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The UMB Pulse Podcast

Episode 2: Tyrone Roper and the UMB Community Engagement Center

July 29, 2021 University of Maryland, Baltimore Season 1 Episode 2



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Jul 29, 2021 Season 1 Episode 2

University of Maryland, Baltimore

Get to know the director of the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Community Engagement Center (CEC) Tyrone Roper (08:33), how the CEC has engaged with West Baltimore residents during the pandemic (11:50), learn all about the brand new Community Engagement Center building at 16 S. Poppleton St. (26:58) and hear a preview of events coming soon to the CEC (39:10). Visit the Office of Community Engagement website at umaryland.edu/oce/ for more information.

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Get to know the director of the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Community Engagement Center (CEC) Tyrone Roper (08:33), how the CEC has engaged with West Baltimore residents during the pandemic (11:50), learn all about the brand new Community Engagement Center building at 16 S. Poppleton St. (26:58) and hear a preview of events coming soon to the CEC (39:10). Visit the Office of Community Engagement website at umaryland.edu/oce/ for more information.

Charles Schelle: 0:28

Welcome to The UMB Pulse. I'm Charles Schelle.

Dana Rampolla: 0:31

I'm Dana Rampolla.

Jena Frick: 0:32

And I'm Jena Frick.

Charles Schelle: 0:34

And on this edition we will be talking to Community Engagement Center Director Tyrone Roper. He's going to tell us all about the in person events not only returning to the CEC but at their new building.

Jena Frick: 0:45

Yes. And as we mentioned in our last episode, we are actually right now recording here at 16 South Poppleton Street on the third floor of the Community Engagement Center.

Dana Rampolla: 0:55

Before we get to Tyrone, let's catch you up on some return to campus information. If you would like to skip ahead to the interview with Tyrone This episode is time stamped in most players to allow you to jump forward

Charles Schelle: 1:06

And this is your Pulse Check. If you lost your COVID-19 vaccination card, there are several ways to retrieve your records. Those who were vaccinated at the UMB clinic can download proof through my portfolio. You can find a link to the my portfolio portal and your vaccination appointment email or on the UMB recovery website at www.umaryland.edu/Coronavirus. If you've run into any trouble with my portfolio, you can call 1-844-281-8667 or email my portfolio support at u m m.edu. Once you've logged into my portfolio, your COVID-19 vaccine information should be on the screen if you were vaccinated somewhere other than UMB, you can download proof of your COVID-19 vaccinations at the Maryland Department of Health vaccine portal and that's located at md as in Maryland immunet.org can also get your vaccination card reissued by contacting the vaccine site directly or the Maryland go Vax hotline at 1-855-634-6829.

Dana Rampolla: 2:16

An updated telework agreement will be released in August the revised UMB telework policy will go into effect on August 15. This will replace the COVID-19 status of operation and telework policy. Employees will not be allowed to regularly telework from a remote worksite outside of the state of Maryland unless they've made an arrangement with their supervisor and it's been approved by UMB's out of state work policy. Allowing employees to telework three or more days a week will require permission from the appropriate Dean, vice president or designee and supervisors have the discretion for employees requesting to telework one or two days a week. Details on eligibility and other frequently asked questions can be found on the Elm

Jena Frick: 2:55

And that's your UMB Pulse Check

Charles Schelle: 2:58

Getting back to the Community Engagement Center, also known as the CEC, as we love to say they've been doing quite a bit during the pandemic serving the community when they need it the most. Jena community engagement is actually one of your beats Media Relations. Dana, you've worked closely with community engagement on marketing. So you've been both very close to this.

Dana Rampolla: 3:17

Yes, we have.

Jena Frick: 3:18

Yeah, for three years now. I've been working with the Community Engagement Center I was with them when they were in that very small one room space over on and

Charles Schelle: 3:28

You can see it out the window.

Jena Frick: 3:29

Yeah, you can see it out the window. Yeah, I was like trying to name the street. Like I was like, Oh, I know all this stuff. But I completely forgot

Dana Rampolla: 3:35

Isn't that Baltimore street

Jena Frick: 3:36

It is Baltimore Street and

Charles Schelle: 3:37

It's still Poppleton. Poppleton and Baltimore we're at a different block of Poppleton.

Jena Frick: 3:41

Right, exactly. And like he said, we can actually see it out the window right now. So I was with them when they were still in that one one room little space. I was with them when they announced you know, the the brand new building reinvention reimagining is what we called it because it's you know, renovated and keeping the old historic structure intact.

Dana Rampolla: 3:59

Yeah. And it's beautiful. The big windows, all the light, but it still has a lot of the integrity of the old building.

Jena Frick: 4:06

Mm hmm. And we love working with the Community Engagement Center and all the people in the Office of Community Engagement.

Dana Rampolla: 4:12

Yeah. You know, I would before I came to UMB, I didn't realize that universities, some universities do this. And it's so compelling to be able to share their story with family, friends, young people who are looking for colleges just to say, Hey, this is something really, really cool to look for in a school if you like community engagement,

Jena Frick: 4:31

Yeah, and volunteer work and things like that. They have lots of different opportunities for that. And on

Dana Rampolla: 4:33

All different ages and different different top of that, they have all this really great weekly free programming for anyone in the community who's interested can come You know, they have exercise classes like Zumba and line dancing every week yoga. They even have someone from the medical center coming and helping you figure out what your fitness goals are like giving you like weight checks and nutritional resources and taking your like blood pressure and cholesterol and stuff. It's very cool. And like actually from when they started doing the exercise programs, to like a few weeks later, a lot of people in the community were seeing progress towards their fitness goals, which is really cool because, you know, they were actually able to see that happen over time. Yeah. And then we also have, you know, really great youth programming here, interest levels to so it's not just the exercise, but it's like you said there's health health components, there are activities for students so that they can be engaged and be learning whether it's stem or you know, all the 3D printing they do and all kinds of stuff.

