

the **Stand** south side news

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Syracuse, NY

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Issue 34 FREE

RUNNING RIGHT PAST

Corcoran High School junior finishes sixth in state 300-meter race

Ways to stop bullying

Three young girls share their tips in a guest column

play space

Mary Nelson raising money for basketball and tennis courts

Gardens of local food

Groups working toward same goal: healthy eating

MARSHELLA MASON'S MUSIC



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IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.**FEATURES** | Learn how Syracuse Community Geography uses mapping to identify hunger zones and to study the demand for food pantry supplies in the city.**COMMUNITY** | Get to know Syracuse Grows, a nonprofit group that is raising money and awareness to cultivate community gardens on the South Side.**SCHOOL AND YOUTH** | Check out a special guest column about bullying, which was written by elementary-grade members of Pretty Girls Rock and their mentor.**SPORTS** | Meet Corcoran High School's promising track and field star, Patrice Williams, who placed sixth in the state 300-meter race and is known as "The Silent Bullet."**SCHOOL AND YOUTH** | Read all about Corcoran Band Director Marshella Mason, whose knack for recruiting has tripled the number of students in her school's music program.**COMMUNITY** | Mary Nelson has plans to turn an empty grass lot next to her center into basketball courts and a tennis court so children will have a place to play sports.

■ Cover photography of Patrice Williams by Lenny Christopher

CALENDAR | APRIL

What: Bird Houses for Fair Housing Annual Fundraiser**When:** 5:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 16**Where:** Community Folk Art Center, 805 E. Genesee St.**Cost:** Tickets \$15; visit cnyfairhousing.eventbrite.com or purchase at the door**Contact:** To learn more, contact Karen Schroeder at info@cnyfairhousing.org or (315) 471-0420**More Info.:** This auction and reception will benefit CNY Fair Housing's efforts to eliminate housing discrimination, to promote open communities and to let attendees purchase a unique bird house for the spring.**What:** Sustainability Workshop**When:** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 19**Where:** Southwest Community Farm, Midland and Bellevue avenues**Cost:** Free**Contact:** Register with Ethany Uttech at eauttech@gmail.com**More Info.:** Sponsored by The Canary Project, this series of sustainability-themed workshops is designed for high school and college-age students. In this session, participants will learn to grow their own food. This date also is the Southwest Community Farm's season kick-off. Participants will transplant seedlings in the dome greenhouse, learn about the farm and put the finishing touches on the greenhouse dome and earth oven.

Tribute to John A. Young

The Stand is sad to share that board member John A. Young passed away Feb. 27.

I first met John four years ago at The Stand's launch party before our very first print issue came out. He was enthusiastic about our community newspaper project and eager to be a part of it. John quickly joined our board in 2010 and began to bring ideas and outreach to the project.

John was a U.S. Army veteran, honorably serving his country for 26 years, and served as a photojournalist at the Pentagon. His journalism experience and photography skills played a major role in his efforts at the paper. He was eager to share story ideas and provide photography tips at our annual photo walks.

He made every effort to attend The Stand's community workshops and outreach efforts, and was present at every photo walk, except one, which just happened to fall on the date of his wedding. He was also an active member of the Syracuse Association of Retired Men and the American Legion Dunbar Post 1642.

I heard from John often outside of board meetings through phone calls and sometimes short visits to grab extra copies of the paper, which he would personally distribute. He'd call and say, "Ashley, I have a story for you. You need to get a student on this." Or he would remind me of upcoming events in the community that our readers should know about.

At the most recent board meeting he attended, he welcomed our two newest board members and was excited to add Tajuana "Tae" Cerutti, who is recently out of grad school and new to being on a board. John was encouraged by seeing such a youthful addition and told the board, "we can take her under our wing and train her," but he also valued the youthful energy and ideas she will provide.

And it was obvious he was a dutiful son, often mentioning "that's my mom on the phone" or "after this, I have to go and check up on mother." He is survived by his wife, Tonette; his mother, Alberta Young; and three children, Trebbe Shaw (Dwayne) of Atlanta, twin sons, Jamal Young of Rochester, N.Y., and Jafir Young (Mercedes) of Los Angeles; five grandchildren; nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. Our thoughts are with them.

