

the Stand

south side news

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Syracuse, NY

NOVEMBER 2015 Issue 46 FREE

SEARCH FOR HOPE

Syracuse community gathers to find bone marrow donor for baby

Abuse ends, life begins
Woman shares her decade-long story to help others

book buddy

Young students get personal attention as they improve reading

Fatherhood series
Q/A with Nate Brown, who sees his role as 'a joy'

A PLEA AGAINST GUNS



INSIDE | NOVEMBER

the Stand

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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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4 **SCHOOL AND YOUTH** | Reading is a fun adventure at Seymour Dual Language Academy, where first- and second-graders get help from personal book buddies who volunteer there.

6 **FEATURES** | Ardena Harvey says that the decade she spent in an abusive relationship has prompted her to openly share personal details so she can help others.

10 **COMMUNITY** | Meet 2-year-old King Nazir Leon, who has CD40 Ligand deficiency and needs a bone marrow transplant. Find out how you might be a donor match.

13 **FATHERHOOD** | Get to know Nate Brown, father of four, who is our featured dad in this month's Fatherhood Q/A, and who embraces the challenges and joys of raising children.

14 **FEATURES** | Clifford Ryan takes to the streets with a large sign and a plea to the young people he meets to pledge that they'll stay away from guns and violence.

16 **COMMUNITY** | Find out why ACTS, the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse, is shifting focus from conflict resolution to conflict transformation in its quest for peace.

18 **COMMUNITY** | If you notice more shade at McKinley Park in coming years, you can thank students from McKinley Brighton Elementary School, who recently planted 14 trees.

■ Cover photography by Leonard Adams of Denisha DeLee and 2-year-old son, King Nazir Leon

CALENDAR | NOVEMBER

What: RESPECT: CNY Celebrates Women in Music
When: Doors open at 5:45 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13
Where: The Palace Theater, 2384 James St.
Cost: \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door. VIP tickets are \$50, with an after party, food and signature drinks
Details: Central NY's female artists will pay tribute through performance to women in music who inspire them. This year, a happy hour beer sampling will feature brews by Saranac, Blue Moon, 1911, Sierra Nevada and Ithaca Brewing Co. Event hosts are Amy Robbins of 93Q and Dave Frisina from 105.9 The Rebel. Proceeds benefit the Centers at St. Camillus.
More Info: For the complete lineup or to purchase tickets, visit www.RespectCNY.com

What: Building Bridges
When: 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 28
Where: Beauchamp Branch Library, 2111 S. Salina St.
Cost: Free
Details: Learn how bridges defy gravity and hold you up, learn why some hold trucks and trains but others wobble when you walk on them. Youth can design, learn about and build their own Popsicle stick bridge.
More Info: Call (315) 435-3395

Our cover features King Nazir Leon — “Baby King” — who is in need of a bone marrow transplant.

Several registry drives have been held, but still no match. The challenge? Race is a major factor in finding a match, and only 7 percent of registered donors are African-American.

I have been on the registry for the past decade. Last year I was contacted when my blood profile came up as a possible match for a young child. A team member with Be The Match contacted me and explained the process.



The next step was for me to provide additional blood samples to see if I was a strong enough match. If this happened, then they would follow up and discuss my options, including how, when and where the procedure would happen. I ended up not being an ideal match, but I have kept my blood on file to serve as a potential donor to others.

It was important for me to register as a multiracial individual because it is extremely difficult for individuals of mixed race to find a match. It is also challenging for African-Americans because the donor pool is so low. To learn more about Baby King, turn to Page 10. To find out if you might be that one match he needs, contact Paula Miller at (315) 476-3000 ext. 2576 or visit join.bethematch.org/babyking to join the registry.

In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October, Ardena Harvey volunteered her personal survivor story in an effort to help others. She participated in our From Where We Stand storytelling series in the summer of 2014. Before completing the project, she told me she should share her story — how she drove more than 900 miles with her two small children to escape an abusive relationship and start over back home in Syracuse.

Other stories this month include a profile of Clifford Ryan and his O.G. Against Violence campaign to help steer at-risk youth away from the streets and a look at a literacy program at Seymour Academy that helps students who are below the recommended reading level by pairing them with a reading buddy. Also, visit mysouthsidestand.com for an update on A Tiny Home for Good, which we wrote about in the October issue of The Stand.

This month's featured dad in our fatherhood series is Nate Brown, better known to many as Peanut, who founded Brownskin Band and plays drums with the group. Tywana Reese, a close family friend, wrote a touching letter nominating him for his efforts in raising his four children. She wrote: “Nate works two jobs to ensure his children have what they need and some of what they want, including a full-time stay at home mom. When you are in the Brown's household it's not unusual to hear I love you being said and hugs being given out.”

She adds, “I recently asked Nate what does being a father mean to you and his response was ‘it means the world to me as a creator of a person that resembles me. I want to do everything to make them proud of their father.’”

For more local stories and upcoming events, visit mysouthsidestand.com.

Ashley Kang

UPCOMING EVENT

Nov. 14

Bone Marrow Registry Drive sponsored by The Stand

When: 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 14

Where: South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St.

Details: The need for diverse donors is great, as the most likely match is someone of your same race. Currently, there is no match on the Be The Match registry for Baby King, who is featured in this issue of The Stand. To become a donor, you must be between the ages of 18 and 44 and meet the health guidelines.

Contact: Organizer Paula Miller, (315) 476-3000, ext. 2576

NOMINATE A FATHER

To submit a nomination for an outstanding father who should be featured in our Fatherhood Q/A in The Stand, send a short explanation with contact information to The Stand Director Ashley Kang at ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or call (315) 882-1054.

ASK JULIO

Julio Pinet Jr. is a 6-year-old second-grader at Seymour Academy who is in his second year participating in Book Buddies

Q: Why do you like coming to Book Buddies?

A: Because I get to read three books with my Book Buddy and they give you snacks

Q: What's your favorite book?

A: "Give Them Back"

Q: What do you like to read about?

A: Animals

Q: What's something you learned at Book Buddies?

A: Reading helps you read words

Q: What's your favorite part?

