

the Stand

south side news

www.mysouthsidestand.com

Syracuse, NY

APRIL 2015

Issue 42

FREE

POLICING TOGETHER

Officers hope new satellite police office helps the community

A charitable musician

Dr. Richard Ford teaches youth to reach for success

father series

Meet Ricky Worley and his family as they lead their daily lives

Helping the Homeless

Andrew Lunetta's programs reach people in many ways

MINIMUM WAGE: THE ISSUES



INSIDE | APRIL

the Stand

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

- 4** **THE STAND** | Cake, balloons and smiles lit up the party celebrating the five-year anniversary of The Stand at the South Side Innovation Center. Check out our photo album.
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■ Cover photography of Ahmad Mims and Christopher Dominick by Steve Davis

CALENDAR | APRIL

What: "Motherhood Out Loud"
When: 8 to 11 p.m. Thursday, April 16
Where: CNY Jazz Central, 441 E. Washington St.
Cost: \$25
Details: Utterly unpredictable, "Motherhood Out Loud" shatters traditional notions about parenthood, unveils its inherent comedy and celebrates the deeply personal truths that span and unite generations.
More Info.: Visit cnyjazz.org or call (315) 479-5299

What: Comedy for a Cure
When: 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, April 24
Where: Palace Theatre, 2384 James St.
Cost: \$15 advance; \$20 at the door; ticket proceeds go toward American Diabetes Association
Details: Opening act is Justin "Chocobear" Jackson, winner of Syracuse Funnybone's Clash of Comics; with headliners CJ Burney, voted ABC's "The View" Funniest Person Contest 2014, and KD the Comic, a Syracuse native and NASCAR host. For mature audiences only.
More Info.: Call KD Productions Entertainment at (804) 482-0537

What: Register for OCRRA's Earth Day Litter Cleanup – "Every Litter Bit Helps!"
Register: Registration by local groups due by April 17
Cleanups Occur: Friday and Saturday, April 24 and 25
To Get Involved: Form a group. Gather neighbors, co-workers, classmates, friends and family. There's no limit to group size. Then pick a spot that needs some cleaning. If you have small children in your group, try to stick to low-traffic areas. During the cleanup, label your trash bags with the stickers OCRRA provides and your trash will be counted in the annual tally.
More Info.: Email earthday@ocrra.org or call (315) 453-2866, ext. 202

DISCLAIMER

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE STAND ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE ENTIRE STAFF. THE STAND WELCOMES SUBMISSIONS FROM ALL MEMBERS OF SYRACUSE'S SOUTH SIDE BUT RETAINS THE RIGHT TO PUBLISH ONLY MATERIAL THE STAND DEEMS ACCEPTABLE TO THE PUBLICATION'S EDITORIAL PURPOSE AND IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.

Proclamation

COMMEMORATING THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STAND NEWSPAPER

WHEREAS, A GREAT STATE IS ONLY AS GREAT AS THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT PERFORM EXEMPLARY SERVICE ON BEHALF OF THEIR COMMUNITY, SUCH AS THOSE ILLUSTRIOUS LOCAL JOURNALISTIC ENTITIES WHICH HAVE ENDURED, RECORDING THE HISTORY OF THEIR COMMUNITIES, HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL NEWS, AND BRINGING NEWS OF THE LARGER WORLD TO THEIR READERS; AND

WHEREAS, THE STAND IS ONE SUCH PUBLICATION, HAVING SERVED THE SOUTH SIDE OF SYRACUSE AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES SINCE 2010; AND

WHEREAS, THE VISION FOR THE SOUTH SIDE NEWSPAPER PROJECT EVOLVED FROM AN ASSIGNMENT CREATED BY PROFESSOR STEVE DAVIS, HIS STUDENTS WERE TASKED WITH CREATING A NEWSPAPER FOCUSED ON STORIES FROM SYRACUSE'S SOUTH SIDE, THE RESULT OF WHICH WAS AN IMPRESSIVE 36-PAGE PUBLICATION THAT CIRCULATED THE CITY AND RECEIVED POSITIVE FEEDBACK; AND

WHEREAS, DURING THE SAME TIME, MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY DISCUSSED CREATING A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER TO HERALD NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS FROM A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE GROUNDED IN TRUTH, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY; AND

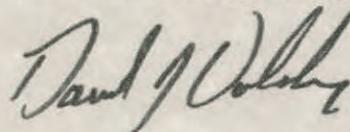
WHEREAS, WITH HELP FROM SEVERAL COLLABORATORS, THE STAND WAS BORN 5 YEARS AGO AND IS AN ONLINE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER THAT IS WRITTEN FOR AND BY SOUTH SIDE RESIDENTS, WITH THE GOAL OF STARTING A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION BY INVITING RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTH SIDE TO SHARE THEIR STORIES; AND

WHEREAS, THE STAND IS THE VOICE OF THE SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY OF SYRACUSE AND WITH THE CONTINUED HARD WORK AND DEDICATION OF MANY IT WILL SERVE AS THE VOICE FOR MANY MORE YEARS TO COME; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, THAT I, STATE SENATOR DAVID J. VALESKY, RECOGNIZE THAT IN THE STAND WE HAVE AN ORGANIZATION WORTHY OF OUR HIGHEST RESPECT AND ESTEEM; AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, THAT A COPY OF THIS PROCLAMATION BE TRANSMITTED TO THE STAND DURING TODAY'S 5TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION .

DATED: MARCH 21, 2015
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO
SET MY HAND AND SIGNATURE



DAVID J. VALESKY
NEW YORK STATE SENATE
53RD DISTRICT



ABOUT THE PROCLAMATION

Sen. David Valesky issued a Proclamation in honor of The Stand's fifth anniversary.

Craig Wilson, community liaison for Valesky, presented the Proclamation on March 21, during the anniversary celebration at the South Side Innovation Center.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I was so excited to read the first article in the African-American Fathers Series! I commend The Stand for highlighting the black dads of the South Side, many of whom are involved in their children's lives — or want to be.

— Staci Dennis-Taylor
South Side resident and
Family Court Mediator

Read Dennis-Taylor's full letter on Page 12.

Her letter appears with our second story in The Stand's Fatherhood Series, which made its debut in the March anniversary issue.



> Board member Shante Harris El cuts cake during The Stand's party held March 21 at the South Side Innovation Center.



> Board member and A Friendly Five music columnist, Reggie Seigler, looks through the anniversary photo book with board members Charles Pierce-El and Dale Harp.

