trading in France, but despite his views and background, he has been a welcome visitor to Baltimore.

"Over the past seven years, the Open Society Institute has awarded \$50 million in grants to help some of the most vulnerable of our neighbors to realize their full potential," Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley said.

Fundraising For The Institute

The institute has worked with local officials on problems of drug abuse and improving education for city students.

The first group of donors stepped forward during a news conference at City Hall on Thursday.

* The Lockhart Vaughan Foundation will give \$250,000 over five years for drug addiction programs.

* The Annie E. Casey Foundation is awarding up to \$1 million to match the institute's spending on four initiatives in the East Baltimore development zone.

* An anonymous donor has pledged \$160,000 over two years.

Susan Cohen, of the Cohen Opportunity Fund, has pledged a significant gift over five years to a community fellowship program.

Previous Efforts Raise Millions

Soros gave Baltimore a similar challenge in 1998. He offered \$6.25 million for an after-school program if the city raised \$12 million. That challenge was part of an initial \$25 million to run the institute for five years, and that has since turned into a total \$50 million.

Fueled by \$5 billion from Soros, the institute has expanded to 60 countries, but the Baltimore office is the only one focused on one city and its focus is more local. It has participated in efforts from establishing an urban debate league in city high schools to increasing the number of people in drug treatment.

To see a video of the broadcast go to:

<http://www.thewbalchannel.com/video/4483926/detail.html>



Program:

Thursday, May 12 2005



Jeff Salkin sits down with billionaire philanthropist George Soros to discuss his plan for a \$10 million grant to support his Open Society Institute's projects in Baltimore City. The grant comes with a challenge to residents to raise an additional \$20 million.

George Soros

Philanthropist, Founder and Chairman, Open Society Institute

RELATED LINK: [Open Society Institute](#)



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The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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May 12, 2005, Thursday, BC cycle

12:00 AM Eastern Time

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 426 words

HEADLINE: Philanthropist offers city \$10 million if city raises \$20 million

DATELINE: BALTIMORE

BODY:

Billionaire activist George **Soros** has spent \$50 million since 1998 on his Open Society Institute in Baltimore to address the city's ills. Now he wants local donors to help keep the institute going.

Soros visited Baltimore Thursday to pledge up to \$10 million to the institute, which fights drug addiction and funds educational programs in the city. But only if the community can raise another \$20 million. He believes that there are people of wealth in the city, and with connections to the city, that want to see it thrive.

"To be successful, we need people to buy into the funding as well," he said.

The institute has worked with local officials on problems of drug abuse and improving education for city students.

Soros is "someone who invested in Baltimore's comeback early," said Mayor Martin O'Malley. The continuing support will help the city keep that momentum.

The first group of donors stepped forward during a news conference at City Hall on Thursday. The Lockhart Vaughan Foundation will give \$250,000 over five years for drug

addiction programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is awarding up to \$1 million to match the institute's spending on four initiatives in the East Baltimore development zone and an anonymous donor has pledged \$160,000 over two years.

Susan Cohen of the Cohen Opportunity Fund has pledged a significant gift over five years to a community fellowship program.

"It's possible to turn around a city that is effectively sinking and make it rise," **Soros** said, that's why he established the institute. He thinks the money was well spent and the early results are showing success.

"The image will soon catch up with the improving reality," he said.

Soros gave Baltimore a similar challenge in 1998. He offered \$6.25 million for an after-school program if the city raised \$12 million. That challenge was part of an initial \$25 million to run the institute for five years, and that has since turned into a total \$50 million.

In 1993, **Soros** founded the Open Society Institute, a private operating and grant-making foundation, to support foundations he started in 1984 in Eastern Europe helping countries move from communism to democracy.

Fueled by \$5 billion from **Soros**, the institute has expanded to 60 countries, but the Baltimore office is the only one focused on one city and its focus is more local. It has participated in efforts from establishing an urban debate league in city high schools to increasing the number of people in drug treatment.

LOAD-DATE: May 13, 2005

Soros asks \$20 million match from residents

May 12, 2005

George Soros - a billionaire who has used his riches to fund social and political causes - came to Baltimore yesterday to drum up support for his Open Society Institute, which has worked to combat drug addiction and fund educational programs in the city since 1998.

Soros is to meet with Mayor Martin O'Malley at City Hall today to announce a \$10 million grant to support the institute's projects in the city for the next five years. He is also expected to challenge residents to come up with another \$20 million.