A: When we get to read books

BOOK BUDDIES

One-on-one sessions strive to improve children's reading levels



> Volunteer Isaac Osei-Bobie sits with Julio Pinet Jr. during one of their sessions together. | Kathy Hua, Staff Photo

By | Ashley McBride
Staff reporter

Volunteers read stories with students from low-income communities to instill a love of reading

During Isaac Osei-Bobie's first session as a Book Buddy, he had to chase 6-year-old Julio Pinet Jr. around the Seymour Dual Language Academy library and persuade him to settle down long enough to finish his lunch and complete reading his sight words. Although it was just the first session, Osei-Bobie feels optimistic about future sessions.

"I went to Syracuse city schools, so it's an easy way for me to give back, and I get something out of it, but I think the kids get even more," he said. "This gives half an hour to an hour where they can just sit down, one to one, and get any sort of attention that they need with their reading."

In its second year, the Book Buddies program has enlisted nearly 100 Syracuse community volunteers, more than twice as many as last year, to help first- and second-graders with their reading skills at Seymour Academy.

"From professionals in the community, some from the working world, to police officers, to retired teachers,

there's a wide range of volunteers," said Ashley Rivera, the site coordinator for Book Buddies from the Near Westside Initiative.

Rivera said the group focuses on these grade levels so students receive help before they get to third grade, when standardized testing begins.

When it's time for their Book Buddies session, students often enter the library boisterous and energetic because many of them are returning from recess or lunch. During their 30-minute session with a volunteer, the pairs review sight words and read up to three books together. By the end of the session, Laurie Black, the program coordinator from Syracuse 20/20, encourages the students to read for 20 minutes a day at home.

Syracuse 20/20 is a nonprofit organization that aims to identify and address problems facing the city of Syracuse. Members began the Book Buddies initiative as a result of collaboration with the Campaign for Grade Level reading, a national organization that targets third-grade reading skills for children from low-income communities.

The environment in the Seymour Academy library during the lunch hour is relaxed yet educational. Student and volunteer pairs spread out around small tables and chairs, along the bookshelves and sometimes on a beanbag chair. Volunteers can be heard praising students for

completing a book or sounding out a word, and the students always leave with a pencil and a sticker for finishing the session.

Dorcas MacDonald, a second-year volunteer, returned because she recognizes the necessity of the program. And as a retired librarian, she also enjoys seeing students grow to love reading.

“I love children, and I actually wanted to volunteer in a library once I retired and this gave me the opportunity to do it,” she said. “It’s a good program, and I’d like to see it at all the schools because the children need help with reading.”

According to the New York State department of education, in a searchable database of scores provided by syracuse.com, 92 percent of third-graders in the Syracuse City School District did not meet state standards in ELA testing in 2015. At Seymour Academy, 96 percent of third-graders did not.

Besides growing the number of volunteers, Book Buddies also increased the number of students who participate in the program. Last year, 40 participated; this year, 86 are participating. Additionally, Rivera said the Book Buddies coordinators plan to work closely with the school staff and administration to monitor the students’ attendance to ensure they are attending Book Buddies if they are at school that day.

The program was established at Seymour Academy because a teacher there reached out to the Near Westside Initiative to request more community volunteers at the school, Rivera said. In the future, it may expand to other schools, but for now the program is focusing on core skills of Seymour’s first- and second-graders.

Sasha Rasmussen, a first-grade teacher at Seymour, expressed her appreciation that the program provides additional support and time for her students.

“Last year, when we compared the beginning and end results, we had students move up three or four levels of reading, and that’s when I partnered with Laurie and Ashley,” she said. “I saw the data and I said, ‘I want to be involved, I want to show them that it really does help out students and it does matter.’”

During volunteer training sessions, Rasmussen makes a point to stop by and meet the volunteers to let them know the substantial difference their time makes.

According to results compiled by Book Buddies last year, the reading skills of 30 out of the 40 students participating were below grade level at the start of the year. By the end of the year, nine students were at or above grade-level reading. However, all 40 moved up at least one reading level, 32 moved up at least three reading levels, and 20 moved up at least five reading levels through the year.

The Book Buddies program faces an uphill battle in helping kids achieve grade-level reading skills, but both the volunteers and coordinators remain optimistic that their work will be beneficial. Osei-Bobie believes that just



> First-grader Katore Henderson comes to Book Buddies during lunch to read with Laurie McCarthy. | Kathy Hua, Staff Photo



> Volunteer Mary Baily shares a high-five with second-grader Nazariah Smith for finishing a book. | Kathy Hua, Staff Photo



> Six-year-old Julio Pinet Jr., reads aloud with his Book Buddy Isaac Osei-Bobie at Seymour Academy. | Kathy Hua, Staff Photo

having one-on-one time with a different instructor than usual is effective.

“Maybe if you hear the same things over and over from the same people you might tune them out, so I think it’s good just to give them a different face and a different voice on a weekly basis.”

ASK KATORE

Katore Henderson is a 6-year-old first-grader at Seymour Academy

Q: Why do you like coming to Book Buddies?

A: It’s fun and I get to read books

Q: What are your favorite kinds of books to read?

A: “(The) Cat in the Hat”

Q: What do you like about your volunteers?

A: They’re nice and they help me say the big words

Q: What word did you learn today?

A: Because

Q: Can you use it in sentence?

A: I will not go because I am scared of cats

WANT TO BE A BOOK BUDDY?

Contact Laurie Black at syracuse2020@yahoo.com

Although there are few spots left for this school year, potential volunteers can submit their names for next year

Volunteers must be available 11 a.m. to noon or noon to 1 p.m. once a week for the entire school year

ABUSE STATS

In 2014, according to Vera House, Inc. information:

9,629 domestic calls answered by Syracuse Police Department

5,273 calls answered by Vera House's 24-hour hotline

1,424 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes assisted by Vera House's Advocacy Program

1,376 domestic violence perpetrators arrested by Syracuse Police Department

1,089 adults and children sought shelter due to domestic violence were provided safety by local emergency shelter services

49 individuals provided free legal advice by CNY Women's Bar Association Legal Clinic

1 intimate partner homicide reported

MOVING PAST ABUSE

Syracuse resident uses lessons from abusive relationship to help others



> Ardena Harvey prepares cornish hens for dinner. For years, she was in an abusive relationship, but she has moved on. She now shares her experience to help others in similar situations. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang
The Stand director

Ardena Harvey decides to tell her story to help others and herself move forward in life

Driving 60 miles an hour on a six-lane highway while holding her 5-month-old son, Ardena Harvey was punched in the face by her partner, likely she recalls for something she said.