At this time, our thoughts are also with another board member, Nathaniel Brown, who spent more than a week in the hospital and is back home recuperating.



> John A. Young, left, is shown with Reggie Seigler, fellow board member, and below in the orange shirt. | File photos



Ashley Kang

MAPS WITH A PURPOSE

Syracuse Community Geography's mission:

- Raise awareness about community resources and problems
- Advocate community concerns
- Inform programming and planning processes
- Support community organizing

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the organization's initiatives, visit

communitygeography.org

MAPPING HUNGER

Geographers use spatial data to analyze food security in Syracuse



> Aggie Lane, left, talks with Chuckie Holstein, executive director of F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, at a recent event. Syracuse Community Geography commemorated eight years of partnerships in Central New York. | Drew Osumi, Staff Photo

By | Miguel Balbuena
Community correspondent

Syracuse Community Geography members study demand for food pantry supplies

When one thinks about hunger, the first thing that comes to mind isn't usually mapping. But hunger was exactly what the precursors of Syracuse Community Geography focused on to study the demand for food pantry supplies in the city at the request of the Samaritan Center, a soup kitchen downtown.

In 2003, when the Syracuse Hunger Project study was conducted, Lucas Barros-Correia was a sixth-grader in his hometown of Boston. On March 6 of this year, Barros-Correia — now a senior geography major at Syracuse University — was manning one of two computer stations, located near a projector showing images of the hunger study on a highlight reel.

"In May 2013, I decided to apply to a yearly internship at Community Geography in order to research topics such as the potential of mobile farmers' markets to be part of the solution to food scarcity," he said. "This involves assembling data sets and using GIS (geographic

information system)."

The slide show and concurrent events, held at the Palace Theatre at 2384 James St., were put together by Syracuse Community Geography to celebrate the eighth anniversary of the commencement of its formal cooperation with community organizations in Central New York. Those include Partnership for Onondaga Creek, Onondaga Citizens League and United Way, all of which sent members to the commemoration.

In addition, Syracuse Community Geography has collaborated with the city of Syracuse, which was represented at the meeting by Andy Maxwell, director of the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, and Steve Harris, city arborist.

Syracuse Community Geography's duty is to "map and spatially analyze ... identify and address challenges, providing insight on social issues such as food insecurity," according to its press release. To achieve these goals, it relies on students such as Barros-Correia, and faculty.

But before students and professors can work on a project, it has to be submitted by a community-based organization, coalition or task force, or a municipal entity. Then the project is assessed for its "societal

benefit” by Syracuse Community Geography’s advisory board, which is composed of eight members.

One board member is Aggie Lane, an activist with Partnership for Onondaga Creek and the Urban Jobs Task Force. She has been part of the advisory committee since 2012.

Lane said that eight years ago, Jonnell Allen Robinson, director of Syracuse Community Geography, did mapping for Partnership for Onondaga Creek related to jobs and skills. Robinson presented the findings to a community meeting on the South Side. Then in 2010 and 2011, Robinson hosted South Side youth brought to Syracuse University by the partnership and taught them about global positioning system — GPS — in a fun way.

“I value Community Geography’s work so much.”

— Aggie Lane

“Jonnell created a GPS treasure hunt for them, allowing them some hands-on experience with GPS locators,” Lane said. These experiences prompted Lane to join Syracuse Community Geography’s board, she added.

Lane also praised the group’s recent role in helping the Urban Jobs Task Force by mapping the city’s unemployment by neighborhood. She said that work has been useful for the task force’s advocacy around jobs for low-income people.

“Various maps and studies on the SCG website illustrate some of the problems and initiatives that benefit the South Side, such as the day-care study, the food desert study, the community garden mapping, the poverty maps to name a few,” Lane said. “I value Community Geography’s work so much that it is hard to think about going back to the days when SCG didn’t exist and each group had to figure out on its own how to capture data and map it.”

Barros-Correia seemed to agree. “I have contributed to geographic projects on disaster response management, tobacco advertising and housing demolition, vacancy and tenure patterns in Syracuse,” he said. “I enjoy the diversity of projects that I have been participating in while working at Community Geography.”



