

the **Stand** south side news

www.mysouthsidestand.com

Syracuse, NY

APRIL 2013

Issue 26 FREE

FAITHFUL OUTREACH

Preacher takes his
message beyond the
four walls of his church

Ban the Box crusade

Job seekers with criminal pasts want a better chance

Cultural richness

Paul Robeson
Performing Arts
Company sees a revival

**Building a
community**
Somali Bantu refugees find
safety at Burt Street center

'KING OF IN BETWEEN' VISITS



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SOUTH SIDE COMMUNICATION CENTER
2331 SOUTH SALINA STREET
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MATERIAL THE STAND DEEMS ACCEPTABLE TO
THE PUBLICATION'S EDITORIAL PURPOSE AND
IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.**4** **FEATURES** | Taking on his third term as president of 100 Black Men of Syracuse, this month's South Side Achiever Vincent B. Love shares why he devotes time to mentoring.**6** **COMMUNITY** | Local advocates of Ban the Box say legislation would give job applicants who have a criminal past a better chance at being looked at by prospective employers.**8** **FEATURES** | Residents speak out on the proposed NYC soda ban and whether such a drastic sugar cut — or simply more education — might be a good idea for Syracuse.**10** **COMMUNITY** | Around 500 Somali Bantu refugees call Syracuse's South Side home and are finding support from the Somali Bantu Community Organization.**12** **CHURCH** | Pastor Daren C. Jaime of the People's A.M.E. Zion Church touches not only his congregation with his message but also the community, radio listeners and TV viewers.**15** **SCHOOL** | Teachers of Tomorrow program helps to attract, train and keep teachers in urban school districts, including Syracuse.**16** **YOUTH** | Zen Center's Dharma Kids program is open to all and teaches children Buddhist practices and values.**18** **FEATURES** | New artistic director of the Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company puts his efforts into community outreach and invites local residents to share their talents.**21** **COMMUNITY** | Strolling the South Side stops at the P.E.A.C.E. Inc. program, which provides a welcoming space for families and children, including those with developmental difficulties.**22** **ENTERTAINMENT** | Garland Jeffreys — 'The King of In Between' — brings his unique combination of folk, jazz, rock, R&B and reggae to Syracuse April 20.

■ Cover photography of Pastor Daren C. Jaime by Mark Logico

CALENDAR | APRIL

What: Clean Up 'Cuse**When:** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 13**Where:** Various locations throughout the city. South Side's cleanup will begin at the Rahma Health Clinic, 3100 S. Salina St.**More Details:** The Alchemical Nursery, the Rahma Free Health Clinic, The 100 Black Men of Syracuse, and the Mary Nelson Youth/Community Center will lead a cleanup of the South Salina Street Corridor. Activities will include litter cleanup on neighborhood streets, and weeding, mulching and seeding at the Rahma Edible Forest Snack Garden. Volunteers will be provided with a free T-shirt and water bottle commemorating the event. In addition, Tops Markets will provide food for volunteers.**More Info.:** Volunteers should register online at <http://www.volunteercny.org/>**What:** Food and Wine Tasting Farewell to Jesse Dowdell**When:** 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday, April 20**Where:** King + King Architects, 358 W. Jefferson St.**More Details:** This farewell event will also be a fundraiser for the Southwest Community Center and will feature food and wine from around the world. Music will be provided by Signature Music. Visual artist Carrie Mae Weems will present a video showcasing Dowdell, retiring CEO of the center. A silent auction will be held.**Cost:** \$50**For tickets:** Contact Jenny Pennington at the Southwest Community Center at (315) 671-5802; limited number of tickets will be available at the door

The South Side Newspaper Project is excited to welcome new interns this month. Media students from the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central High School, located downtown, will write for The Stand by contributing online preview stories and feature stories. They will even produce videos. Students start April 9 and will continue for the last eight weeks of their school year.

We are also looking forward to meeting new community members who are interested in contributing to the project. We will offer two general interest meetings this month to anyone interested in learning more about the project. The Stand exists to share community stories, and we want to help you write your own or assist in pairing you with a reporter who can tell the story for you.

Also during April's general interest meeting, attendees will hear about The Stand's summer writing workshops. During our writing workshops, we teach attendees the recipe for a good story — where to start, how to conduct an interview and how to compose your final piece.

For now, turn the page to read community coverage, including a profile on Pastor Daren Jaime of the People's A.M.E. Zion Church who is growing the congregation and expanding the church's mission beyond the building's walls. Also, meet the Somali immigrants who are settling here, and much more.

Ashley Kang



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 13 & 16

General Interest Meeting

We offer two opportunities — **10 a.m. Saturday, April 13, and 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 16**, at the South Side Communication Center, 2331 S. Salina St. — to meet with The Stand to learn ways you can get involved. We are always looking for fresh ideas and new writers. If you want to learn more about the paper and how you can participate, plan to attend.

More Info.: Contact Ashley Kang at (315) 882-1054 or email ashley@mysouthsidestand.com

'BANKING DESERT'

As Janeka Coker reflects on the struggles of opening up her business on South Salina Street, she laughs and exhales a deep sigh. "So far we've put our own money in, and it takes a lot," she said.

Her full-service hair salon, Miraculous Beauty, located in the 2800 block of South Salina Street, has been a long time coming. She spent several years working at another salon before deciding to open her own. Coker is working with Bank of America downtown to help finance her new business.

She has decided to go with a bank outside of the neighborhood for several reasons. "I have a history with them, and it's a little bit easier."

For quite some time the South Side was seen as a "food desert," a community without a major grocery.

It's been a "banking desert" as well: There's only one bank on the South Side.



Read the full story about the lack of banks on the South Side, online, at mysouthsidestand.com



> Janeka Coker recently opened a business on the South Side, but leaves the neighborhood for her banking needs. | Nathan Laird, Staff Photo

APRIL 18 CONCERT

What: Jazzuits at Temple Concord

When: 7 p.m. Thursday, April 18

Where: Temple Concord, 910 Madison St.

More Details: The Le Moyne College Jazzuits, under the direction of Carol Jacobo, will perform on the Regina Goldenberg Music & Cultural Series.

Cost: Free

More Info.: Call (315) 475-9952 ext. 314

LOCAL ACHIEVERS

The South Side Achiever is a feature in The Stand that highlights an accomplished person in the community.

NOMINATE SOMEONE

Do you know a South Side Achiever? Nominate that person by contacting Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or (315) 882-1054

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit 100blackmensyr.org or follow the group's Facebook page www.facebook.com/100blackmensyr



Vincent B. Love

Provides inspirational motivation to local youth

By | Natalie Caceres
Staff reporter

Returning president of 100 Black Men of Syracuse continues to offer hope

Sitting at his desk inside the South Side Innovation Center on South Salina Street, Vincent B. Love, 59, describes how he isn't perfect.

The Syracuse native — who grew up just down the street in Pioneer Homes — points out that he made some wrong decisions in his earlier years. However, one of his goals in life is to do right by giving back to the very community that helped bring him up.

Re-elected for another two years this past January as president of the 100 Black Men of Syracuse chapter, his third term in a row, Love is continuing his platform of leadership and mentoring. He says he wants to help foster respectable, achieving and successful young men through his personal experiences.

Love grew up on the South Side, moved to the West Coast after college and eventually settled back in Syracuse to take care of his mother. He sees himself as a catalyst for the youth of Syracuse to prosper and thrive by having mentors.

"When I was young, I had older gentlemen as role models," Love said. "They weren't always the most model citizens, but they were there."

He was brought up by a single mother and a supportive family system that included four brothers and two sisters. He received a full, four-year scholarship to Florida A&M and earned a degree in accounting with a minor in business administration. Love moved to San Francisco after his older sister, whom he credits as one of his most influential mentors, convinced him that the job market was a good match for candidates like him. He eventually ended up in Los Angeles during the early 1980s. Love recalls that while he made some questionable decisions during his time on the West Coast, he saw the experience as a building block to chart the right course in life.

"It was a huge culture shock," Love said about his time in Los Angeles. "It was a rocky road with some poor lifestyle choices."

He credits a strong family support system as the foundation he needed to get back on track and real-

ize that a move back to Syracuse, to care for his ailing mother, would be the best decision he could make.

Now Love, who is an accountant and deputy treasurer for the North Syracuse Central School District, makes it his mission — in line with that of 100 Black Men — to devote his time and resources outside of work to "improve the quality of life within the Syracuse community to help young men progress."

100 Black Men of Syracuse, a local chapter of the national organization 100 Black Men of America, was officially inducted in June 2009. Even though there previously had been two unsuccessful attempts to get a chapter started in Syracuse, Love knew this time would be different: More than 30 men attended the initial meetings, purely by word of mouth.

Members credit Love's inspirational leadership.