Jena Frick: 5:37

Yeah, and catching us up on and the PAL program, also the police, athletics and activities league where kids in the neighborhood develop this really great relationship with the UMB police department. And they're all so wonderful. They did like a puppet show at a local theater last year together. And it's it's really great watching the kids and the officers having such a great mentor mentee relationship and all that jazz. So this, the center brings a lot of really great stuff to the community.

Charles Schelle: 6:06

As we learned on last episode, you're terrified of horses. You had a really cool event here with horses that actually made it on national TV. Tell us about that.

Jena Frick: 6:16

Yes. So the program is called city ranch. So the Community Engagement Center partnered with city ranch to bring horseback riding into the community. So we literally in the middle of the city, on this little green space, we had horses set up in a corral and the kids ages What is it eight to 15 I believe were able to sign up for this program. It was 10 weeks, the first two weeks they met every single day. And they went through an intensive training workshop on horsemanship, so they learn the anatomy of the horse, how to take care of one, how to put the saddle on and how like the basics of riding. And then for the next eight weeks, they were meeting once a week, and just learning to trot, learning to do like little jumps and stuff. And it's, it's really, really cool. Because the whole point of the program is that you know, being able to provide access to the equestrian industry to kids who maybe wouldn't normally have that, whether that's because of like transportation issues or, or financial issues or something like that. But this shows that they are able to ride a horse without really leaving their neighborhood, which is very cool.

Charles Schelle: 7:21

And Maryland is is horse country. And we have Pimlico right up the road from here to Yeah. So how did Tamron Hall get involved in in all this?

Jena Frick: 7:30

Well, I reached out to a bunch of different media outlets to let them know that we were having this really great program and it really took off. We had all of the local TV stations coming out doing the story. And then Tamron Hall came out to interview the owner of city ranch and all the kids in the program and everything. So it was it was very cool. There was also there was also a reporter and a photographer from the horse channel here, which I had never heard of. They have a DC Bureau, but they're based in Texas, so they were out here also doing a story on

Charles Schelle: 8:02

The Horse Channel?

Jena Frick: 8:02

The Horse channel

Charles Schelle: 8:03

I knew you had -- Did RFD come out?

Jena Frick: 8:06

Wait, I'm sorry. No, it was the Cowboy Channel. Wow, Dana, it's my turn to have like a mix up on the podcast. It's the Cowboy Channel, not the Horse Channel.

Charles Schelle: 8:17

You would think there would be horse channel though sound probably the most of the horse channels are probably like the the off track betting. Yeah,

Dana Rampolla: 8:24

I was gonna say I'm sure there's a TikTok that. Yeah, we're not promoting that. Let's be very clear.

Charles Schelle: 8:31

Alright, enough horsing around everybody. So let's bring out our guest. He is the director of the Community Engagement Center, Tyrone Roper. Welcome to the Pulse!

Tyrone Roper: 8:40

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Charles Schelle: 8:41

It's great seeing you here and the Community Engagement Center. I've met you at the old Community Engagement Center. During my little tour, you're going to tell us more about the building later and about yourself.

Jena Frick: 8:52

Yeah, but before we get to talking about the CEC, we want to hear more about you in a segment we call Introduce Yourself. So Alright, so how this is gonna work. It's like, like the summer camp icebreakers. We're going to do two to two truths and a lie. So you're going to tell us two truths about yourself in a lie and then we're gonna have to guess which one is which.

Tyrone Roper: 9:11

Got it. Ready.

Jena Frick: 9:12

All right, go for it.

Tyrone Roper: 9:13

I can squat 800 pounds pressive I love speed

Charles Schelle: 9:20

Like the movie?

Tyrone Roper: 9:21

No speeding.

Charles Schelle: 9:23

Oh, like in a car. Okay.

Tyrone Roper: 9:26

That's a bad habit of mine. Or is it? Then lastly, I enjoy skydiving.

Jena Frick: 9:35

I think I know which one it is but I also know you pretty well Tyrone because I worked with you for a while so I'm going to let these guys guess first.

Charles Schelle: 9:44

I'm going to guess the first and the third one are truths. So you you don't like speeding

Dana Rampolla: 9:50

I'm going to guess that you don't like skydiving.

Jena Frick: 9:53

I'm gonna say the same. You don't like skydiving.

Tyrone Roper: 9:57

Correct I do not like skydiving.

Charles Schelle: 10:00

So does that mean you've skydive before and you didn't like it or you just that you will never attempt to skydive

Tyrone Roper: 10:07

I have such a terrible fear of heights. Literally. If I'm too high, I have to brace myself and hold on to something. It's like my legs are getting ready to give out like I don't do heights well,

Charles Schelle: 10:17

So when they built this building you made sure anything about three floors I'm out.

Tyrone Roper: 10:21

I this is probably my fifth time coming up to the third floor.