> Lucas Barros-Correia, right, an intern with Syracuse Community Geography, stands at a computer station during a recent event and explains to attendees how the program has evolved over the years. | Drew Osumi, Staff Photo

Make college dreams real

say yes...



To putting Syracuse City School District students on the road to success.

To offering a college tuition guarantee to city students.

To building an educated workforce, so local companies can grow and prosper.

To a stronger, more vibrant Central New York economy.

Syracuse is taking the lead in urban education. It’s the first community in the United States committed to making sure all public school students can afford and succeed in college. Through the Say Yes to Education program, Syracuse University is joining with the Syracuse City School District and others to make college dreams real.

To find out what Say Yes to Education means for you and your family, go to sayyessyracuse.org, or call **315-443-4260**.



CORE VALUES

Syracuse Grows lists these values on its site:

- Equitable access to healthy, safe, affordable, quality and culturally appropriate food
- Community resiliency, diversity, fellowship and collaboration
- Strong, healthy and safe communities
- Self-sufficiency through access to the means of food production
- Community development through community gardening and urban agriculture
- Diverse participation among the community

GARDEN LOCATIONS

Syracuse Grows has 15 member gardens, including five community gardens on the South Side.

1. West Newell Street Community Garden
2. 341 Midland Avenue Community Garden
3. Rahma Clinic Edible Forest Snack Garden
4. Expeditionary Learning Middle School Garden
5. Southwest Community Farm

ONLINE

www.syracusegrows.org

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Members of Syracuse Grows hope to improve community gardens



> Rozlynn Jakes-Johnson, a Syracuse Grows advisory board member, presents during the fifth annual Salt City Dishes dinner held in February at St. Clare Theater. | Allison Gates, allisongates.com

By | Stephen Connors
Urban Affairs reporter

Nonprofit hosts annual meeting to discuss goals, efforts to raise \$10,000 by year's end

Syracuse Grows, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing “food justice” to the city’s residents, hopes to raise \$10,000 this year. Some of the money will help buy supplies that would better allow it to help local gardens, some of which are on the South Side.

The organization’s chair, Sarah Brown, said working with neighborhoods and community members is the best way to achieve this. “Our main mission is to cultivate a just food system in the city of Syracuse where everyone has access to healthy, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food,” Brown said.

At Syracuse Grows’ annual meeting this year, the group discussed its 2014 goals, including fund raising and its ability to add more volunteers. Jonnell Robinson, the vice chair of the board, said Syracuse Grows has been slowly growing in size, but that only with more volunteers could it expand. Currently, the 10 people on the advisory board are volunteers.

Still, Robinson said she thinks Syracuse Grows has a good effect on the community. “It’s about food and com-

munity, and bringing those two things together. We get lots of people out of their houses and into the garden,” Robinson said.

There are four functions of the organization: programming, education, advocacy and resources. These involve planning events, education, working with the city and supplying growing material, such as seed and mulch.

Brown said the organization acts as a facilitator “between the city and the community gardens within the city.” Board members recently worked with city officials to draft the food system chapter of the city’s sustainability plan. Syracuse Grows will work with the city again this year to form an urban agriculture policy task force.

“It’s about food and community, and bringing those two things together.”

— Jonnell Robinson

One way Syracuse Grows accomplishes its goals is through its member garden program, Brown said. Member gardens are community gardens that belong to Syracuse Grows. The people who run the community gardens request what they want to grow and what materials they need, and Syracuse Grows works with local organic farmers and volunteers to get the resources to the gardens.

Rose Tardiff, a Syracuse University student interning with the organization, learned about Syracuse Grows from Robinson, then her geography professor. Tardiff said that in the class, they mapped organic farms. She is now working on mapping community gardens with Syracuse Grows.

Lee Newman, a State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry professor who attended her first Syracuse Grows meeting in February, said she thought the group was interesting and wants to continue going to meetings. Lee works on "horticultural therapy" at the Syracuse VA Medical Center.