Five Years of Print

Photos by Joe Librandi-Cowan

The South Side Newspaper Project held its Fifth Anniversary Party Saturday, March 21, at the South Side Innovation Center with around 45 guests. Originating from a spark of serendipity from a journalism professor, The Stand has grown into a community newspaper serving as a voice for the community.

Keynote Speaker Sean Kirst



> Local columnist Sean Kirst with Syracuse Media Group spoke about the importance of stories reflective of one's community. "Every child is a story; every story is a treasure," he said. Here he is interviewed by Newhouse students before he delivers his keynote address during the party.

NEW LOOK ONLINE



Check out mysouthsidestand.com to see our redesigned website.

Also go online to see more photos from the party, view the video produced by ITC media student Vernon Macklin and see a digital version of the special anniversary book that was given as a gift to board members.

Proclamation presented by Sen. Valesky



> Craig Wilson, community liaison for Sen. David Valesky, reads through the anniversary issue of The Stand while founder of The South Side Newspaper Project Prof. Steve Davis speaks. Wilson read and presented the proclamation seen on Page 3 to The Stand's staff during the celebration on behalf of Valesky.



> South Side resident Donna Reese, in black and white, speaks during the party on how much she appreciates The Stand. After having eye surgery Feb. 10, her first venture out of her home on her own was to attend The Stand's anniversary celebration.



> Vernon Macklin, ITC media student, produced the video shown during the party featuring The Stand's board members. His mother, Verselle Cottman, stands behind him and his aunt, Demaris Jones, sits beside him while he talks with party guest Aggie Lane.

Saturday, March 21

South Side Innovation Center

COMMUNITY SURVEY

- 80.9 percent of workers in Syracuse are private wage and salary workers as opposed to government employees or self-employed.

- 41.8 percent of household incomes in Syracuse are under \$25,000.

- 10.5 percent of households in Syracuse receive Supplemental Security Income.

- 8.2 percent of households in Syracuse receive cash public assistance income

- 28.7 percent of households in Syracuse received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months.

- Out of all families in Syracuse, 28.2 percent record incomes below the poverty level. For families with a female head of household and no husband present, the number is 46.1 percent.

Source:

— U.S. Census Bureau
— 2009-2013 5-year American Community Survey

MONEY MATTERS

Workers describe difficulties making ends meet on minimum wages



> Cheres Mildrew earns \$12.50 a hour at her current job as a medical secretary. In the past, she's had difficulties living on a minimum wage salary, and argues for higher wages for employees to help make ends meet. | Brendan Krisel, Staff Photo

By | Brendan Krisel
Urban Affairs reporter

As costs of living increase, workers and groups discuss the need for rise in minimum wages.

When Cheres Mildrew was a minimum-wage worker in California, she shared a two-bedroom apartment with four other people just to afford rent.

At 22, when she moved back to Syracuse, she worked four jobs just to make ends meet.

One day she would be restocking shelves at Price Chopper, and the next she would be working a cash register at Family Dollar. Mildrew, 33, said employers were understanding.

“Some employers are OK because they know it’s hard and if they can’t give you all the hours you need, they will give you the hours you need to make it to your other job,” Mildrew said. “It works, but you’re tired, but at least you have some pocket money for a little bit.”

Now, Mildrew is making \$12.50 an hour as a medical secretary at SUNY Upstate Medical University Hospital. She is also earning a bachelor’s degree in health services

administration from Bryant & Stratton College.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo recently announced his plan to have the state minimum wage raised to \$10.50 by the end of 2016, with a special minimum wage of \$11.50 in New York City to account for the higher cost of living. Currently the minimum wage is \$8.75 an hour in New York State.

According to a March estimate released by the governor’s office, there are 23,536 minimum-wage workers in Syracuse.

In both California and New York, the minimum wage defined Mildrew’s life. She learned to budget extremely carefully — and even then sometimes couldn’t pay all of her bills at the end of the month.

While she laughs about the situation now, Mildrew remembers when her first car was repossessed. Before she moved to California, her bank gave her two options: to return the car, or to take it with her as long as she kept up with payments. She took it, but in a few months it was repossessed.

“I thought somebody stole the car, so I was trying to figure it out and then I put two and two together, called the bank and they said, ‘Yeah we had our sister company come get the car because you were delinquent on two payments,’” Mildrew said.

Mildrew said that moment was a wake-up call for her and taught her the importance of keeping good credit and budgeting, even though it was hard to manage on her salary.

Now Mildrew beats the minimum, but still sometimes feels a bit under-compensated.

“To me it feels like if you grasp a position, if you grasp something very well, then they give you more (work), but they don’t compensate you with pay. They load you up with work but you don’t get compensated, which I don’t think is right,” Mildrew said.

Mildrew estimated she earns about \$2,000 a month in salary and after paying for her car, food, cellphone, cable and taking care of her 4-year-old daughter Kayla, she is left with about \$500.

Trisha Botty, who works for SEIU Local 200United, a labor union that represents nearly 15,000 workers throughout Upstate New York, said in 2012 communities realized how important raising the minimum wage is. That year, people started contacting their legislators, and organizations started pushing for wage reform.

“We support issues that really help move workers up in this country and this state and more importantly making sure that we realize that you can’t live off the current minimum wage,” Botty said.

Lisa Davis, 53, worked for minimum wage until she realized there had to be a better way to make a living.

For five years, Davis worked as a personal care aide at the Hearth at Greenpoint in Liverpool. She kept records and tended to every personal need of the residents for a minimum-wage salary.

“When I got paid I didn’t know if I would have enough money for the next week,” Davis said. “I was working very hard and was getting cheated out of pay.”

Now unemployed, she’s earning a bachelor’s degree in marriage and family therapy for a better job. Davis said the hardest part about living on a minimum wage was the amount of care she would have to put into budgeting.

“Learning to prioritize your money and pay what’s most important, I don’t think [minimum wage] is ever enough where you can pay off all your bills for the month,” Davis said.

Botty said poverty in the United States is directly related to minimum wages. By raising the minimum wage in recent years, it has provided workers with new opportunities to provide for their families, even if their hourly wage is only \$1 higher.

“A dollar to some people doesn’t seem like a lot of money, two dollars doesn’t seem like a lot of money,” Botty said. “But to people in our communities, including the city of Syracuse as well as the suburban counties, raising the wage gives the opportunity for people just to have a little bit more, and that money goes back into the economy too.”