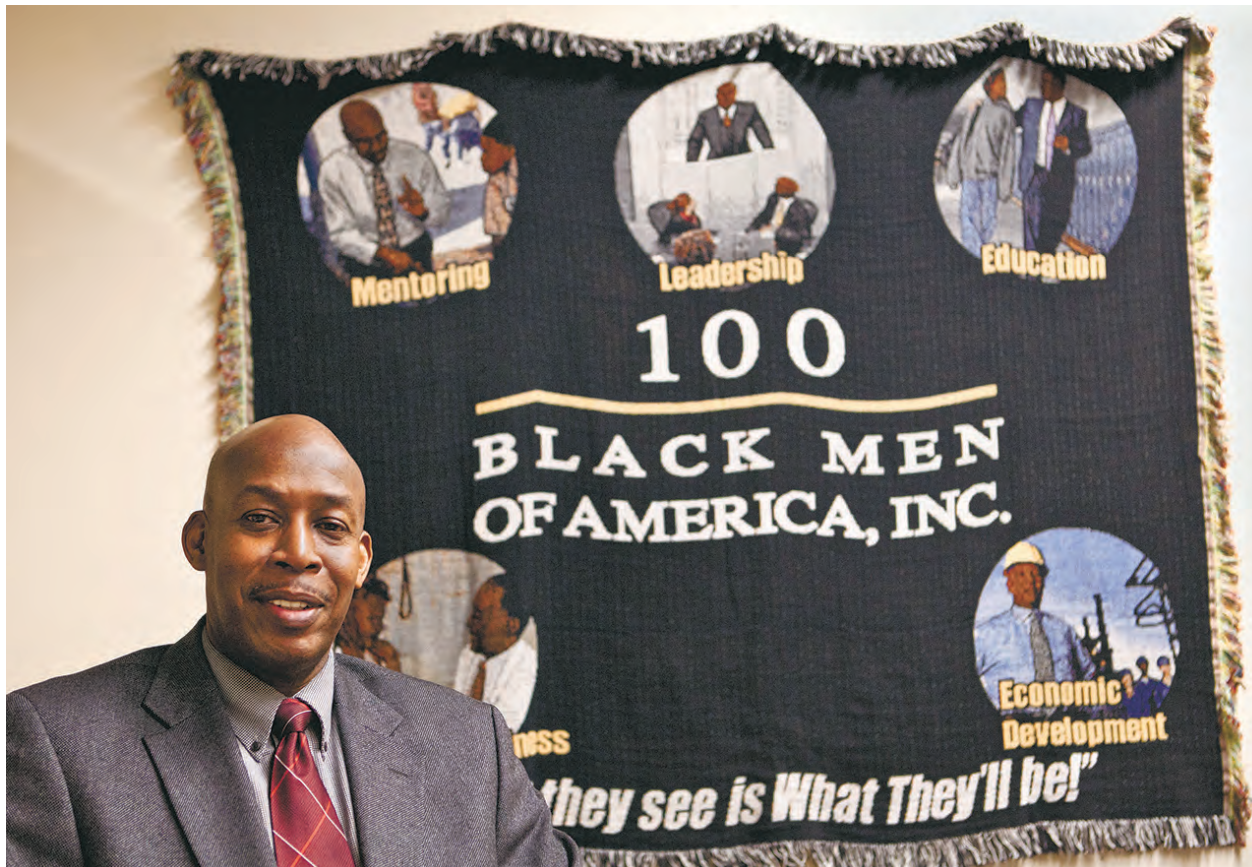
"Whether he realizes it or not, he's a born leader," said Drake Harrison, director at large for the organization. Harrison notes that Love has really come into his own in the position — skillfully able to strike a balance between motivating the members to give as much as they can, yet always ensuring that the members themselves feel valued. Harrison, who is director for the Collegial Science Technology Entry Program at Onondaga Community College, is familiar with overseeing others. Love, he says, knows how to lead by example.

"Vincent will always receive your call or return it," he said. "He's willing to listen."

The national organization is devoted to helping young men pave a successful future through "respect for family, spirituality, justice and integrity," according to the group's website. 100 Black Men of Syracuse builds upon those virtues, Love says, but adds four components: mentoring, education, economic empowerment and health/wellness.

"We want them to know that their current situation, whatever that may be, does not have to dictate their future."

— Vincent B. Love



> Vincent B. Love, president of 100 Black Men of Syracuse, an organization that aims to connect youth with adult mentors, poses in his office on the South Side of Syracuse. | Allison Milligan, Staff Photo

Some of 100 Black Men's mentoring efforts include, at minimum, weekly visits to Westside Academy at Blodgett, Fowler High School and Percy Hughes Elementary School Bookman Program. Members make sure to engage in activities such as reading to students, checking up with teachers and helping with homework.

"Youth are the basis for the future," said James McCampbell, vice president of administration with 100 Black Men of Syracuse. "However, I think that the kind of foundation needed so that there is a brighter future for our youth is people stepping up and committing time and effort to make sure that those things are in place that will help foster and enhance that future."

McCampbell, like many of the other men, had strong role models around him as a young man and believes that continuing that model is crucial in helping shape a more engaged and giving community.

Love wants to make sure that these young people don't simply see him and other members as older men criticizing or trying to change them. In fact, he says, it's quite the opposite.

"We want them to know that their current situation, whatever that may be, does not have to dictate their future," Love said. "We want to give our young people some hope." That idea of hope as a gateway for a more promising tomorrow is a common mission among the 100 Black Men of Syracuse members.

"A lot of us had similar backgrounds as these youth,

so we can share the challenges, give them direction and hope," said Robert Sykes, a manager of resource planning at National Grid and the vice president of operations with 100 Black Men of Syracuse. "A lot of us have been blessed, so now we have the opportunity to share those blessings." Sykes helps ensure the organization operates smoothly through tasks like taking minutes, running meetings in Love's absence, helping to mentor at schools and coordinating youth activities. Those activities include taking the young men to basketball games at Syracuse University, bowling and picnics.

"We want to set the right example of doing the right thing, making the right decision, creating the framework to be successful," Sykes said about why they put in so much time and effort. "When you make the difference in the lives of young people, you can't help but feel good about it."

And in Love's third term, the work and goals to be achieved are still in motion, he says. He and the other members are always working to achieve such things as higher recruitment of volunteers, partnerships and perhaps — most important — funding. The main source of economic support comes from the annual December banquet. Regardless, Love is determined to continue the work, no matter the time.

"I want my life to be worth something," he said. "100 Black Men of Syracuse is what makes my life worthwhile."

KEY PROGRAMS

- **Manhood Training:** Meets bimonthly to promote the development of a manhood identity for African-American male adolescents ages 14 to 18.
- **Historical Black College Tour:** Raises funds and provides support for Central New York students who wish to tour historically black colleges.
- **SAT Prep Class:** A collaboration of 100 Black Men and The Say Yes Collegiate Preparatory Academy. Students taking this free course are offered proctored practice tests, academic instruction, test-taking strategies and tutoring for the core competencies measured on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.
- **Health & Wellness Collaborations:** Designed to raise the awareness level about health care issues and how they impact the African-American community.
- **Annual Celebration Banquet:** Held each December to honor the group and serve as a fundraiser.

Source:
100blackmensyr.org

NEWARK ORDINANCE

- Passed Sept. 19, 2012; considered “the most comprehensive Ban the Box ordinance in the nation to date”
- Applies to both city and private employers, licensing and housing
- Box banned on applications
- Background checks are allowed only after conditional offer of position
- Background checks only are required for some positions
- Applicants have the right to appeal a denial of employment
- Employer must provide copy of background check
- Depending on the offense, there is a limited amount of time the employer can check
- Eight years for indictable offense
- Five years for disorderly persons convictions or municipal ordinance convictions
- Employers may not advertise any limitations on hiring based on criminal record
- Requires a detailed mandated notice to denied applicants

Source: National Employment Law Project, www.nelp.org

SECOND CHANCES

Syracuse advocacy groups want to ‘Ban the Box’ on job applications

By | Cassandra Sweetman
Urban Affairs reporter

Legislation could allow those with criminal past to have a better opportunity to get interviews

Anyone who’s applied for a job is familiar with it: the section of the application inquiring about criminal history.

Many pass over this check box quickly, checking “no” and moving on. Yet others dread this box, considering it a death sentence for their chances at a position.

“I started looking for work, sending out tons of applications and not getting any interviews, and part of it, I think, was I definitely disclosed I had my criminal record,” said 33-year-old Isaac Rothwell. “Even a lot of opportunities I think I would have been easily called back for, I wouldn’t.”

Rothwell spent three years in prison after a felony drug-trafficking conviction in 2003. When he got out, he finished college and took any small jobs or internships he could get, hoping he might start his own business and avoid the application dead ends.

For Rothwell and for many others, finding employment after incarceration is difficult if not impossible. Long-felt frustration with the “box” inquiring about a criminal history has spawned a growing “ban the box” national movement, which can help applicants with a record get past the opening application stage.

Patricia Warth is co-director of Justice Strategies and one of the lawyers at the Center for Community Alternatives, a not-for-profit organization that advocates for alternatives to incarceration and helps reintegrate clients back into society.

