



# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Join us for the UMD Health Equity Drum Circle, April 26**

***Promote Health Equity, Set a World Record!***

College Park, Md. -- April is National Minority Health Month, and the theme for this year is **Prevention is Power: Taking Action for Health Equity**. To celebrate National Minority Health Month, the Maryland Center for Health Equity (M-CHE) in the University of Maryland's School of Public Health is inviting the community to join the **Health Equity Drum Circle: Drum Beats for Health and Wellness**, planned to take place at Maryland Day on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>.

Organized in collaboration with the university's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the goal of the Health Equity Drum Circle is to raise awareness about disparities in health in underserved communities and to call communities to action to promote health and wellness through activities such as the Mission of Mercy adult dental clinic scheduled for September 5-6 at the Comcast Center. "But we're not just going to make noise," said Dr. Stephen Thomas, Professor in the School of Public Health and Founding Director of the Maryland Center for Health Equity. "We will have expert drum circle facilitators to lead the drum circle and help us break the Guinness World Record for the largest hand drum ensemble! To do this, we need at least 1,400 people to participate in the group drumming attempt to break the record. You don't have to consider yourself a drummer to participate. All are welcome and thanks to corporate sponsor, Universal Percussions, a limited number of drums are available for the first 750 people who may need assistance!

Like the rhythm of the heartbeat, drumming is a universal language and is widely recognized for its healing power and ability to bring diverse communities and cultures together. Neuroscience research studies have shown a linkage between drumming and stress reduction, lower blood pressure, reductions in depression, and a healthy immune system. The Health Equity Drum Circle aims to unite participants in a fun physical activity, all while raising awareness about the need for community engagement to eliminate health disparities for all. Dr. Jessica Phillips-Silver, a researcher in music neuroscience at Georgetown University Medical Center, introduces the concept of "neuroentrainment, by which individuals synchronize in time and in affect through music." She believes that the Health Equity Drum Circle is an example of this phenomenon. See her video at <https://vimeo.com/92798846>

Please join us at Maryland Day!

What: Health Equity Drum Circle

When: Saturday, April 26, 2014. 12:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Where: Capital One Byrd Stadium at the University of Maryland

**12:15 – 1:40 p.m.** Drum circle jam sessions with Katy Gaughan

**1:40 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.** Performances featuring University of Maryland Drum Line, David Fakunle and Duane Hinton, and Tom Shelley (Universal Percussions)

**2:00 p.m.:** Participants for the Guinness World Record attempt must be in the stadium to rehearse the beat for the record

**2:40 p.m. -3:00 p.m.:** The Health Connection with Dr. Stephen Thomas

**3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.:** Guinness World Record Attempt and Performances featuring:

Bele Bele Rhythm Collective  
Baba Ras D  
Kristen Arant  
Katy Gaughan

Interested participants who have a hand drum should bring it with them. A limited number of loaner drums will be available for participants who do not have a drum.

Examples of qualified drums are:

- Djembe
- Doumbek (also sometimes spelled dumbek)
- Bongo
- Conga
- Ashiko
- Frame Drum
- Tambourine (with head)
- Cajon

Special appearances by:

**Dr. Wallace Loh** President, University of Maryland accompanied by Testudo;

**Dr. Stephen B. Thomas** director of the Maryland Center for Health Equity;

**Baba Ras D** founder of Harambé, a forum for children to learn through movement and song;

**Tom Shelley** renowned percussionist and President of Universal Percussions, main sponsor of the event;

**Katy Gaughan** hand percussionist and certified drum circle facilitator with Music Heals Us;

**Kristen Arant** a multi-talented artist and founder of DrumLady.com;

**Bele Bele Rhythm Collective** an intergenerational diverse group of women who perform to celebrate unity and diversity, and spread the joy and power of West African drumming. There will be raffles for a variety of percussion accessories.

Members of the media can arrange for interviews with:

**Stephen B. Thomas, PhD**, professor of Health Services Administration in the School of Public Health and Director of the Maryland Center for Health Equity (M-CHE) at the University of Maryland in College Park, is the visionary behind the Health Equity Drum Circle. Dr. Thomas' goal in advancing M-CHE's mission and raise awareness about health equity is to mobilize and engage diverse communities in M-CHE's efforts to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. Dr. Thomas conceived the Health Equity Drum Circle idea and is a recognized expert on use of innovative community engagement strategies to generate mass mobilization to advance health promotion and disease prevention. "The ultimate aim of this event is to raise awareness for a massive oral health initiative scheduled for September, The Mission of Mercy, which will provide free dental care to over 1,000 people in need. Additionally, over 750 Tambourines donated for the Drum Circle event will be donated to school and community music programs in the region. The drum circle will generate beats that will keep on giving long after the new world record is set," said Dr. Thomas.

**Jessica Phillips-Silver, PhD**, is a researcher in music neuroscience at Georgetown University Medical Center, an educator, a musician, and a mother. She is the founder of *Growing Brains: A brain-based approach to raising children and communities*. Jessica's original research examines how 'feeling the beat' in music is a multisensory experience, even in babies, and she documented the first case of the musical disorder 'beat deafness'.

**L. Richmond Sparks, PhD**, is director of music at the University of Maryland, College Park. In this capacity, he directs the UMD Marching Band and Pep Band programs. Dr. Sparks has helped organize all-American bands for national and international events, such as the 50th Presidential Inauguration; the unveiling of the renovated Statue of Liberty during Liberty Weekend; and the Centennial Celebration of the United Way.

**Baba Ras D**, whose name means "Father of Kings and Queens," has more than 10 years of experience in youth development, education and conflict resolution. He created Harambé, which means "all pull together" in Swahili, as a creative learning space for children to practice hope, possibility, and compassion through movement and song.

**Tom Shelley** is a world-class percussionist and President of Universal Percussions, distributor of more than 8,000 percussion products. Universal Percussions is the main sponsor of the Health Equity Drum Circle and has donated 750 tambourines with heads for the event. These tambourines will be distributed to music programs at local community groups and schools after the event.

### **About the Maryland Center for Health Equity**

The Maryland Center for Health Equity at the School of Public Health at the University of Maryland is committed to building and sustaining a community-engaged research enterprise to eliminate racial and

ethnic disparities to achieve health equity among residents in the state of Maryland, and increase the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities in health research through the [Building Trust Initiative](#).

A *health disparity* is “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It also defines *health equity* as the “attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and health care disparities.”