Laura Brown, an organizer for the Workers’ Center of Central New York, an organization that advocates for workers’ rights and does outreach work for low-wage workers, agreed that the current minimum wage of \$8.75 is not a living wage. Brown advocates for a raise beyond Cuomo’s proposed \$10.50, but realizes that any increase is a step forward for minimum-wage workers.

“For people who are working low-wage jobs every little bit counts ... but if you were to keep up with inflation the minimum wage should be higher, around \$15 or \$16,” Brown said. “The relative weight of that extra dollar, I’m not saying people don’t notice, I’m sure they do, but at the same time I feel like it’s always too little too late.”



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.

Get a second chance!

Earn a Syracuse University degree. Ask about the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) for part-time students. Academic advising, tutoring, and scholarship assistance for tuition and books are available to those who are accepted.

Go SU—part time!

Call 315.443.3261, email heop@uc.syr.edu, or visit us online at uc.syr.edu/stand.

“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.



ON THE SIDE

MUSIC CAMP

Signature Music's mission statement:

"Signature Music provides a holistic approach to life development for adolescents and young adults through music, regardless of economic means. We provide our participants the resources and enriching opportunities that nurture their talents resulting in productive citizenship."

FORD'S MARK

Dick Ford knows what it takes to make differences in the lives of kids he works with, so he stands up and makes it happen.

In addition to free music lessons and instruments, his program also provides a food pantry, paid gig opportunities, help with acquiring tuxedos and gowns for gigs, and rides to and from gigs.

Signature also provides mentoring and college-planning workshops for kids and their families, and occasionally college visits.

BUILT ON MUSIC

Dick Ford encourages music education through Signature Music Camp



> Richard "Dick" Ford has been educating and nurturing future musicians for years. | Brenda Muhammad, Staff Photo

By | Reggie Seigler
A Friendly Five Columnist

Syracuse resident's music camp provides opportunity for students across the country

Dick Richard W. Ford by most people's standards would be described as a physically large man. He stands just over 6 feet tall and has hands that could probably span better than an octave on a Steinway grand piano. His voice comes across with authority and with clarity, without force or intimidation.

"Dick," as he likes to be called, is a man who has something to say and can back it up. So he does.

He was born in 1937. The Great Depression had only recently begun to subside in some areas and many families were still struggling. It was the year that the Hindenburg exploded and Amelia Earhart disappeared over the Pacific Ocean never to be seen again. But there was an upside to the era: The music was good.

Count Basie's "One O'clock Jump" and Duke Ellington's "Caravan" were near the top of the charts, and Benny Goodman's "Sing Sing Sing (With a Swing)" was No. 1. Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday were also on the charts, as well as Bing Crosby and Tommy Dorsey.

All that good music must have rubbed off on Dick. He caught the music bug at a young age.

Dick was adopted by the Ford family of West Winfield, New York. West Winfield is a small village a little bit south of Utica. When I say small, well, the 2010 Census placed its population at only 826 people. The Fords allowed him to begin taking music lessons at a young age and gave him the opportunity to pursue his education. By the time he was in high school and then college, Dick was leading his own jazz bands and mimicking the sounds of the Duke and the Count.

He began undergraduate studies at Ithaca College. He earned a degree in music while there and went back home to West Winfield and became a music teacher. After a few years teaching, he accepted a position in Springfield, New York, as superintendent of schools. At 24, he would become the youngest superintendent of schools in the state.

Ultimately his educational path led him through two more colleges. Dick earned a master's degree in administration from Colgate University, and in 1966, a doctorate of education at Syracuse University. It was those beginnings and achievements that set the foundation to back up the things he says and does now.

DICK SAYS IT

“Education is the key, and a career as a music educator is a fine choice,” he said.

He believes this is a way out of poverty for many kids of poor urban upbringing.

“Kids who are genuinely interested in music can learn to sight read, sing and play instruments regardless of their ethnicity and socio-economic status,” he said.

He knows that many kids with talent, particularly in urban settings, see pursuing a career as a big music star as their ticket. This can be the way for a few but he said that it can be “hit or miss.” And it’s mostly missed.

Having been a teacher and superintendent, he understands the inside dynamics related to being an educator. “A teacher’s entry-level salary in most public school systems today is about 45 to 50 thousand annually,” he said. “They work only about 180 days a year and get all major holidays off. They’re also off during winter, spring and summer breaks.” He went on to express, “Those base salaries don’t include the extra money that teachers can earn for providing after-school instructions, like directing band or coaching sports.” As well, “many of them also play in professional wedding bands sometimes earning thousands of dollars in extra cash.”

He didn’t finish there. “A teacher can retire after 20 years or so with their pensions and benefits and can

begin new careers if they want while they’re still young.”

Becoming a music teacher, though, for many kids in urban settings may be just as much out of reach as becoming a “rock star.”

“To be accepted in most college music programs, kids have to pass an audition,” Dick explained. “To pass the audition, they will need to have had some type of formal one-on-one training which is not offered in the public schools. Most white kids from suburban schools have already had a few years of private lessons by the time they get to the college level. Many have played in the school band and have had opportunities to attend and perform at elite private functions. And a lot of their parents can afford to purchase or rent instruments for them to practice.”

Dick believes this gives those kids an advantage.

“There is a lot of ‘institutional racism’ in the public school systems,” he said. “The students are always represented in studies by race. The studies usually compare the achievements of white students against blacks, Latinos, Asians, Native American, Pacific Islanders and others. This matrix invariably shows non-white students underachieving in comparison to white students.”

Dick believes the disparities are not about race but about poverty versus privilege. “The results often dictate how funding is distributed and the focus of curriculum. Music and arts gets cut.”

DICK BACKS IT UP

In 1993, Dick began Signature Music Camp, now known as Signature Music Summer Camp. The camp is held at his alma mater, Ithaca College. Music students from all over the United States and the world have attended, although most students are from New York state. The camp runs two sessions during the summer for middle and high school students. The kids stay in the dorms with 24/7 adult supervision. Some scholarships are available.

Signature Music Camp provides an opportunity for students to grow and network with others in their age and peer groups. But it doesn’t provide the regular one-on-one lesson and the other necessary supports that urban students need to compete.

In 2000, Dick formed Signature Syracuse, which provides just that for the Syracuse City School District.

Since its inception, it has provided free instruments, private lessons and mentoring to scores of students interested in music.

Students benefit from public performance opportu-

nities and cultural experiences at community events.