“As we’ve experienced this through the lens of our clients’ lives and simultaneously seen what’s happening across the nation with the Ban the Box movement, we thought, ‘Wow, Syracuse needs to really look into this,’ ” Warth said.

“There’s probably about 92 million people in the United States who have a criminal history record on file. That’s a huge number of people.”

She referenced a study last year that concluded “one in three adults, by the time they’ve reached 23 years old, has experienced a criminal arrest. That’s 33 percent of adults.”

Common Council members Jean Kessner and Khalid Bey, along with advocacy groups, are exploring and shaping a proposal for legislation “banning the box” here in Syracuse.

“If you have 20 people applying for a job and you



> Isaac Rothwell, 31, a Ban the Box supporter, says the proposed legislation would prevent potential employers from requiring a “criminal background” check box on a job application. This could help assure fair opportunities for people with a prior conviction. | Joshua J. Wahl, Staff Photo

have one person that checks the box, then you’re not even going to look at that,” Kessner said. “You just throw it in the trash.”

Kessner attended an information session last summer on issues surrounding hiring people with criminal convictions.

“Laws have been on the books for 37 years, they just haven’t been followed,” she said. Legislation is in place as part of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act to keep employers from discriminating against those with criminal histories. But that doesn’t stop employers from consciously or subconsciously overlooking these applications regularly.

“This (Ban the Box legislation) gives the person the opportunity to meet you face to face or at least be interviewed on the telephone,” Kessner said. “And you can talk and get a measure of the individual and see if you have a fit.”

But the idea in Syracuse was immediately met with strong opposition.

“I put it on the agenda to start the process talking,” Kessner said. “I think that was kind of a mistake on my part.”

Kessner said the president of CenterStateCEO sent out a press release saying the proposed ordinance would prohibit any background checks.

“Which is nothing of the sort,” said Kessner. “That would be bad business. That would be a crazy way to do business.”

“We are not saying you can never do a background check. I wouldn’t even subscribe to that. So being, I would say, sort of accused of that was sort of ramping up the opposition in the way that was misleading.”

“They have an early, unfinalized draft ordinance,” stressed Warth. “A starting point for Jean and Khalid. There’s nothing in the works right now, no thinking at all, that employers should not be permitted to do background checks.”

Warth and others in Justice Strategies at the Center for Community Alternatives have been working with the Common Council members to formulate the plan. Part of this is examining other cities that have passed Ban the Box legislation across the United States, using their example as a model to be drawn upon and reshaped to fit Syracuse.

As of November 2012, 43 cities, including San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and Washington, D.C., have adopted ban the box policies or legislation. Warth says the policy they’ve modeled after most closely so far is the one passed in Newark. Ban the box is still in proposal stages in many other states and cities across the U.S., including: Richmond, Va.; Providence, R.I.; and Charlotte, N.C.

Rothwell’s first long-term job after incarceration was three years at the CCA helping others with criminal backgrounds get past the tough question and find employment. Now he works at another not-for-profit, helping place Syracuse college graduates in internships and employment.

But he remains an active advocate for the rights of the rehabilitated.

“For people who make the decision to turn their lives around and try to set a good example, it’s very hard to when you can’t set an example because you’re not allowed to be a fully productive citizen because of your criminal history record,” Rothwell said.

“It’s really destructive for the city of Syracuse as a whole. I think it’s really kept the community from progressing.”

EEOC

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was formed in 1965 to enforce laws against discrimination in the workplace.

The laws forbid discriminating against an applicant or employee based on age, disability, genetic information, national origin, pregnancy, race/color, religion and sex, including sexual orientation.

Since the 1970s the EEOC has been protecting the rights of individuals with criminal backgrounds, intermittently issuing policy statements on the issue (most recently in April 2012).

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at www.eeoc.gov



HENDRICKS CHAPEL
Syracuse University

A Home for All Faiths — A place for All People

Coming soon... the **Eat to Live** **Food Cooperative!**



Your options for making healthy food choices are about to become a whole lot better. Expected to open in the **summer of 2013, Eat to Live Food Cooperative** will stock farm-fresh fruits and vegetables—and so much more—at affordable prices.

Designed to meet a critical need in the South Side neighborhood, the 3,000-square-foot grocery store will feature a wide array of products, as well as a café with delicious, healthy treats.

Syracuse University joined with many local partners to make this vital resource a reality. For more information, contact the Syracuse University South Side Initiative Office at **315.443.1916**.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY: Scholarship in Action



WHAT'S IN A DRINK

- A typical 20-ounce can of soda contains 15 to 18 teaspoons of sugar
- A 64-ounce fountain cola drink could have up to 700 calories
- 1 in 4 people in America get at least 200 calories from consuming sugary drinks
- 5% get at least 576 calories — equivalent to four cans of soda

QUICK FACTS

- Beverage companies in the United States spend half a billion dollars on marketing aimed directly at youth and teens
- Two out of three adults in the nation are overweight or obese
- One out of three children are overweight or obese
- People who drink “liquid candy” don’t feel as full as if they had consumed the same amount of calories from solid food

Source: Harvard Study
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/sugary-drinks-fact-sheet/>

GOODBYE BIG GULP?

Debate focuses on banning sugary drinks or teaching healthy habits

By | Dana Harris
Urban Affairs reporter

South Siders speak out on New York City’s proposed soda ban, what could be done here

While New York City continues to wrestle over a legal limit on oversized sweet drinks, one South Side registered nurse has laid down the law in her own home.

Not in my house, says Barbara Yancy-Brewer.

“I want to tell you something that I had to change up a little bit,” Yancy-Brewer said last month, not long after a state Supreme Court judge ruled that New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s limits on sugary drinks over 16 ounces was “arbitrary and capricious” and overreached the city health department’s powers. “I would have my granddaughter (Kyra) and two of her cousins who are all teens over on the weekends,” Yancy-Brewer continued.

“They love soda and I saw myself bring sodas and buy two 12-packs. So I’d buy them on Friday, and they’d be done by Sunday. You’re speaking of 24 sodas being done in a two-day period between three teens,” Yancy-Brewer said.

Bloomberg is appealing the court ruling. His initiative and others to promote health, especially to the presumed benefit of minorities and young people, are sparking a debate that continues: Should people be told what healthy choices to make, or perhaps be persuaded instead by educating them?

On any given day half of people in the United States consume sugary drinks. And minorities are affected disproportionately by obesity and other diseases that can be related to lifestyle choice.

Hispanic boys ages 2-19 are significantly more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic white boys. In addition, non-Hispanic black girls are significantly more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic white girls, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, the Office of Minority Health reported two years ago that 19 percent of black girls and 12 percent of black boys in high school were overweight.

There is actually not that much dispute between 14-year-old Kyra Spaight of Grant Middle School — Yancy-Brewer’s granddaughter — and Bloomberg. “I don’t think I’d be a fan of that (the ban). I like soda,” she said, “and a lot of kids my age like soda. ... I think a lot of them would say, ‘Why are they doing this, it’s not cool,’ ” Spaight added.

But Spaight also gave some ground to exactly what

Bloomberg would do, focusing on fast-food and restaurant sales rather than groceries and convenience stores, which would not be similarly limited. “Maybe in fast food places, he could shorten the amount and size of cups so that people wouldn’t get so much soda, Spaight offered. I think that would work or something. That way you’re not completely taking away soda.”

“I like soda, and a lot of kids my age like soda. ... I think a lot of them would say, ‘Why are they doing this, it’s not cool.’ ”

— Kyra Spaight

Syracuse is not considering any New York City-style ban, but the health director of The Syracuse City School District, Maritza Alvarado, does not reject the idea out of hand.

“This is a tough one, because on the one hand I can understand that people have their right to make choices, but on the other hand all of us are actually paying for some of the choices that some people make. So, for example, higher rates of obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, just not taking care of yourselves — we’re all eventually paying for that,” Alvarado said.

Alvarado, as a health professional, knows the impact that a sugary drink can have.

“I was down in New York City recently,” she said, “and really it’s interesting that you go to the mall to grab some quick food and they have the calorie counts up there. (A 2006 New York City Board of Health-Bloomberg requirement to list calories right on menus

and menu boards.) And it made me take a step back and think ‘Oh jeez, I really don’t need that much.’ But I think that so many people have gotten used to ‘the bang for your buck’ with the larger portions that people see this as an infringement of their rights. Overall I think it’s a good idea, but how far he (Bloomberg) is going to get, I just don’t know,” Alvarado said.

Sugary drinks are expensive, too, another concern for high-minority, lower-income communities. The South Side of Syracuse includes a majority of African-Americans and Hispanics who on average make a median of only \$31,000 per household, according to the 2010 Census. Some 31 percent of the South Side is living at or below poverty.

