

# the Stand

south side news

[www.mysouthsidestand.com](http://www.mysouthsidestand.com)

Syracuse, NY

NOVEMBER 2014 Issue 38 FREE

## CARDBOARD ARCADE

Kids make imaginative games from boxes for a day of inside fun

Progress at Corcoran

School comes off priority list as graduation rates rise

ice cold

Meachem Ice Rink reopens just in time for a new season

**Pretty Girl Threadz**  
Sisters credit their mother for inspiring new hair salon

EXPERIENCE HARLOW PARK



# the Stand

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DEAN LORRAINE BRANHAM,  
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### CONTACT US

SOUTH SIDE NEWSPAPER PROJECT  
(315) 882-1054  
ASHLEY@MYSOUTHSIDESTAND.COM

THE STAND IS BASED OUT OF THE  
SOUTH SIDE COMMUNICATION CENTER  
2331 SOUTH SALINA STREET  
SYRACUSE, NY 13205

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**12 BUSINESS** | Two sisters opened a salon in May specializing in styling and caring for the hair of African-American women. Get to know them and their salon, Pretty Girl Threadz.

**14 FEATURES** | Syracuse is home to plenty of parks, but Carmen Harlow founded his own Harlow Park as an athletic space for South Side athletes and youth.

■ Cover photography of Sierra Kubinda by Mike Mahardy

## CALENDAR | NOVEMBER

**What:** Frederick Douglass from Slavery to Freedom: The Journey to New York City

**When:** On display through Friday, Nov. 7

**Where:** The Noreen Reale Falcone Library atrium at Le Moyne College

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** The exhibition looks at the life of Frederick Douglass, who fought to end slavery and championed civil rights for all Americans. The exhibition will explore aspects of his youth that shaped his determination to be free.

**More Info.:** Call (315) 445-4153

**What:** Sensory Friendly Storytime

**When:** 10:30 a.m. Nov. 22

**Where:** Beauchamp Branch Library, 2111 S. Salina St.

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** Sensory Friendly Storytime is an inclusive, interactive program for children with sensory integration issues and for differently abled children at a preschool developmental level. Books, songs, movement, play tables promote learning and play.

**More Info.:** Call the library at (315) 435-3395

Last month, we celebrated National News Engagement Day on Oct. 7 by presenting a journalism lesson for girls in the Literacy Empowers All People program. Girls ages 8 to 14 participate in project LEAP, which is dedicated to improving the reading and writing skills of children who live in poverty.

LEAP leaders use an anti-racist curriculum to assist these young girls with their ability to find information, think about it critically and present their own ideas to others. Last year, the group contributed a column on bullying to *The Stand*, and they reached out to me to visit one of their sessions so they could learn more about journalism.

On Oct. 7, we discussed how to conduct an interview and worked with the girls in groups to develop questions.

They next interviewed me and then wrote a lead and nut graph, which is a paragraph in a story that tells readers why the story is important and why they should care about it. Members of the group that had the most interesting lead each won a *Stand* T-shirt.

I also recently gave a presentation at the Northeast Region of the Alliance for Community Media annual conference held in Nashua, New Hampshire, during the “Community Journalism and Storytelling” panel with our board member Reggie Seigler, who spoke about the paper’s community partnership.

During the panel, “If you Build it, They Will Come: How to Kickstart a Community Newsroom,” I was able to share an overview of the history of the South Side Newspaper Project, how it has empowered the community, and what role the university, journalism students and community members play.

The majority of conference attendees were from public access channels in the northeast region. But *The Stand* was invited to share a new perspective and speak about how its model works along with its partnership with community groups in an effort to encourage PEG (Public, Educational and Governmental) access channels to branch out to publish online news stories and/or pursue partnerships with local media or universities.

Ashley Kang



> Jane Regan, left, director of Somerville Neighborhood News, stands with Ashley Kang and board member Reggie Seigler of *The Stand* after a panel session. | Staff Photo

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I saw a report in October on CNY Central News. The report described a murder that was committed on the South Side on Calthrop Avenue. The reporter gave a description of the suspect: a black man in dark clothes.