Dick’s music program is very well accepted within the community it serves, as is demonstrated by the support it gets from the slew of familiar institutions. Among them: Bethany Baptist Church, DeWitt Community Church, Hopps Memorial C.M.E. Church, Nojaim Brothers Supermarkets, the Syracuse Sunrise Rotary Club and many more.

Dick is an honorary member of the Syracuse Inner City Rotary Club. It consists of some prominent members of the community that his music program serves. He also has been awarded twice by the NAACP for his achievements in the community.

Dick is looking at a succession plan for his music program. This is not to indicate that he is prepared to retire. But he is realistic and knows that having a plan in place is good business. “Don’t just talk about it, be about it.” Dick not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk.

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

STANDOUT STUDENTS

Dick Ford is proud of all of his students. He remembers a few former students who were standouts. There are more than 30 former students with college credentials, and following are some of his first students.

Greg Evans is an outstanding drummer and now an instructor at Ithaca College. He graduated with his master’s degree.

Eveny Parker recently was accepted into a master’s degree program, according to her Facebook page. She currently is a music teacher at Nottingham High School.

Jose Verona had just immigrated to this country from Cuba a few short years before Dick started working with him in his program. Jose is now gainfully employed in the music industry and living in New York City.

WHAT KIDS MUST DO

The kids in Dick Ford’s music programs understand their **roles and responsibilities**.

They must commit to **practice at least one hour daily** and **show progress** on their chosen instruments.

They must also **maintain acceptable grades** in school.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Our first story in the new Fatherhood Series ran in last month's special anniversary issue of The Stand. It focused on a new community outreach program — the Fatherhood Initiative — launched by Syracuse Healthy Start to provide resources for fathers.

This series idea originated from photos that came out of The Stand's summer community journalism series, From Where We Stand. Eight residents shared photos of their family life throughout the summer, and many images highlighted touching moments between father and son.

In some of the final images, you can see a father playfully blowing bubbles with his young son, a father supportive of his son's dream of becoming a boxing champion and a grandfather teaching his grandson to ride a bike. During the exhibit's gallery opening, participant Brenda Muhammad said it best: "This project is important because it shows there are strong men supporting and raising their sons in this community."

Because of those photos and Brenda's statement, I wanted to further highlight South Side fathers through stories.

— Ashley Kang, director of The Stand

A NEW CHAPTER

Following death of wife, South Side man takes on role of single father



> At home, from left: Quantae Worley, Nevaeh Worley, Ricky Worley, Charres Burnett, Sayvion Burnett and Ricky Worley Jr. pose for a photo together. Ricky and his fiancée, Charres, met on the way to their children's school. | Drew Thomas, Staff Photo

By | Drew Thomas
Urban Affairs reporter

Ricky Worley is his children's biggest supporter, both in the gym and in the classroom

Nevaeh Worley, 10, laughs in the living room of the family home, mimicking her father, Ricky Worley, who is sure to be standing and cheering for his sons as they make their way to the basket during one of their Saturday basketball games.

"Go Ricky, go! Pass! Now shoot the ball, shoot!"

Worley, 39, is a single father who splits his time working as a line cook at TGI Fridays, getting his children on the bus to and from school, and making it back in time to volunteer as a coach for his children's basketball team at the Southwest Community Center.

"He's always the loudest one," said his son, Ricky Jr., 9, of his father's unshakeable presence on the sidelines.

Worley explains: "It's important to be involved with kids. I believe it's my calling."

For Nevaeh Worley, some of her special moments with her father happen before the day begins. "He does my hair daddy-style. It's real cute!" she said with a grin.

Being involved with his children has never been a question for Worley, who was taught by his own father that "it's a man's responsibility to provide for his family."

But that doesn't mean the journey has been effortless for a man whose own dad passed away more than 20 years ago.

Being a single father wasn't in the plans for Worley. Just one year after his youngest child, Quantae, now 7, was born, Worley's wife died after suffering a heart attack caused by long-standing health and weight issues.

"It's a day I don't forget, but they were so young that they don't remember," Worley said, recalling the heart-breaking day when he found his wife unresponsive on the floor of their South Side home.

"It was a big transition. But I stopped everything to take care of them," he said of the children.

For Worley, "stopping everything" meant starting over, a new chapter in his life where he has worked relentlessly to be an active provider and presence in his children's lives.

It was a big change for his own mother, too. Carol Worley, 64, stepped in and became a crucial player on the team when her son began picking up the pieces to

get back on his feet after suffering the loss of his wife and mother of his children.

The kids' grandma-turned-mom moved out of her senior living building and into a rented home on the South Side with her son and his children. Today, she looks back emotionally on it all.

"The one thing he stood firm on was his kids. He's never thrown his hands up and said, 'I just can't do this,'" she said.

It still brings a smile to Carol Worley's face when she recalls the time she spent living with her grandchildren and the progress her son has made in raising his family.

Though his father is no longer alive, Worley attributes some of his core values as a parent to him. Growing up with a pastor as a father and a mother who didn't take "no" for an answer, Worley learned by example exactly what it meant to be an involved parent. One thing he remembers was spending every Sunday at church, a mandatory routine instilled by his father that has kept Worley grounded in faith throughout his life.

Now, Sunday morning church visits have become routine for Worley's children, too.

"Even when it seemed to a lot of people like I had nothing, I had my family, and family is the only thing we really have," Worley said as he watched his sons on the Southwest Community Center basketball court where they practiced one recent Tuesday.

After his wife died, Worley began starting his morning routine with his three children, commuting as a family on the city bus to his children's bus stop for school. And, routinely, Worley would accept the positive messages shared in passing by Charres Burnett, 32. Burnett, a single mother to her son, Sayvion, 8, recalls seeing Worley when he would send his son on his way to McKinley-Brighton Elementary School in the morning.

"She always had something uplifting to say, and I needed that," Worley recalls of Burnett. "Eventually, she asked me out on a date to a Tyler Perry movie, and we've been together every day since," Worley said of his now-fiancee, who is expecting their first child together.

"He treats my son like he's one of his own," Burnett said of the way Worley has embraced Sayvion since they have joined their families.

When he's cheering from the sidelines every Saturday, he's cheering for Sayvion too.

Worley and Burnett decided to move Worley's family out of the South Side and into Burnett's East Side apartment, where long days end in laughter, dance competitions and the aroma of Worley's barbecue chicken, rice and collard greens.

Carol Worley recalls her son's love for cooking from the time that she stayed with him and his family. "I think



> Worley volunteers as a coach. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo



> Ricky and his fiancée Charres. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo



> Burnett helps diffuse a dispute. | Ashley Kang, Staff

that brought him and the kids even closer together after his wife died."