At 19, the new mother had just left her entire family in Syracuse and was starting a new life with her son's father.

"That was the very first time he struck me," recalled Harvey, now 39. "Something I said triggered him. Then he said, 'you're gonna learn today.'"

Rather than argue, Harvey went silent.

But she is silent no more. As a result of what she describes as a years-long abusive relationship, Harvey launched a support group, Virtuous Women on the Rise!

"It's a sisterhood where we hold empowerment sessions and build a community of support," she said. "I started it because I believe you teach what you need to learn and also because of my lack of resources being a single mother."

Looking back, Harvey says she knew from the moment her partner struck her that the relationship would not work. She just didn't know it would take her a decade — and many attempts — to leave.

"I knew this is not a demonstration of love," she said. "There's no way that someone that could confess their love for me and say they feel this strongly toward me would ever do that."

Harvey says she left her partner the first time when the couple reached Atlanta. She withdrew \$170 and walked three miles to a hotel while carrying her infant son. Her escape lasted just two nights. She returned, she says, because it was her only option.

And the abuse, which she described as manipulation, verbal putdowns and physical attacks, continued. So did the leaving. Five times, Harvey left the relationship, only to reconcile later and watch the cycle of domestic violence continue.

Tiffany Brec, a prevention educator at Vera House, which is a local support service that assists victims and families of domestic violence, notes it can take several attempts to finally sever ties with an abusive partner.

"On average it takes a victim six to eight times of leaving and going back, leaving and going back, before they are finally at a place where they are ready," Brec

said. “This is about the average, but the timeframe on how long this could take is dependent on the person and situation.”

LOVE BLIND

Between the gap of graduating high school and leaving for freshman orientation at University at Albany, State University of New York, 17-year-old Harvey met the future father of her two children and her abuser. He lived behind her family’s Kennedy Square townhouse. She said the connection was instant; he was intriguing and seemed wise beyond his years.

“His conversation was so different than the men my age,” she said.

He told Harvey he was 21, that he had one son and that he was a student at Syracuse University. Yet in reality he was 26, had given her one of many alias names he used, had multiple children and had falsified documents, claiming to be an SU undergrad.

“I fell in love with a fictitious person,” she said.

He was well-spoken, she said. He introduced her to new schools of thought about religion and wellness, and he challenged her to stop eating pork.

Later she recognized this as manipulation. She dropped out of college — after having transferred to Le Moyne College — because she says he purported it as a white man’s education. And by this point, she was pregnant.

“It was understood that we would be married and start a family,” she said.

“I wanted my children to have their father, and I really thought he could change.”

— Ardena Harvey

A ceremony was performed in his mother’s living room and attended by one witness; a few months later, the pair left for Georgia with their new son. Harvey knew deep inside it was not the relationship she wanted. She never mailed in the marriage license. And it was years later before she told anyone the union wasn’t legal.

VICIOUS CIRCLE

The challenge for Harvey in separating was her chil-

dren. She had her second child two years after arriving in Georgia.

“He didn’t believe in using birth control or condoms,” she said.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that adolescent pregnancy and unintended pregnancies are linked with intimate partner violence, along with anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as an increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

With a toddler and infant, she wanted her family to work.

“I wanted my children to have their father,” she said, “and I really thought he could change.”

There was a process she set up for leaving.

The first step was to ensure she could care for both children independently. “I literally had to practice catching public transportation with two children. When I felt comfortable that I could live on my own, then I would sneak out,” she explained.

She also would have to line up baby sitters, secure housing and oftentimes borrow money.

Without doubt, they would reconcile.

“He’d say, ‘I’m sorry,’” she said. “I really believed that he didn’t mean to do it. I don’t blame him because I really wanted our family to work. But once I established my independence, I was comfortable that if it doesn’t work, I know how to do this on my own.”

FED UP

By 2001, she returned to Syracuse after fleeing the relationship.

“I grabbed a garbage bag full of clothes for the kids, got into my little Ford Aspire and just drove,” she said. “I’ve never driven long distance by myself. I didn’t have a map or directions; I was going to see how far I could go. I started driving, then saw I had made it to another state.”

And she kept driving — straight up Interstate 81.

“I unexpectedly knocked on my parents’ door,” she said.

They were totally surprised, she said, because she never told anyone about abuse in her relationship.

Nationally, 1 in 5 women have been victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and women between the ages of 18 and 24 are most commonly abused by a partner.

At that time, Harvey was 24, her son, Yahkeef Davis, was 5 and her daughter, Na’amu Harvey, was 3.

“But again we tried to reconcile,” she said, and the family got an apartment together only a few months after she arrived in Syracuse.

It was a final assault a year later that compelled her to leave for good.

“I don’t remember much else that happened that

LOCAL SUPPORT

Vera House, Inc., prevents, responds to and partners to end domestic and sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

LOCATION

Vera House
6181 Thompson Road,
Suite 100

WEBSITE

VeraHouse.org

HOTLINE

Vera House Crisis &
Support Line
Open 24 hours a day, 7
days a week
(315) 468-3260

When you call, a volunteer can assess your situation and safety

WANT TO JOIN HARVEY’S GROUP?

Contact Ardena Harvey at (315) 254-7591 or email ardena@ardenayinnerprize.com to learn more about Virtuous Women on the Rise!

MESSAGES FOR WOMEN

For women currently in abusive relationships, Ardena Harvey says there are five key things to know.

- 1. Recognition:** You are not alone, and it's not your fault.
- 2. Communication:** Talk to someone, even if it's a stranger. Talk about what you're experiencing because being able to share can help ease some of your pain.
- 3. Make a decision:** Determine whether you want to make the relationship work. Some women hold religious beliefs that say they are supposed to stay married. For them, walking away is not an option. If the decision is to leave, then start to put together an exit plan.
- 4. Strategize:** Create a plan
- 5. Solicit help:** Regardless of your choice, you need help. If it's staying, you need to get the appropriate counseling, appropriate support to make it a healthy relationship. If it's leaving, you need the appropriate resources whether it's Vera House, getting a job, getting your education, finding day care or creating a simple strategy on how to be a single mom.

evening after the assault in the bathroom, but I do remember for the next few days I was strategizing how to leave."