I fit that description, as I am sure many other African-American men do. In my opinion:

1. News reporters are bound to accuracy and that “non description” is anything but accurate.
2. That description probably fit hundreds of African-American men, if not thousands. It fit me.
3. What benefit can that description be to “anyone,” since descriptions are meant to help in apprehending criminals?
4. These types of slights are typical of police and news organizations, so what message are they really sending out? It’s certainly not a knowledgeable or helpful one considering the times.
5. I wrote News Center. Their response: Blame it on (information from) police.

There is no excuse for slighting a whole population of men. They really didn’t address anything at all about their choice to repeat the information. The police didn’t make them do that.

Barry Irving  
Former South Side resident



## INTERVIEW LESSON

Girls in the Literacy Empowers All People program — LEAP — pose with Director Ashley Kang of *The Stand* (center of back row) on News Engagement Day, which happened Oct. 7. Kang conducted a journalism lesson for the girls, covering how to write the first paragraph of a news story. She also explained the importance of helping readers understand why they should care about a story. | Staff Photo

# EXCITEMENT ON SOUTH SIDE

## OPRAH VISITS



> Oprah Winfrey concentrates as Mary Nelson explains her plans to build a basketball court for youth in an empty lot next to her Mary Nelson Youth Center on South Salina Street. Then Winfrey surprised Nelson with a check in the amount of \$100,000. Winfrey was in Syracuse on Sept. 29 to make remarks at the dedication of new television studios at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. After that event, Winfrey traveled to the South Side at Nelson's invitation to tour the center. | Dale Harp, Staff Photos

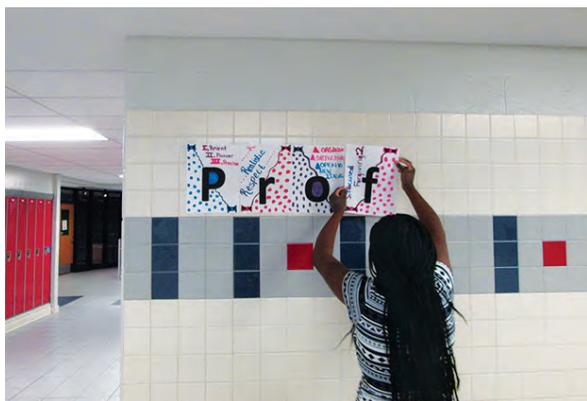
## DUNBAR TO REOPEN

> The Dunbar Center held a community meeting Tuesday, Oct. 21, to hear input from residents about what programs and events it could offer in the future. For now, the center is offering a few programs for seniors, a small after-school program and weekly Zumba classes. The center seeks volunteers to fill many roles. Volunteer needs include: board members, youth activity leaders, receptionist, office assistant, senior services assistant, youth services program assistant, activities assistant, janitor, maintenance worker, IT systems coordinator and social worker. If you would like to volunteer or make a donation, contact the center at (315) 760-3155 or email [thenewdunbar@gmail.com](mailto:thenewdunbar@gmail.com). | File Photo



## ITC ENGAGEMENT

> Digital multimedia students of the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central launched an awareness campaign on professionalism in October. The project includes posters, videos, presentations to classes and polls ... all with the mission to inform and engage students about "Professionalism." The school's advanced media students also participated in National News Engagement Day on Oct. 7 by creating a video project in an effort to engage fellow students and teachers in the news. Their video can be seen on the group's Facebook page (search for We Are ITC). | Provided Photo



# THINGS TO DO

More events happening throughout the month

**What:** Zumba Fitness

**When:** 5:30 p.m. every Wednesday

**Where:** Dunbar Center, 1453 S. State St.

**Cost:** \$2 per class

**Details:** Zumba is a dance fitness program originated by a Colombian dancer. It involves dance and aerobic elements, and its choreography incorporates hip-hop, soca, samba, salsa, merengue and mambo.

**More Info.:** Call (315) 760-3155

**What:** Coffee & Conversation

**When:** 10 a.m. to noon Friday, Nov. 7

**Where:** Southside Interfaith Community Development Corporation, 500 W. Newell St.

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** Members of the Southside Interfaith CDC gather the first Friday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon for coffee, refreshments and discussion. This is a place for all members of the Syracuse community to come together to relax and get to know each other. Senior citizens are especially welcome. Southside Interfaith CDC Vice President Audrey Haskell states, "we offer hot coffee and even hotter topics."