While the kids laughed and stuffed their faces at the dinner table on a recent March weeknight, Worley tidied the kitchen and explained his pride for his children's

GRAND SCHEME

Carol Worley, the Worley kids' grandmother, moved in with them to help take care of the family after Ricky's wife died.

According to a Pew Research Center analysis of 2011 U.S. Census Bureau data, 7.7 million children under the age of 18 are living with a grandparent.

3 million of them are getting primary care from that grandparent.

African-American children were most likely to be cared for by a grandparent, according to the analysis.

African-American children:

- 8 percent

Hispanic children:

- 4 percent

White children:

- 3 percent

KNOW A FATHER TO SPOTLIGHT?

To nominate a father, send a short explanation with contact information to The Stand Director Ashley Kang by calling (315) 882-1054 or emailing ashley@mysouthsidestand.com

ON THE SIDE

INITIATIVE FOR DADS

The Fatherhood Initiative is a new program that was started in September 2014 by Syracuse Healthy Start, which wants to support fathers and encourage them to be a part of their children's lives, says Lisa GreenMills, program coordinator for Syracuse Healthy Start.

The launch of the Fatherhood Initiative comes at a time when the role of a father is being redefined. A June 2013 Pew Research Center study found that Americans now expect fathers to be more of a moral teacher and emotional comforter than a breadwinner or disciplinarian. Fathers are spending more time with their kids, too — three times the number of hours they were spending in 1965, according to the study. That's a good sign, since the study found that 69 percent of Americans say having a father in the home is essential to a child's happiness.

There has also been a rise in the number of single fathers nationally, according to a July 2013 Pew study. Single fathers make up 24 percent of single-parent households today, compared with just 14 percent in 1960. White single fathers make up 56 percent of this number, and 15 percent are black, according to the study.



> Ricky Worley prepares dinner for the children. His love of cooking helps bring the family together. | Drew Thomas, Staff Photo

accomplishments, both on and off the basketball court.

“I got an award at school,” Nevaeh humbly bragged to her younger siblings.

Just as seriously as he takes participating in his children's extracurricular life on the court, Worley makes sure that school is their priority.

“I let them know they have to do well in school if they want the privilege of doing the extra things that they

want to do. So far it's working,” Worley said.

And Nevaeh Worley has set the bar high for her younger brothers by making her father proud as an honor role student. She flipped through her folder of homework assignments boasting about her A+ grades on her math assignments, but complaining about her reading comprehension assignments that she struggled with the night before.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR HELP FOR DADS

I was so excited to read the first article in the African-American Fathers Series! I commend The Stand for highlighting the black dads of the South Side, many of whom are involved in their children's lives — or want to be.

I am the Family Court Mediator for Onondaga County. My employer, New Justice Conflict Resolution Services, is a not-for-profit agency sponsored by the Office of Court Administration and the United Way and has an office located at the Onondaga County Courthouse at 401 Montgomery St., Room 115. Walk-ins are welcome. Families can come to resolve custody and visitation disputes. Our services are free of charge, confidential and can help parents avoid litigating in court, which can be costly, intrusive and time-intensive. Mediation can be used to create or modify custody and visitation orders.

The first article in the Fatherhood Series mentions a number of local dads who have legal questions or want to nurture a positive

relationship with their child's mother. As a neutral mediator, I can help with that.

Our agency is authorized to facilitate the resolution of disputes, prior to court involvement, through the process of mediation. At the mediation conference, each party is asked to present his or her side. All areas of disagreement are discussed and possible solutions are examined.

After all parties have reached a mutually satisfying agreement, the mediator documents the agreement in writing. A copy is given to all parties and an original is filed in Onondaga County Family Court so that a judge or court attorney referee can make it into a legally binding court order. Mediation agreements are not required to be filed with the court — some families prefer informal agreements instead of court orders.

I can be reached 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at (315) 671-2047.

Staci Dennis-Taylor
South Side resident and Family Court Mediator

Worley stopped her mid-sentence the second she said the word “can’t” in reference to her work. “It’s the ‘I can’t’ attitude that makes me feel like she’s not ready,” Worley said about the option Nevaeh has to skip the sixth grade based on her high performance at school.

He is his children’s biggest supporter, but it’s a call Worley is not ready to make. “I don’t want to push her too quick.”

But there’s another call he’s sure of.

“My next big plan is to legally adopt my stepson and to make Charres my wife.”



> Quantae, 7, and Sayvion, 8. | Drew Thomas, Staff Photo

WHEN I GROW UP

Around the dinner table in the Worley home, the children share their aspirations.

“I want to be a lawyer when I grow up, because I’m good at arguing.”

— Nevaeh Worley, 10

“Maybe I’ll be a teacher so I can tell the kids what to do when they don’t listen.”

— Ricky Worley, Jr., 9

“I love basketball. I could play all the time.”

— Sayvion Burnett, 8

“I want to be a policeman!”

— Quantae Worley, 7



> Nevaeh, 10. | Drew Thomas, Staff Photo



> Ricky Jr., 9. | Drew Thomas, Staff Photo

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ON THE SIDE

SATELLITE STATION

“As a police officer my No. 1 wish is to see the community and the police work closely together. To have the police be more accessible to the public ... I think the South Side community center will make cops more approachable.”

— Christopher Dominick

“The South Side satellite station can answer a lot of the questions people (have). ... We as police officers need to listen to you and you as citizens need to listen to police.”

— Ahmad Mims

EASY TO REACH

Syracuse police officer Ahmad Mims said the satellite office makes police a lot more approachable.

“A lot of times we deal with citizens on call that don’t want to come directly to the police station because they may wait a couple hours or call on the phone, but having the center they can come at their convenience,” Mims said.

FRIENDLY PATROL

Syracuse police officers sit down for a Q&A chat with *The Stand*



By | Carolyn Blackburne
Urban Affairs reporter

Officers Ahmad Mims, Christopher Dominick talk about their jobs and serving the South Side

The Syracuse Police Department is 93 percent white and 7 percent black, according to Lt. Eric Carr.

In an effort to do more outreach to the African-American community, Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner recently announced plans to open a satellite police office in the Southwest Community Center this spring. Carr said the new satellite office on the South Side of Syracuse will be open to the general public.

“The officers will respond to calls and problems in the surrounding community, take complaints from the office and attend neighborhood watch meetings,” Carr said.