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Each day, Harvey reads a passage from "Until Today!: Daily Devotions for Spiritual Growth and Peace of Mind" by Iyanla Vanzant. On Jan. 17, 2002, she read a passage that told her: *You're going to have to do something that you don't want to do, but you have to do it for all the women in your family.*

"In interpreting that spiritual message, I thought I had to shoot him," she said. "Not to kill him. But to maim him, to let him know that you cannot abuse people like that and get away with it."

Extreme thoughts like this had never entered her mind and, she says, have never returned. "I didn't see another way out. If I shot him in the leg, then maybe he'd become paralyzed and couldn't chase me. I felt like I was in a hopeless situation."

She developed a plan.

She would go to work at Carrier like normal. She'd take a break to drive to the bank and was prepared to withdraw \$1,000. She'd next walk up to any crowd of guys on the street and ask to purchase a gun.

The morning she was prepared to do all of this, her car would not start.

"He had to take me to work," she said. "That threw

a monkey wrench into my entire plan."

By being dropped off at work, she had no car and no way to travel to the bank, no way to obtain a gun.

"My car has never not started," she said. "Just that particular morning. It really had to be a divine intervention, because the very next day, it started up."

A few days later when he left for work, she packed up her things and moved back in with her parents, into the same three-bedroom townhouse where she grew up. She shared a bedroom with both her children. She worked two jobs and saved \$18,000 in less than a year, using that money as a down payment to buy her own home.

Her son recalls those times. "I didn't mind us all living together," Davis said. "I was an affectionate kid, and I loved being close to my mom. And when we got a house, it was exciting. I remember the first night there. We didn't have any furniture, so the three of us all slept on the dining room floor layered in covers and sheets."

Looking back, Davis can remember wanting his dad around, but he supports his mother's decision to leave the relationship. (His dad is now in prison.)

"I think she made a good decision," he said. "Although I was without a father for a majority of my life, she didn't feel comfortable in that relationship. I feel she had every right to leave. It's not like she said he couldn't come and see us, he just didn't. I think she was completely justified in her response."



> Ardena Harvey's daughter, Na'amu Harvey, and boyfriend, Fred Garner, throw her a surprise birthday party in October. Having moved on with her life after years in an abusive relationship, Harvey is writing a book about her experiences. She hopes to have the book published by her 40th birthday next year. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

SURVIVAL STORY

Harvey kept the abuse a secret over the years, but at least one person noticed. “Only once did I allude I was in an abusive relationship. While we were moving around in the South, a leasing agent looked at me and said ‘I can tell that you are suffering and if there is anything you want to talk to me about, and I mean anything, I am here.’”

Harvey said she didn’t acknowledge anything at that time. “But I also didn’t disacknowledge. I just sat in silence.”

Looking back, something about how that woman showed concern inspired Harvey to become vocal later in life.

“I wish I remembered her name,” Harvey said. “She doesn’t know how much that question touched me.”

In a 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey, it was estimated that 41 percent of African-American women living in the United States were victims of physical or sexual abuse and/or stalking by an intimate partner and that African-American women suffer at a disproportionate rate.

According to researcher Catherine A. Kendall in her 2014 study, “Deconstructing the Universal Woman,” many domestic violence social programs are based on the needs of white, middle-class women; thus it marginalizes women of color, who are in the greatest need of help. The result, she reported, is that many victims do not seek help or speak out.

Harvey utilized no services.

But, now, her support group provides services for others, and it has helped her, too. Because of Virtuous Women on the Rise!, Harvey was able to return to school. She completed a bachelor of science in business administration from Columbia College at Hancock Field in Syracuse. She also earned a master of social work from the David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics at Syracuse University.

Harvey now works as a Promise Zone Program supervisor with the Syracuse City School District. She works at the central office off Harrison Street and supervises the Promise Zone team of school social workers. Their focus is bringing parents, teachers and students together to discuss issues rather than merely dole out punishment.

Joining Harvey’s group was a way for Geneva Fortune to heal from abuse she witnessed her sister endure, as well as a few of her own volatile relationships. “We would come together and be there for each other,” Fortune said of the women in the group. “And then there were times we would take each others’ kids to make sure that they could do what they needed to do — work or attend classes.”

Fortune also says Harvey’s drive to achieve her education pushed her. At 56, Fortune has recently returned to college to complete a bachelor’s degree in social work at Cayuga Community College. “Her motivation to move on and keep going inspired me,” Fortune said.

A goal of Harvey’s is to work with women who have been in domestic and/or abusive relationships. As a certified life coach, she hopes to help them identify the lesson or the blessing in that traumatic experience. And another goal is a book.

“I’m currently writing a book based on my relationship with him and based off of other defining relationships I’ve had.”

Her commitment is to have the published book in hand by her 40th birthday — Oct. 7, 2016.

“In retrospect, there’s always a lesson and a blessing in that abuse,” she said. “It’s here to teach us something. The lesson I learned was forgiveness.”



Do you have a high school diploma or GED, but no college?

You may qualify for the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) for part-time students at Syracuse University.

HEOP helps with:

- » Tuition
- » Books
- » Academic guidance
- » Tutoring

Are you eligible?

Call **315-443-3261** for an appointment, or visit parttime.syr.edu/heop.

“This wonderful program benefits low-income students. It gave me the tools to complete my dream of a bachelor’s degree.”

Nancy Legra-Garcia
SU Class of 2015

HEOP and its activities are supported, in whole or in part, by the New York State Education Department.

GO SU
part time!



> King Nazir Leon, 2, sits between portraits of his two uncles, Dayvon and Daqwan DeLee, who passed away from complications of a CD40 Ligand deficiency. It is a hereditary immune disease that King also inherited. | Leonard Adams, Staff Photo

A MATCH FOR A KING

Community members rally for baby who needs a bone marrow donor

By | Chris Libonati
Urban Affairs reporter

Local drives, including one at SU, reach out in hope of finding a donor for King Nazir Leon

The tent, the clipboards and the swabs on the Syracuse University quad were all for the 2-year-old boy with an Afro and a black Columbia jacket, blue jeans and blue boots to shield him from the elements.

One man called out “Baby King” as the toddler arrived at the tent.