**More Info.:** Visit [ssinterfaithcdc.org](http://ssinterfaithcdc.org)

**What:** CNY Veterans Parade and Expo

**When:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 8

**Where:** New York State Fairgrounds in the Center of Progress, 581 State Fair Blvd.

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** New this year, stories from Central New York veterans will be collected in partnership with Clear Channel Communications

**More Info.:** Visit [cnyveteransparade.org](http://cnyveteransparade.org)

**What:** Free Dental Care for Vets

**When:** 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 11

**Where:** Eastwood Dental Office, 2326 James St.

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** Dr. Joan Laura will open the doors to her dental practice for free dental care to any veteran who walks in. This will be Dr. Laura's third year helping vets. Each vet can choose either a cleaning, a filling or an extraction. Simply bring proof of status and complete a short medical history form. No eligible patient will be turned away.

**More Info.:** Call (315) 438-3333

**What:** Spirit of American Women fundraiser

**When:** 7:30 to 9 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 13

**Where:** Ramada Syracuse, 1305 Buckley Road

**Cost:** Suggested donation of \$25

**Details:** The YWCA Syracuse & Onondaga County will present keynote speaker Sally Roesch Wagner, Ph.D., founding director of the Matilda Joselyn Gage Foundation, whose writings include the untold stories of the 19th-century suffrage movement. The event will also include a book signing by Wagner. Breakfast is provided and the suggested donation is to support the women and girls saved through the YWCA programs such as Girls Inc., The Women's Residence Program and youth afterschool programs.

**More Info.:** Visit [ywca-syracuse.org](http://ywca-syracuse.org) or call (315) 424-0040



## Numbers don't always tell the whole story.

Your grades are just part of the picture of who you are. If high school was a struggle—but you have the drive and determination to succeed—college can be more than a distant dream.

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"I never thought that going to college was within my reach."

Krystal Jones,  
University College  
part-time student

**SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY**  
University College

University College's HEOP project and its activities are supported, in whole or in part, by a grant from the New York State Education Department.

## STATISTICS OF SCHOOL

Corcoran High School has been a South Side staple in the Syracuse City School District since 1964-65.

### Enrollment:

Roughly 1,800 students

Grades: 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>

### School day:

Begins at 7:50 a.m. and ends at 2:26 p.m.

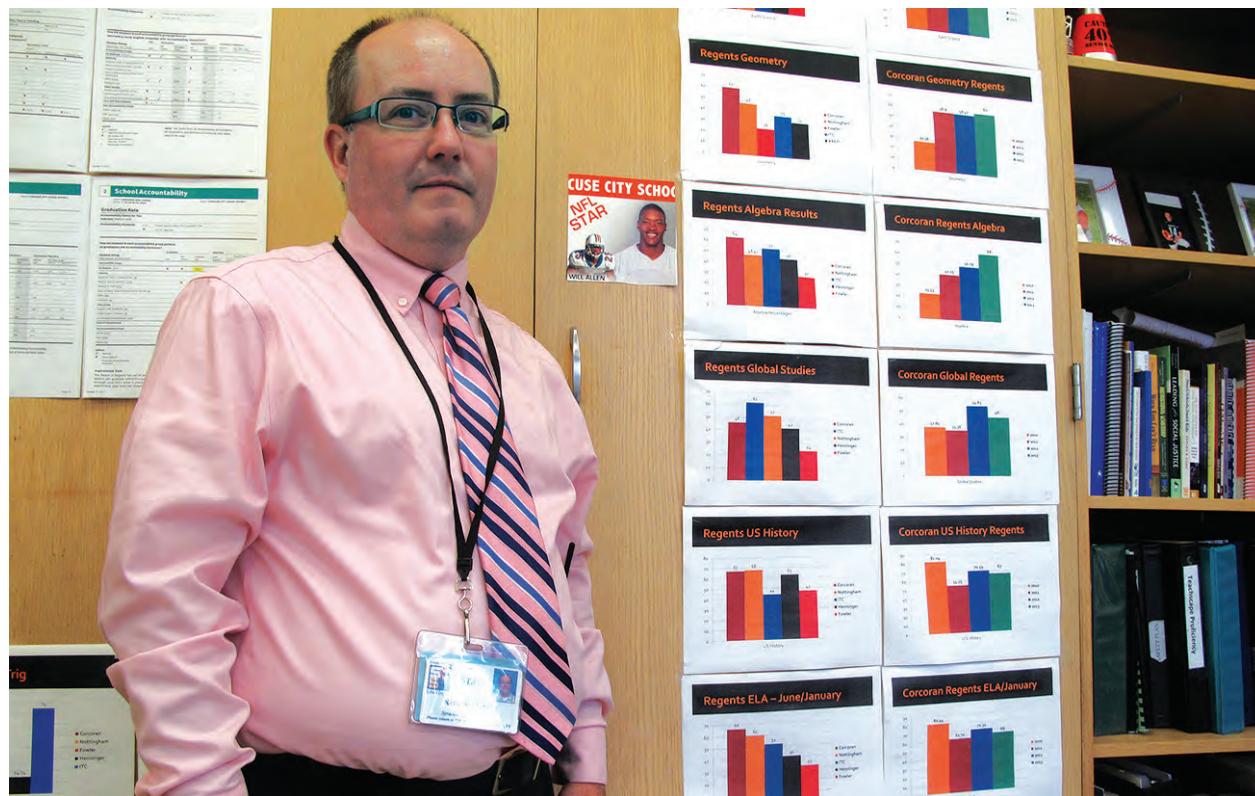
### Address:

919 Glenwood Ave.

New York State added Corcoran to its list of “Persistently Lowest Achieving” schools in 2010 because its graduation rate was only 57 percent. Corcoran remained on the list for four school years, from 2010-11 to 2013-14. The state took Corcoran off the list before the 2014-15 school year because its graduation rate is now 67 percent, according to Paulette Coppin, of the New York State Department of Education.

# DATA-DRIVEN METHOD

Corcoran improves its graduation rate with new teaching techniques



> Assistant Principal Kevin Murphy stands beside the charts tracking all academic data. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

By | Jarrad Saffren  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

Corcoran implements interim tests to determine whether students are learning concepts

Corcoran High School was removed recently from New York state’s “priority school” list for schools with low graduation rates. Corcoran improved its graduation rate because more students passed the state’s Regents Examinations, which they must do to graduate.

The rate improved after the school’s top two officials — then-Principal Leo Cosgrove and Assistant Principal Kevin Murphy — decided to focus class material on concepts likely to appear on the annual Regents Exams. Cosgrove and Murphy implemented a series of interim tests to determine whether students were learning these concepts, Murphy said, and the plan worked. Corcoran’s graduation rate rose from 57 percent to 67 percent, good enough to get taken off the priority list, according to Paulette Coppin of the New York State Department of Education. Any school whose graduation rate is below 60 percent winds up on the priority list.

Corcoran students were failing the Regents Exams for a simple reason, Murphy said.

“The work in classes did not correlate to the exams,” he said. In 2010, only 26 percent of Corcoran students who took the Algebra Regents Exam passed it. But 82 percent of those students passed algebra.

“Step one is clearing up the data,” said Dan Lowen-gard, former superintendent of the Syracuse City School District who oversaw the changes at Corcoran. “You have to know where all ... kids are academically.”

That’s what Corcoran began to do in summer 2010, a few months after it was first put on the list. Cosgrove said he was shopping in Barnes & Noble when he saw a book that caught his eye. It was Paul Bambrick-Santoyo’s “Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction.” In the book, Bambrick-Santoyo, a veteran school administrator, advises schools to track everything with data, from test scores to student participation in class.

Cosgrove showed the book to Murphy, who passed it around to the entire administrative staff. It became the basis for the school’s new data-driven method for tracking academic progress.

“This data book was the big rock,” Murphy said. “All of our decisions are based on data. Like where do kids stand academically? Even attendance data and behavior data were part of the equation.”

The first initiative Cosgrove and Murphy undertook was to implement the interim tests. They started giving four tests in each subject during the school year. After each test, Corcoran teachers made flow charts highlighting which questions gave students the most trouble. The teachers then re-taught those lessons in their classes and put similar questions on the next test. So class material prepared students for the interims, which prepared them for the Regents.

Corcoran students have scored increasingly better on the Regents Exams since the interim tests began in 2010, except in English and global history and geography. Math scores have improved the most. In 2010, only 27 percent of Corcoran students passed the geometry exam. And, as Murphy said, just 26 percent passed the algebra test. But by 2013, 61 percent passed the geometry exam and 64 percent passed the algebra exam, Murphy said.