"What we're trying to do at the hospital is get veterans who are disabled out into a garden environment," Newman said. "We have a very large terrace garden, and in the summertime we bring the veterans out to plant and harvest fruits and vegetables." Newman is working on another planting program for veterans, but needs volunteers to help get the garden started.



> Jonnell Robinson attends Syracuse Grows' annual meeting. She is the vice chair of the board. | Kimberly Kramer, Staff Photo

RESOURCE DRIVE

There will be a resource drive **April 19** for anyone who would like to volunteer.

People with pick-up trucks are especially needed to help transport materials to the gardens.

Want to help?

Call (315) 443-4890 for more information

ON THE SIDE

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



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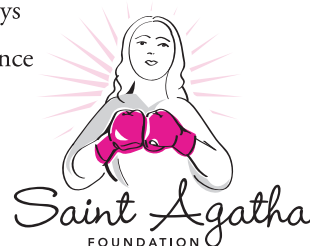
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MEET THE WRITERS

Azzuré McClain, 9, is a third-grader at Syracuse Academy of Science

Breiale Martin, 8, is a third-grader at Roberts Elementary

Shayla Baker, 8, is a second-grader at H.W. Smith

PARTNERING GROUPS

PGR

Promoting values such as sisterhood, internal beauty, service and education, Pretty Girls Rock



is a national mentoring program founded in Syracuse to help young girls. PGR mentees are girls 8 to 16 years old, affectionately known as “little sisters,” while the mentors are known as “big sisters.”

LEAP

The Literacy Empowers All People program is dedicated to improving the reading and writing skills of children in the Syracuse area. Using an anti-racist curriculum, it assists youth with their ability to find information, think about it critically and present their own ideas to others.

SPEAK UP, STAND UP

Members of Pretty Girls Rock share their tips on ways to stop bullying



> From left: Lead teacher Lorenda Mable; guest columnists Azzuré McClain, Breiale Martin and Shayla Baker; and mentor Amanda D'Angelo. The columnists are all members of Pretty Girls Rock. The mentors are with the Literacy Empowers All People program. | Photo provided

By | Breiale Martin, Shayla Baker, Azzuré McClain
Guest columnists

Don't be silly, stop the bully

Bullying occurs frequently in our community, and the effects of bullying impact all involved in a negative way. There are different types of bullying that can occur. These are cyber bullying, physical bullying, and verbal bullying.

Cyber bullying is bullying through the internet. Physical bullying is bullying someone through physical actions like hitting. Verbal bullying is when someone bullies others through words. Bullying can take place anywhere, in schools, homes, online and work places.

People bully because they've been put down before and want other people to feel the same pain. They may also bully because they do not like a certain person or are jealous of them. Bullies may feel that they will get attention if they bully others. They may think this attention will help them become popular. They may also think that hurting other people's feelings will make them feel better.

Ways to stop bullying are to treat everyone with respect and don't be a bystander. A bystander is someone who watches bullying happen and does not tell someone, which allows the bullying to continue. Another way to stop bullying is to tell an adult or someone older than you. An adult can be a teacher, a parent, siblings and family members.

In our schools, we can post sticky notes that say “stop bullying” or “be nice to each other.” We can also post posters around the school that say positive things in big words.

As a group, we came up with the idea of “Stop Light Bullying.” There are three colors: red, yellow and green. Red means STOP! bullying.

Yellow means WARNING. Stop or I will tell an adult.

If the bullying does not stop, we go to green which means GO! tell an adult. We think that teachers should put it in their classrooms.

We read an example of bullying in “Sugar Plum Fairies: Plum Fantastic” by Whoopi Goldberg. The main character, Alexandra, moves to Harlem, N.Y., from Apple Creek, Ga. Her mother enrolls her in dance classes. At first, she is bullied because of her colorful costume. One of the dancers, Epatha, makes fun of Alex, but they soon become friends after Alex stands up for herself.

In conclusion, all people involved in bullying can be victims. This includes the person getting bullied, the bystander, and the bully. Bullying is bad because it hurts people's feelings. No one should be bullied just because they are different. Keep in mind that everyone is different, not better or worse, just different.

This column was submitted by members of PGR and their mentors.