The retired hedge-fund manager, who has spent \$50 million to kick-start local projects such as a high school debate league and community fellows program, has said that if local people don't pitch in, he will see it as a sign that OSI-Baltimore was not a success.

Soros acknowledged that it could be difficult to come up with the money because it is such a large sum - "\$20 million is no chicken feed," he said - but also because the local office has achieved much of its success by partnering with local advocates and experts and financing their projects.

"The foundation is not terribly known because it did not seek to make a name," Soros said. "It is going to be difficult to convince donors in Baltimore that it is a cause worth supporting."

Soros has set a Dec. 31 deadline for the fund-raising venture. If local residents fail to come up with the \$20 million by then, the local office will close. Sources close to officials at OSI-Baltimore say that several donors have stepped forward but the bulk of the challenge remains unmet.

- Lynn Anderson

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THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NONPROFIT WORLD

Urban Experiment's Next Phase

George Soros is challenging donors to pick up tab for project

May 12, 2005

By Michael Anft and Ian Wilhelm

Baltimore--"Pure exhilaration." That was how Joseph T. Jones Jr. says he felt when George Soros offered \$10-million to continue an innovative experiment to help fight social ills in this city, which has one of the highest poverty and crime rates among this country's major urban areas.

But Mr. Jones -- a board member of the Baltimore affiliate of Mr. Soros's foundation, the Open Society Institute -- says his excitement ebbed when he realized that Mr. Soros's gift was contingent on the group raising twice that amount from other donors.

"My second thought was, That's a lot of money," he says.

Like Mr. Jones, nonprofit leaders here are divided on Open Society's future in this city after Mr. Soros announced that the \$10-million matching gift, if the terms are met, would most likely be his last.

Open Society-Baltimore has spent \$50-million since it began operating in 1998. Mr. Soros decided Baltimore would be a good place to test new approaches to solving urban problems. "There was a lively community of people with civic interests," he says.

During its seven-year experiment, Open Society has been credited with linking poor people with jobs in high-growth industries, increasing drug-treatment opportunities for addicts, and helping create programs for troubled youths and ex-convicts. It has tried approaches that are controversial, including an effort that trains heroin addicts to help revive victims of drug overdose through mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and other means.

Risky Strategy

While Baltimore officials, foundation executives, and nonprofit leaders laud Open Society's track record, some are skeptical that donors will support an organization that was founded by another wealthy donor who is now moving on to new issues.

What's more, they fear that the key ingredient that has made Open Society Institute-Baltimore effective -- its courage to explore innovative, if unusual, practices to solve social ills -- will be jeopardized once more supporters bring their donations, and their opinions, to the table.

"How do you make the leap from a leadership position to one where you're asking, You like what we do? Please support us?" asks Betsy F. Ringel, executive director of the Blaustein Philanthropic Group, in Baltimore. "It will be a real challenge."

Mr. Soros's insistence on matching funds has also raised a broader question for philanthropy: Is this a good way for wealthy donors to end major commitments to a city?

Many foundation observers praise Mr. Soros for offering the additional dollars, instead of just walking away.

But other experts in grant making criticize his decision, saying it shifts local charitable funds toward his priorities, not the city's. Others contend that cash-strapped Baltimore, the site of another major philanthropic fund-raising effort that aims to garner \$30-million, may not have enough donors who can provide the money needed to keep Open Society going. The Reason to Believe campaign, a fund-raising effort spearheaded by the Baltimore Community Foundation, is designed to improve living conditions for the city's poorest families.

Mr. Soros defends his request for Baltimore to provide \$20-million before he provides any more money, describing it as a "market test" for Open Society's programs. "We are biased in favor of what we are doing," he says. "It's much more interesting to see whether other people buy into it."

Mr. Soros says it will be difficult to persuade Baltimore donors to support his project. "Honestly, I don't know. It's not easy," he says. "People like to originate things, they like to have sense of ownership. It's much harder to get people to buy in."

Yet by filling its board of directors with local residents, the group has tried to be a Baltimore program, not a George Soros program, he says. "It didn't seek to build its own identity," he said. "It was more concerned with doing the right things for Baltimore. That may help."

Diana Morris, director of Open Society Institute-Baltimore, says her organization has already garnered \$1.7-million in donations from foundations and individuals. She plans to raise \$4-million per year for each of the next five years by appealing to small local foundations, large national grant makers, and wealthy people.