Yancy-Brewer said large liters of soda are cheap — and the kinds of servings typically sold in groceries that would not have been banned by Bloomberg — but there are healthy drinks that are just as reasonably priced that can replace a sugary drink. “They’ve put a new Tops here. You can buy a 32-pack of water for \$3.99. And you can even take those 32 bottles of water and buy Crystal Light, which is very cheap, and put something in your water with half the sugar of a large liter of soda.

“I think the problem is, a lot of times what happens is with any community that’s misunderstanding, education is the best thing for people. When people

aren’t educated on what these sugar drinks cause or what harm they cause down the road, then it’s like ‘Whatever, let’s do it.’ ... It’s a lack of knowledge and education,” Yancy-Brewer said.

Alvarado added, “If you’re trying to force people to do something, I think there will always be some sort of controversy. But if we want people to change how they eat, we have to educate them that portion sizes have to be smaller, you have to eat more variety. But people who live in food deserts may not have that option. You can’t say to people, ‘You have to eat healthy’ and then not provide them the mechanism by which to do that.”

(The South Side had no big grocery until the recent opening of Tops, making it a “food desert.”)

Yancy-Brewer said many parents don’t have health insurance, and the cascade of problems brought on by unhealthy choices mean one problem after another. “So what I see is this being a precursor to problems down the road: diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, all these things.”

Meanwhile, despite his recent setback, Bloomberg has not given up: Days after the court ruling on sugar drinks, he called on the city council to consider legislation to require retailers who sell tobacco to keep the products out of sight — under the counter or behind cabinet doors.

RETHINK CHOICES

- Morning coffee: Instead of a medium cafe latte with whole milk (265 calories), try a small cafe latte with fat-free milk (125 calories)
- Lunchtime: Instead of non-diet soda (227 calories), try water or diet soda (0 calories)
- Dinnertime: Instead of non-diet ginger ale (124 calories), try water with a slice of lemon (0 calories)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

GARLAND JEFFREYS



garlandjeffreys.com

Saturday,
April 20, 2013

SHOW: 8:00 PM

DOORS: 7:00 PM

AT THE HISTORIC

Palace
Theatre

2384 James St., Syracuse
\$27 General Admission

Cash bar available
Donations of canned and
non-perishable foods welcome



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800-838-3006 and at
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Future Workshops offered from 10 a.m. to noon:
April 18, May 16, June 20 & July 18

REFUGEE
DEFINED

ref·u·gee /refyoō'jē /
A person who has fled
from some danger or
problem.

According to
migrationinformation.
org, at the end of 2000
there were 14.5 million
refugees and asylum
seekers worldwide. They
also estimated in 2000
that 40 percent live in
Asia, nearly 27 percent
live in Europe, 25 percent
live in Africa, 5 percent in
North America, less than
3 percent in Latin America
and the Caribbean, and
less than 1 percent in
Oceania.

SYRACUSE REFUGE

Somali Bantu refugees find support, community at center on Burt Street



> Binti Omar, 15, works on extra credit for algebra at the Somali Bantu Community Organization with the help of Elizabeth McMahon, a Syracuse University student. Omar's favorite subject is gym, but she enjoys algebra. | Glorianna Picini Staff Photo

By | Paige Sedgewick
Urban Affairs reporter

Somali Bantu Community Organization offers
English classes and programs for new families

While violence is an often-discussed problem for Syracuse and the South Side, the city and this neighborhood is a sometimes-unrecognized refuge from it, too.

Many newcomers to America find a center on Burt Street to be a new start, and a peaceful alternative.

“The mission here is to help new refugees and all refugees in the United States to get adjusted and also prepare them to get self-sufficient,” said Haji Adan, executive director of the Somali Bantu Community Organization of Syracuse.

And that is exactly what the center did for Sadik Yaqub and his family. It was the one place where there was hope.

“When the civil war broke out in Somalia, the militia-men attacked our village. They tied me back and then killed my dad in front of me. And the blood was flowing under my feet, and my mom wanted to save me, and as she was running towards my dad ... they thought she was attacking them and then they also killed her in front of me.”

Yaqub recalls walking for 25 days to Kenya. Once they arrived in the United States, Yaqub and his family were settled in Chicago.

From there, he said, “I moved to Syracuse because (of) my family members who live here and a lot of people speak (the language) here, and help us ... I prefer to stay here after six months and then go back to Chicago.”

It isn't coincidence that Somalis are coming to live in Syracuse. Here, Adan explained, “The help that is provided is free of charge to the people. Not all centers in the United States are free. A lot of them cost money.”

Yaqub describes the environment in Syracuse as, “My neighbor, my community.” Elsewhere, he said, it is more isolated. “My life, my own family.”

And now Yaqub is in an environment with many neighbors. Adan confirmed over email that there are about 500 refugees in the community. He also said that most of them live on the South Side because of public housing. Many of these families reach out to the center.

The center offers a number of classes to help the families — English primary among them.

These English as Second Language classes help prepare the adults first to get by, and ultimately for jobs. Classes are very practical.

“Like when they are late for work, what do they say?” Adan explained. “How to prepare for interviews, making appointments or canceling with doctors.”

The center also helps the families get jobs. They pre-interview and find out what they like to do and then assess how well they speak English. Adan said that most of the families maintain jobs in housekeeping and

FOR MORE
INFORMATION

Location:
Somali Bantu Community
Organization
302 Burt St.
Syracuse, NY 13202

Phone:
(315) 214-4480

Daily Courses:

- ESL classes offered every day, ages 10-12
- Children homework help, ages 5-8

cleaning or production and assembly.

The center also provides services to families with other issues, especially medical ones. When Yaqub had to get his kidney stones removed, the center assisted.

"I got big help from the community center transporting me back and forth, helping my wife to visit me because she cannot drive, and they fill out the forms," Yaqub said.

For younger refugees, schoolwork is a top priority.

"The children who have been coming here have been coming to the program for a long time. They are well-adjusted and all they need is the support of the community and the support of the neighborhood," Adan said.

One student who drops in at the center on Mondays and Thursdays is Binti Omar, daughter of Yaqub. She has been helping her parents adjust to the culture.

"Yeah, I always translate for my parents," Omar said. "They get phone calls or doctor appointments."

Still, English is youngsters' second language, too, so they often need help with reading and writing. Adan said there are usually 25 to 30 students; 15 or so Syracuse University students come down to the center to tutor. They also offer enrichment programs for the students and do challenging debates on a popular topic.

The center also wants children to learn to think critically. "We make them talk, and come up with a solution and a problem," Adan said.

Families get government assistance until they make enough to live on, Adan explained in more detail over email. He said that it depends on the family and the amount of income. If they make more than the poverty line, then they can be "cut off." But, Adan said, usually larger families get extended help.

Adan has a goal of his own for the families.

"We don't want everybody to be on public assistance, we want everybody to be self-sufficient. That's the American dream," Adan said.



> Omar Ahmed helps a student read English vocabulary. Ahmed, from Somalia, moved to the United States in 2003 and has been teaching English at the Somali Bantu Community Organization since 2007. | Glorianna Picini, Staff Photo



> Students from Somalia, Nepal, Burma and Eritrea learn English at the Somali Bantu Community Organization. | Glorianna Picini, Staff Photo

CIVIL WAR IN SOMALIA

There have been 350,000 to 1 million Somalis killed during this conflict since 1991, according to globalsecurity.org. The civil war in Somalia broke out because there is no national government. Fighting between rival faction leaders, in their attempts to rule, has led to starvation.

In 2011, five regions within Somalia declared famine because they had experienced their worst drought in 60 years, according to refintl.org.

There are still 3.7 million Somalis who are refugees and are in desperate need of humanitarian aid, according to refintl.org.

CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

The 2013 Onondaga County Scholastic Chess Championship was hosted by the Southside Academy Charter School on Sunday, March 10.

The Southside Academy chess club won first-place team honors in both the K-6 and K-12 divisions, and third place team honors in the K-4 division. The school's team members who competed were: Jalynn Regner, Jade Regner, Adam Qaddourah, Ibrahim Qaddourah, Justin Regner, Dave Ahyee, Deon DeLee, Anthony Abert, Alexis Brown and Briana Johnson. Additional team members are: Dwight Jackson, Nate Parkhurst, Adham Qaddourah, Kaleb Shelton and Kelvin Shelton.

About 40 students from around Central New York participated in the competition.



> Justin Regner, left, and Ibrahim Qaddourah, both Southside Academy Charter School students, play a game during The 2013 Onondaga County Scholastic Chess Championship. | Photo provided by Southside Academy Charter School



> Pastor Daren Jaime preaches the Word of God at the People's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, South Salina Street, on Palm Sunday. | Mark Logico, Staff Photo

FAITH BEYOND WALLS

Pastor leads congregation, revival of business along South Salina Street

By | Farron Stark
Urban Affairs reporter

Daren Jaime works to expand People's A.M.E. Zion Church's mission beyond the church itself

From the wood-framed window of his office on the second floor, pastor Daren Jaime looks down on the 2300 block of South Salina Street. The cracked pavement that used to bear crack pipes and the trailing footsteps of prostitutes, now paves the way for small business owners with an added interest to invest in their community.

