Happy Lunar New Year! For many of our Asian communities here in Oakland, February 19 kicked off the Year of the Ram. For some, the new year offers an opportunity for new beginnings. For others, it’s a moment to reflect on what has passed. For most of us, the turn of the calendar represents both, and here at Oakland Unite, we choose to remember and hold close all that has happened in recent months and let these important events inform how we move forward. The fatal shootings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, and the decisions not to indict the officers responsible sparked an upsurge of national attention and dialogue on why black lives matter, and have always mattered. While the marginalization of poor communities of color has always been a central concern of Oakland Unite staff and program providers, these events remind us why the work we all do continues to be so necessary, and urge us to maintain a critical frame around how we understand our work. Despite the obvious tragedy surrounding such loss, these events also provide momentum and inspiration, as evidenced by the immense response and leadership from community activists, youth organizers, scholars, clergy, and elected officials across the country, and especially here in Oakland, who insist that we prioritize the lives of those most impacted by structural inequalities and institutionalized violence, and that we revisit and correct the policies that shape such conditions.

Last November, Oaklanders spoke loudly as an overwhelming 77% of voters approved Measure Z, the Violence Prevention Public Safety and Services Act. This convincing win illustrates the community’s commitment to support public tax initiatives dedicated to improving community safety through improved policing and comprehensive support services for those most at-risk of engaging in or being impacted by violence. So, 2015 is an important year for Oakland Unite, as Measure Y ends and Measure Z begins. We are excited for the transition, and look forward to continued refinement and improvement of violence prevention and intervention services, always with an eye towards doing the work better, smarter, and more effectively. We are already a month into an intense listening campaign, which includes focus groups with service providers and program participants, listening sessions with executive directors and key stakeholder groups, and key informant interviews with our systems partners. Meanwhile, we are also conducting a thorough review of outcome data, program evaluations, current best practices, and public
investments. In the end, we anticipate a successful strategic planning period that will produce a thoughtful, informed spending plan recommendation to the newly seated Measure Z Oversight Committee later this spring, with the goal of releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the summer.

As always, the work of Oakland Unite relies on the strength and commitment of our network of community-based service providers who do the heavy lifting day-in, and day-out. The important services and resources they provide, and the deep relationships they develop with the loved ones they serve, are at the heart of Oakland Unite. Thank you all for what you do.

In Appreciation,
Peter Kim
Oakland Unite Manager
City of Oakland, Human Services Department

Check-out the website to watch the Oakland Unite video!

Or click [HERE](#) to watch it.

The Oakland Unite Video features case management client Jabari. To learn more about Jabari's story watch the short video [OAKLAND UNITE VOICES: Jabari](#) by clicking [HERE](#).
Last weekend, Saturday, February 21st, Oakland Unite's Messengers4Change participated in the Aim 4 Peace All-Star Day at Ira Jenkins Recreation Center in East Oakland. Approximately 150 community members, mostly youth and young adults, had a fun-filled day. There was an exhibition basketball game between the Oakland Police Department and the Oakland Independent League. In addition, there was a jumper and gift give-away for children, and participants enjoyed a free barbeque lunch, while a DJ played music in the background.

Community events like these are part of Oakland Unite's commitment to engage residents in positive community building activities, especially in neighborhoods that are often hurt by violence.
Friday, February 27th, Oakland Unite's Messengers4Change is co-sponsoring a "Speak Out" for families that have lost loved ones to gun violence.

The event will take place at BASIC Ministries Church at 925 107th Avenue in East Oakland and starts at 7pm. Refreshments will be served. We invite community members to come out and share their stories at this powerful "Speak Out."

OAKLAND UNITE IN THE NEWS

Brenda Payton's ten-part news series "Steps Toward Peace" discusses current trends in violence and the efforts to reduce this violence in Oakland.

Check out Oakland Unite's Lead Case Manager, Emilio Mena and Violence Prevention Network Coordinator, Kevin Grant, in the article "Oakland Unite provides support services toward violence prevention" by Brenda Payton.

Payton also highlighted the success of two Oakland Unite participants Jabari and Terrell in her article, "Young men who are transforming their lives in Oakland."