By focusing material on statewide exams, it might appear that Corcoran is “teaching to the test,” a phrase implying a priority shift in how students are taught.

But Sally Fisher, Corcoran’s math coach who tracks data in math classes, said Corcoran is not teaching to the test because it does not fire teachers or administrators based on interim test scores.

“The data is only used to inform their instruction,”

*“This data book  
was the big rock.”*

— Kevin Murphy

Fisher said. “So there’s really no incentive to have our kids do well on interims that we created.”

Fisher also said that teaching to the test means that teachers are emphasizing procedural skills and objective knowledge, which Corcoran and New York state are no longer doing. “New York’s Common Core has shifted its emphasis from procedural skills to critical thinking, which I think is a big shift,” Fisher said.

Corcoran’s data-driven, interim-testing program has been so successful that Murphy wants to apply it to other areas, such as behavior and attendance.

“We have decided that we are going to do what’s called B.A.G. checks with kids,” Murphy said. “Behavior, attendance and grades.”

## Do you need help with your breast cancer bills?

The Saint Agatha Foundation has established funds at area hospitals and medical providers to provide financial support for breast cancer patients in Onondaga, Cortland, Cayuga, Madison, Oneida, and Oswego Counties, New York.

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# Creative Play

> Children of all ages attended the “Day of Play” at local libraries as part of the Cardboard Challenge, featuring hand-crafted games. | Mike Mahardy, Staff Photo

By | Mike Mahardy  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

## Syracuse libraries host the Cardboard Challenge, fostering “A Day of Play”

A sea of brown cardboard boxes covered the second floor of Beauchamp Branch Library on a recent Saturday, decorated with cascading ribbons and hand-drawn logos. These weren’t ordinary packing containers.

Every branch of the Syracuse City Library system hosted the Cardboard Challenge on Oct. 11, inviting children from across the city to showcase their own makeshift games, complete with corrugated ping pong and fishing. The event was inspired by Caine Monroy, a Los Angeles child who designed and managed his own cardboard arcade in 2011, which sparked a viral documentary about his project. Local library officials said the Cardboard Challenge also was a push to get more youth off the streets and into reading environments.

“The kids came in with their own ideas,” said Anne

Gregory, a children’s librarian at Beauchamp. “They figured out creative ways to make these projects work, and we’ve had a lot of impressed people come through here.” Between 40 and 50 people attended — an overwhelming number in the small space, but a great problem to have, she said.

The creations ran the gamut of classic arcade installations. One child created a knee-high platform to play air hockey; another participant fashioned a small box into a miniature soccer field, complete with plastic balls that players could hit with their fingers. And Sierra Kubinda, a South Side resident who frequents Beauchamp, made her own version of Skee-Ball.

Sierra is a 12-year-old member of PEACE, Inc., a nonprofit at 217 S. Salina St., that works to strengthen family relationships, provide children with foster care and pair children with big sisters and brothers. Sierra was paired with Lisa Baker, from nearby Manlius, six months ago; the two collaborated for a total of four hours to create Sierra’s Skee-Ball cabinet.

“We had a totally different idea when we started,”



> Lisa Baker, left, and Sierra Kubinda set up a Skee-Ball game that they created together. | Mike Mahardy, Staff Photo

Sierra said. “But then we figured out we could make this into a Skee-Ball game, and made a few changes to make it more fun and interesting.”

The contraption was composed of several boxes, then covered with decorations that spanned the entire color spectrum. Players rolled plastic balls up the sloping board, over bubble letters spelling “Sierra” and “Lisa,” and into targets Sierra drew on the upper half. Hit the smiley face: 10 points. Hit the peace sign: 50. More daring players had the option of tossing the balls into a small hole on top, and the ones who struck the target received a 100-point payoff.

“She was the brains behind the project, I was mainly there for encouragement,” Baker said. “It was a really good chance to spend time together, and for Sierra, and the other kids, to flex their creative muscles.”

Anyone who visited Beauchamp could play. And it wouldn’t be an arcade without prizes. Sierra won 300 points for catching a cardboard fish, with a cardboard rod, from a blow-up pool. The points netted her a kazoo, mini dinosaur figurines and even a navy blue T-shirt.