*For more on PGR, contact Zasha Moore at
(315) 373-3538 or pgrsyracusechapter@gmail.com*

This is tobacco marketing.

Kids who see it are more likely to smoke.



It's a fact:

Research shows that kids who shop at stores with tobacco marketing two or more times a week are 64% more likely to start smoking than their peers who don't.

Source: Henriksen, Schleicher, Feighery and Fortmann. *Pediatrics: The Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, July 19, 2010. DOI: 10.1542/peds.2009.3021

Our kids have seen enough.

Take action to protect them at

Tobacco *free* **NYS.org**

CNYCL CHAMPS

On Feb. 13, for the **first time in 19 years**, the Corcoran High School girls' indoor track and field team won the Central New York Counties League American Division championship.

It was the program's **first division title since 1995**.

- Sheniah McKenzie, Rosheia Hamilton, Gabiany Romero and Jalia Moore won the 4x200 meter for Corcoran with a time of **1:55.95**.
- Ashley LaRode won the High Jump (**4-8**) and the 55 hurdles (**9.71**). Taniya Williams was the best triple jumper (**34-0.75**).
- Patrice Williams won both the 600 (**1:42.95**) and 300 (**43.18**) meter races.

SECTION III QUALIFIER

- At the Section III State Qualifier at SRC Arena on Feb. 19, the 4x400 meter team of McKenzie, Moore, E. Elizabeth Whitted and Williams finished third with a time of **4:15.58**.

'THE SILENT BULLET'

Corcoran track athlete Patrice Williams lets her running do the talking



> Patrice Williams runs in the 300-meter race at the State Championship at Cornell University. A high school junior, Williams poses with Corcoran head coach Tara Jennings, who calls her “a force to be reckoned with.” | Lenny Christopher, Staff Photo



By | Josh Hyber
Urban affairs reporter

Corcoran runner Patrice Williams posts times that are bold, loud and lead to medals

Patrice Williams’ pink and white sneakers barely make a sound as she sprints down a hallway at Corcoran High School.

It’s a Tuesday afternoon — more than an hour after classes have ended — and all Williams wants to do is practice. But because the track at Onondaga Community College’s SRC Arena is unavailable and Corcoran’s outdoor fields are covered with snow, Corcoran’s star track and field athlete is forced indoors.

Williams, a junior, has no time to waste. In just five days, she’ll be behind the starting line for the 300-meter dash at the New York State Indoor Track and Field Championships at Cornell University.

The even-keeled Williams doesn’t say much. She smiles time and time again, choosing to let her running do the talking. Her long strides are smooth and quiet, but the times she posts are bold and loud.

The Silent Bullet, as Cougars coach Tara Jennings calls her.

“She’s a force to be reckoned with,” Jennings said. “I think when she puts her name on the map this season, that not only the District, but the Section and hopefully the state as well, will realize that Patrice is that Silent Bullet. She’s so silent, but she will run right by you.”

Since seventh grade, Williams has been running right by her opponents. As a novice runner at Grady Middle School, Williams had a natural talent that was apparent to Jennings, a former collegiate runner at State University of New York at Cortland. And when she began posting high school-like times around eighth grade, Williams herself knew she had the potential to

take her track career to the next level.

"It's a God-given talent," Jennings said. "It's something that you just knew. She won everything,"

At the state meet just days after that Tuesday practice session, Williams finished sixth in the 300-meter dash, posting a time of 41.19 seconds.

Corcoran assistant coach Joseph Serrao, who has been at Corcoran for almost 20 years, called it a "luxury" to have Williams on the team. She is one of the top three runners he's ever seen come through Corcoran, he said.

At the indoor practice session, Williams' routine consisted mostly of stretching and cardio. Her distance program had to be flipped to Wednesday because of the unavailability of a track. Williams' gray and garnet Corcoran track and field shirt barely showed any signs of sweat as she did leg crawls, squats, pushups and jumping jacks.

"There's our star!" one passerby exclaimed.

"There she is!" another said. "She's going to states, right?"

Each time a Corcoran staff member walked by and made a comment, Williams grinned.