Named King Nazir Leon, he has a CD40 Ligand deficiency, a hereditary immune disease that can be fatal without a bone marrow transplant. King’s best hope for a future is to find a bone marrow match, but only 7 percent of people on the bone marrow registry are African-American. Race is a key factor in determining a match.

Local people, including aspiring rappers and SU athletes, have rallied around King. Denisha DeLee, his mother, and other helpers turned out Sept. 26 for a bone marrow drive on the quad at Syracuse University before SU played Louisiana State University.

“His grandmother reached out to them and started doing a drive,” DeLee said of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, an organization that supports programs related to blood cancers. “Since July 11th, she’s been doing drives. Every chance we get, we do a drive.”

Both of DeLee’s brothers had CD40. One died when he was 4 years old and the other when he was 18 years old. By then he was using a wheelchair because he had lost his ability to walk.

DeLee knew her son would have a 50-50 chance of being born with the disease. Doctors told her so.

From an early age, King has been a regular visitor to Upstate Golisano Children’s Hospital for treatments. Sometimes he will get sick and his immune system can’t fight back like that of a healthy person. Even taking him to an event like an SU football game is a risk because of the sheer number of people who could have an illness as simple as the common cold, his mother said.

At one point King caught pneumonia and spent two months in the hospital, hooked up to a breathing tube.

“There are days that I don’t want to go to work because he’s so sick,” DeLee said. “He’s constantly sick ... it’s very, very hard.”

If DeLee gets sick, she stays in a separate room in the house, and King’s grandmother takes care of him to make sure no germs spread. DeLee also has two daughters she must provide for as a single mother.

Doctors told DeLee the best way to find a match would be to have another child, but she said she doesn’t want to put herself or another baby through what King faces right now.

At the bone marrow drive, a few people stopped at the tent to join the bone marrow registry and have their cheeks swabbed — first the top left of their cheek and then typically counter clockwise, with the swabs changed for each corner of the mouth. After swabbing for cheek cells, the swabs are put in a packet and sealed.

“Thirty-eight thousand-to-one are the odds of a match,” a volunteer told people who became part of the Bone Marrow registry. It’s the way nearly every conversation at the table ended.

A volunteer explained that only people ages 18 to 44 could join the registry because after the cutoff age, it becomes more dangerous to the donor’s health to give

“There are days that I don’t want to go to work because he’s so sick.”

— Denisha DeLee

bone marrow. People who become part of the registry typically are contacted only if a match is found.

On the quad at SU, 15-year-old rapper Mahkai Bailey and his father, Freedom Allah-Bey handed out fliers to get people to stop and register. They first met King at a performance at the Elks Lodge on South Salina Street. A few days later, at 1:30 a.m., Bailey walked into his father’s room and told Allah-Bey he wanted to write a song about King.

“He felt a connection with the kid. He said, ‘Dad that could be me,’” Allah-Bey recalled.

Bailey, who raps under the name “Truth Speaker,” performed the song when he opened up for Nas at the Great New York State Fair in late August.

“It hit me down deep inside,” Bailey said.

As the clock crept toward noon, Scoop Jardine, a popular former SU basketball player, showed up at the tent. He has a 2-year-old son, too, and committed to

HOW TO DONATE

You can attend an upcoming local registry drive, to be held from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14, at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St.

The need for diverse donors is great, as the most likely match is someone of your same race.

Currently, there is no match for Baby King on the Be The Match registry.

To become a donor, you must be between ages 18 and 44 and meet the health guidelines.

Contact organizer Paula Miller at (315) 476-3000, ext. 2576

If you can’t make the local drive, you can go to the Be The Match website bethematch.org/ and join online or find a donor registry drive in your area.

If you join online, Be The Match will send a kit for you to swab cheek cells, which will be cross-checked to match donors to patients.

ON THE SIDE

HOW THEY MATCH UP

Of the 12 million people on the bone marrow registry:

- **67%** are Caucasian
- **10%** are Hispanic/Latino
- **7%** are Asian/South Asian
- **7%** are Black/African-American
- **4%** are Mixed Race
- **1%** are Native American

– Source: *Be The Match*

* Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



> Denise DeLee, left, poses with her son, King, and his grandmother, Deborah Polk, during a bone marrow registry drive held in King's honor on Syracuse University's quad Sept. 26 | Leonard Adams, Staff Photo

coming when he heard about King two weeks earlier.

Jardine graduated from SU with one of King's relatives. The family helped take care of Jardine when he played at SU. Even when the former guard traveled overseas, the family sent him care packages.

"It's only right for me to give back and try to help them," Jardine said.

DeLee knows that it's rare to find a match. Neither

of King's sisters is a match. She and the baby's father are just a partial match.

But even with the somber data, DeLee looks forward to these drives, which help sustain her hope that someone out there can save her son.

"They give me faith, because there's days I want to give up," DeLee said of the drives. "So these events keep me going."



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NATE BROWN

*Nominated by Tywana Reese,
who calls him a hands-on dad*

By | Ashley Kang
The Stand director

Q: What did it feel like when you became a father?

A: It was a joy and it still is. Being a father comes with challenges, but is always a joy.

Q: What can you share about your children?

A: Lanasia, 21, is a certified nurse assistant. She's a hidden talent. She is very talented and can sing, but she refuses to sing in public. She sings at home a lot. Kayla, 19, is very outspoken and is a sophomore at Onondaga Community College. She's a go-getter. No matter what people say, she's going to go out and achieve it — in a positive way. Nate Jr., 18, is a freshman at OCC and is a very good kid. He plays drums with my youngest son, in the Elks Pride Drumline. Then there is Maxwell, who is known as the prince of the family because he gets away with everything. He's 7. He's involved with everything: karate, football, wrestling.

Q: What was your relationship like with your father and what similarities and differences do you share?

A: I was raised by my stepfather. He worked every day, and he took care of the house and the family. And I find myself doing the same thing. You knew he loved you.

Q: Is there a saying of his that stands out?

A: He had a saying: "You never know when you're going to get another mouthful." Meaning appreciate today because you never know what's going to happen tomorrow. Try to save up for tomorrow and enjoy today.

Q: Why are fathers important?

A: A good father and a good mother — completes a family. A lot of people seem to think you don't need a father, but I think it strengthens everything. Fathers are there for guidance and direction. Moms give that, too, but dad always seems to have the last word.