Jena Frick: 10:27

Wow, so I guess you were never on the roof when they were putting up those like Wi Fi towers or anything then?

Tyrone Roper: 10:31

No, no, I have been up on the roof once. But yeah, I don't I don't make that a frequent stop.

Jena Frick: 10:38

For sure. I can understand that. I'm not a huge fan of heights, either.

Dana Rampolla: 10:41

Well, Is there any thoughts since you obviously do lift? 800 pounds that all that bulk and muscle? You might just drop like a rock?

Tyrone Roper: 10:49

No, it's not even that. I feel like it is this. Something I'm shamefully having to confess I'm just afraid of heights.

Dana Rampolla: 11:00

That's all right. Yeah. We all have our things

Charles Schelle: 11:03

I remember visiting the CN Tower in Toronto, one time they have one of those glass panes in the floor. I think they do have like the Willis Tower or Sears Tower.

Dana Rampolla: 11:16

I've done that in Chicago.

Charles Schelle: 11:18

And once your legs here on that. I'm wobbly and I thought I was like going to turn into jello and just like fall like right there.

Jena Frick: 11:26

I I've been there also and I had the same sensation. I was like freaking out for a second and then I moonwalked off of it.

Dana Rampolla: 11:35

Can you imagine doing that over the Grand Canyon? Have you seen that? That I think would be really

Charles Schelle: 11:42

Just helicopter ride, I'm fine with it actually, in the comfort of coach class in Southwest. looking out the window

Dana Rampolla: 11:50

Well, let's get to talking a little bit about the CEC. The CEC has always been very active in the community. And when the pandemic hit, you found some really unique ways to stay connected and continue to bring resources and services to the community, Tyrone, but let's talk for a minute first about you being part of the CEC, you actually came on during the pandemic right?

Tyrone Roper: 12:12

Right at the beginning. And I say it, I say it often and I just believe it to be true, I still feel like I'm in an orientation phase. I started December 23 of 19. And during that time, you have to remember it's it's vacation time, a lot of folks are on vacation, right? So as folks started to come back from vacation after the new year. I literally had a month, about February. And I started to gradually meet folks. And in March, the pandemic hit. And the virtual experience had become my reality, I started to meet more people just through virtual experiences, and that the virtual experience here has become what I know. You know, and that's that's, that's, that's interesting, because it's just a new space for me. So as we're transitioning out of it, I'm becoming more just accustomed to what I'm used to just in person conversations with people being able to interact that way. So yeah, it was interesting. You know, I came on right at the beginning of all of this, and, you know, really worked like heck with neighbors and other grassroots organizations and housing development units to be able to support folks based on their concerns and needs I heard.

Jena Frick: 13:21

Yeah, so what what were some of the things that you were doing to kind of support the people in the community and everything like that, through the pandemic? I mean, it like you said, you were really new to the community, a lot of people probably didn't really know you that

well. What was that like for you? And what sort of things are you providing for them

Tyrone Roper: 13:36

Being new, it's not an awkward space, I know how to maneuver through all of that.

Jena Frick: 13:41

You're very personable,

Tyrone Roper: 13:42

I was able to really develop some relationships pretty quickly. One of the first relationships I was able to develop, I was with Vintage Gardens, their resource coordinator there. So she and I really developed a strong bond. So she had a number of residents, older residents that had expressed concerns around things they needed through our partnership with United Way of Central Maryland. We were able to reach out and say look, how can you guys help in certain capacities. So one of the first things that happened is we received an enormous amount of diapers and baby wipes and, and baby formula that came to the center. So the old center was really just an open space and it was saturated with diapers of every number.

Jena Frick: 14:25

I remember coming in to see you I think I was just taking pictures of boxes being stuffed for the PAL kid. And the in the entire floor was just covered in boxes of Pampers stuff.

Tyrone Roper: 14:36

And they listened they went people were really in need of that stuff. It was very appreciated by neighbors that we were able to support young parents, existing parents to be able to get diapers, especially the formula that's pricey. So we're able to hand out the formulas and do some other partnerships. We're able to create care packages for older adults that had some minor food items in there non perishable items. Were in those packages, we did that. But then as we continue to transition through, we developed a partnership with Holly Poultry. They donated about a little more than 2000 pounds of chicken. And that is a lot. That's a lot of chicken.

Jena Frick: 15:15

And do you want to tell the story of how that chicken was delivered to everyone? I'm laughing because I was there through it.

Tyrone Roper: 15:22

Well, it wasn't squatted so we can assure you that. So through through another partnership with the Arab Society, the Arrabers, we were able to partner with them because they have such a strong relationships in the community. So we broke all of the chicken up together, and we loaded it on their carts. And they in as opposed to what you folks are accustomed to the fruits and vegetables. It was frozen chicken they were handing out. So we went throughout West Baltimore, handing out the frozen chicken to people. And then there was another donation that came in as well with bread loaves of bread. So individuals were getting frozen chicken and loaves of bread. And I have to tell you, they were running to the carts to be able to pick this up.

Dana Rampolla: 16:02

There was a time where people were afraid to go out for anything. So I'm sure that was a welcome relief.

Tyrone Roper: 16:07

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Charles Schelle: 16:09

I was wondering, with the frozen chicken, you said people were running, I would think if someone's yelling out free chicken coming down the street, I'd probably be taking a look at them. I'm like, Are you serious? You're giving me a whole chicken?