> A library becomes an arcade. | Mike Mahardy, Staff Photo

The Cardboard Challenge, and the librarians who orchestrated the citywide event, had other aims in mind as well. Janet Park, branch manager of Mundy Library at 1204 S. Geddes St., said she was hoping to not only attract residents for the two-hour attraction, but also to encourage future visits.

Park said she and the other librarians wanted to see new children join the library environment. By creating the arcade atmosphere, complete with all of its rewards and stimulating activities, Park said she wanted to get the kids hooked on reading as well.

A lot of children visit Mundy, so the “interactivity on display” would hopefully foster more creative pursuits, Park said. “It’s not like watching TV,” she said. “It’s something they can dream up.”

Park, Gregory and the rest of the librarians who coordinated the Cardboard Challenge said this was the first time the branches had a simultaneous event across the city. It took a lot of planning, Park said, but the librarians wanted to create an empowering environment.

“There’s an entire network set up to facilitate this content creation,” Park said. “Maker spaces, 3D printers, new ideas — anything we can do to move these things ahead. It’s really worthwhile to have planned things like this within our network.”

After Sierra’s fourth trip to the prize table, behind which librarians were handing out bags of popcorn and 300-point T-shirts, she played familiar tunes such as “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “Happy Birthday” on her new kazoo. She stood next to her creation as the plastic balls rolled out of the hands of adults and children alike.

“Today, people are playing my game,” she said. “Not the other way around.”

## CAINE’S ARCADE

When 9-year-old Caine Monroy built his own cardboard arcade in his father’s Los Angeles-based auto part store in 2011, he ultimately attracted hundreds of city residents, sparking the creation of a scholarship fund in his name. To date, it has raised \$239,000.

Today, more than 100,000 children in 50 countries participate in the Cardboard Challenge, including attendees at Syracuse libraries.

Source:

[cainesarcade.com](http://cainesarcade.com)

ON THE SIDE

# MEACHEM ICE RINK

**Location:**  
121 W. Seneca Turnpike

**Phone:**  
(315) 492-0179

**Regular Hours:**  
Nov. 1 through March 21

12:15 to 3:15 p.m.  
Tuesdays through Fridays

7:15 to 10:15 p.m.  
Fridays and Saturdays

**Cost:**  
\$3 general admission

\$2 for youth 12 and younger & ages 55+

**Skate rental:** \$3

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Senior Skate (55+)**  
**Hours:** 9 to 11:45 a.m.  
Fridays

**Cost:** \$1, includes admission and free coffee or hot chocolate (skate rental is not included)

**Skate & Shoot**  
**Hours:** 9 to 11:45 a.m. Thursdays & 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturdays

**Cost:** \$3, skaters can practice their hockey skills or enjoy pick-up hockey games; players must have their own equipment and helmets

*\*Note: Call ahead to confirm hours as there are many tournaments/ make-up games throughout the season, which could interfere with open skate*

# BACK ON THE ICE

*Meachem Ice Rink opens after repairs just in time for new season*



> Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner speaks at the opening ceremony of Meachem Ice Rink held Oct. 8. | Photo courtesy of the Mayor's Office

By | Molly Smith  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

**After more than \$400,000 in updates and improvements, the rink is ready for use**

**A**fter nearly four months of repairs, Meachem Ice Rink is back in business.

According to Syracuse's Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs Department, the repairs at 121 W. Seneca Turnpike had been a long time coming.

"We'd known for a while that the rink was on its last legs," said Common Councilor Bob Dougherty. For the past three years, Dougherty, who chairs the council's parks and recreation committee, said the city's financial situation had allowed for only temporary repairs to the rink. Mayor Stephanie Miner joined forces with State Sen. David Valesky and State Assemblyman Bill Mag-narelli earlier this year to secure more than \$400,000 for the project, Dougherty said.

Meachem closed indefinitely in April and officially reopened Oct. 8. Work started in June to install an "ice mat" ice surface, which Dougherty said should last at least 10 years. The ice mat contains coolant tubes and was laid over the concrete floor. It was a less expensive

alternative than the projected \$1.5 million needed to replace the rink's 30-year-old coolant system.

"We were lucky in that the boards around the ice were only a couple of years old and in good shape," Dougherty said. Maintenance workers at the rink said that the repairs mainly consisted of re-wiring the electricity to accommodate the upgrade as well as installing new ramps to lead up to the elevated ice surface.