"There are a lot of small family foundations that have small staffs that could take advantage of our manpower," Ms. Morris says, adding that such a marriage could be made when the missions and program interests of Open Society dovetailed with those of a smaller grant maker. "We're hoping that national foundations will see that Baltimore is a good laboratory, as we have."

Looking for Benefactors

Wealthy people with a willingness to give have traditionally been hard to find in Baltimore, but Ms. Morris says she is hopeful she can persuade more of them to donate to Open Society's causes. She is tapping individuals who regularly give to the arts or education, as well as people who have moved from Baltimore but who remain concerned about the city.

Although Open Society's approach in Baltimore is seen as unusual, the organization has succeeded when it has sought money from local grant makers, Ms. Morris says.

It provided \$5-million to start the Baltimore Fund, a program designed to aid fledgling high-growth industries and find ways to link poor people with jobs in those industries, in July 2002. The Baltimore office of Open Society was able to raise \$10-million from banks, 14 foundations, and several individuals to support that effort.

"It certainly gave me some practice at raising money," says Ms. Morris. "It showed me that Open Society could extend its role in the Baltimore community. We could have called it 'the OSI Fund,' but we wanted everyone to feel that it was theirs. We've shown we can organize that kind of work."

One national foundation has already agreed to support Open Society Institute-Baltimore's extension plan (as have two individuals who do not want their names released to the public). The Annie E. Casey Foundation, in Baltimore, will spend at least \$2-million to help low-wage workers and unemployed people get higher-paying jobs over the next five years, says Ralph R. Smith, senior vice president at Casey.

But some Baltimore foundation leaders say they are unlikely to support Mr. Soros's efforts until several important questions are answered. "How much flexibility is there? How willing are Soros and his people to have other perspectives at the table?" asks Timothy D. Armbruster, president of the Morris Goldseker Foundation, of Baltimore.

Although Goldseker made a \$500,000 donation to the Baltimore Fund, Mr. Armbruster says the foundation has not yet decided whether it will help match Mr. Soros's contribution.

Robert C. Embry Jr., president of the Abell Foundation, says the grant maker's board has a policy of not giving money to groups that then distribute it to other charities, such as United Ways.

"We're not interested in giving people money so they can give other people money -- that's our job," says Mr. Embry.

He echoed other foundation leaders in Baltimore who said they are swamped with grant requests but don't have the money to support all of the worthy proposals that cross their desks.

"We get requests for 9 to 10 times the amount of money we give out each year," says Shale D. Stiller, president of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, which awards \$100-million to charities each year. Nevertheless, Weinberg will consider making some contributions to Open Society's program to help prisoners adjust after they are released, as well as to its jobs programs, areas in which Weinberg already has experience, Mr. Stiller says.

Cuts Feared

If other donors do not step forward to support the Open Society Institute, some grantees say the loss of donations will hurt their programs.

You Are Never Alone, or Yana, a charity that provides social services to prostitutes in Baltimore, laid off three employees last year because Open Society stopped supporting the group. "It has been an incredible resource for us," says Sid Ford, Yana's executive director and founder. "We hope it will be around."

But more important than the money, Ms. Ford says, is the Open Society's leadership and its enthusiasm for helping prostitutes, drug addicts, former convicts, and other people that many donors ignore. "It goes out on a limb and funds programs that other foundations just don't get," she says.

Open Society's ability to gather experts, grant makers, nonprofit leaders, and others together to come up with sometimes controversial solutions has also been praised -- and would be missed if the foundation were to stop operating in Baltimore, says Hathaway C. Ferebee, executive director of the Safe and Sound Campaign, an organization that devises strategies for helping poor children.

"They put themselves on the line regarding outcomes," says Ms. Ferebee, whose group received \$6-million in Open Society grants five years ago to create a citywide after-school program. "They're very accountable and base everything they do on sound research and in engaging as many aspects of the community as they can. They're rare in the foundation world."

For William A. Schambra, director of the Hudson Institute's Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, in Washington, the degree to which the board and Mr. Soros are willing to yield control to local contributors is crucial to whether his offer to match money raised in Baltimore is a wise approach.

Mr. Soros's matching requirement "skews local funding toward his own priorities, at the precise moment he no longer has to live with the consequences," says Mr. Schambra. "If a funder thinks he has a good idea, then he should fund it -- period."