Tyrone Roper: 16:20

Right? Now remember, though, the Arabbers are the ones that have the relationship. They're the trusted entity, you know, and the one thing I've always said is as a UMB employee, the one of the greatest things that we bring as an institution is we bring resource capital, right, so we're able to leverage the resources under the UMB umbrella, but we lack the human capital. So we don't really have those as we would like the strong enough relationships, as a lot of these grassroots organizations have. So they bring the human capital, they are the trusted entity. So we take this resource, and we then couple it with that, with that partner who has the human capital. They're saying, look, this is who we are. People know who we are free chicken free bread. I know exactly who that is offering it. So I trust them. And then they go and pick it up. Great. Yeah.

Jena Frick: 17:02

And so you weren't just offering physical resources and donations to people. You also were providing digital resources like free Wi Fi. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Tyrone Roper: 17:15

Yeah, so the free Wi Fi came through a partnership with the Waves Foundation, Digital Harbor Foundation, as well. So the goal here was to be able to, we're in the middle of a pandemic, one of the things is that the pandemic highlighted for us as it really highlighted the haves from the have nots. And we didn't really understand how important it was to be able to have internet access until the pandemic hit. So as a result of that, we found that many of our neighbors here within the footprint of UMB did not have internet access. And you think about the schooling, all of the schooling had to be virtual, a lot of the families didn't have access to that. So what we did, and in also in partnership with the BioPark, we were able to leverage the Internet service from the BioPark port from their service, placing antenna on top of our building and other buildings throughout our kind of Southwest footprint, it would allow neighbors within a certain proximity to be able to tap in and to receive free Wi Fi services. So they're then able to benefit from the internet,

Jena Frick: 18:11

Right. And you also on top of that were providing them with people to call to actually get them all set up with it as well. So they weren't running into issues, you know, being on hold for hours waiting for someone to help them set it up.

Tyrone Roper: 18:26

So that technical assistance was available for people. Because it's a number of it's a number of spaces that you have to be willing and prepared to support. One is now you have free internet access, you have Wi Fi connections. But I don't know how to use a laptop. Better yet I don't even have a laptop. So what do we do? So through a donation from Marco and Debbie Chacon, we were able to purchase 100 Chromebooks that we then handed those out to our neighbors, and the neighbors were then able to connect use their their device connect to the Wi Fi. If those individuals did not know how to use those devices, we created cheat cheat sheets, if you would, that would help folks know how to navigate their own Chromebook. So they're able to access and connect to the internet.

Charles Schelle: 19:07

How's that Wi Fi program doing right now?

Tyrone Roper: 19:10

It's still operational, we're still still on top of the building and the other buildings in which it was situated so folks can still within the proximity of the Community Engagement Center get connected. So that's still available.

Jena Frick: 19:20

And then there's also a different program or partnership with Comcast that also set up like 100 families, or was it? How many families did the partnership with Comcast get set up?

Tyrone Roper: 19:31

I believe it was right at 100 families, which the intended goal was to be able to reach them and it allowed those families to be able to connect to the Comcast service. That was what that partnership was

Jena Frick: 19:41

right for a year of free Wi Fi which is also happening right now. Still though, they'll have the Wi Fi until December I believe and then that possibly extending it after that there was like talks about it. I'm not sure yes, fingers crossed.

Dana Rampolla: 19:55

Tyrone, what about the children in the community were you able to do anything specifically to help them?

Tyrone Roper: 20:01

We were and you know, a lot of the supports that we were able to provide them again, in the beginning was so challenging because we were really limited in how you could engage people. You had to wear a mask, there was such strong mandates around the social distancing guidelines. So we had to quickly transition into a mode in which we could still provide programming to young people. So we weren't able to do a hybrid model at that point. So it was completely virtual. So young people were able to tap in and connect with our programming efforts through a virtual manner, logging onto the computers, we would then participate in PAL. And then we also had a food program where we had lunches that were made available for our PALs participants - our PAL youth - every, every time there was a power day in which the programming was happening. We were delivering lunches to young people as well, through this effort, so we have lunches going to larger families, then we were providing lunches specifically to our PAL youth as well.

Dana Rampolla: 20:58

And where did those lunches come from?

Tyrone Roper: 21:00

From The Nook through a partnership. So again, through a donation from Marco and Debbie Chacon, they provided a donation that allowed us to provide lunches from The Nook who provided lunches for our PAL youth.

Dana Rampolla: 21:14

It's amazing the generosity of the community. Yeah, that's really amazing.

Jena Frick: 21:18

Another thing that you all were doing providing resources, you're also providing information about the vaccine effort and everything. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Tyrone Roper: 21:28

That was huge. So one of the biggest pushes is to ensure that we were providing information where individuals could really kind of educate themselves around the vaccinations and what happens, what's happening. It was challenging because there are so many stigmas around the vaccine, you know, does it work? Does it not work? What should I be concerned about? So we began to have different efforts where we're pushing information about vaccines and providing information. Kelly Duran has since come on board as the director of our health and wellness suite, and she has a few nurses as well. They're out canvassing communities and sharing information. One of the first opportunities we had in terms of canvassing was over here at Hollins Roundhouse Market at the Hollins Market, where we all situated ourselves around the market. And we began to provide information to any of the patrons or neighbors that were coming there for for whatever reason. I mean, we then we were also trying to have folks signed up for the vaccination. So it wasn't just information. We also did have the ability to sign individuals up to be able to receive the vaccine as well.

