

BRANCATI CENTER BULLETIN




Baltimore

DEAR NEIGHBORS,

February is filled with all matters related to the heart – we celebrate and cherish Black history, make time for our loved ones on Valentine’s Day, and focus in on our heart health this month. In this issue of the Brancati Bulletin, we discuss how adding intentional movement into our lifestyle can make a big positive impact on our heart health. We provide an update on current COVID-19 strains and remind everyone to get vaccinated. Our spotlight this month honors the late Reverend Melvin Tuggle, who was a remarkable community leader.

–The Brancati Center Team

COVID CORNER



Since the fall of 2023 we have seen two new types of COVID-19 virus strains (known as variants), XBB and JN.1. Between December 2023 and January 2024, the JN.1 variant was the most widely circulating virus type in the United States. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control demonstrates that the updated COVID-19 vaccines were effective against both XBB and JN.1 variants. Therefore, the best way to stay protected from COVID-19 infection is to get the updated vaccine.

Given the ongoing risk of serious illness, hospitalization and death related to COVID infection for older and immune compromised individuals, it is important to wear a mask if you are experiencing respiratory symptoms (ie cough, runny nose, fever) and avoid exposing others to infection. Similarly, washing your hands or using hand sanitizer frequently when in public can help protect you from getting infected with COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

EXERCISE FOR HEART HEALTH

February is American Heart Month! While there are a number of actions we can take to prevent heart disease, including eating nutritious foods, maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress and prioritizing sleep, perhaps one of the most impactful lifestyle habits is regular physical activity.

What are the benefits of physical activity for the heart?

Our heart is a muscle, so just like we exercise to strengthen our other muscles, the heart muscle gets stronger and more fit with regular physical activity. Exercise can help us specifically with the following:

- It can lower blood pressure and blood sugar.
- It can lower LDL-cholesterol, which is known as “bad” or heart disease promoting cholesterol, while raising our HDL-cholesterol, also known as the “good” or heart-protective cholesterol.
- It can help us maintain a healthy weight or achieve weight loss.
- It can lower risk for depression and cancer.

What type of physical activity helps with heart health?

Any type of movement is beneficial and better than no movement. However, studies show that as little as 10-20 minutes of intentional activity where we can get our heart rate up to a moderate intensity (where we are able to talk but not sing due to level of effort) helps lower heart disease risk factors (such as blood sugar). This form of exercise is known as “aerobic” exercise and is often termed “cardio exercise.” Examples include brisk walking, jogging, biking, and dancing.

Tip – finding a group or friend that can do the activity with you helps to keep you motivated and having more fun in the process.





Spotlight:

Black History Month



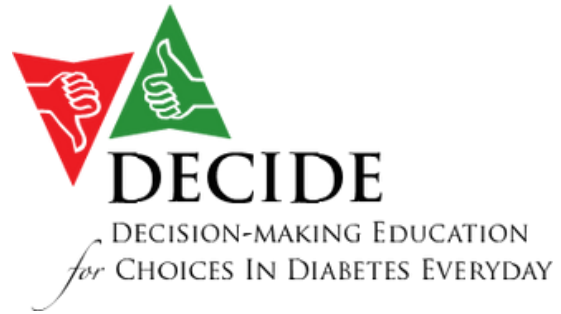
To honor black history, this month is an opportunity to celebrate those who paved the way in our community. Rev. Melvin B. Tuggle, II a lifelong East Baltimore resident, was the founder and chair of Heart, Body, and Soul, Inc., a partnership between CURE (Clergy United for Renewal in East Baltimore) and The Johns Hopkins Schools of Public Health, Medicine, Nursing, and The Johns Hopkins Hospital. This partnership brought many important health related programs to East Baltimore. Rev. Tuggle extended his efforts nationally to train others in neighborhood-centered public health programs in both cities and in rural America. His book on how to partner with churches to improve health through community engagement, *It Is Well With My Soul*, was published by the American Public Health Association and stands as a primer in best practices for successful community partnerships.

In 2016, the Reverend Melvin B Tuggle Community Excellence Award was established to recognize students and fellows of the Johns Hopkins University who work in the East Baltimore community to address access to health care, prevention programs and/or mitigation of social issues related to health. Nominees for the 2024 Tuggle Award are now being accepted. Please visit the Brancati Center website to learn more.

Please consider supporting the Tuggle Award by [making a donation](#).

Upcoming Community Events

March 29th from 12:00–2:00pm: Fleming Senior Center, Hemoglobin A1c screening, DPP education



Diabetes Self-Management Education Program Recruitment

Do you find it hard to keep up with your diabetes care? Our Diabetes Self-Management Education Program offers education and support to help improve your health.

What is it? Evidence-based program that has been proven to improve individuals' knowledge and skills to manage their diabetes.

Who can join? Adults with type 2 diabetes.

- hemoglobin A1c 7.0% or above

How much does it cost? The program is **free** for all eligible participants.

How do I learn more? Visit our website:
<https://www.brancaticenter.org/decide-power-to-control-diabetes.html>

We will be delivering the program remotely (via Zoom). If you are interested in joining the program, please call us at 410-215-1913.

The Sydney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Education Sessions

Join our Webinar:

REGISTER HERE

Colorectal Cancer: Risk Reduction and Early Detection

March 19, 2024 at 6:00 pm