To credit the five-year evolution, most people will point to the old stone building of the People's A.M.E. Zion Church. Those in the church will point to one man, Pastor Jaime, who in turn points up to give credit to God.

"I acquired a heart and a passion for people and community," Jaime said. "God basically told me this is what he wanted me to do."

Since the diocese moved the business-oriented pastor to Syracuse, he's done more than just deliver sermons behind the pulpit. Jaime gave up his career in journalism to focus on ministry but still hosts a two-hour, community-oriented radio talk show each Saturday on Power AM 620. And the Harlem native flies back to host two television shows each week in the Bronx — an hour-long, live call-in show, and a 30-minute show that focuses on issues in the African-American community and current events.

"It's all a part of what I do," he said. "The first priority was building up the community, then we talked about building up the church."

He said he just likes to stay busy, but his media presence also helps him and the church stay relevant, even among those who don't know about the church ministries. In just a few weeks, famed gospel singer and minister Donnie McClurkin will worship and deliver the message at the church revival.

Jaime is also a member of the trauma response team that partners with the Syracuse Police Department; is on the board for Southeast Gateway, which deals with housing on the South Side; and works with Reach CNY, which is involved with infant mortality. He emphasized that his work is about shifting the mentality of church beyond its four walls.

"When people start to see that outside we're engaged and we're active and trying to make a difference, I think that was the catalyst," he said. "And I believe we preach a relevant message to people in a way that they can understand it."

The church itself also has plans for expansion and business ventures. Jaime recently unveiled the congregation Project Save 711. It represents 711 E. Fayette St., one of the last remaining buildings from the historical Fifteenth Ward and the former house of worship for the church, which is the oldest African-American congregation in the city. Jaime wants to turn it into a community café and a place where people can learn culinary skills.

All are ideas that have the support of Gwen Fagan, who has been a member of the church since 1998, which was 10 years before Jaime moved to Syracuse.

"Some people didn't like it, and I'm quite sure some of those people just like to sit and wait and see," she said. "But now they're like 'Ohhh' and they've jumped on the bandwagon."

Fagan was laid off and finishing work on her M.B.A. Then she received what she can only describe as a vision from God when she had a dream of walking into a clothing store and asked for Mrs. Fagan. It was herself who walked out, and when she woke up, she was told to call it Suit "U" Now. Jaime encouraged her to pursue it.

"So I took my 401K and opened this shop with no loans, no nothing," she said. "Saturday it'll be two years since then."

Her business is located across the street from the church in the newly renovated strip of businesses built with grant money under Jaime's leadership. Fagan said she's not getting rich, but business is stable and she loves not having to report to anyone else. She doesn't see the same people that used to walk the street, but knows they probably still come at night because every now and then she'll see a beer bottle in front of her store or one nearby.

"This was a leap of faith," Fagan said when explaining how much more it meant to her to have a business in conjunction with the church. "And he [Jaime] was instrumental in it."

And the list of Jaime fans doesn't stop with his flock.

"He's got star power," said Timothy Jennings-Bey, better known as "Noble," director of the trauma response team and leader at the Southwest Community Center. "People feel like they know you but never met you ... and you can't teach that, that's a gift."

Noble explained that the trauma response team partners with the Syracuse Police Department to meet on the scene of shootings and other traumatic events primarily located on the South Side, to serve as a liaison between the police and the families involved. While

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GET INVOLVED

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Meeting times for church:
Sundays 8 a.m. and 11 a.m., Wednesdays 7 p.m.

RADIO SHOW TIMES

Pastor Daren Jaime's radio show airs on Power AM 620 on Saturdays from 3 to 5 p.m.

STORE HOURS

Gwen Fagan's store, Suit "U" Now, is open Tuesday-Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

IF YOU GO

What: Morning message delivered by Pastor Donnie McClurkin

When: 10 a.m. Sunday, April 21

Where: People's A.M.E. Zion Church, 2306 S. Salina St.

More Details: Donnie McClurkin is a preacher and singer. He has won three Grammy awards and an NAACP Image award, among many others.

PROJECT SAVE 711

Syracuse's A.M.E. Zion church started in 1841.

The church building at 711 E. Fayette St. is the oldest standing African-American church building in the city.

Although the church is boarded up, it still has the original stained-glass windows.

The building is more than a century old.

A NYS Consolidate Funding Application for \$400,000 was submitted. If the grant is awarded, the church will still need to raise \$133,000.

For more information: Visit save711amezion.org

Continued from Page 13

Noble said he invited other pastors from the South Side to join in the initiative, Jaime was the only one to follow through, and he does so with consistency.

"I remember the worst incident we responded to when a baby was killed and Pastor Jaime was like an alligator in a swamp," Noble said. "Everyone was on high alert, it was chaotic."

That response was the November 2010 gang shooting that killed 20-month-old Rashaad Walker Jr. when he was sitting in his car seat in a minivan on Coolidge Avenue. Noble said the baby's father grew up going to the community center, so losing the baby was like losing his nephew.

"I got to a point where I couldn't go any further, that was it," he said. "But pastor went above and beyond that so even though I'm the director of trauma response, to have someone like that, that's willing to go that length speaks volumes."

Jaime also recalled the horrific night and said it was one of his hardest. One of the most difficult moments for the church was being the constant victim of burglary. About two years ago, someone stole around \$10,000 worth of audio equipment. And before a full recovery, the church was burglarized again, but the second time people from the church investigated and caught up with one of the thieves.

"And after he turned himself in to the police, of course they charged him, but I promised him, I said if you would help me get all my stuff back, because it was him and three people involved, I would work very leniently with you," Jaime said.

Jaime went to court with the young man, who ended up being released on probation under the pastor. While Jaime describes it as one of the most painful times for the church, he said God was able to turn it around for the good. The young man eventually joined the church and was active in the audio/video ministry there.

"He comes by here now frequently and nobody's scared, he's accepted as part of the family," Jaime said.

Noble says Jaime is "the new breed from that old-style preaching," describing him this way: "He doesn't have a four-wall ministry. He brings the principles that Jesus came to teach, outside, and he put it in the streets."

Pastor Tony Roach of the Minda Street Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, has a radio talk show and even competed in a reality television show on Oprah's OWN network. He, too, has a strong media presence and has expanded his congregation's initiatives beyond the church walls.

"Christianity in discipleship and discipleship doesn't occur in the four walls of a church building," Roach said of outreach such as Jaime's. "Discipleship occurs in the lives of people they do business with on a day-to-day basis."

The people that Jaime does business with on a daily basis have helped increase the size of his flock. Fagan described the church a few years ago as only having a few dozen people scattered through the pews. Now, the church has about 500 members and standing-room-only on some Sundays.

During the 11 a.m. service, the parking lot is full and cars line the street. You can hear the choir singing from outside the church walls. And as for Jaime, "to God be the glory."



> Left, renovated businesses along the 2300 block of South Salina Street have helped to revitalize the South Side. Right, Pastor Daren Jaime with the People's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, located across the street from the renovations, has been instrumental in the block's improvements. | Mark Logico, Staff Photo

GROWING TEACHERS

Teachers of Tomorrow leads professionals in careers helping students

By | Joe Diglio
Urban Affairs reporter

Program provides incentives for teachers to work at schools in need and to earn certification

When she emigrated from Cuba to the United States, Rosalina Fonseca hoped to stick with her career as a teacher. She had taught math for nine years in her native country and hoped to do so here.

"I didn't know any English, but I wanted to be a math teacher in the U.S.," she said.

She got to work — and became a student herself. A decade later, she is not only teaching math in a city school, but she also has her master's and is advancing through the ranks partly on the strength of a state program to encourage her and others to choose Syracuse.

The program, she says, is "awesome," sounding as much like the student as the teacher she is.

Teachers of Tomorrow pays more to teachers who choose Syracuse and teach in key subject areas, then helps them earn more through continuing education.

Fonseca's path was incremental, and determined. English classes got her a teacher's assistant position at the Delaware Academy School in 2001. Two years later, she was offered the position she sought: a job teaching math at Clary Middle School. Other than a one-year spell at Beard School during the 2007-08 academic year, she has taught at Clary ever since. Meantime, she's earned a master's degree to secure her professional certification, and the higher salary that goes with it.

"I saw it and thought, 'I can do this,'" Fonseca said.

Teachers of Tomorrow was established in 2000 by the New York State Department of Education to combat teacher shortages in the city school districts of New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers. It aims to find teachers for particular schools and subject areas. Priority goes to schools that are considered underachieving based on state standards. Program coordinator David Lavelle said that other factors taken into consideration are schools in need of repair, or those that have special programs such as free and reduced lunches.

The program has multiple components designed to attract teachers, including a tuition reimbursement program. It gives teachers with lower levels of teaching certification \$700 per course in order to obtain their professional certification. Lavelle said the reimbursement program is important because a number of teachers are teaching outside of their certification level.