Dana Rampolla: 22:26

That's great. Did you have a lot of people after they kind of saw you out there and canvassing they they began to build a trust? Did you feel like that?

Tyrone Roper: 22:34

I did feel that way, I felt like folks are now becoming more trusting of who we are. Because we're really we're really intentional about showing a presence in the community. We've recently started a community canvassing effort that would happen every other went well, every other Wednesday here, we'll just canvass the area share information about who we are, what we provide, how they can participate, and we really highlight the fact it's free. Right? So the things that's provided here within the Community Engagement Center are free for our neighbors.

Dana Rampolla: 23:01

Well, let's talk a little bit about some of the things that you did related to the UMB community directly at the onset of the telework and tele study period. I remember working with your department on a campaign, it was a thank you card campaign, and we did a food for the front lines campaign. Did you feel that that was successful?

Tyrone Roper: 23:24

So the campaign supporting our frontline health workers was a huge success, because it allowed for us to not only support just the nurses, but also the environmental health workers as we're able to really pay tribute to the hard work that they did. Those individuals were classified as essential. So they have to remain in place, right. So to ensure that they're being recognized, they're being encouraged, because they're seeing so much of the trauma that's happening as a result of COVID. They are continued to be put back in those situations. So we created a program where neighbors and others could simply write thank you cards. We then delivered all of the thank you cards to the frontline workers just to show our appreciation for their hard work.

Dana Rampolla: 24:03

Right. That was great. And what was exciting about that is that it grew, it started here through the CEC. And then other people heard about it, and it trickled through the grapevine it wound up being a far reaching Baltimore program or activity. And we had hundreds and hundreds and we did a thank you video with a lot of those cards. We actually had families and children live well not live virtually. We recorded them live, sending well wishes and thank you messages and it was on the local news and everything it was. It was a great campaign

Tyrone Roper: 24:36

And it's a great way just to have folks reminded of the fact that what they do is important,

Dana Rampolla: 24:40

Right, Right

Tyrone Roper: 24:41

You know, showing up every day, constantly experiencing the trauma, the tragedy that's associated with COVID to see the video with the young people saying thank you for what you do. I'm sure it meant a lot for him.

Dana Rampolla: 24:52

Right right. Now what about the Food for the Frontlines campaign that was the brainchild of Laura Kozak, whose the associate vice president of communications and public affairs in our office. She worked with Lynne Henry, some of the folks in Philanthropy, and I think Madison was a really big leader in that area. All of those meals were able to be served through the Office of Community Engagement, right?

Tyrone Roper: 25:03

Correct. So the Food for Frontline workers is really an effort that's still continuing. We're still working through that through through dollars that we have available. And just ensuring that we're able to provide lunches for our youth as well as youth partnering schools that we partner with as well. And providing lunches and resources for them.

Dana Rampolla: 25:18

Okay. And at one point, Jena, you were there working on when we handed a community or not community meals, but lunch meals out to UMB employees? Who were frontline workers.

Jena Frick: 25:27

Yeah, I was there. It was great. They were also very appreciative, lots of people came out. And yeah, it was really amazing that we were able to continue to provide that for frontline workers, to give them a little bit of a break. And

Dana Rampolla: 25:42

And that initiated when all of the protocols were still very strong. Yeah. So I think that the university was able to partner to do such a great event, even when restrictions were there, and it helped our community, you know it helped the restaurants

Tyrone Roper: 25:56

Indeed, and that's one of the things I really do celebrate the university for is just being super intentional about finding ways to kind of work through the pandemic, to be able to support folks in the spaces they need us to send

Charles Schelle: 26:08

What I'm taking away from all the examples that we talked about, is the Office of Community Engagement led by Ashley Valis, and then you overseeing the CEC -- all of you have been here every day, going out into the community to be that literal face-to-face contact and connection that they needed. I just want to say thank you for doing that for the community because it's just beyond amazing not letting COVID-19 being a barrier to her

Tyrone Roper: 26:36

Yeah, yeah. And I've tell you, that's the entire team. I've said this, and I'll continue to say it, because I've shown up pretty much every day since the pandemic hit. There's so much work that's happening from staff and a lot of what's happening via telework. But it's not just me, you know, we really do have such an awesome team. That's that's really, really grinding just to make sure folks are getting what they need.

Charles Schelle: 26:57

Absolutely. And now your team has a new space,

Tyrone Roper: 27:00

New space,

Charles Schelle: 27:01

We're here in the brand new CEC building, we're actually in a third floor room with the two way mirror, a couch, some nice sitting chairs. This is not a recording studio, in case you're wondering, we have our own equipment, but it's a perfect space. And again, thank you for letting us do this here. To reiterate. What's the new address here? And when did you open?

Tyrone Roper: 27:24

16 South Poppleton. Baltimore City 21201 is the zip code. We opened I would say almost a year ago, it seems. When I say open, not open to the public. Right? So we're just now recently reaching a space where we can start having neighbors come in. But yeah, looking forward to it.

Charles Schelle: 27:44

Right. So what's your favorite part about the building?

Tyrone Roper: 27:47

I don't think I have a single favorite part about the building. I'm still continuing to learn the building. I occasionally will just walk through the building just ensure I'm familiar with the building what's available. My favorite part? I don't know, I think I think our kitchen is pretty cool. I think we have a pretty cool kitchen,

Charles Schelle: 28:05

Right? It's probably hard to imagine though, because you haven't seen people use it.

