The Pittsburgh Study

This month, the “Take Charge of Your Health Today” page focuses on a major child and adolescent wellness initiative called the Pittsburgh Study. Liz Miller, committee cochair of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and Transcultural Science Institute, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, spoke about this topic. Good afternoon, Ms. Bush. I’m so happy to talk about the Pittsburgh Study, because the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh has been involved in developing and promoting this community-partnered study. As you know, the Pittsburgh Study is involved in an initiative where we are trying to learn together with community members about what works to ensure children and adolescents are healthy, thriving, and meeting their academic goals. The Pittsburgh Study will be looking at interactions to improve the health and wellness of pregnant women, infants, toddlers, preschool-age child-
notes.

A: Yes, Liz. Last year, I had the privilege to speak at a planning retreat for the Pittsburgh Study. I’d like to share a little bit about the Study’s importance in a few ways. One of the key ways in which the Study is unique is in its focus on listening and involving community members as active participants in the research. This is based on the shared principles that came out of the retreat process, and the importance of doing research “with” people, not “on” people. LM: Thank you, Esther. It’s been wonderful for me to meet with community members across our county to hear what they think about child health and how they see these issues. Our children don’t look like them. Community members have shared with us that the “Research” isn’t just a topic in theory or an environment free from oppression and pollution. Environments that thrive for children and adolescents are healthy, thriving and meeting their academic goals. A: I believe that you mentioned that the Pittsburgh Study is so important to talk about. Because in fact, far too many children are living in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvan-
tage—an environment that contributes to discrimination and instit-
tional racism, they’re not afforded the same opportunities that chil-
dren in more privileged environments have. We need to have interventions and policies that recognize these inequities and work to support them. LM: Indeed. I’m so happy that many community organizations and people from diverse backgrounds are getting involved. We love to have interested community members join the different groups working on the Pittsburgh Study. Community partnerships help to make sure that the science is meaningful and relevant.

EB: I think the Pittsburgh Study is a partner in the community. I truly think that a city is only as healthy as the community’s mental health. We need to talk about the children’s mental health.

A: As you know, the Pittsburgh Study is a community-partnered study. The study started by engaging community partners to design the study. One of the study’s main principles is to develop research with people—not on people. Partnership and equity are core to the Pittsburgh Study. “Our goal is going to be a Pittsburgh Study that is to have community partners help to design the study.” The study started by en-
gaging community members in deciding what it is that is going to be a Pittsburgh Study coleader. “Our goal is going to be a Pittsburgh Study that is to have community partners help to design the study.”

Theresa R. Jenkins, Pittsburgh Study am-
assador, Westville, and Elizabeth Miller, coleader of the Pittsburgh Study, had the opportu-
ity to talk about the motivation behind being involved in the Pittsburgh Study work.

A: Why are you involved in the Pittsburgh Study?

A: I am involved in the Pittsburgh Study because the study’s research findings can change the way my community thinks about re-
search. As a community member, I have been wronged in so many cases in the past. We need to have research that is about people, not on people, and if the research isn’t about people, then how can we understand health issues and health disparities? We need to change the path and direction of our communities’ health and wellness for the betterment of our mental health.

A: What is meaningful to you and the com-
munity you serve about being involved in the Pittsburgh Study? T: The one thing that I would say is mean-
ingful is to keep the community engaged in all aspects as much as possible so that every step is transparent to the community and the community has full ownership in the study.

A: What do you hope will emerge from this partnership?

A: My hope for the Pittsburgh Study is that the community gets engaged and makes it accessible to become more healthy, more active, and to have healthier, happier and thriving in all commu-

The Pittsburgh Study is collaborative to its core. Community partners include the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, UrbanKind Institute, Healthy Start, Allies for Children, UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pitts-
burgh, University of Pittsburgh and the Shear Family Foundation.

For more information on how to become involved with the Pittsburgh Study, contact Maricela Saura at mab472@pitt.edu or 412-692-8028 or visit www.pittsburghstudy.org.