"We try to provide reimbursement to anything that will lead to the right certification," Lavelle said.



> Teacher Rosalina Fonseca found assistance from Teachers of Tomorrow to earn her master's degree while teaching at Clary Middle School. | Jessica Bidwell, Staff Photo

Fonseca continued teaching full time at Clary while completing her degree, going to class part time at Le Moyne College. In 2012, she graduated and earned her professional certification.

In addition to tuition reimbursement, the program has other offers for teachers, such as recruitment incentives. The recruitment incentive provides a \$3,400 stipend in addition to a first-time employee's base salary, which in the district is \$42,052. However, this still leaves teachers in Syracuse with a slightly lower salary than the average for a starting teacher in New York, which according to the state education department is \$48,520.

Lavelle said more than 20,000 teachers have been hired with the help of the recruitment incentive program. Ann Sanzone, assistant director of personnel for The Syracuse City School District, said it gives the district a leg up when it comes to recruiting. Of the 80 to 90 teachers the district will bring in during a given year, about 10 to 15 new teachers come in part thanks to the program.

The overall statewide program has reimbursed courses for more than 10,000 teachers over the years.

"When we talk about all of our recruitment efforts, we talk about the Teachers of Tomorrow Program," Sanzone said. "And when we talk about retention and support, we want to make sure that they get their professional certification, and that we support them by helping them with their education."

TEACHER TRAINING

TEACHERS OF TOMORROW OFFERS

- **Teacher Recruitment Incentives:** Provides annual stipend separate from teacher's base salary for up to three years
- **Summer in the City Internship:** Provides field experience for students enrolled full time in a New York State-registered teacher preparation program
- **New York State Master Teacher Program:** Designated Master teachers can be awarded \$10,000 annually working in a low-performing school for up to three years
- **Tuition Reimbursement Program:** Provides funds to school districts to reimburse teachers \$700 per course taken toward professional certification
- **Science, Mathematics and Bilingual Education Tuition Reimbursement Program:** Provides funds to school districts to reimburse teachers \$4,000 annually for courses taken toward a professional certificate in math, science or bilingual education
- **Summer Teacher Training Program (NYC only):** Provides funds for New York City schools to train first-time employees with any type of certification

Source:
www.highered.nysed.gov/

ZEN BUDDHISM

Zen is both “something we are and something we do,” according to Shinge Roshi, the spiritual leader of the Zen Center of Syracuse. There is no doctrine in Zen Buddhism; instead, it consists of a guide toward “realization.”

Buddhism was created by Siddhartha Gautama, an Indian prince who was sheltered for most of his life. When he ventured outside of his castle some 2,500 years ago, he noticed that there was sickness, suffering and death, and became distraught. After that, he left his life as a prince and meditated for an extensive amount of time until he achieved enlightenment. From that point on, he was known as the Buddha. “Buddha” means “awakened one.”

The goal of Buddhist practice is to achieve “nirvana,” which is the state of being free from suffering. Zen Buddhist practice involves meditation, recitation of chants, practicing the “eightfold path” laid out by the Buddha, and making offerings.

Source: Zen Center of Syracuse

REACHING NIRVANA

Dharma Kids program at Zen Center of Syracuse open to all



> Paul Batkin reads a story about the Buddha to Xen Warner and Catheryn DeSalvo during the Dharma Kids program held at the Syracuse Zen Center. | Kayla Rice, Staff Photo

By | Marisa DeCandido
Urban Affairs reporter

Sunday sessions teach Tibetan and Zen Buddhism to help children de-stress

Today’s assignment: “Draw what you hear.” As soon as Reijitsu Paul Batkin says these words, the eyes of the children sitting inside the Zen Center of Syracuse light up. These are the kinds of activities they look forward to on Sundays at the Dharma Kids program. The five children quickly pick up crayons and paper, rushing to a spot inside the center where they can sit quietly, reflect and “draw what they hear.”

“I decided to track the noise I heard,” says Gene Balian, 7, of Fayetteville, as he holds up a white piece of paper showing red, yellow and blue lines that look almost like a heart monitor. “The spikes up are when I heard something loud, like someone coughing.”

Next to present her findings is Ellen Batkin, Batkin’s daughter. The 6-year-old took a different approach. She shows a paper with splashes of color in different sizes.

“I hear a loud noise, paper shuffling, coloring, trucks from outside, people walking and people whispering,” she excitedly explains. “I showed the different sounds in

different colors.”

These creative projects are just one part of the Dharma Kids program at the Zen Center of Syracuse at 266 W. Seneca Turnpike. Recently, the children helped to prepare for a special upcoming event that is a major celebration for Buddhists, according to Batkin’s wife, Lyn Blanchfield.

“We do some fun group activities, like recently we made clay Buddha statues and painted them to celebrate the Buddha’s birthday in April,” she explained.

The Dharma Kids program brings families together at the center so that children can learn more about Buddhist practices and values. The Zen Center is not only a meeting place for those studying various levels of Buddhism, but also a sort of “house of worship,” where people can meditate and partake in Buddhist practices. It is just one of two in the area.

Dharma Kids started around 2000, but stopped for a few years because there was no one to lead it. However, center member Jennifer Waters revitalized it four years ago, and then passed it on to its current director, Paul Batkin. Batkin and his family are from the city of Syracuse.

He leads the group two Sundays each month at



> From left, Xen Warner, Catheryn DeSalvo and Anthony DeSalvo plant flower and vegetable seeds at a recent Dharma Kids program activity. | Kayla Rice, Staff Photo

10:30 a.m. It is open to children ages 5 and up, as well as their parents. The program is open to all members of the community, not just members of the Zen Center, according to Batkin.

"We have a lot of people coming from communities all around Syracuse because we are the only place that offers a program like this," Batkin said.

Emily Balian is one of those people, traveling from Fayetteville with her two children Karina, 9, and Gene to take part in the program.

"I started bringing them a year ago when I found out about this Zen program for kids in the area," she said. "I practice Buddhism in my own home, so it's great to get a chance to introduce it to the kids.

"When they come here, they can explore it and have some kind of experience with it."

While the program is well known among Zen Center members and others who "sit," or participate in meditation and study some form of Buddhism, it has not always been publicized to those in the city of Syracuse. However, the program can benefit local kids even if their families are not Buddhist, according to former participant and Syracuse University Communication and Rhetorical Studies professor Diane Grimes.

"It's very good for kids because it can calm them down and help them learn how to focus," she explained. "I'm not sure if you're just going to practice it for an

hour every other week it will stick, but for those who really have it as a part of their lifestyle at home, it works."

While Dharma Kids is open to everyone, the experience does involve learning about both Tibetan and Zen Buddhism. It also includes a short meditation in the Zendo, or Buddhist Meditation Hall, a reading from the story of Buddha's life, and some kind of craft or activity.

"Sitting for 45 minutes quietly meditating is great, but it's a little more than I could ask my 6-year-old to do," Batkin said. "This is important to me, so it's a great way to share it with my children."

Batkin's son, Daniel, has attended the program for several years. Soft-spoken and introspective, Daniel proves himself to be an extremely mature and thoughtful 13-year-old. The program really helps children appreciate being in the present moment, he said.

"I think when we go into the Zendo, it's so quiet and just sitting there really helps us focus on being mindful," Daniel added.

These types of lessons taught in the Dharma Kids program are not just limited to Buddhist practice, but can apply to all people in all aspects of life, according to Grimes. She took her neighbor's two children to the program.

"Their mom works in the library at SU, and so I know she would talk about a lot of the stories the children heard in Dharma Kids and put them into a life perspective," Grimes said. "There was one story about 'filling your bucket,' like when you do something nice for someone, you add to your bucket, and when you do something bad, it takes away from your bucket.

"So there is this idea that we are always filling our buckets and be kind to people, and their mom talked about that with them."

Batkin acknowledges that it is not an immediate process. It takes time for children to really grasp his teachings

"I think it's more of a slow, evolutionary thing," Batkin said. "I think that it has affected Daniel, who has been around this practice since he was a baby."

Blanchfield jumped in. "Practicing Buddhism really helps him de-stress."

GET INVOLVED IN DHARMA KIDS

Everyone in the community is invited to attend the Dharma Kids program.

If interested, visit zencenterofsyracuse.org/programs/dharma-kids

You can also email Paul Batkin at pbatkin@twcny.rr.com or call the Zen Center at (315) 492-9773

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

Buddha's birthday is a fun celebration for the Buddhist community, especially at the Zen Center. While the exact date fluctuates according to different sects of Buddhism, it is often celebrated April 8.

This year, the Dharma Kids program made and painted clay Buddha statues to use during the celebration, and they will be displayed around the main house of the Zen Center. In several Asian countries, the Buddha's birthday is a national holiday.

Source: Zen Center of Syracuse

NOT BUDDHIST?

No problem! The Zen Center is open to anyone who is interested. You do not have to be a member or a Buddhist to practice at the Zen Center. Newcomers can practice with instruction at 5:30 p.m. Thursdays.