Q: As a father, is there anything you do that would surprise people?

A: Take my family apple picking. Every year, we go to Beak & Skiff Apple Orchard for a family outing. The entire family goes to spend special time together.

Q: Any advice for other dads?

A: Stay involved. Try and understand your kids. When I grew up, adults would tell us to do something and we'd ask why; they'd say because we said so. Now kids are informational children. They need to know why. They aren't being disrespectful; they just need to know why. They understand how computers work and all these different concepts, and sometimes parents refuse to let them know how they operate as a parent. We need to take time to explain our reasoning.



MEET FATHER NATE: Brown, 46, works as a probation officer for Onondaga County and is the father of four. He is pictured here with his youngest child, 7-year-old Maxwell. Brown is the founder of Brownskin Band and is a drummer with the group. He and his wife, Delia Ogletree-Brown, recently celebrated 20 years of marriage. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

Q: What is a favorite moment you've shared with your family?

A: My favorite moment was last year when I got sick. I had an aneurysm in my aorta and required emergency open-heart surgery. To wake up and see my family there, that was the most important thing for me. Due to hospital policy, Maxwell was too young to visit the intensive care unit and it wasn't until a little later I could see him. (In her nomination letter, Reese noted that "it was heartbreaking to watch father and son wanting to see and hold each other. The older kids were able to come every day, but Maxwell would stay in the waiting room while they visited. One day it became too much to bear, and we slipped Maxwell in and Nate was so happy he couldn't stop smiling, hugging and kissing his baby boy.")

Q: Final thoughts?

A: Keep God first and everything will fall into place.

"You never know when you're going to get another mouthful"

TAKING THE PLEDGE

In an effort to bring visceral awareness to people in areas where gun violence has been a problem, **Clifford Ryan** plants himself somewhere visible and carries a sign with him reading “**O.G.s Against Violence.**”

He asks that kids pledge to stay away from violence by taking photos with the sign, which he later puts on his Facebook page, “**O.G.’s Against Gun Violence.**”

PLEA: SAY NO TO GUNS

Syracuse native returns home to urge youth to stay away from violence



> Clifford Ryan stands on the porch of an abandoned house on Midland Avenue and says “O.G.s against violence” to a kid riding past him. His movement, Ryan said, is about getting young people to stay away from guns. | Georgie Silvarole, Staff Photo

By | Georgie Silvarole
Urban Affairs reporter

Clifford Ryan considers himself an important voice on gun violence in the local community

Standing in front of an abandoned house on Midland Avenue, a 52-year-old man holds up a white sign denouncing gun violence as kids and cars travel by him. In black Nikes, cargo shorts and a white polo, Clifford Ryan walks up and down the street, speaking to every person he encounters.

When it starts to rain, he walks up to the porch of the house and stands in front of its boarded-up windows, continuing his mission and raising his sign above his head periodically.

“Wherever they have a shooting, I go to the area,” Ryan said. “They really respect the movement, and they don’t shoot while I’m out here.”

Several kids walk by after being let out of school. Some run over to have him take their picture with his sign. Others just nod or say, “Hey, O.G.!” — a reference to “original gangster.” Some scurry past with their heads down, but steal glances over their shoulders once they think they’re out of

sight. School buses honk their approval as they pass.

Ryan, a Syracuse native, returned this summer from his life in Binghamton to advocate against gun violence. While he doesn’t consider himself an original gangster, he takes a term like “O.G.” and flips its meaning by hitting the streets as an “O.G. against violence.”

Organizations and individuals like Ryan are campaigning hard for a reduction in gun violence on the South Side. Two nonprofits are working together to alter the perception and reality of neighborhood violence and advocate for more help from the local government.

Aggie Lane, president and community outreach chair of the Urban Jobs Task Force, said she doesn’t think any one entity can solve the problems in Syracuse. The task force, which has recently lobbied for an ordinance requiring the city to reserve 20 percent of big construction jobs and public works contracts for Syracuse residents, recognizes a direct correlation between joblessness and violence, she said.

The materialistic world we live in sets up the desire to have things such as shoes, cars and clothes, Lane said. When there’s no way to obtain the money for those things, along with other basic needs to support a family, people will turn

to other methods of making fast cash, she said.

“You’re going to go out in the street and look at ways to get it, and drugs have been a really good way,” Lane said. “The drug industry flourishes then — people come into the city to buy their drugs, and so people can make a lot of money very quickly. Then you’re defending your territory and you’re defending it with guns. So I’m thinking that if you can get some good jobs for folks, that can lessen the violence.”

Children learn by modeling, Lane said, and a cycle is created when children watch their parents go out and make a living by selling drugs, by selling people by way of prostitution, by selling weapons.

“I think that, first of all, if you don’t have a whole lot of opportunities and you don’t have a whole lot of hope, you depend on the safety net of the system to figure things out, and that gets modeled down,” Lane said. “Sometimes there’s a disconnect between what you hope you might have and how you might get it — and you’re going to take the risk of being shot.”

Mark Cass — executive director and organizer of ACTS, which stands for the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse — said its newly established Community Violence Task Force combines the needs of the public with the ability of its members in order to push for legislative change.

At a meeting in September that Ryan attended, the group decided to develop a program called Conflict Resolution Training, Cass said, a concept that since has evolved to

be called Conflict Transformation Training.

“We really do try to identify specific ideas,” he said. “We’re really about systemic change — which could be laws, practices, money. But understanding and having relationships with the people who live here is how we find solutions and work to put those solutions in place.”

For Lane, Ryan’s direct efforts make sense, and they’re not something every organization is capable of doing. He gets out there, she said, and he brings the sentiments of people he encounters into the legal and political world where change is planned and mobilized.

“Clifford came to our hearing last night, and he spoke about the hopelessness he sees on the street,” Lane said. “He tries to tell them there are people out there that do care, but he says a lot of the perception is hopelessness.”

People like Ryan help the issue by bringing the “back-room” efforts to the public sphere, Lane said.

Ryan explains his actions. “It’s important when you see me out here with these signs. I’m not selling dope, I’m not selling guns,” Ryan said. “You’re doing something for a purpose. That’s what’s wrong — you can’t be afraid to come out here and talk to your people.”