Other foundation observers take a different view.

"He's telling donors: If you like my philanthropic track record, let me manage your charitable efforts to improve society," says Adam Meyerson, president of the Philanthropy Roundtable, an association of grant makers in Washington.

He added: "The market will tell us if Soros inspires as much confidence among philanthropic investors as he does among financial ones."

At least \$1.4 million raised for Open Society Institute

Soros will give \$10 million if locals meet funding goal

By Lynn Anderson
Sun Staff

May 13, 2005

Even before he arrived at City Hall yesterday to make official his \$20 million challenge to Baltimore, billionaire George Soros was a tad closer to raising the funds needed to keep the local office of his Open Society Institute going. At least \$1.4 million has been raised - most of it from the Annie E. Casey Foundation - since the campaign was announced last month.

Soros, who opened OSI-Baltimore in 1998 with the goal of studying urban ills and solving them, has promised to pledge \$10 million of his own money if locals can meet his challenge to raise \$20 million. He has said that he doesn't want to see the office close but believes that locals must contribute. Soros' OSI network extends worldwide and mainly focuses on nurturing democratic governments. Baltimore's office is unique because it deals with urban problems.

"The idea was very simply to demonstrate that it is possible to turn around a city that was sinking and make it rise," Soros said at a news conference with Mayor Martin O'Malley that included several people who received grants from OSI and wanted to thank Soros. "I think that after seven years we are beginning to see some results. ... I think the city is generally rising."

OSI has been promoting programs to improve education, drug treatment and job creation in the city for about seven years, but its initial funding - \$50 million from Soros - is set to run out in December. Soros has not set a deadline for raising the funds, but at least some of the funds must be raised by the end of the year to keep the office open, said Diana Morris, executive director of OSI-Baltimore.

"Our approach is that we can serve as a catalyst, but we must have public investment," Morris said. "I'm very aware that \$20 million is a lot of money to raise, but I'm optimistic."

Soros arrived in Baltimore on Wednesday, and much of his visit has been spent talking with people who have the resources to make a major contribution. If OSI-Baltimore gets the money it needs to stay open, it will focus on three areas: helping youth succeed and stay out of prison, helping adults who have been incarcerated rejoin their families and find careers, and tackling drug addiction. The group will also continue to fund community fellowships.

Soros - who in the last election funneled \$27.5 million in soft money to liberal candidates - acknowledges that his political activities might hurt OSI-Baltimore's fund-raising abilities. Conservative critics have called Soros a "billionaire socialist" and the "billionaire sugar daddy" for leftist causes. One of his harshest critics, the National Rifle Association, accuses Soros of pushing a "global civil disarmament" agenda.

Soros said he hoped Maryland residents would focus on local social issues, not national politics, when considering a donation.

"Let's face it - there has been a deliberate campaign to sort of demonize me," Soros said in an interview with The Sun's editorial board Wednesday. "It's a hardship that I have to put up with."

OSI-Baltimore officials have said it could be difficult to raise funds because so much of the office's work has been done behind the scenes. The office's small staff provides support, including expertise and networking opportunities, to groups or individuals who then go out and implement plans or help people in need.

A quick and partial rundown of OSI accomplishments in the city includes doubling the number of drug-dependent people receiving treatment, cutting fatal overdoses to their lowest level in five years, and securing \$25 million to pay for after-school programs used by 14,000 students. The office has also worked with public school officials to create smaller high school campuses.

In introducing Soros, O'Malley thanked him for being an "early investor" in Baltimore and credited OSI with "getting more out of every dollar."

"Their work is really all of our work, and that is to keep Baltimore's comeback going," O'Malley said. "Our goal is to keep this going for another five years. ... I hope we can thank Mr. Soros by continuing this work."

Some residents have been quick to act.

Suzanne Cohen of the Cohen Opportunity Fund has promised "a significant gift" to OSI-Baltimore over the next five years. Other early contributors include the Casey Foundation, with \$1 million over five years; the Lockhart Vaughan Foundation, with \$250,000 over five years; and an anonymous donor, who has pledged \$160,000 over the next two years.

Cohen, who attended the event and greeted Soros, said she believes that OSI has made progress.

"I think OSI is getting to the root of the problems that have troubled this city for so long," said Cohen, a Baltimore native. "I think OSI is making a true difference."