Tyrone Roper: 28:10

Not yet,

Charles Schelle: 28:10

Really, except for us.

Tyrone Roper: 28:12

I have a vision I see people using that kitchen, I see programming happening out of the kitchen. So So a lot of my excitement really come from just the vision I have and really seeing folks occupy the space here.

Jena Frick: 28:24

I was gonna say my favorite part of this building is the the bottom floor where the kitchen, the like event space and little like auditorium area is. It is so great. And I can just imagine having you know, the community meals back down there, everyone hanging out, maybe the PAL kids can put on like a puppet show like they did last year. But actually on a stage within the building. There's oh my gosh, I am so very excited about when people can finally get back in and we can actually use everything.

Tyrone Roper: 28:53

Me too. So that's a great space. And I we will not just have community lunches, but we will eventually have community dinners as well. That would be super awesome as well for people. Yeah.

Charles Schelle: 29:04

So tell me about some of the event spaces inside of here. How can people reserve it? And when can they start inquiring about maybe using some of the some of the spaces here?

Tyrone Roper: 29:14

So we're still building out and refining what the request for space process will look like. What what all that looks like. So we're rebuilding it and shaping that. So that's not finalized just yet. However, if someone's interested in using space, they can always call the Community Engagement Center 410-706-8260 and go ahead and make a request that way or send an email to engagement@umaryland.edu to make a request as well.

Charles Schelle: 29:42

Since I'm somewhat obsessed about this firm that we're in, tell me why it even has a two way mirror.

Tyrone Roper: 29:48

Well, it's a one way mirror

Charles Schelle: 29:49

A one way mirror. I'm sorry,

Tyrone Roper: 29:50

No worries. That's a one-way mirror. So we have two rooms here on the third floor in which have a one way mirror. So this space one of the benefits we have here is -- remember UMB has the resource capital. So I'm able to leverage the resources, expertise, knowledge and other capacities of the UMB system. That includes the six professional schools and the Graduate School. So faculty, staff and students will come here, and they will render services or provisions to our neighbors. So in this space as an example, School of Social Work can potentially come in with a group of students. And they'll do mock counseling whenever the students are working, mock counseling with neighbors. So whenever the students are working in any capacities with neighbors, faculty and staff have to be present. So there's no microphones in this room. So on the back side, faculty and staff can observe. And the way they will talk with students is through headsets, they'll be able to communicate that way, as students do these mock counseling, drills, that things of that nature. When it's not used for a didactic person -- reason -- then we will have a screen that covers this window. As an example, we'll do some conflict resolution in this space as well. Some

other types of training will occur in which the one way mirror isn't needed. So it's also important for folks to feel they have a sense of privacy when they're in this space as well. The mirror is only for didactic purposes, as well as the mirror in our health suite as well.

Charles Schelle: 31:14

Great. You know, you were talking about essentially, the room is built for confidential conversations. Right? And which is why this makes so wonderful acoustics for us. So how can people see the building? Are you planning any sort of open house in the fall?

Tyrone Roper: 31:29

Wonderful question. We are on October 28. That's today, we've landed on our reopening. So we're looking forward to this huge celebration, we're still working out a lot of the logistics and what that will look like. But the dates confirmed, it will be October 28. So stay tuned for invitations.

Dana Rampolla: 31:47

And the great thing is you don't have to wait for the open house because you've been working on events like we talked about, you've been operating under different forms of guidance throughout, throughout, but some things have remained the same. Back to the rooms, talk a little bit about what's on that first floor area because as someone who's been able to be in here, see it, I love that space down there because I think it really speaks to the community.

Tyrone Roper: 32:12

So first floor. When you first come in to your left, you'll see our studio, the studio, I think I should probably back up real quick. So what we provide here are five provisions. We do programs, services, supports, trainings and activities. Each one of those has its own particular portfolio of things that are built under it. So in the studio, under the provision of activities, you'll have our line dancing, yoga, Zumba, we'll also be bringing on some hip hop dancing. No, I won't be the instructor.

Jena Frick: 32:45

You will see me there because I love dancing.

Charles Schelle: 32:47

As we teased about events. We're going to

Tyrone Roper: 32:47

Okay, good stuff. I'm working on a partnership now with UMBPD to bring in a rad self defense course training, just some basic self defense course training, they'll happen in that space. You won't walk out Bruce Lee, but you'll have talk about events in our next segment with you. But part of some basic self defense course training that will happen. Ta dancing is one of the thing I've heard that people are interested in having in the space. So that's the studio space there, it's a really nice space, one of the walls are completely mirrored. Back out of that space. When you go you'll see this program is that we want to give people some context because see our computer lab, it's very open with the glass window where you can see in so we've grown from 12 to 24 computers. So that's that's our computer lab. Computer Lab is also going to be used for trainings. So if someone has a training as an example, our sister agency partner UMMC, they have a number of digital literacy trainings and things of that nature they want to do. And they'll utilize our computer lab through request. It's a training they put on so individuals able to use the computer lab, we have a smaller computer lab there as well on the first floor. how can I put on an event here a UMB between summer and the fall. So here's the latest events guidance as of this recording on July 12. Effective July 19, there are no longer COVID specific restrictions on how food is served at events. That means food no longer has to be in prepackaged containers. So finally, the cookie tray can return to meetings and events, buffets and self serve options can resume following regular food safety guidelines. We have one set of event guidance for the summer, you can have indoor events with up to 50 people and outdoor events with up to 100 people as long as all UMB COVID-19 health and safety practices are followed. If your event will have more than 10 people attending, then the event holder needs to keep a list of guests for contact tracing. Events larger than the given size limits must be approved by a dean or vice president. An email to COVID recovery is required when 25 or more visitors are attending an event at any one time.

