

# the **Stand** south side news

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

Syracuse, NY

WINTER 2015-2016 Issue 47 FREE

## A SCIENCE STARTUP

Laurie Muok launches  
a robotics team called  
The Down Unders

## free advice

Volunteer lawyers  
and law students help  
people avoid eviction

## Aurora outreach

Donna Reese expands her  
message to faith groups

## Metal detectors in use

High schools report progress with daily screenings

## ROBOTS RACE IN LIBRARY



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(315) 882-1054  
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IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.

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- Cover photography by Yu Hua of Laurie Muok

## CALENDAR | WINTER

**What:** Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today Area 3 South Side Meeting  
**When:** 6 to 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 7, and again Monday, Jan. 4, 2016  
**Where:** South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St.  
**Cost:** Free and open to the public  
**Details:** TNT aims to create a comprehensive process for involving neighborhood residents, businesses, and organizations in planning for their neighborhoods. The South Side group regularly meets at 6 p.m. on the first Monday of each month at the SSIC. Meetings are subject to change.  
**More Info.:** For more information, or to be added to the group's e-mail list, email TNT@SyrGov.net or call (315) 448-8100

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

In the past year, contributing writer Tamara Reese introduced us to local fashion entrepreneurs. We met former convicted felons turning their lives around: David Hills, now employed as an outreach worker with the S.N.U.G. program — “guns” spelled backward — and former gang members Quante Wright and General Davis, who both speak to at-risk youth, encouraging them to not make the same mistakes they did.

We watched as Kirk Park installed an outdoor classroom, and we learned about local youth and groups who donated their time to plant trees at McKinley Park.

Music columnist Reggie Seigler wrote a touching piece on Jeffrey Houston, a popular Syracuse guitarist who passed away in April. Houston performed for more than 30 years locally with a background in gospel, rhythm and blues, rock and smooth jazz.

Our urban affairs reporters wrote a collection of in-depth stories on housing inequalities within the city, and our Annual Photo Walk participants captured short tales of day-to-day struggles by talking with residents they met along the way.

We launched a Fatherhood Series to spotlight local African-American dads who are actively engaged in their children’s lives. We held our five-year anniversary celebration and reflected on highlights from those memorable years.

And in last month’s issue, we met King Nazir Leon, a 2-year-old boy known as Baby King, who was diagnosed with CD40 Ligand deficiency and who is in need of a bone marrow donor. We helped in the small way we could by coordinating a local bone marrow registry drive Nov. 14 in partnership with the William G. Pomeroy Foundation.

Fanita Johnson saw an announcement about the registry that morning and decided to stop at the event before going to work. “I was moved when I saw him on the news,” Johnson said. “I have five kids of my own, and if I needed something for my child, I’d want people to help.” See photos from the event on Page 20.

If you were not able to attend but would like to join the registry, you can sign up online at <https://join.bethematch.org/babyking>. A kit will be mailed to you with instructions on how to do a simple cheek swab.

As we look back, we also look ahead. In this issue, hear from Donna Reese about a new initiative she has launched with Aurora of CNY to reach out to local faith groups. Meet a high school senior starting her own robotics club, a father who helped raise his wife’s younger siblings and hear from students on how the first month of metal detectors at city high schools is going — plus much more.

Ashley Kang

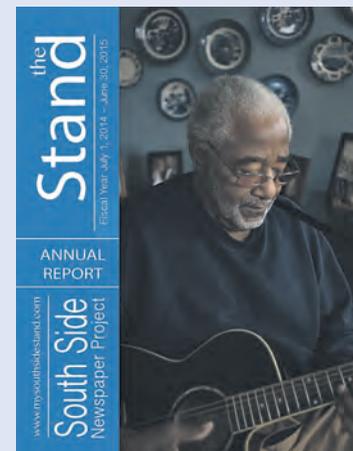


## ANNUAL REPORT

Our annual report is out and available online or by request.

Each year, we produce a reflection of the year’s accomplishments and highlights from our recent projects and contributors. The goal of this report is to show our impact on the South Side community year after year.

The report chronicles the fiscal year of July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. To view the report online, visit [mysouthsidestand.com/about/annual-report/](http://mysouthsidestand.com/about/annual-report/)



### CLARIFICATION

Ardena Harvey, who was featured in the November issue of The Stand, works for the Promise Zone Program, which is an external partner with the Syracuse City School District. She is not an employee of SCSD, but rather an employee of Care Coordinated Services, Inc.

Promise Zone is funded through Onondaga County, Department of Children and Family Services, Division of School Based Initiatives. Harvey serves as a supervisor of Promise Zone specialists.

## HEALTHY START

### WHAT IS A DOULA?

A doula is someone who provides emotional and informational support before, during and after pregnancy. Unlike midwives, doulas do not provide any medical care. Instead, they are trained to massage, be present during the birth and support the mother.

### HOW DO I BECOME A DOULA?

Doulas for Syracuse Healthy Start are sought from the community and must go through a five-day “intensive” training and education program to receive their license.