"Everyone knows who she is," Jennings said, laughing. "And that's what's funny. You would think everyone knows who she is because she talks a lot. If you notice, she's not someone who carries huge conversations. She speaks for herself when she steps on the track, and it speaks volumes about who she is as a person."

Williams said it feels good to have the support, but there is pressure.

"I try not to think about it," Williams said. "Because I try not to think when I run. I just try to do good and keep with the crowd."

Corcoran assistant coach Allison Dupree — who works with Corcoran's middle distance runners — works a great deal with Williams. For Dupree, it's the God-given ability that makes the girl she calls "Pat Rice" a special athlete.

Dupree also taught Williams' English classes in seventh and eighth

grades at Clary. But while Dupree didn't coach Williams in middle school, she still attended Williams' meets.

"Watching her run was like she was the only one in the race," Dupree said. "The gun would go off and she'd be so far ahead of everyone."

But with all the victories and all the recollection, there's one achievement that Williams has yet to accomplish. She has yet to beat Liverpool High School junior Oreoluwa Akinpelu. At the Section III State Qualifier at SRC Arena on Feb. 19, Williams ran a 300-meter time of 41.18 seconds. She qualified for the state meet, but lost to her Liverpool rival by less than a second.

Even though Williams lost, she called it her favorite memory of her running career. "I'm always nervous to run against her," Williams said. "But at sectionals I almost beat her."

At the state meet, Akinpelu again finished one spot ahead of Williams.

Midway through the Tuesday training session, Jennings went to check her mailbox. When she returned, without saying a word, she handed Williams a white 4x9 envelope.

Williams flashed another large smile. In the envelope was a recruiting letter from Utica College. "I wasn't really thinking about running track in college," Williams said.

Her coach wants the best for her. "I really hope she goes D-1," Jennings said. "But I really want her to go wherever her education takes her. I hope she goes somewhere that she enjoys the coach, she enjoys the campus and it has her major."

Serrao, the Corcoran assistant, echoed statements made by Jennings and Dupree about Williams' work ethic and natural talent. He also pointed to her exceptional ability to keep her legs moving in a big, long stride.

"When she's on the track, you'd think she'd get swallowed up," Serrao said. "But once she gets on the track, she's like a different person. She's aggressive. She goes out and she hates to lose."



> Patrice Williams reaches into the crowd at the state championship, where she finished sixth in the 300-meter race. | Lenny Christopher, Staff Photo

CORCORAN HIGH BAND

FLUTE

Nyasia Brown
Kristen Sandell
Hannah Cecile

CLARINET

Lauren Burgess
David Love
Janissa Johnson

BASS CLARINET

Halle MacKnight

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Matt Haskins
Roy Bell

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Emily Streissguth

TRUMPET

Sophia Kinne
Annamarie Reedy

FRENCH HORN

Cate Streissguth

TUBA

Jordan Pagan

PERCUSSION

Taniya Williams
Jasmine Lightburn
David George
Zana Byer
Quintia McClain
Ellie Stultz

GROWING THE ARTS

Marshella Mason helps enrich students' lives through music

By | Josh Hyber
Urban Affairs reporter

Corcoran High School's band director adds diversity and members to music program

When Marshella Mason arrived at Corcoran High School three years ago, the incoming band director had one mission: grow the program. Since then, the number of students enrolled in the school's band has more than tripled — from 15 to 47.

"The arts are important anywhere regardless if it's in the Syracuse City School District or anywhere," Mason said. "Kids need outlets other than just academia. Not that academia is not important, but for some kids, it's the arts that keep them there."

Corcoran's musical profile is prevalent throughout Syracuse. On Feb. 8 at the Syracuse All-City Instrumental Music Festival at Henninger High School — a concert Mason helped manage — 20 Corcoran students performed as part of the high school band. The Cougars had six percussionists, three flutists, three clarinetists, two trumpeters and two alto saxophonists participate, along with one tubist, one French horn player, one tenor saxophonist and one bass clarinetist.

In 2012, the Syracuse City School District started its "Great Expectations" initiative. An objective is to "recruit, develop, support and retain effective teachers and school leaders." Syracuse Superintendent Sharon Contreras said the All-City concert was designed to showcase not only students, but also instructors — like Mason. "You see the absolute best when they come together," Contreras said.