Jena Frick: 34:56

There will not be an event size limit in the fall semester for events that are predominantly composed of UMB or University System of Maryland faculty, staff and students, as well as guest speakers or caterers who are present at the events, those are fine, and there will not be an event size limit for the fall semester on outdoor events. At a later date, UMB will be issuing new guidances for indoor events that have a significant number of visitors who are not part of the USM or UMB communities. If you need more immediate guidance, please ask your dean or vice president to contact Jon Kucskar. There is also an updated visitors guidance at play as well. These are for the people who are not part of the UMB community.

Charles Schelle: 35:35

And if you need to find anything else out, it's at www.umaryland.edu/Coronavirus. You can find all the updated events guidance you can think about. Now let's get back to Tyrone and the CEC. Even with those guidelines, you can still do quite a bit here. Tell us about some of the events you're able to host and how you're able to pull them off. Let's start off with a Juneteenth Jubilee that you've done recently.

Tyrone Roper: 36:00

So that was done in partnership with some other departments here under the UMB umbrella, we were able to pull that one off, because there's a process for how we requests, programs, activities to happen. So through approval, we were able to host the Juneteenth celebration, which was phenomenal turned out really well. It was held outdoors, individuals who at the time were required to wear masks to participate. So that's how that was held. It was outdoors, outdoor activities, events really do allow for us to have a higher capacity number of people. Because underneath the tent, it's free flowing, the air will continue to blow. It's more it's more challenging for enclosed spaces where there's less air circulation.

Charles Schelle: 36:38

Sure. And then you also had a community lunch, what was that lunch? And what were some things that you had to, you know, tackle especially considering there was food involved?

Tyrone Roper: 36:47

Yeah, so again, so it's outdoor. So one of the initial processes to make the request for what we anticipate on doing we will generally provide like a target number of folks that will think about potentially engaging, it's tough for the community lunch, so we couldn't do that. So it's outdoor that's happening every other Wednesday outdoors. It's under the tents, all of the meals have to be pre packaged. So it's not buffet style, folks aren't coming through selecting items. It's a variety of different pre packaged foods or lunches that folks will come select their meal, and then a bottle of water is provided for

Charles Schelle: 37:19

Smart.

Jena Frick: 37:19

So when is the next community lunch?

Tyrone Roper: 37:21

Next Wednesday

Jena Frick: 37:23

And who are we getting the food from?

Tyrone Roper: 37:24

We have not determined that yet. We have some we have some really good group of vendors that we partner with. All are locally within the Southwest Baltimore footprint. So we're not exactly sure who will be the next vendor for for a meal next Wednesday,

Jena Frick: 37:38

I'm crossing my fingers for Neopol Smokery because they are so good.

Tyrone Roper: 37:43

The next one will be on August 4. And then the next one after that will be August 18.

Jena Frick: 37:48

All right. So make sure you write those dates down and come on out get a free lunch,

Dana Rampolla: 37:52

And they're always at noon, right?

Tyrone Roper: 37:53

Always at noon, from noon to one, be early lunches go fast.

Charles Schelle: 37:57

What do you have to account for when you're planning some of these upcoming events, because now we're able to do some things indoors, too?

Tyrone Roper: 38:04

The biggest thing is the reduction of risk. The reduction of the spread of COVID. So my lens is always ensuring that I'm first really mindful of ensuring there's no risk being added to the university. So whenever we put any event on, that's where my initial lens goes, just to make sure we're providing things in a very safe manner. And then from there, it's about a plan. We talked about the flow of traffic, how individuals will come in, how they exit the process, what's going to be provided, how are we keeping staff safe and our neighbors safe that participate in these events? So that's a lot of the thinking. It's a lot of a risk reduction lens that has to be on we're shaping out these programs,

Charles Schelle: 38:44

How does it feel to be able to see community members again, in a new space? You've been seeing them throughout the pandemic, but now you're seeing them and kind of sort of like different contexts.

Tyrone Roper: 38:54

You know, it's it's refreshing for me, because I'm starting to get feedback on a center that I've been part of for so long. Many of the team members as well have already been part of this. So it's it's refreshing to have folks come in and see their excitement, see this new excitement about their Community Engagement Center.

Charles Schelle: 39:10

Now you have another event to preview and we'll tell people how to learn more about signing up for these. Rec to Tech sounds like a cool program. I see it involves robots and laser cutters. Tell me more.

Tyrone Roper: 39:20

So that's still a partnership we have with Under Armour. So our rec tech program eventually will transition into a space at the James McHenry Rec Center, where we'll be renovating a portion of the rec center. We'll then take our STEM program nested inside of the rec center. So it allows for the young folks that are students of James McHenry Elementary, Middle school to participate and other youth for after hours. So it's taking a STEM model placing it into a recreation environment. And there that's that's the reason for that. So that's what that's about. And for all of the programs any program individuals can simply call and or send an email to engagement@umaryland.edu or register for our newsletter in which we have a QR code and they can register that way.