Most recently Payton released two additional articles in the series, "Oakland's tradition of fighting youth violence," and "Addressing socioeconomic inequality issues essential to reducing crime in..."
In December Messeengers4Change Spread Holiday Cheer through the Mayor's Community Toy Drive

Oakland Unite's Messengers4Change partnered with the Mayor's office, 81st Avenue East Library, Oakland Parks and Recreation, and Public Works Agency to host the 4th Annual Toy Drive and Holiday Party in East Oakland. With the help of Messengers4Change volunteers, over 400 families were registered at the 81st Avenue East Community Library on December 6, 2014.

On December 20, 2014, at the Tassaforanga Recreation Center, Oakland Unite's Messengers4Change volunteers distributed over 1,000 toys generously donated through the Mayor's Toy Drive program. Families were able to take photos with Santa Claus as well as enjoy musical entertainment, refreshments and cookies. All the children left smiling and excited for the holidays.

**Special Thanks**

81st Avenue East Community Library- Thank you to the staff for opening their doors and allowing Messengers4Change to use their facility to register families for the toy drive.

Tassaforanga Recreation Center- Thank you to the staff for opening their doors and allowing Messengers4Change to host the 4th Annual Toy Drive and Holiday Party.

Public Works Agency- Thank you to the staff from the Department of Facilities and Environment for helping deliver over 1,000 toys to the Tassaforanga Recreation Center.

First 5 Alameda County- Thank you for adopting eight low-income families through the summer parks program.

Oakland Ceasefire Working Group- Thank you to the clergy members who adopted over 27 of the Ceasefire "Call-In" participants' families.
PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT: Nikki

Nikki*

Nikki* came to Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSSEY) when she was just 15 years old. Moving from one foster home to another, she was kidnapped by an exploiter and put out to work on the streets of Oakland. She was referred to MISSSEY as a probation youth, but was not interested in any of the services that MISSSEY had to offer, and was definitely not ready to leave "the life." MISSSEY's case managers worked hard to gain her trust. Countless contacts and consistent support from MISSSEY case managers, along with placement in a stable foster home, enabled Nikki to agree to start therapy and begin the long process of healing.

Three years later, Nikki is 18 and has a stable and close relationship with her foster mom.
and siblings. They truly have become family to each other. She graduated from high school, attended her prom, and is now enrolled in culinary school. She has been out of "the life" long enough for her to consider herself a survivor. Her goal is to get an MBA and open up her own restaurant where she wants to employ at-risk youth.

*The name has been changed to protect the survivor's identity.

Thank you to Youth Uprising, Youth Employment Partnership and Healthy Communities/Healthy Oakland

These agencies hosted Healing Centers for the community in the wake of the verdict out of Ferguson, Missouri. They created a safe place to hear reactions to the verdict, and facilitated productive dialogue around the issues it raised for the residents of Oakland.

*A photo from the Healing Center hosted by Healthy Communities in West Oakland

To learn more about each agency and their important work click on the name of the agency below:

Youth Uprising, Youth Employment Partnership, Healthy Communities/Healthy Oakland
Oakland Unite Staff Retreat

Oakland Unite staff came together for a strategic planning retreat in the middle of January. The retreat, led by Oakland Unite Manager Peter Kim and consultant Brightstar Olsen, focused on refining our program strategies, and solidifying a unified vision in anticipation of Measure Z implementation. Oakland Unite staff left the retreat feeling refreshed, motivated and inspired!

Meet Our Staff: Maereg "Mimo" Haile

Maereg "Mimo" Haile is a Program Analyst with Oakland Unite. In this role, Mimo is responsible for managing all administrative components of the grant making process such as; managing grant life-cycles, tracking program budgets, ensuring accurate payments and accounting of grants, and planning and implementing complex program-related meetings and training. She also works closely with the Family Violence Intervention strategy.

Prior to Oakland Unite, Mimo worked in San Francisco where she managed contracts with five private foundations.

Mimo has her Master of Public Health from the University of San Francisco and a Bachelor of Science from the University of California, Davis. Mimo has also successfully completed a 9-month training program to become a certified Health Advocacy Trainer with the California Black Women's Health Project (CBWHP).

Remember to:
"Like" us on Facebook and invite your friends to do the same.
Make sure to visit our website for news, events and program highlights.

www.oaklandunite.org

COMING UP...
Look for information about the roll-out of Measure Z.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

The Oakland Unite Team