Syracuse City School District Supervisor of Fine Arts Sarah Gentile started working in the district at the same time as Mason, and she said she has seen Mason's "welcoming personality" and knack for recruiting change the Corcoran program. "She goes above and beyond for her students," Gentile said. "She's definitely an asset to our program."

Mason has spent 16 years in the Syracuse City School District, 10 1/2 of them at Frazer K-8 School. A transition from middle school band to high school band demanded an increase in skill and commitment levels.

On a normal day, Mason arrives at Corcoran for a band rehearsal at 7:40 a.m. By the time her day wraps up at 2:50 p.m., she'll have taught two band sessions, piano lessons and a course called Music in Our Lives. Each of the band rehearsal classes has about 20 students. Mason also recently started Corcoran's first school drum line.

And at Corcoran, Mason has also seen a more



> Marshella Mason instills in her students a passion for music at Corcoran High School. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

diverse group of students. In 2011, the Syracuse City School District had 21,247 students: 27.5 percent were white; 52.7 percent were black; 12.1 percent were Hispanic; 6.1 percent were Asian; and 1.7 were Asian American.

"It's a mixture," Mason said. "There's a little bit of everyone."

But one of the things she especially tries to do is treat everyone the same.

"Sometimes you have to have those honest conversations," Mason said. "And they may not have anything to do with music at all that day, but it may be something that's a life lesson."

Justin Mertz, the assistant director of bands and director of the Syracuse University Marching Band, said, "Music is important to any school district. It's a way of educating students that's different from other subjects and other content areas. It's a way of aiding students' cognitive development, their critical thinking skills, their reasoning skills and even their artistry."

At SU, Mertz teaches students who come from all across the globe. But after being selected by Mason to conduct the high school portion of the All-City concert, he was able to see the grassroots efforts of the city's teachers and students.

"Most of these kids aren't going to go on and major in music," Mertz said. "But that's OK. That's not the point. The point is that they learn how to work, learn how to think, and they learn how to listen."

GET INSURED

What to do if you missed Obamacare deadline

By | Jacob Pramuk
Urban Affairs reporter

100 Black Men of Syracuse ready to answer your questions

A nonprofit organization, based on Syracuse's South Side, hosted a series of events to promote health care education and enrollment under the Affordable Care Act.

100 Black Men of Syracuse, Inc., organized the sessions to address misinformation that might have discouraged uninsured city residents from signing up for a plan.

"I have insurance and I have a difficult time with what they cover and don't cover," said Charles Anderson, health and wellness chair of 100 Black Men. "So the people that don't have any insurance, it's really important they get covered."

The sessions took place at multiple locations on Feb. 8, 15 and 21, Anderson said. The organization hoped to motivate residents, particularly minorities, to sign up for reasonably priced health care in Syracuse, where 13 percent of residents have no insurance, according to Onondaga County's 2013 community health assessment and improvement plan.

The workshops, which featured healthcare specialists, were designed to provide aid before March 31, the

deadline to sign up for the New York State of Health marketplace before receiving a financial penalty under the law's individual mandate, Anderson said.

Many uninsured low-income families in Syracuse have resorted to "home remedies" to treat manageable conditions, which can lead to unnecessary complications, said Vincent Love, president of 100 Black Men.

The March 31 deadline has passed, but 100 Black Men of Syracuse still wants to help.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Syracuse residents may need more information about the next time they can sign up. They also might want to know more about the tax penalty, which takes effect April 1.

100 Black Men will continue to answer questions.

How to contact:

100 Black Men
of Syracuse, Inc.
2610 S. Salina St.

(315) 443-8749

100bkmsyr@gmail.com

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GET INVOLVED

What: Kick-Off Celebration Basketball-Tennis Court Fundraiser

When: 1 to 6 p.m.
Saturday, April 26

Where: Mary Nelson Youth Center, 2849 S. Salina St.

More Info.:
(315) 422-5690 or email
tmarynelsonyou@
twcny.rr.com

WANT TO DONATE?