> Officers Christopher Dominick (left) and Ahmad Mims share a laugh while answering questions for *The Stand* about their jobs and patrolling the community. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo



AHMAD MIMS, Syracuse police officer, 4 years on the force, 31 years old, originally from Syracuse’s East Side, now lives on the North Side of Syracuse.

There are four new African-American officers in the Syracuse police class. This is something the minority community has been long concerned about and surely will be pleased about. Why do you think it’s been such a struggle to get the numbers up?

I talk to a lot of African-American high school kids and even people up to 30 years old, too, and they say they don’t want to be a sellout. They don’t want to have to arrest their friends. Be the bad guy. I think it’s great that we’re trying to get more African-American officers. There are a lot more white officers, but that’s because more white officers are applying for the job. We have to get more African-Americans to want to do this type of job, want to be role models. ... I chose this career to reach out to people, white, black, brown, yellow, doesn’t matter your color, just being positive and trying to do the best I can for the community.

From your personal perspective, why do you think it’s so important to have more African-American officers in the Syracuse Police Department?

Especially on the South Side, you can drive every block and you’re going to see a bunch of African-American families. I think it’s great there are more African-Americans on the force because maybe they will see them and feel more comfortable and see someone their same culture and maybe they feel more relaxed and they can talk a little better and open up a little more. Maybe they will say more to me as an African-American officer than they would to a white officer, or vice versa. I just think having a presence out there makes the community feel more comfortable.

What do you hear from other African-Americans while you are patrolling your beat?

It was difficult at first because they see you and they’re

like, “Oh, another African-American officer, you’re a sellout, you’re not really going to help us.” You know, being a black officer I try to get the community out of the mindset that we’re the bad guys. White, black officers, it doesn’t matter. Being able to talk. You have to treat everyone as a human being. A lot of times people say it comes down to color and that’s just a way of them not cooperating and that’s them not cooperating with law enforcement, whether black officer or white officer.

This kind of “community policing,” getting more officers “out there” and getting a higher profile in Syracuse especially with the new addition of the satellite office on the South Side. Essentially, that’s all to build trust. How do you build trust while you’re on the beat?

I honestly just try my hardest to make sure whoever I am talking to knows they’re my No. 1 priority in that moment. That builds a comfort level. So then the next time, if they need to call us, they know they will be treated with respect.

What is your No. 1 wish for the Syracuse community?

It’s being able to have that relationship with the community. You know, if they have problems, questions, or concerns, we can help. I think having the new satellite office on the South Side will help that. We’re hoping and praying it does and in the long run it will bring the crime rate down and people will understand why we do what we do as police officers.

What inspired you to become a cop?

I didn’t come from a family full of law enforcement,

to be honest. I didn’t always want to be a cop. I didn’t decide I wanted to be a cop until I got out of college. But my life took me in a different direction and so I started studying for the police test and why not go to the place you grew up? You know, thinking about other people saying, “Officer Mims, he’s back here! He’s trying to help us out!” That inspired me when I was studying for the exam. I wanted to make a difference and be a positive role model. My father always wanted to be a cop but that never came to fruition. I guess my interest in being a cop started with him, but now I’m glad I’m doing it for me. I love this job. I love helping people. I love being a positive role model in the community. I love trying to make a positive difference.

During your time at State University of New York at Oswego you received First Team All-SUNYAC in the 2005-2006 season and All-SUNYAC Honorable Mention in 2004-2005 for basketball. Has your success in sports helped you patrol the streets of Syracuse?

As soon as you answer a call, people size you up a bit. They see you and they’re like, “Oh, you look pretty fit, you play any sports?” And I’m like, “Yeah!” And then we start talking about sports and it relaxes them and eases them into a conversation. Then at least you’re not talking police, you’re talking sports. Younger kids look at me like, “Oh you can’t ball,” and I like to get out of the car and hang out and talk to the youth and play ball. Throw the football around a little bit. But they remember you! The next time they see you they flag you down and they’re like, “Hey! Rematch!”



**CHRISTOPHER DOMINICK,
Syracuse police officer,
just over 12 years on the
force, 39 years old,
originally from Marcellus,
now lives in Camillus.**

You’ve been on the force for just over 12 years. How do you build trust with people who call for your help?

Every call that I go on and every citizen I come in contact with I try to make it so that citizen says, “Remember Officer Dominick? He did everything he could for us.” I think most of us do that. I don’t think that’s just me. But that’s how I approach every call. This job can get stressful and we get frustrated and we get scared whether or not anyone believes that, but when you get to that point you have to step back and say, “What’s my main objective here?” It’s to build a better relationship with the community and I want people to remember me

and think the Syracuse Police Department is a stand-up agency that is here to serve the community.

What is your favorite memory from your time spent as a cop?

The thing that sticks with me is when I’m sitting in a parking lot doing a report or I’m going into a business to take a report, random people will come up and thank me. That’s not something that happens every day. Sometimes we, as police officers, forget that people do appreciate what we do. That really makes my whole week when someone says thank you for what you do or people will

STARTING A BAND

“I’m in the process of trying to form a band. We have nothing recorded as of yet and we lost our drummer yesterday. I’ve been in several bands, from rock to heavy rock. That’s pretty much it. I grew up always loving music. I sang in church and in an a capella group that traveled across New York state with the church ... I guess sometimes it helps when I’m on the beat because some kids who don’t play sports play music, so we can connect on that level.”

— Christopher Dominick

ON THE SIDE

POLICE DIVERSITY

Four officers in the recent class of 32 are African-American.

The new group of officers also includes five women, three Hispanic officers and one Native American officer. Six of the new officers are also military veterans.

say, "I pray for you guys every night," and stuff like that is very uplifting to hear.

What does it take to be a quality cop in Syracuse?

I think you need to be personable and be able to talk to people. Even if officer Mims and I pulled up on a call and people are fighting, I know that most of the police officers that I work with can defuse that situation without laying a hand on anybody. We are here to do a job and I think that's the biggest part of the job. To let people know that we're not bullies. We have a job to do. Just to be able to talk to people, that's the No. 1 thing that a cop should be able to do.

How do you think the new South Side satellite police office will help with community and police relations?

It's going to make police more approachable. I think that a lot of people are afraid and intimidated by the police when they don't need to be. It's going to be good to have this substation where if you have a problem, you can come talk to us. I'm here. I'll listen.

What inspired you to become a police officer?