In order to become a member, the center suggests a donation of \$5 per visit when you first begin. To become a provisional member, consistent practice is required. You must attend "zazen" at the center at least once a week and attend either a three-day sesshin at the Zen Center or a weeklong sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. A "sesshin" is an intensive zazen practice that can last the entire day.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

An artistic director is the decision-maker of an arts organization.

Specifically in a theater company, the artistic director has artistic control of the theater's production choices, directorial choices and the artistic vision in general. In large nonprofit theaters, the artistic director may be appointed by the board of directors.

The artistic director is the main person responsible for planning a theater's season. Other responsibilities can include but are not limited to the hiring of creative/production personnel (such as directors), choosing the material staged in a season and other theater management tasks. He or she may also direct productions for the company.

THEATER REVIVAL

New artistic director brings back Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company



> Ryan Johnson-Travis was named artistic director of the Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company earlier this year. Under his direction, the program is beginning to thrive. | Alyssa Greenberg, Staff Photo

By | Rebecca Petit
Urban Affairs reporter

**He plans to focus on community outreach:
'I want to tell stories that mean something'**

The new artistic director of the Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company says it's all about community. His first project proves it.

The PRPAC's comeback production is a cabaret for the African-American students that were not cast in Cicero-North Syracuse High School's musical production of "The Wiz." Not a single African-American student was cast in a lead role — a controversy since "The Wiz" is an African-American adaptation of the musical "The Wizard of Oz."

A mother of one of the CNS students contacted Ryan Johnson-Travis, PRPAC's new artistic director, and asked for his help.

She got it, he recalls.

"She said, 'Hey, I want to do this for my baby. She's graduating, she's not a part of this production, can you help?' I said, 'Yes, this is what we can do.'"

The cabaret will take place at the Community Folk Art Center this month, on April 19 and 20. It will serve as a fundraiser and will reintroduce PRPAC to the com-

munity. Johnson-Travis says he accepted the position as artistic director starting last January because of the opportunity it brings for just this sort of community outreach. "I think theater is so much more than just props and costume and set design. It's also about being in the community," Johnson-Travis said.

In an effort to bring PRPAC back to its original standing in the theater community, its board reached out to Johnson-Travis, 27, who has an infectious smile and a personality to match. Johnson-Travis is an actor, director, writer, musician and adjunct professor.

The Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company was founded in 1982 by William H. Rowland and Roy E. Delemos when they realized opportunities for African-American actors, directors, singers, dancers, technicians and audiences were lacking in Syracuse. Thus, the PRPAC was formed to promote the richness and diversity of African-American culture in the community. The company is named after Paul Robeson, the singer, actor and civil rights activist whose enthusiasm for excellence on stage and social justice in society personified what PRPAC hoped to accomplish. PRPAC's most notable musical theater productions include "The Wiz," "From the Cotton Club to Motown" and "What's Going On — The Musical Genius of Marvin Gaye."

“There’s a saying: If you ask for money, you get advice; if you ask for advice, you get money.”

— Ryan Johnson-Travis

Johnson-Travis remembers back in 2007 when he first started performing with The Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company.

“When I was a grad student at Syracuse University the administration in PRPAC really opened up their doors to any and everybody who wanted to use their space. So I was in about five or six plays produced by the company, and I also did my one-man show there, as a part of my thesis project.” Within the past two years, the once-thriving community theater company, which presented high-quality theater performances of African-American tradition, had begun to slowly disappear from the Syracuse theater scene, as SU financially and administratively cut ties. “When I graduated to get my MFA in acting, I came back to do an internship at Syracuse Stage, and so I went back to the original space, but the lot was basically vacant,” Johnson-Travis remembers.

PRPAC first pursued Johnson-Travis for the position in 2012; however, he declined because he had plans to move to New York City to pursue his acting career. “I thought about friends of mine who are in New York City and I know what comes along with that is me waiting tables and hoping that I get a shot, somebody sees me. I know what comes along with that is an incredible amount of competition for morsels of roles telling the kind of stories I don’t want to tell. I don’t want to be ‘Suave Man Number 5.’”

So when a gig opened up for him to do some acting in Syracuse, he didn’t move to the city. He also started teaching at Colgate University as an adjunct.

“PRPAC saw a show I directed, and they asked me again to meet with them. I knew what the meeting would be about. I decided at that point, this is something I really want to consider because of the work I want to create. I want to be in a community and connect to why

the arts are therapeutic,” Johnson-Travis said. “For a lot of people art is healing. I met a mechanic who was a poet. My mom, she’s been a secretary her whole life in some capacity and she’s always written plays. She has like Rubbermaid storage bins full of plays. We used to do plays in the church. So I know people like that exist here,” he explained.

Johnson-Travis has already begun to make some executive decisions. He has restored the board to its traditional role of fundraising. Johnson-Travis says he handles the day-to-day operation. “In terms of PRPAC, I’m doing essentially the role of artistic director but so much more. I’m not doing what an artistic director is meant to. A lot of what I’m doing is director development, marketing, fundraising, everything that a normal non-profit would do, with a team of about seven or eight, I’m doing by myself.”

And he does it without a paycheck, a budget or an official home for the company. However, that doesn’t deter him.

“I thought about a lot of people who intern at Fortune 500s for free. But what they have is they have this vast amount of experience and they have that nice little line on their resume. Right now, I am essentially investing in myself.”

PRPAC doesn’t have an operating budget because so much of the funding was supported by SU. Johnson-Travis already knows what it’s like not to have a budget.

“When I got to grad school, we didn’t have a theater program but there was an incredible drive to make these plays happen. So we would just bind together. Ten of us would put together plays, and we ended up at national competitions with no budget, no anything.” For PRPAC, he says he will use that same mentality to make productions happen. “We’re basically pulling together this really grassroots movement to what theater is about. It’s not about whipping together a play with a \$20,000 investment. So you have clothes in your closet, i.e. costumes. So you have a bookshelf that you’re not using, boom, that’s our set.”

He also doesn’t believe in asking for funding. “I haven’t made that my priority. There’s a saying: If you ask for money, you get advice; if you ask for advice, you get money. So in my meetings with stakeholders and politicians and leaders of other theater groups, what I’ve done is simply ask to be a part of a collaboration. How can we come together and share resources?”

As far as PRPAC not having a space of its own, Johnson-Travis is working on partnerships with local theater groups such as La Casita Cultural Center and 601 Tully, which are both on the Near Westside. “All of these are like pockets of communities that we can tap into. So not having a brick-and-mortar has its benefits. There are a lot of venues and everybody is trying to get an audience. We don’t have a theater space, but we can bring

IF YOU GO

What: Cabaret & Conversation

When: 8 to 9:30 p.m.
Friday and Saturday, April 19 and 20

Where: Community Folk Art Center, 803 E. Genesee St.

More Details: Evening will feature a live performance by several Syracuse area high school students and local musicians. The performance will be followed by an invigorating conversation about colorblind casting, a topic PRPAC believes should be brought to light in an effort to increase understanding and opportunity for performers of all types and backgrounds. Event will also feature a silent auction, raffle, hors d’oeuvres and refreshments. Semi-formal attire is requested.

Cost: \$20 at the door or purchase online at theprpac.org

More Info.: Contact Ryan Johnson-Travis at (315) 313-5203 or info@theprpac.org

Continued on Page 20

FINDING TALENT

The Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company is searching for all talent. Actors, singers, poets, musicians of all ages.

“I think it’s important for performers to continue to have a safe space to refine their craft as artists. And it’s also important for community members to be able to come together in a safe creative space to exercise that muscle. You have a space for actors, but you also have a space for would-be carpenters and would-be seamstresses. So it’s a space for everybody,” Ryan Johnson-Travis said.

PRPAC will be holding auditions throughout the year. Next, PRPAC will collaborate with CNY’s “Celebration of the Arts” on May 10, at St. David’s Episcopal Church.

To participate, email info@theprpac.org or call (315) 313-5203. Be prepared to present whatever showcases your talent best.

“Whoever shows up to the audition, whatever they do, I’m going to weave their pieces into a seamless production with a narrative plot,” Johnson-Travis said.

His plan is to build a season around people who want to be a part of long-term work.



> Ryan Johnson-Travis cleans up the basement of the Plymouth Congregational Church, which was holding things from PRPAC from years ago, for a fundraiser. With the help of some other volunteers, Johnson-Travis separated the boxes into piles of what he thought PRPAC could use for shows and also items that PRPAC could sell. | Alyssa Greenberg, Staff Photo

Continued from Page 19

our audience to your space.”

Actress Calmesha Givens, and South Side native, reached out to Travis-Johnson because as a Syracuse native she wanted to find a way to give back to her community. As the new director of development, Givens says having a community theater in Syracuse is a great opportunity for the youth to get involved in something that’s not as prevalent in this city.

“For the young individuals who are interested in art, it provides them with the experience, the exposure, the opportunity to engage in something that’s more fulfilling, something that would get them out of their environment and exposed to something more beneficial,” Givens said.