Dougherty and hockey coaches of teams that play at the rink all said that the timing of the repairs was good. Most of the teams' regular season play ended right before the April closing.

For the Syracuse Cougars of Corcoran High School, Coach John Purcell said he is thankful the project pulled through and did not affect his team's season. They are due to officially start their season Nov. 10.

"Everybody's really excited about it," Purcell said. "Corcoran hockey has been around for over 30 years. People would have been really disappointed."

At the time the closing was announced, however, one league's coach said that the news was not well-received by the public.

"There was a bit of a panic until we got the money," said Pat Easton, coach of the Valley Youth Hockey



> Members of the Bantam Travel team, ages 13-14, skate on the ice in October. | Molly Smith, Staff Photo

PeeWee Blue team. “The ice had melted everywhere.”

Dougherty attested to the people’s reaction. “There was a lot of uproar about it,” he said. “There are only so many sheets around where people can skate,” Dougherty said, referring to ice rinks. “Clamor for ice time is really something.”

In the time that Meachem Ice Rink was closed, teams

and recreational skaters were forced to travel elsewhere for ice time. They were directed to nearby rinks, such as Sunnycrest Ice Rink and Clinton Square Ice Rink.

Now that Meachem is open again, the ice is already being used and geared up for upcoming hockey seasons.

“Sometimes it’s taken for granted,” Dougherty said. “We’re lucky to have it.”

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ON THE SIDE

### ABOUT THE SALON

Pretty Girl Threadz specializes in hair extension installation, natural hair care and hair color. Sabrina Coleman, a certified nail technician, and another employee also perform nail salon services including basic manicures and body waxing.

**Location:**  
827 E. Genesee St.

**Hours:**  
10 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Tuesday through Saturday

Sunday and Monday  
by appointment

**Phone:**  
(315) 422-4400



View a video of sisters Samantha Coleman and Sakari McDonald at their salon, Pretty Girl Threadz, online at [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com)

# EAST GENESEE STYLE

Two sisters start their own salon with inspiration from their mother



> Pretty Girl Threadz opened in May. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

By | Lateshia D. Beachum  
Staff reporter

New salon owners hope to serve a new part of the city looking for African-American style

African-American sisters Samantha Coleman and Sakari McDonald have been changing the face of salon ownership since May when they opened up their salon, Pretty Girl Threadz.

Salons capable of styling African-American hair can typically be found on Syracuse's South Side, where a large part of the city's black population lives.

"I think a lot of people are surprised that we're even here and that we even own a salon," said Coleman, 23, a student at Le Moyne College.

The sisters, neither of whom are cosmetologists, say they were inspired to start their business because of a

lack of quality of hair extensions available in the Syracuse area. Pretty Girl Threadz started off as a hair extension company and later became a salon, a dream inspired by their mother and salon manager, Sabrina Coleman.

"I'm humbled that they would say I influenced them," she said.

Samantha Coleman said business has been steadily picking up since opening thanks to the welcoming merchant community on East Genesee Street and the growing number of Syracuse University students who heard about them through friends and ads in student publications.

McDonald, 37, said she knows there's a need for students of color to find places in Syracuse with stylists who have knowledge of and the skills to care for curlier and kinkier hair textures.

"You do have a place that's fashion forward, up on the latest, and can do your hair," she said.

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Onondaga County Health Department

# Walk-In Flu Clinic

**Wednesday, November 19, 2014**

**10:00 am – 12:00 noon**

**and**

**2:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

**Onondaga County Civic Center**

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# A PLACE TO RELAX

*Harlow Park provides a common ground for sports, community, history*



> Harlow Park rests at the base of the western side of University Hill. | Mike Mahardy, Staff Photo

By | Mike Mahardy  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

**Local park is a part of Syracuse’s identity; it is maintained by its founder, Carmen Harlow**

Syracuse parks have long been gathering places for individual neighborhoods, and although they provide a sense of identity, the committee on Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs is responsible for maintaining them all.

There are 175 public parks in the city by the count of Common Councilor Bob Dougherty, who is also the chair of the committee. And although he describes the parks as “wonderful” and “phenomenal,” he also adds that the city has as many as it can handle.