It's a family business. My brother is a police officer and my father is a retired police officer. But that's not all. You're probably getting the universal answer of "I wanted to make a difference," and that's the truth. Some people aren't cut out for this job and some were designed

for it. I think I was designed for it. I want everybody that I come into contact with to say that Officer Dominick helped to the best of his ability.

What are some of the lessons your father taught you from his time spent with law enforcement?

My father was a state trooper and I remember him saying when he saw someone in need, when he came up on a disabled vehicle and it's a single mom, he'd give her some money to help her out. I didn't know any cops that did that when I was younger. And in my later years as a police officer and it occurred to me, I have it, why can't I do something like that? And I have carried that lesson with me. My dad was always there to help people for 34 years when he did this job and he still does. He still wishes he was a cop. He lives vicariously through me now.

You mentioned that playing football is a great way to connect with the youth as a police officer. Can you tell me about one time where you threw around the football with some kids in Syracuse?

Over on the Westside, during the football season, I saw a few kids throwing the football around and I said, "Run as fast and as far as you can," and they caught it! Man, I hit him. That was like during the playoffs. Those kids will never forget you. Then mom comes out, "You guys need anything to drink?" It's great to do things like that when you can.

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The SHA is seeking responses to this Request for Proposal (RFP) from contractors with the ability to prepare vacated apartments for re-occupancy. The SHA is interested in contractors who can provide a full range of services necessary for this work. These services may include, but are not limited to, general cleaning; appliance cleaning and repair; dry-wall repairs, flooring repairs, stripping and waxing; painting and preparation for painting; minor plumbing repairs; etc. "Heavy" clean-out, for example mattresses, furniture, etc., will be done by SHA staff.

The SHA manages approximately 2,600 public and assisted housing units, about half of which are high rise-elevator units and half family row house units. Bedroom configurations range from 0 bedroom efficiencies to 2 bedroom units in senior elevator buildings, and 1 to 5 bedroom family apartments. During an average year, between 240 to 300 units vacate.

Contractors must have resources to accomplish all stated work in an apartment in 10 days.

The full text of this Notice can be found at:

www.syracusehousing.org/doingbusinesswithSHA/currentbids/RFPs

or by calling 315.470.4270 and requesting to pick-up a packet or by e-mail request to: RFP@syrhousing.org.

Requests must be made before April 22, 2015.



A roof over their heads

The “Tiny Home Movement” has become a sort of fad in the United States. Some choose to live in the tiny homes because they want to live more simply. The homes can range in size from 100 to 500 square feet and can cost anywhere between \$10,000 and \$40,000 to build.

Andrew Lunetta hopes to build tiny homes on the South Side. The homes would be around 250 square feet and resemble a one-bedroom apartment with furniture and other amenities for people who are facing homelessness. Rent would be 30 percent of their monthly income.

> Andrew Lunetta, 25, has spent several years supporting the homeless community in Syracuse by creating programs such as Pedal to Possibilities. The program holds bike rides three times a week for those facing homelessness. Lunetta also works at the Brady Faith Center on the South Side. | Brooke Lewis, Staff Photo

By | Brooke Lewis
Urban Affairs reporter

Andrew Lunetta couldn't look more comfortable. He roams the tiny Brady Faith Center, with a cup of coffee in his hand. He greets each person with a smile and when someone starts a conversation, his eyes focus with a look of genuine interest.

Lunetta is easily the youngest there, wearing a navy blue sweatshirt, jeans and a black winter hat. His eyes are bright blue and light up when he smiles.

The 25-year-old is working a room full of men and women who have faced homelessness at some point.

“I would (say) some of my best friendships are with people who are and have faced homelessness. I think it's that shift of realizing you have a lot to learn from them,” Lunetta said.

Since graduating from Le Moyne College almost three

years ago, Lunetta has devoted hours of community service to the South Side and to the homeless community in Syracuse. His Pedal to Possibilities program, started in 2011, allows people who are facing homelessness a chance to get out, exercise and ride a bike three times a week.

Lunetta is also the muscle behind a morning gathering at the Brady Faith Center, where coffee and food are served for the homeless community three times a week during winter's brutally cold months.

Now he's organizing an initiative to build “Tiny Homes” on the South Side, small housing units for those facing homelessness. He formed a nonprofit group called A Tiny Home for Good last November dedicated to the issue.

But when Lunetta was a student at Le Moyne College, he pictured himself as a professional tri-athlete. He spent hours training and went on frequent bike rides.

“(I) very soon realized I got so much more life out (of) sitting

ON THE SIDE

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Brady Faith Center
404 South Ave.

EVENTS

- Sunday Mass at 12:15 p.m.
- Women's Group Monday 7-9 p.m.
- Men's Group Wednesday 6-9 p.m.

PROGRAMS

Pedal to Possibilities

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (9 to 11 a.m.) at The Brady Faith Center.

Free bikes provided. After 10 rides, participants get a free bike, lock and helmet.

Drop-Inn Center

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (7-9 a.m.) Usually provides coffee, food and conversation.

down for a cup of coffee with a guy facing homelessness than I did on a bike ride," Lunetta said.

In college, he started working overnight shifts at Oxford Street Inn, a homeless shelter for men in Syracuse. The shelter welcomed men, even if they might be high or drunk. His job: Get the men out around 7 a.m.

He began to see a problem. He wondered what these men would do for the next 9 1/2 hours before they were allowed back in. He could see how some of them would turn to drugs or alcohol.

The men from Oxford Street Inn are not the only people in Syracuse struggling with homelessness. Every year, the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Syracuse and Onondaga County completes a winter and summer count of the homeless in the city. This past January, canvassers found more than 500 people sleeping in shelters, according to a January [syracuse.com](#) article. According to the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Syracuse and Onondaga County, more than 1,700 people in Onondaga County lack a permanent home.

It's not a stretch to say that Lunetta came from a family of community service advocates.

His mom, Cathy Lunetta, contemplated becoming a nun and spent a year in Peru before moving back to Syracuse, where she became director of the Dorothy Day House, a women's shelter. His dad, Rick Lunetta, was a Catholic priest for five years on the North Side of the city. After Rick left the church, he began volunteering at Dorothy Day House, where he met Cathy.

Lunetta remembers volunteering at soup kitchens and participating in Habitat for Humanity as a kid. He lived in Syracuse for seven years before moving to Boston with his family, after his dad started a new job.

Lunetta would meet his now-roommate and one of his closest friends — Dan Khev, 26 — while attending middle school in Boston.

"(Andrew) has a tremendous ability to think of a vision and bring people together around that vision. He really does have a tremendous heart. He notices a lot about people who are on the outside looking in," Khev said.