Tim Bond, the producing artistic director of Syracuse Stage, acknowledges the importance of community theater to the city. “Having a successful and active community theater presence is a sign of a healthy community. It gives a voice to emerging artists and builds audience interest in theater. Having a theater like PRPAC plays a very particular role in giving a voice to the African-American community here. I wish them much success in reviving this important organization.”

Johnson-Travis is passionate when he talks about his vision for the 2013-2014 theater season.

“I want to tell stories that mean something. I want to create and carve out and shape stories that have a message, and it doesn’t always have to be heavy or dramatic, but it can inevitably have message,” he said.

Givens adds that she is excited for the theater season, which will involve a range of productions. “It just won’t be predominately black productions but diverse productions, and that’s art. Art doesn’t define one specific

race. Art is very diverse. There’s no shape, size, color or form. I believe that’s what Ryan is going to bring to the company.”

Originally from Atlanta, Johnson-Travis earned his bachelor’s degree in African World Studies from Fort Valley State University. He received a master’s in Pan African Studies from SU and also holds a master of fine arts in acting from the University of Florida.

Kyle Bass, who was one of Johnson-Travis’ professors at SU, has now become his mentor.

“I think he comes with a skill set that PRPAC can use right now to really move forward to draw new interest and revive its position in the community,” he said. “It will be challenging and he knows this. We’ve talked about the fact that he’s not from here and hasn’t been here that long, so that ability to build relationships will be really key for him. People will see that he’s serious about this, and I think he has what it takes.”

Johnson-Travis’ goal for the next year is to get out of the red and into the black, to find a home PRPAC can call its own and for PRPAC to have a vibrant presence.

“I really want to do a bedside thing for terminally ill patients. I would love for PRPAC in some way be involved with hospice so these people can see their stories in some type of play,” he explained. “I’d love for the work to reflect the cutting-edge, classy, really proactive material that it can, and not at the expense of monetary things. ‘We didn’t have the (money for the) project, so we had to cut back. No.’ In fact because we don’t have the budget, we need to press even harder to have a professional-looking product. Really the biggest investment for me would be the community. They say, ‘Look, this is something that I believe in, and I don’t want this to die.’ ”

STROLLING *the* SOUTH SIDE

P.E.A.C.E. Inc.: A place of learning, peace, warmth

By | Natalie Caceres
Staff reporter

P.E.A.C.E., Inc. enjoys a prime location off of South Salina Street, yet Reshana Blackshear and her team members say they are still tirelessly trying to make the community aware of the organization's existence and purpose.

"We want to know, how can we better serve you? How can we help you be more self-sufficient, thrive and empower yourselves?" she said about the questions they ask themselves when helping those who use the program.

The larger organization Project

Connection is a part of P.E.A.C.E., Inc. It serves community members from infancy into adulthood. With aid such as afterschool programs for children, tutoring for young adults and personal enrichment and support groups for adults and parents, there are a multitude of resources available for the surrounding South Side.

"We work with families with children who have special needs," Blackshear explained, "specifically developmental disabilities."



Read the full Strolling column online at mysouthsidestand.com



> Top: Children can choose from a wide range of activities, including playing video games, before doing homework and eating dinner at P.E.A.C.E. Inc.'s Project Connection, an after-school program for children with developmental disabilities.

Left: Reshana Blackshear is the director of the after-school program. | Allison Milligan, Staff Photos



"I read The Stand to find out what's going on in the community, for people to be aware that there are programs in the community for your kids, or you, to be involved with. It's a nice way to learn about what's going on."

— Alterina Hinkle, South Side Resident

How to purchase an ad

If interested in running an ad, contact **Ashley Kang** to request a rate card and discuss options by emailing Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or by calling (315) 882-1054. The Stand's rate card can also be found online. www.mysouthsidestand.com



> Alterina Hinkle with daughter Niay-irah Lawrence

CONCERT: IF YOU GO

What: Garland Jeffreys with special guest Grupo Pagan

Where: The Palace Theatre, 2384 James St.

When: Doors open at 7 p.m.; show at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 20

More Details: Cash bar available. Donations of canned and non-perishable foods are welcome.

Cost: \$27

For Tickets: Visit brownpapertickets.com online, by phone at (800) 838-3006 or visit Sound Garden in Armory Square

READY TO ROCK

'The King of In Between' brings his eclectic mix to Syracuse



> Garland Jeffreys, a veteran of rock 'n' roll, blues, soul and reggae, returns to Syracuse this month to perform. He first came to Syracuse in 1965 to study fine arts at Syracuse University. | Photo provided

By | Reggie Seigler
A Friendly Five columnist

National act Garland Jeffreys to perform at historic Palace Theatre on April 20

Over the past couple of years, A Friendly Five column has spotlighted many groups, bands, individual musicians and singers. With each story we have tried to share some insights with our readers as to the variety of musical styles and talents in our city.

Occasionally we have told the stories of some of our musical ambassadors who have moved away to pursue careers in other markets. However most of them, if not all, still consider Syracuse home.

Garland Jeffreys, 69, a singer/songwriter from Brooklyn, fits that mold. Well kind of. You see, while Garland is not from Syracuse nor does he consider it his home, he has experienced a few of our winters. Garland began playing music and studying fine arts while at Syracuse University in 1965.

Some of you may remember 1965. It was the year Jim Brown made his debut with the Cleveland Browns (I always wondered if the team was named after him). It was also the year that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led thousands of marchers from Selma to Montgom-

*"I have my
own sound."
— Garland Jeffreys*

ery, Ala., in their quest for justice and voting rights. President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act later that same year guaranteeing voting rights for blacks.

Things were changing then. Heavy-weight boxer Cassius Clay even changed his name. Many of you remember him as the young Muhammad Ali who stood victoriously over the floored Floyd Patterson, taunting him, "What's my name, what's my name?"

That was 1965, and freedom to be oneself was the political climate of the era. It marked the beginning of the end of the times when some blacks would feel the need to hide behind even the slightest bit of light-colored skin, trying to deny their blackness in order to be accepted.

Garland was coming of age around that time.

BEHIND THE NAME

Reggie Seigler's "A Friendly Five" column is named in memory of a singing group in which his two uncles — Mango Gray and George Gray — were members.

The group was called "The Friendly Five," and his uncles moved it from Clarksdale, Miss., to Syracuse in the 1950s.

"I learned all of the racial names quickly when I was coming up," he recalled. "People were afraid to be themselves, even within the family because the penalties could be severe."

Today, though, Garland is proud of his multiracial ethnicity. He is part Puerto Rican, Caucasian and black. He reflects his background in his artistry. He calls himself the "King of In Between," which is also the title of his latest album.

"My music is a product of who I am as a person," he said. "I have my own sound."

He shared with me that his influences were jazz, rock, funk, soul and reggae and that some of the artists he loved when he was coming up were the Temptations, Smokey Robinson and Bob Dylan. I guess it's no coincidence that 1965 was the year the Temptations' song "My Girl" reached No. 1, and Bob Dylan released his hit, "Like a Rolling Stone."

The music Garland writes usually has a message. Sometimes he talks about race relations and other times he just talks about being who you are.

Garland has taken his music all around the world, or maybe I should say Garland's music has taken him all around the world. This October, he will perform in Germany, Holland, Belgium and France.

"I have sold over one million CDs worldwide," he said.

His records are released on the Luna Park Records Label. Recently, he did a live performance of his latest

CD on the Late Show with David Letterman.

"It was really cool to perform on the show, but being interviewed was nice," he said.

Insight and knowledge emanated from Garland's persona as I spoke with him. I got the feeling that Garland had something meaningful to say and that he knew how to articulate his message well. So I asked him if he would share some things with us. I was particularly interested in hearing about how bands and musicians could persevere in this business.

"There needs to be a goal," he explained. "Bands have to take a harmonious approach to what they're trying to accomplish. There has to be some commitment and stick-to-it-ive-ness. Once the product is made, you have to work on it and improve it."

Garland will bring his product to The Palace Theatre this month. The band Grupo Pagan will be his opening act. The band performs Latin-flavored songs and will showcase a few new originals at the show from their upcoming CD. Edgar Pagan from Grupo said that it was an honor to be asked to open.

"Garland is a legend," Pagan said. "His music is interesting because it is very political."

*Have A Friendly Five suggestion? Contact Reggie at
reggie@softspokenband.com
or (315) 479-9620*

CHECK THEM OUT

Garland Jeffreys' band

- Bass, Brian Stanley
- Drums, Tom Curiano
- Guitar, Adam Roth
- Keys/guitar, Gray Reinhard
- Vocals, Garland Jeffreys

Visit the band online at:
garlandjeffreys.com

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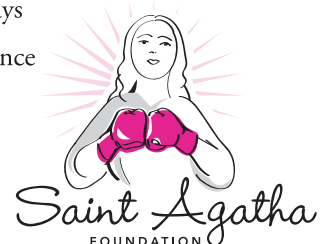
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