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A billionaire's vision

Soros spreads the wealth to tackle global, local ills

May 15, 2005

George Soros - the billionaire philanthropist who has spent hundreds of millions of dollars promoting democracy around the world - visited Baltimore last week to encourage people here to do some giving of their own.

Soros, a native of Hungary who came to America in 1956, is the founder of the Open Society Institute, a foundation promoting social and economic reform in more than 60 countries.

Seven years ago he picked Baltimore as the site of his only American city project. Since then, the OSI office here has spent \$50 million working to improve drug treatment, education and rehabilitation programs. The foundation is credited with nearly doubling the number of people receiving treatment for drug dependence, among other things.

Funding of his Baltimore effort is scheduled to run out at the end of this year. But the OSI office here will remain open if locals can raise \$20 million to match a \$10 million Soros challenge grant from Soros.

Soros, who made much of his \$7 billion fortune in arbitrage - the notoriously challenging business of betting on trends in currency and stock values - once made \$1 billion in one day.

He took time during his Baltimore visit to speak with Sun reporter Lynn Anderson about the challenge of poverty, here and abroad; the importance of democratic institutions; the world economy; and his recent attacks on President Bush.

Do you feel the Baltimore experiment has been worthwhile?

Yes ... I think, particularly in the area of drug treatment and dealing with juvenile delinquency and the re-entry problem, we have ... created a kind of model in Baltimore that ought to be better known in the rest of the country. I hope the foundation will organize a conference and invite people to come to Baltimore.

Why did you decide to help Baltimore?

The idea was to try the same kind of approach that we used in countries that were making a transition from closed [society] to open society to a city in the United States. That is, basically, [to] rely on the people in the city to decide what are the issues and how best to fix them. And then we looked around for the most suitable city, and we hit upon Baltimore.

In many ways, Baltimore remains a scrappy loser, a former industrial-era powerhouse that today suffers nearly a homicide a day and a stubbornly high number of resident drug addicts. What does this say about efforts to improve the city?

I see significant improvement in the areas where the foundation is engaged. Drug treatment has more than doubled. I think school performance has improved. The image usually comes after the reality. ... first the reality has to change, and then, hopefully, the image of Baltimore will also change.

The United Nations' Millennium Project aims to significantly reduce poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women by 2015. Do you believe that this is a realistic and achievable goal?

It would be, if the political will were there, but unfortunately ... dissension among the major contributors is so widespread that I don't expect a positive outcome.

Does this make you worry about our global future?

It makes me very worried because the international community is riven by dissent and they can't get their act together, very largely because of the unilateral approach of the United States. There are these problems of poverty and global warming that are really becoming very pressing, and we can't afford to lose many more years.

What do you think about current political and economic trends in Russia?

I've been very much engaged in Russia, and it is a disappointment that the country is reverting to an authoritarian state.

Do you think that this is due to the actions of Russian President Vladimir Putin?

No, it goes deeper. President Bush has embraced the spreading of democracy, and I fully applaud him and support him, but what he doesn't realize is the democratic regime change is not the end of the road but the beginning. ... Assistance needs to pour in to solidify the gains that were made. So, we had a collapse of the Soviet Union, and 15 years later we have a new wave of revolutions because the first time not enough was done to build the foundations of an open society. So I hope that this time we will do better. I certainly haven't given up on Russia, because the Putin regime is very weak indeed.

What do you think this country can do to bridge the gap between the world's poor and wealthy?

This country has a special responsibility because we are the most powerful nation on the Earth, we are setting the agenda for the world. The rest of the world doesn't have a vote in Congress, but nevertheless Washington sets the agenda; it's a little bit like the Boston Tea Party. ... We cannot solve [the problems of the rest of the world] by ourselves. ... We have to cooperate with others ... [If we don't cooperate] there will be increasing resentment against the United States and we are going to lose our preeminent position. ... We are losing it now.

Is our era of preeminence ending?

We are a very large part of the world economy, and we are the dominant force in the world, and we set the agenda for the world. I don't think that will change for a while.

How much money did you spend trying to defeat President Bush in the 2004 election? Was it \$24 million or \$27 million, or does it make that much of a difference to a multibillionaire?

I think it was \$27.5 million.

Do you still think the country would be better off if he wasn't president?

I feel as strongly as I felt it then. I think that the Bush administration has endangered democracy at home and undermined stability abroad.