#### Contact:

Syracuse Healthy Start Program  
501 E. Fayette St.  
(315) 435-2000

### CAN A MAN BE A DOULA?

Yes. Though there are currently no male doulas in Syracuse Healthy Start’s initiative, it is a possibility, Lisa GreenMills said. A male doula would be able to support fathers during birth or support a mother if she chooses, GreenMills added.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The proper way for a baby to sleep is on the back.

# MOTHERS NOT ALONE

*Volunteers support women during pregnancy, at birth and beyond*



> (Back row, left to right) Crisol Matos, Martese Dodson, Barbara Wiggins, Vickie Patterson, Aimee Brill and Asteir Bey, along with (front row, left to right) Lisa GreenMills, Juliet Ilunga, Diane GreenPope and Selina Lazarus are all part of the doula program run by Syracuse Healthy Start and REACH CNY. The program pairs mothers with doulas, who support a woman before, during and after pregnancy. Brill, Bey and Lazarus are all involved as either doula coordinators or mentors, while GreenMills coordinates the project for Syracuse Healthy Start. | Photo provided

By | Jon Mettus  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

### Syracuse Healthy Start, REACH CNY train volunteers from community to become doulas

Imagine sitting in a bed in a delivery room all alone. Maybe you don’t speak the same language as your doctors. Maybe you’re 18 years old and scared, giving birth to your first child with no one to support you.

For too many women in Syracuse, this is a reality.

“You don’t realize how intense that day can be until you’re in the middle of it,” said Lisa GreenMills, project director for Syracuse Healthy Start, a program run through the Onondaga Health Department to promote healthy pregnancies and babies. “It can be traumatizing

if you don’t have support.”

To combat this problem, Syracuse Healthy Start and a service it subcontracts — Resources, Education, Advocacy and Collaboration for Health Central New York, or REACH CNY — launched a new doula initiative about a year and a half ago. A doula is someone who supports and educates a woman during her pregnancy, and the program is making that service available to the community.

The program, which is in its second year of a five-year grant, currently has six doulas and primarily serves women who are already Syracuse Healthy Start clients. It will expand to the entire community next year and will increase the number of doulas to 12.

“We’re really focused on working with women from the community so that that’s who is our face and

that's who's doing the work," GreenMills said, referring to the doulas being members of the community. "That's who's connecting with our moms" so the same person that a woman sees in the grocery store is the one helping her with her baby, GreenMills said. Typical doula programs utilize women from outside the community, she said.

The doula program started after GreenMills and others she works with at Healthy Start heard stories about women in the area going to the hospital in confusing, stressful and sometimes traumatic situations that they had to handle by themselves. They realized that many women across the city shared these experiences and needed a support system.

The health department spent the first year partnering with Doula Trainings International, a doula training company, securing federal funding and creating its policies. There wasn't much advertisement because the group was focused on getting the program in order, GreenMills said.

Onondaga County Health Commissioner Indu Gupta described the overall approach. "We are putting an emphasis on how important the health and support is — starting from before a woman gets pregnant, during conception time and after," she said.

One of the doulas, Barbara Wiggins, explained the training process. Each doula has to go through an "intense" five-day program where they learn about breast-feeding, post-partum depression and how to make labor more comfortable, she said. Despite having raised five children of her own and having helped raise eight grandchildren, Wiggins learned she had been putting her babies to sleep in the wrong position.

"I used to lay my babies on their stomachs," Wiggins said. "My last two babies I laid them on their side. ... I learned that was not the right way."

Syracuse Healthy Start consortium coordinator Selina Lazarus expanded on the educational aspects. "Education is one of the best ways to help our women and babies in our community," she said.

GreenMills said the doulas can educate mothers and help reduce infant mortality, much of which is related to unsafe sleep.

"Hearing that message from somebody who's in your life and you really know makes a huge difference from just your doctor you see once a month or reading it on a billboard," GreenMills said.

The job of a doula starts before the baby is born. The doula meets with her client and teaches her what to expect during delivery.

During the birth, the doula stays with the mother-to-be the entire time. One of Wiggins' clients was in labor for 29 hours, and she did not leave. Wiggins is trained to massage the woman to make her feel comfortable and has an exercise ball, which she calls her "doula ball," that the client can jump on to help the labor along.

After the baby is born, doulas can help facilitate breast-feeding, and they make visits to the home in the following days and weeks. Sometimes, Wiggins will even do the dishes so her client can take a nap.

Wiggins' favorite memory of being a doula is getting to cut the umbilical cord for her first client, she said. She regularly gets calls from current and former clients thanking her saying, "I don't know what I would have done without you," she said.

Though the doula program is in its infancy, GreenMills says it is on the rise and will rely on word of mouth to spread throughout the community.

"I'm very optimistic about it, just from seeing what is done so far and the sort of thoughtful way it's been put together," she said. "I feel like it's got a really good foundation to be successful."