Charles Schelle: 40:04

Great. Well tease that at the end as well,

Jena Frick: 40:06

The Rec to Tech program actually, that started in the middle of the pandemic and started virtual right? And then it transitioned to a hybrid. And now people are in person being able to actually use the tools that are here in the Community Engagement Center, is that right?

Tyrone Roper: 40:19

That's true. And that's, that's true for many of our programs. But the direct to tech program, comm started completely virtually, and then went through a hybrid model. And we're now actually having young folks and adults participate in this, that's one of the big priorities of mine is making sure we have a really intentional lens on our older adult population.

Jena Frick: 40:36

That's actually a perfect transition, because the next thing we wanted to talk about was the adult art classes that you all have just started.

Tyrone Roper: 40:42

They love it.

Jena Frick: 40:43

Yeah?

Tyrone Roper: 40:43

Absolutely love it. So we have older adults and adults that will come in after work. And they find it so therapeutic just to participate in the art classes we have. So we're working on creating more canned programs here, as opposed to special projects that last six to eight weeks. So this art class is something that is will it'll definitely remain here within the Community Engagement Center.

Dana Rampolla: 41:05

And that's another free program.

Tyrone Roper: 41:07

All of them are free.

Dana Rampolla: 41:09

How about the photography program is that fall right in line?

Tyrone Roper: 41:12

The photography program was a partnership we had on a it's not a canned program. It's something we're looking at being able to sustain long term. That was a great program, individuals were able to sign up and learn about photography and receive a free camera.

Dana Rampolla: 41:28

Wow, that's great.

Charles Schelle: 41:30

And there's also Art with a Heart partnership where they're putting together a mural. Yeah, for the new building. How can people get involved? Is it too late?

Tyrone Roper: 41:38

it's not too late. We're actually actively recruiting individuals to sign up for their for our mural project. Again, that's the best way for folks to sign up is really calling in or sending an email. If you get access to our newsletter, there is the QR code that folks can scan with their phone to register for the mural project.

Jena Frick: 41:59

And we can also put that link in the description of this podcast so that people can sign up and the dates that people can sign up for a start actually next week, right? Yeah. So people perfect timing.

Charles Schelle: 42:10

Great. Do we have any other programs that we missed?

Jena Frick: 42:12

Yes, actually, we also want to get to talking about Workforce Wednesday, which is the program run by the wonderful Lisa Rawlings that helps adults, even some, like college students, maybe who are trying to put together their resume and their cover letter and really getting them connections with ways to get hired and a job.

Tyrone Roper: 42:32

Right. So Workforce Wednesdays at the beginning of the pandemic went to a virtual experience. Lisa was was savvy enough to be able to create a virtual opportunity where folks could join her through Facebook, to go through that that process. So what Workforce Wednesdays continues to happen every Wednesday from two to five.

Dana Rampolla: 42:51

And how about Maker Mondays? Is it making a return?

Tyrone Roper: 42:54

it will make a return. Again, we're in the process now of identifying those programs that are sustainable that we can continue to move forward. Maker Monday is is continues to be a success though.

Dana Rampolla: 43:06

What do you get to do there and who can sign up?

Tyrone Roper: 43:09

Maker Monday is part of our STEM program that's facilitated by Bernard Smit. He's our program coordinator. So it's a lot of the STEM programming as part of Maker Monday, They'll be participating in various projects utilizing vinyl cutters, 3D printers, things of that nature. So it's a it's a STEM program for youth and adults.

Charles Schelle: 43:29

Well, thank you Tyrone. I have learned a lot. It sounds like even though we're still transitioning back to campus, you have been more than busy. And again, if you're interested in registering or learning more about the programs, Tyrone mentioned email

Tyrone Roper: 43:46

TRoper@umaryland.edu

Charles Schelle: 43:49

or call

Tyrone Roper: 43:50

410-706-8260.

Dana Rampolla: 43:54

You can learn more about the Community Engagement Center and the Office of Community Engagement by subscribing to their newsletter at

Tyrone Roper: 44:02

engagement@umaryland.edu.

Jena Frick: 44:04

And you can also stay up to date on all of the things happening at the Community Engagement Center through their social media channels. You can follow them on Instagram at umb_community_engagement and on facebook at Facebook.com/UMBcommunityengagement. Thank you again Tyrone so much for coming and talking with us.

Charles Schelle: 44:24

Wow! You know there's sounds like there's so much going on here at the CEC

Dana Rampolla: 44:28

I'm sure people are happy that some of the fitness classes are returning to the CEC but you can also work up a sweat now at URecFit and Wellness.

Jena Frick: 44:35

Our next episode will feature Julia Wightman and Jimmy Heiner of University Recreation Fitness and Wellness. They will tell us about what it's like working out at URecFit now and how they got through the pandemic.

Charles Schelle: 44:45

Hey, maybe this will be my new fitness podcast. Listen to it while you're walking

Dana Rampolla: 44:49

Or a jog. If you think we're upbeat.

Charles Schelle: 44:52

Either way, hey, we got to run everybody and thank you for listening to the UMP Pulse

Jena Frick: 45:02

The UMB Pulse with Charles Schelle, Dana Rampolla and Jena Frick is a UMB Office of Communications and Public Affairs production, edited by Charles Schelle sound engineering by Jena Frick marketing by Dana Rampolla Music by No Vibe Recorded in the University of Maryland Baltimore Community Engagement Center.

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