Make checks payable to:
Mary Nelson's Youth Day
Foundation

Mail to: SEFCU Federal
Credit Union
401 S. Salina St.,
Syracuse, N.Y. 13202

Or, you can donate using
PayPal

CHILD'S PLAY AREA

Mary Nelson envisions basketball and tennis courts next to her center



> Mary Nelson hopes to raise enough money to turn this lot into courts for children to play outside. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

By | Phil D'Abbraccio
Urban Affairs reporter

'You look in this area, you don't have any type of outdoor activities ... no nothing,' Nelson says

For weeks last winter, snow covered the empty grass lot just north of the Mary Nelson Youth Center. But that's not what Mary Nelson sees now. What she envisions is what she hopes will be a reality in just a few months: a neatly paved lot with two basketball courts and a tennis court for the children of the South Side.

"I really want to make this happen," Nelson said. "You look in this area, you don't have any type of outdoor activities. No basketball court, no nothing."

The nearest public basketball hoop is down the block, she pointed out. But it's only for the residents of that neighborhood. That's not how Nelson runs her nonprofit center, which is open to all. The Mary Nelson Youth Center, located at 2849 S. Salina St., offers services for not only children, but adults, as well.

The center's core focuses, Nelson said, are education, health, careers and mentorship. It offers free breakfasts, lunches and dinners throughout the week. It also provides programs for children after school and for senior citizens and young adults.

Nelson is not only the president and CEO of her center, but also has a full-time job in radiology at Upstate University Hospital. She has owned the center since 2009. It is named after her registered charity, Mary Nelson's Youth Day Foundation.

She is always looking to improve her facility and hopes to update the center's outdated computers. And then there is the empty field of grass that separates the Mary Nelson Youth Center from the next building to the north.

Amatullah Yamini owns the lot and Salina Shoe Salon, located just up the block at 2809 S. Salina St. Yamini said she has been contemplating selling the lot for a while, and she always told Nelson that if she were to sell it, Nelson would be the first person she would approach.

Now, Yamini said she is close to selling it. She did not disclose the price she and Nelson have discussed. Nelson said she hopes to reach a deal and break ground in the spring.

During summer, Yamini allows Nelson to use the lot as a place for the children to play. But Nelson has bigger ideas.

"There's no place in that area for children to play basketball," Yamini said. "I think it would be wonderful

if she would be able to do that. I applaud the work that she's doing."

Nelson estimated she would need approximately \$12,000 to have the grass ripped up, concrete pavement laid down and two full basketball courts installed. She would also arrange for a few trees to be removed and a parking lot established. Most of that money will come from herself, but she will take all the help she can get in making this dream of hers come true. A fundraiser will be held later this month.

"Why not give them something where they can have something to do every day?" Nelson said. "The kids have nothing to do. I'm hoping they can start having pick-up tournaments, things like that ... different tournaments being held right here. It would just really uplift this area and this part of the city."

Ever since Nelson lost a nephew, Darryl Patterson, to gun violence in June 2002, she has taken it upon herself to help the South Side.

The lobby of the center displays the handful of plaques and awards that Nelson and her center have accumulated in the five years she has owned it.

No honor stands out more to her than The Harriet Tubman Humanitarian Award she received in 2010. It is an award that recognizes New York women who generously devote themselves to improving the quality of life available to the poor, the powerless and the persecuted.

"Why not give them something where they can have something to do every day?"

— Mary Nelson

"I took a tragedy and made it into something positive," she said. "I could've said, 'Things aren't going to get better.' But they are. When God anoints something, it's a blessing."

Nelson's son, Larry Moore, stands next to his mother as she shares this sentiment and adds his own idea of things to come.

RECENT HONORS

Mary Nelson has also been honored with:

- Honoree award from Syracuse University College of Law Civil Rights Movement on March 22
- Dan and Mary Lou Rubenstein Social Justice Award from the School of Social Work, scheduled to be awarded April 17

ON THE SIDE

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Participants **provided camera and video equipment**, paired with a mentor and coached on storytelling.

By the end, we will have documented the diverse experiences of residents of our Salt City.

INTERESTED?

Contact Ashley Kang at
ashley@mysouthsidestand.com
or (315) 882-1054 by April 15