Following the terrorist attack of 9/11, the president declared war on terror and ran for re-election as a war president who is above criticism. Because the critical process was suspended, the most egregious error in American foreign policy was committed - the invasion of Iraq. That was the basis of my opposition.

Since then, the other major criterion of an open society - checks and balances - is in danger of disappearing. ... Republicans have captured Congress, and the executive branch is now in the process of capturing the judiciary by introducing rabid ideologues onto the bench.

How would you stop this?

Fortunately we still are a democracy, and there is a ballot box, and I am convinced that we will reject this because it is an excess, it is a form of extremism, and the country, I believe, is not a country of extremists. We were temporarily unhinged by the terrorist attack, but now, gradually, as the Bush administration is embarking on new initiatives like the war on Social Security, and the Terri Schiavo case, and the abolition of the filibuster, and the increasing penetration of religious beliefs into politics, I can see that the public is increasingly turning against them.

You once told a biographer you wanted to be the "conscience of the world." What keeps you up at night these days?

There is plenty.

Do sleeping pills work?

It's tough. It's tough.

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Pitching a low-key, effective project

Philanthropy: The Open Society Institute's Diana Morris has until Dec. 31 to raise \$20 million.

By Lynn Anderson
Sun Staff

May 15, 2005

When Diana Morris was tapped in 1997 to head the Open Society Institute's Baltimore office, she thought she would disperse \$25 million to worthy causes here over five years and be done with it.

Almost eight years later, Morris has been challenged by her boss, billionaire and OSI founder George Soros, to raise \$20 million to keep the office open. Soros has already spent \$50 million - twice the amount he originally promised - in the city he refers to as a "laboratory" for reform.

Now, he's dangling an additional \$10 million to tempt locals to step up.

Morris - an attorney who worked for the Ford Foundation for 10 years in Africa and Europe - is in hot pursuit of the money.

She says she and Soros are going to target individual donors, people who see the wisdom of giving to an organization that can use their millions to leverage millions more. Foundations and local businesses are also being asked to help.

Soros, a retired international financier who is worth more than \$7 billion, suggested last week that Baltimore's financial institutions - T. Rowe Price and Legg Mason, for example - could step up.

"There is a financial industry in Baltimore that could be a Robin Hood," he said.

At a news conference Thursday at City Hall squeezed between meetings with potential donors, Morris said more than \$1.4 million in contributions had been pledged so far. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national children's advocacy organization based in Baltimore, has committed the bulk of that amount - \$1 million over five years.

That pledge is a small fraction of the commitment needed to keep OSI-Baltimore offices

open when Soros funding runs out Dec. 31, Morris said.

Part of the challenge Morris faces is telling potential donors just what has been accomplished with the \$50 million Soros has spent so far.

Until recently, her foundation has been deliberately low key - working to strengthen existing organizations and to persuade government agencies to work with them and provide funding.

As a result, there are lots of grateful do-gooders willing to sing OSI's praises but relatively few program successes that the foundation can claim as uniquely its own.

Still, Morris says she is confident Marylanders will come through, once they realize the foundation's commitment to dealing with the city's core problems of drugs, education and the re-entry of ex-cons into community life.

"OSI has a track record in Maryland of doing good work," said Morris, who lives in Lutherville. "We have a lot of partners now and the momentum is there to really address some of the root causes of problems in the city. If we don't act, these problems will continue to eat away at the fabric of this community."

Morris says she has a great story to tell. Since 1998, OSI has:

- Helped cut fatal drug overdoses to their lowest level in five years, in part by funding a controversial project to train heroin addicts to use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and to inject Narcan, an antidote that can revive someone who is near death from an overdose.
- Helped raise \$25 million from private and public sources to fund after-school programs for 14,000 city school students.
- Contributed \$5 million in seed money to create the Baltimore Fund, a community development and venture-capital fund that creates new jobs for low-income people through investment in local businesses. The fund, which started with \$15 million in 2002, is part of a larger, \$50 million fund run by the venture capital arm of The Reinvestment Fund headquartered in Philadelphia.
- Launched an urban debate league now in 26 city high schools. The league has been credited with training young people to be campus leaders and encouraging them to pursue a college education. The program, which has become a national model, is administered by the Baltimore Urban Debate League, a nonprofit group that partners with the public school system and [Towson University](#).
- Provided \$5 million in grants to support "Reason to Believe," an expansion of the city's "Believe" campaign. The group works to strengthen programs that improve the lives of children and fight crime and drug abuse.