After graduating from Le Moyne, Lunetta and his girlfriend at the time biked across the country for more than 60 days, ending in California and raising almost \$5,000 for the Brady Faith Center through donations.

The Brady Faith Center, located across the street from the Southwest Community Center, is a familiar place to many on the South Side. It provides services for the community ranging from Sunday Mass to spiritual groups for men and women. Kevin Frank, the center's executive director, interacts with people daily.

"You know a lot of people will talk about this neighborhood as a bad neighborhood, and what goes along with that is bad people make up bad neighborhoods. People just don't understand that there are really great people living in this neighborhood," Frank said.

Frank remembers watching Lunetta interact with men

at the Oxford Street Inn. He was impressed with how Lunetta knew almost every man by name. Frank said he could tell how much he cared.

"In anything that we do, we can do the right thing for the wrong reasons. Even in ministry or service, you can kind of be in it, but not really understand the core and the heart of why we need to be doing what we're doing. It's really about relationships. I think Andrew really understands that," Frank said.

After Lunetta's summer trip across the country, he returned to Syracuse in September and rented a house on Midland Avenue. He opened up his house to three other men who were facing homelessness. In 2013, he began attending the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, hoping to obtain his master's degree in public administration.

Tony Parton, 47, lived in the Midland Avenue house. He met Lunetta through bike rides with the Pedal to Possibilities program, after seeing a flier for the program at his homeless shelter.

He saw the house as his opportunity to leave the shelter system. Even though he found housing, Parton still struggled to find a job.

"I always wanted to try to get out and find work. It's not easy," Parton said.

The guys and Lunetta found their bond through

LESSONS FROM HIS PARENTS: HELPING OTHERS

"I like people. I like a job that helps people. ... I get a lot out of that interaction with people," said Lunetta's mother, Cathy Lunetta, who lives outside Boston with Lunetta's father, Rick.

She says her son experienced a very open environment growing up, recalling their time attending St. Andrew's, a church now closed in Syracuse, which promoted a community of social justice, tolerance and acceptance. Lunetta also went to Edward Smith Elementary School, a school for kindergarten through eighth-graders in Syracuse and one that Cathy says was very diverse, allowing her son to meet many different types of people.

Cathy credits Lunetta with good listening skills and says he brings out the best in people. She notices how he seems to just be completely at home with others in a room.

"He's so sincere about it, too. There's nothing put on or fake."

Cathy believes allowing Andrew to participate in community service growing up helped shape his view of people. They volunteered at a soup kitchen in Boston, which introduced him to the homeless community.

"We get to know these people as more than just a homeless person," Cathy said.

biking, and sometimes discussion would turn to a morning ride through Pedals to Possibilities. They even got a kitten, after Parton brought one home.

“We tried to eat dinner together every other night or so, which was really nice. We’d all kind of switch on who would cook and who would clean. Everyone was making steps, looking for jobs, going to school,” Lunetta said.

But halfway through his yearlong graduate program at Maxwell, some things changed. Some guys were still continuing to drink and do drugs in the house, which was against the house policy of no alcohol or drugs.

The thoughts of what the guys were up to whenever he was away began to consume Lunetta. He would stay up all night, listening closely for any type of sign of drinking or drugs. He lost focus at school. He began to feel physical stress from the constant worrying.

He remembered thinking one day, “I just have my hands in way too many things. There are people that are counting on me and I’m not able to give fully myself.”

He eventually had to tell people at three different points during his year at Maxwell to leave the house. It wasn’t easy.

He was scared the first time he had to approach someone — and took a friend with him to deliver the news.

“I was more scared of ‘Wow, I failed. I wasn’t able to keep this guy out of the shelter long term. He’s going right back to where I took him from,’” Lunetta said.

Last November, Lunetta launched his non-profit, called A Tiny Home for Good in Syracuse. He hoped to use a vacant lot on the near Westside as the first site. But opposition rose when he proposed it to neighbors living nearby.

“When I say we’re going to rent these three homes to homeless people, bells go off and they think of guys under the bridges, drugs and alcohol,” Lunetta said.

The Greater Syracuse Land Bank, a non-profit group dedicated to redeveloping vacant, abandoned or tax-delinquent properties, held a public meeting last November about the vacant lot on the near Westside. Lunetta hoped this meeting would result in the non-profit group transferring the lot over to A Tiny Home for Good. But 15 other neighbors were also present, openly voicing their opposition. Ultimately, Greater Syracuse Land Bank representatives said they needed more time for public comment, which Lunetta believes was a nice way of saying he needed to find a new neighborhood for his project.

He believes the negative view of people facing homelessness is what has set the project back.

“I hope to really show that if those facing homelessness have the structure and the safety around them, they can really start to contribute a value and be individuals who society doesn’t brush under the rug or ignore, but who embrace and say these are good people,” Lunetta said.

He continues to move forward with his plan to build a “Tiny Home.”

Lunetta graduated from Maxwell last year. Toward the end of his program, he felt comfortable asking the men to find their own places or help them look. He knew it was time to move on from the Midland Avenue home.

Now, Lunetta mainly focuses his time on “Tiny Homes” but makes money doing framing and painting for a contractor on Fridays, Saturdays and some Sundays. He said his work just barely covers rent and gas.

“He can live on nothing. He doesn’t have a lot of material needs. That seems to keep him pretty happy and grounded,” said Cathy Lunetta about her son’s simple lifestyle.

He currently lives in a house with his close friend from Boston, Khev, and the head of the Pedal to Possibilities Program, Roy Durgin, 26.

Joe Niles, 33, is the oldest of the group living at the house. He faced homelessness after moving back to Syracuse from Florida in 2011 and was unem-



> Lunetta talks to a patron at the Brady Faith Center. | Brooke Lewis, Staff Photo

ployed for almost a year before finding work at Gordon Dining Commons at Onondaga Community College. During his unemployed year, he lived at the Rescue Mission in Syracuse and learned about Pedal to Possibilities.

Niles enjoys the community they’ve created in their home, describing Durgin as the resident chef. He said Lunetta is like a brother.

“He has a very upbeat personality. I mean if he is having a bad day, sometimes you might not even know it because he always tries to have a smile on his face,” Niles said.

Parton now works in the kitchen at Le Moyne College. He’s currently living at the YMCA in Syracuse but is looking for a place of his own. He owes a lot to Lunetta, he says.

“I wouldn’t know what to do if I didn’t meet him.”

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