

# B'More Fund commends city's unsung heroes

G.M. Corrigan, The Examiner  
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## **BALTIMORE -**

Charity, as the Roman playwright Terence said, begins at home, and the B'More Fund, a local example of philanthropy's trend-setting "giving circle" concept, takes this admonition to heart.

The four-year-old nonprofit networking group of area "emerging leaders," whose \$500 per year dues underwrites the group's annual recognition of local community activists, awarded \$5,000 each at the downtown Creative Alliance on Thursday to a youth center developer, the founder of a second-chance, remedial school, and an urban improvisational theater impresario.

Kristina Berdan of the Stadium School Youth Dreamers, Tom Culotta of the Community School, and Mike Subelsky of the Baltimore Improv Group took the 2006 gifts, joining eleven previous winners.

"We're a local giving circle," said B'More Fund co-chair Kerry Whitacre Swarr of the 50-member group, founded in 2002 in association with the Baltimore Community Foundation. "It's a new trend in philanthropy. Our members pool the money together, and we give MacArthur Genius [Grant]-like awards to unsung heroes in Baltimore, who are making a difference in the city.

"We also try to inform our members [on the community and on philanthropy]," said Whitacre, who works as executive assistant to the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools. "So we have a whole educational series that's for members but is also open to the public, where we bring in different speakers."

That, along with the annual awards events, Whitacre said, provide the crucial networking opportunity for local leaders to interact with area "social entrepreneurs" for possible further collaboration.

Pam Spiliadis, one of 2005's B'More Fund award recipients, is the executive director of the George Soros-sponsored Baltimore Urban Debate League.

"The idea behind urban debate programs," Spiliadis said, "is that of an educational reform effort to give kids in Baltimore City schools the same opportunities that kids in public schools used to have available [and are still available] to kids in affluent suburban and private schools."

She said she used part of her \$5,000 award, which recipients can use as they see fit, to send some inner city students to an international youth conference in London.

## **More information**

» For more information on the B'More Fund, visit [www.bmorefund.org](http://www.bmorefund.org).

*Examiner*