- Provided 42 grants totaling \$7.2 million to support drug treatment programs and initiatives in the city. Grants to the Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, a nonprofit arm of city government that deals with drug abuse, were used to recruit and train staff, as well as perform strategic planning. The money also paid for reports documenting the benefits of drug treatment, which in turn, advocates say, helped to leverage more state funds.
- Worked with local organizations to leverage more than \$20.3 million in public and private funds to help ex-prisoners become productive citizens upon their release. Recently, the state has begun to reform its parole practices and improve prison drug treatment and transition services. OSI has also funded an experimental prison methadone program to help incarcerated addicts.
- Funded lobbying to increase federal and state funding for drug abuse treatment in Baltimore from \$23 million in 1997 to \$60 million in 2003.
- Helped boost the number of treatment slots from 4,100 in 1996 to 8,597 in 2005, according to city officials. Local clinics will serve an estimated 22,074 people this year.
- Awarded 70 community fellows grants worth \$48,750 each since 1998. Fellows have used the grants to start a community conferencing center to work with juvenile offenders, launch a program that teaches inner-city students about community law, and provide professional, affordable video and film production to social justice activists.

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The Washington Post

By John Wagner and Matthew Mosk

Post

Sunday, May 15, 2005; C04

Soros Challenges Baltimore to Keep Institute Going

New York financier and philanthropist *George Soros* pledged to donate \$10 million last week to programs aimed at improving Baltimore's social problems if community leaders there raise \$20 million.

Soros, a major Democratic campaign donor, said a \$30 million investment would allow him to continue the work of his Open Society Institute in Baltimore for five more years.

Soros has given \$50 million since 1998 to fund the institute, which focuses on drug treatment, educational programs and other urban initiatives. Soros said the pledge was part of a continuing effort to show "it is possible to turn around a city that is effectively sinking and make it rise."

Soros made the announcement at Baltimore City Hall, standing next to a man with a vested interest in seeing the city rise: Mayor *Martin O'Malley* (D).

The Soros challenge

May 16, 2005

GEORGE SOROS was never here to stay. That's not how he operates. The Hungarian-born billionaire invests money to attack tough societal problems with the expectation that a city or organization will eventually assume the work - and that's as it should be. Philanthropic dollars are best spent to empower individuals and communities.

When Mr. Soros' Open Society Institute chose Baltimore as its first regional city of interest in 1998, this newspaper viewed it as a "positive step." He pledged to spend at least \$25 million on some of Baltimore's most intractable problems - drug abuse, struggling schools, youth crime, unemployment. OSI has spent twice that amount and extended its stay once already. Now, Baltimore and its supporters must decide if OSI's work is worth their dollars. Mr. Soros isn't abandoning Baltimore - he's offered \$10 million over the next five years to continue the work, provided his millions are matched 2-to-1.

It's an offer Baltimore should accept, a challenge that should be met through a public-private partnership.

On the occasion of the [Greater Baltimore Committee's](#) 50th anniversary, corporate leaders should consider Mr. Soros' challenge. This is an opportunity to build on a record in areas of desperate need in the city and further refine efforts to combat drug addiction, improve student achievement and promote innovative civic leadership.

George Soros is not your conventional billionaire. He spends his money on developing and encouraging a healthy, open civil society, and he is critical of those he views as a danger to it. He spends money to get at the underlying causes of some tough urban problems and to change public policy. OSI takes risks - whether that means funding a methadone substitute, establishing a debating league for city kids or helping to create 150 jobs in the region through a new venture capital fund.

Some respected, influential civic players have already signed on to the challenge. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has offered \$1 million over five years to match OSI's investment in East Baltimore programs. The Cohen Opportunity Fund, the Lockhart Vaughn Foundation and an anonymous donor also contributed money toward specific OSI initiatives, bringing initial pledges to more than \$1.4 million. That's a respectable start, but the total sum is substantial in a city where many worthy organizations compete for philanthropic and corporate dollars and need often outstrips giving.

What would a new OSI give Baltimore? A sustained effort to increase drug treatment for the city's 60,000 addicts, a similar push to improve student achievement through after-school programs and help provide education and job skills to ex-offenders returning to local neighborhoods.

When OSI arrived in Baltimore, the city's nonprofit and philanthropic sector was in the midst of a renaissance. The institute's work should now be viewed as part of a collaborative effort to improve the quality of life in the city and its environs.

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