He wishes other members of his generation would have the courage to talk to the youth, Ryan said. The connections he’s forging and the empowerment he’s trying to implement are so vital to reverting the crime trend, he said.

“I can’t walk away from this movement right now,” Ryan said. “I’m saving lives — literally, it’s saving lives.”

UPCOMING EVENT

What: 100 Black Men of Syracuse annual banquet

When: 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21. Doors open at 5 p.m.

Where: The Oncenter, 800 S. State St.

Cost: Individual tickets are \$75 and \$750 for a table of 10

For tickets: Buy online, from members or by arranging pickup at the 100 Black Men office at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St. Call to coordinate at (315) 443-8749 or visit 100blackmensyr.org

ON THE SIDE

THE STAND IS ONLINE



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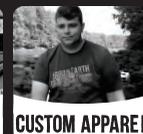
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WHAT IS ACTS?

The Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse is a grassroots, interfaith network advocating for social justice.

ACTS is made up of civically engaged people working for justice, equity and solidarity within the community.

NEXT ACTS MEETING

What: Community Violence and Youth task force

When: 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 12

Where: Southwest Community Center, 401 South Ave.

Details: The meeting is open to the public, and participation is encouraged

MAINTAINING PEACE

Community organization ACTS plans to address violence and youth



> Barry Lentz, left, and Mark Cass look over a crime map of data released by the Syracuse Police Department. Several points show gun violence on the South Side, leading ACTS to focus beyond “resolution training.” | Georgie Silvarole, Staff Photo

By | Georgie Silvarole
Urban Affairs reporter

The organization hopes to adopt new initiative of ‘conflict transformation’ on the South Side

A South Side organization has decided on strong marching orders toward its ambitious goal of establishing systemic change to combat youth violence in Syracuse neighborhoods.

Members of the organization — the ACTS Community Violence Task Force — say they want to move beyond merely resolving conflicts and instead focus on transforming the South Side neighborhood, which is being harmed by gang and gun violence.

“We’ve been aware that the term ‘conflict resolution’ is kind of limiting for the kind of work we want to be doing,” said Barry Lentz, a member of ACTS, which stands for the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse. ACTS oversees the task force.

“Conflict transformation,” he said, goes beyond mediating incidents to working on establishing a community of people who understand what events and situations aid in developing violent environments.

The organization’s most recent meeting, held Oct. 8 in the Southwest Community Center at 401 South Ave., elicited an emotional response to local violence when one man wept over a map of Syracuse highlighting violent incidents that have afflicted the South Side.

Emmanuel Flowers, an ACTS co-chair and leader of the meeting, wiped his eyes when he looked down at the map. He put his hand over his mouth and sighed as he cupped his chin.

“It’s hard for me to look at this map, because some of those faces — they’re just dots on this map now,” Flowers said. His emotion swept the conference room, and other members’ posture and body language changed with his.

Back in September, the task force voted to pursue a project that would tackle conflict resolution. Members eliminated other ideas, such as police relations and youth services, opting instead for training that would give community members the tools they need for understanding and working to prevent violence.

At the October meeting, Lentz clarified for the group that the task force would no longer use the term “conflict resolution training” and would adopt the term “conflict transformation” instead.

Lentz explained that conflict resolution is specific to a certain scenario in which a win-win result has to be found, and conflict transformation goes beyond that situation to address the community architecture that makes conflict happen.

“With conflict resolution and conflict transformation, you can see that being worked out,” Lentz said. “What can we do within the structure of the community so those conflicts don’t keep occurring?”

The meeting’s discussion spanned a variety of topics, and a primary concern emerged: economic decline on the South Side.

“Concentrated poverty — it’s been the problem in Syracuse for decades,” Lentz said.

ACTS Executive Director Mark Cass agreed that poverty and issues within the system aren’t mutually exclusive.

“Concentrated poverty contributes to those problems related to the system,” Cass said.

Lisa Mundy, a community member and ACTS participant, suggested ways to coordinate the task force with other existing community organizations.

“Maybe as a group, we’d want to arrange for a workshop, because then we could move out into the community having experienced what conflict transformation is,” Mundy said.

Mundy’s point seemed to resonate with other ACTS members — a training session of some sort was added to the list and deemed vital to the project.

A graphic produced by the Syracuse Police Department was distributed at the meeting, and it showed details where shootings resulted in injury and in death. Small dots scattered around Syracuse were dense in the parts labeled as Syracuse’s South Side.

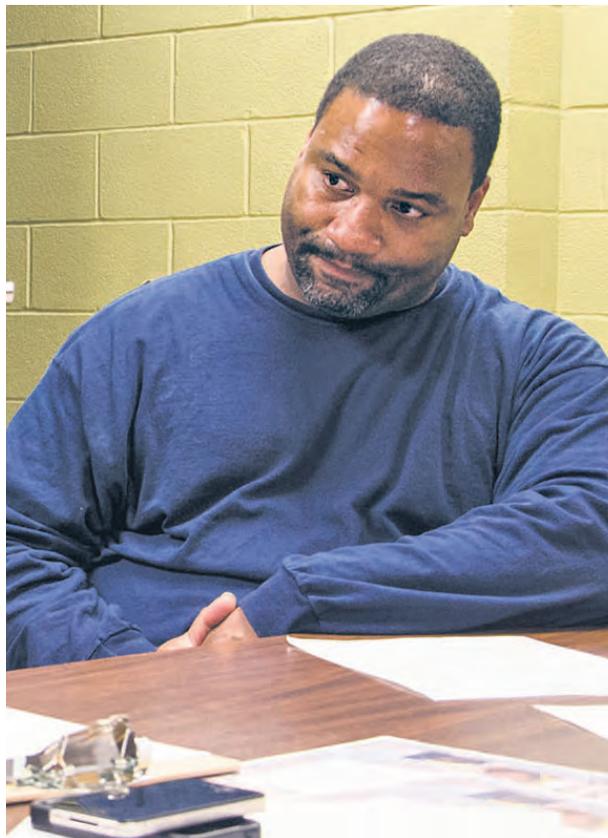
The sadness was heavy for a moment before Cass asked the group to look at the map and decide whether to tackle all of Syracuse or start with a specific spot.

“The severe affliction of violence on the South Side of Syracuse has expanded to what is considered the southwest,” Flowers said as his eyes welled with tears. “So I guess if you want to fix something, you start at its heart, and I’m drawn to believe we’re sitting very close to it.”