“A lot of them go back a long time,” Dougherty said. “Some of the stonework you see dates back to the Depression, and you can really see the history there. But whenever we add more, it becomes a maintenance issue. And the city doesn’t want any more, to be honest.”

But what the city does want is more athletic space,

Dougherty said. Syracuse has long been a hub for sports, not only for athletes clad in the orange of Syracuse University, but also for youth participating in Pop Warner football leagues and pickup basketball games.

One place was established to honor such urban athletes. Situated at the base of the western side of University Hill, in the shadow of Interstate 81, is Harlow Park. It’s private, and it doesn’t fall under the city’s maintenance jurisdiction. Founder Carmen Harlow takes care of it himself.

“I went to SU. I’m an alumnus,” said Harlow, former deputy commissioner of the Syracuse Department of Public Works. “But I grew up on the South Side. I was born here.”

He runs a snack shack in the park, which sits at the intersection of Renwick Avenue and Martin Luther King East. As a child, growing up in nearby Pioneer Homes, Harlow could hear the chants and cheers erupting from games at the former Archbold Stadium.

Harlow discovered football there, at the base of the hill, and just how strong a catalyst community sports

could be.

“There’s a lot of history, a lot of family here,” Harlow said. “On the west side of 81, this is the South Side. I know a lot about sports history around here, and can tell you whatever you want to know.”

Aside from providing a place for competition to unfold, Harlow Park also houses the hall of fame for urban athletes in Syracuse, which is situated in the park. It’s a small building decorated with photos of urban athletes in their youth, as well as the plaques and awards they received. Harlow said he wants to continue encouraging participation in local sports, especially now that he’s in the process of retiring from his position as a part-time coach at the Boys & Girls Club after-school program at Bellevue Elementary.

Dougherty also grew up in the city, and he said parks are a key component in any neighborhood’s sense of identity. He spent a lot of time in city parks, and although he had friends in the suburbs, he said the city’s recreational spaces have always been better.

Dougherty called the parks common grounds. The fields not only gave neighbors a place to gather, but also offered them a “sense of community.”

“A lot of these are small park corners, like in Clinton Square,” he said. “We need to continue to maintain them. They’re integral to the city of Syracuse.”

Private city parks like Harlow’s are autonomous, but any public grounds are maintained by the city Parks and Recreation Department. Suburban parks are overseen in similar fashion: Employees such as Eamonn Vaughn, of Liverpool, help the town of Clay maintain its own grounds. The town does landscaping and cleans its parks much like the city departments do. Vaughn said he spent most of his 2014 summer job repairing high school equipment, but spent about two days a week mowing the

*“There’s a lot of history, a lot of family here.”*

— Carmen Harlow

fields in neighborhood parks and clearing brush from the edges of busy roads.

Vaughn also previously worked for Onondaga County and witnessed a diverse range of people going to the parks to have picnics, throw a Frisbee around or just sunbathe. This was as common on the shores of Onondaga Lake as it was in the suburban parks surrounding the city, Vaughn said.

“We would see people of all ages along the parkway,” Vaughn said. “People always forget how many different backgrounds come from the Syracuse area, and having places to gather is a great reminder.”

Harlow’s comments on the park system align with Vaughn’s. Harlow’s urban hall of fame honors everyone from track-and-field athletes to martial artists, as long as they live within the Syracuse city limits. He said his park is “doing just fine,” and that he’s going to continue maintaining it himself because the park plays an important role.

“I’m going to continue to support sport participation in Syracuse,” he said. “Along with the history that comes with it.”

## DIVERSITY IN PARKS

The city’s **175 public parks** span a variety of sizes, from corner courtyards to sprawling fields.

Residents of the South Side flock to **Kirk Park**, while visitors downtown gather in **Clinton Square** — for the Taste of Syracuse festival in the summer and ice skating in the winter.

According to the Committee of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs, **the definition of “park” is flexible.** Any public space can be designated as one of the city’s many common grounds, whether it has an **ice rink, playground or grassy fields.**



> Harlow Park is private property, but Carmen Harlow, who founded the park, allows passers-by to relax when walking through it. | Mike Mahardy, Staff Photo



> Carmen Harlow runs a snack shack in Harlow Park. He supports community sports and encourages people to take part in competitions. | Mike Mahardy, Staff Photo

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