Cass agreed, saying starting small is a good choice, and Lentz followed up by agreeing that the South Side is close to everyone in the room, and obviously a place that needs help.

“It would be nice to have an anchor from which to build out from,” Lentz said.

After a gripping 90 minutes, the task force had made major decisions. At its next meeting this month, members will talk more about workshops to train people in conflict transformation, developments in community partnerships and the decision on a home base, which most likely would be the Southwest Community Center, Flowers said.



> Emmanuel Flowers, an ACTS task force co-chair, tears up after viewing a crime map of data released by the Syracuse Police Department. | Georgie Silvarole, Staff Photo

“It’s hard for me to look at this map because some of those faces — they’re just dots on this map now.”

— Emmanuel Flowers

As Flowers concluded the meeting, Lentz had some closing words that lifted the dark mood.

“I would argue it’s not as tough as we think it is,” he said. “We just have to be willing to do it.”

ACTS TASK FORCES

The Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse currently has four task forces open to the public:

- Pre-K Expansion
- Community Violence and Youth
- Criminal Justice
- Moving People Transportation Coalition

WANT TO HELP?

To get involved with ACTS, to attend a task force meeting or to find out more information, visit the ACTS website at www.acts-syracuse.org

ON THE SIDE

MCKINLEY PARK

Location: Off of Midland Avenue and West Newell Street

Size: 7.77 acres

Features:

- Swimming pool
- Basketball court
- Playground

Type of park: Neighborhood

TNT Sector: Area 3 – South Side

PLANTING A FUTURE

Community members of all ages work to revitalize a local park



> Children and community members cheer after planting 14 trees at McKinley Park in September. | Jon Mettus, Staff Photo

By | Jon Mettus
Urban Affairs reporter

Recruited by a neighborhood improvement group, elementary students make a difference

Children sank shovels into the earth and tossed dirt onto tarps. The sound of laughter and spattering soil filled the air.

“You guys are doing great!” Diane Cooter, a member of a McKinley Park supporters group, yelled out as the children stomped dirt down at the base of freshly planted trees. “This is fantastic.”

This green-thumb work by 15 fourth- and fifth-grade students a few weeks back is meant to brighten up McKinley Park when spring breaks out next year.

The children — all from nearby McKinley Brighton Elementary School — planted 14 trees, a fresh addition to recent improvements aimed at making the seven-acre park more inviting to local residents.

“It’s very important because it brings life back into the community, and it lets the community see that people

are invested in it and people care,” said Lazarus Sims, commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs, and a former basketball player at Syracuse University.

The Southside Interfaith Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit group whose mission is to improve the community on the South Side, founded the all-volunteer McKinley Park Supporters, which is aimed at improving the park.

It came about several years ago when members met in a small group for coffee and conversation based around their idea of seven habits of the community — one of which was neighborhood improvement.

“We were trying to think what around here needs doing, and McKinley was perfect,” said Audrey Haskell, vice president of the interfaith organization and de facto leader of the McKinley Park Supporters.

The group is made up of older residents in the community, and they keep in touch with the parks department to share ideas for ongoing improvements. The process requires Haskell to pester the parks department to get things done, Haskell said, but the results have been positive.

“I’ve watched this park go from wonderful to pretty bad to worse and then see it come back little by little.”

— Audrey Haskell

In the past two years, working with the parks department, volunteers added benches, picnic tables and a flower box to the park. The playground equipment was repaired and repainted, and new entrance signs were added. A broken guardrail around the park was fixed and repainted by members of the community.

“It’s looking better,” said Shamika Surrey, who lives across the street from McKinley Park. “It really brought a lot of life to the park.”

By planting trees, the elementary school children worked to replace trees that were destroyed last year by people breaking off the branches. This time, the trees weren’t planted in a straight line to make it more difficult to harm them all at once.

The park supporters wanted the children involved so



> Children from McKinley Brighton Elementary school collaborated with community members to plant trees in McKinley Park. The project was part of an initiative by McKinley Park Supporters to beautify the space. | Jon Mettus, Staff Photo

they’ll feel the park belongs to them.

“Maybe they’ll take some ownership and protect them a little bit,” Haskell said.

In a sign that just such a thing might be taking place, one young boy spent the day walking around the park calling himself the Lorax, in reference to the Dr. Seuss character who speaks for the trees.

Karreem Wofford, who has lived near the park all his life and joined the children when he noticed them planting trees, said the park is important to the community.

“It’s time for a different look, for a change for our kids,” he said. “Because they come down here looking for stuff to do and when they run out of stuff to do they go to the corners.”

For the first time in 35 years, the park finally looks different, Wofford said.

Haskell said she wants to replace the old playground equipment in the park, and her goal is to have the park be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. Wofford would like to see a pavilion added like the one at Kirk Park.

The parks department is focused on the playground equipment and opening the pool each summer, Sims said.

The improvements at McKinley Park have had a resounding impact throughout the community, Haskell said. She has seen neighbors clean up their houses and yards and take better care of the park on their own.

Persuading the city to add money to the park is difficult in a time of lean budgets, Haskell said. Even the most recent additions to the park are just the beginning of a bigger revitalization of McKinley Park, she added.

“I’ve watched this park go from wonderful to pretty bad to worse and then see it come back little by little,” Haskell said.

“It’s been encouraging. We’re working at it. We haven’t given up.”



ANNUAL MLK EVENT

What: 31st Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

When: Sunday, Jan. 31, 2016; dinner precedes the program at 4:30 p.m., doors open at 4 p.m.

Where: Carrier Dome, 900 Irving Ave.

Details: This yearly MLK Celebration is the largest university-sponsored event in the nation to honor King’s legacy. The evening program includes an address by Marc Lamont Hill, distinguished professor of African American Studies at Morehouse College and a leading journalistic voice in social justice; the presentation of the 2016 Unsung Hero Awards; music by a community choir; and entertainment by student performers.

Cost: Evening program is free; dinner tickets for the general public will be sold through the Schine Box Office, and are available on an individual basis (\$30) or in blocks of 10 (\$300). The box office is located in the Atrium of Schine Student Center, 303 University Place

More Info.: Call Hendricks Chapel at (315) 443-5044

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