## 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](http://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!**

## LIBRARY EVENTS

All of these events will be held at Beauchamp Branch Library  
2111 S. Salina St.  
(315) 435-3395

### Toddler/Pre-School Storytime

9:30 to 11:30 a.m.  
Dec. 9 and 16

### Wii & Game Fun

3 to 4:30 p.m.  
Dec. 11 and 18

### Family Movie Night: "Minions"

5 to 7 p.m.  
Dec. 15  
Free popcorn served

### Preschool Play & Learn

9:30 to 11 a.m.  
Dec. 23 and 30

### Christmas Party

2 to 4 p.m.  
Dec. 23  
Stories, crafts and pictures with Santa

### Puppet Making Workshop

11 a.m.  
Dec. 24  
Presented by Open Hand Theater, participants will use simple concepts of math, physics and properties of light and shadow to create simple jointed puppets that can be manipulated through scenes in a 45-minute workshop. All supplies are provided. For ages 8 to 14 years. Workshop made possible in part by a state grant secured by Sen. John A. DeFrancisco.

# CONSTRUCTION ZONE

Beauchamp Branch Library engages kids with educational activities



> Librarian Anne Gregory places a masking tape track on the floor so children can race their Cubelets creations. In November, participants at Beauchamp Branch Library used magnetic blocks to create their own robots. | Georgie Silvarole, Staff Photo

By | Georgie Silvarole  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

## A safe space at the library allows kids to use science and technology skills to build robots

A dozen tiny robots are buzzing throughout the room — flashing, beeping, whirring over tables and rolling across the floor. Their paths are followed by the sounds of children's laughter and squeaky sneakers on the laminated floor of Beauchamp Branch Library's miniature auditorium.

The Beauchamp Branch Library on Syracuse's South Side made several Cubelets kits available for an event in November. Around two dozen children, ages 6 to 12, played with the robotic blocks and learned how magnets and electricity can combine to create a machine.

Lucas Jenkins came with two of his boys — Thompson, 6, and Huckleberry, 3. He said it's important that he brings his children to the library often.

"We do any activity we can see. Tommy likes to learn," Jenkins said. "I try to make sure that they have critical thinking skills."

Librarian Anne Gregory, who has worked at Beauchamp for the past year and a half, says the library serves

as a safe place. At Beauchamp, children 8 years and older can come unaccompanied. Those under 8 need someone at least 13 years old to act as their guardian at the library.

"We really just want to be a safe place for the kids," Gregory said. "Most of our programs are at 2 o'clock because that's when we find kids are most active."

When Gregory opened the doors to the small activity room on the library's second floor, children ran in, pushing one another, playing with smart phones, and running and jumping off the small stage at the front of the room. Gregory watched and sent out a firm look at those who wouldn't take a seat.

Patiently, she calls them by name and, after significant effort, gets them to sit. Finally she has their attention.

"What does a robot need?" Gregory asked.

The children light up with answers — a brain, a battery, a mission — and practically beam when Gregory praises them. She hands out sets of Cubelets, which cost about \$160 apiece, she says. She visits each table, helping children understand that the blue blocks are the batteries, the black blocks are the sensors, the clear blocks have wheels.

"Yeah, they're all over the place, and by just working with them, they settle down and become responsible

kids,” Gregory said. “Some of these kids don’t get the structure and discipline at home.”

It’s not easy, she said. Some days it’s tiresome, acting as an impromptu babysitter.

“When I find myself hitting a wall, I like to say to the kids, ‘Look, I’m having a rough day. You know how to behave. Behave.’ And they respond to that,” Gregory said.

For Trinity Chairs, 9, and her brother Shakur Chairs, 13, Beauchamp is a place where they spend a lot of time. Shakur said Cubelets interested him, partly because he recently attended a robotics camp.

“I like math and science,” Shakur said.

Trinity is interested in other subjects.

“I’m good at art and I’m good at singing,” she said. “I’m going to be a singing person.”

The two got along well, stealing blocks here and there from each other’s robot. They were immersed in creating a robot that could stop rolling and not fall off the table.

“This is so cool,” Trinity said to herself.

After about 90 minutes of building, six children remained at the end of the program to race their robots. Gregory didn’t hesitate to find masking tape and lie on the floor to make different lanes for all of the competitors.

While there was no clear winner — the robots seemed to have minds of their own and a tendency to stray from their lanes — Gregory did the best she could to congratulate everyone.

“It’s absolute fun,” Gregory said. “Seeing them build on those ideas — that’s why I keep doing this.”



> Trinity Chairs, 9, uses Legos to embellish her robot with a capital “T.” In November, Beauchamp Branch Library had its turn with the Onondaga County Library System’s collection of Cubelets — magnetic create-your-own robots — and about 20 kids showed up to play. | Georgie Silvarole, Staff Photo



> Anne Gregory, right, a librarian at Beauchamp Branch Library, teaches children about robots during a November event. She explains what a robot needs to function and how to use Cubelets to create a working robot. | Georgie Silvarole, Staff Photo

## LIBRARY EVENTS

All these events will be held at Beauchamp Branch Library  
2111 S. Salina St.  
(315) 435-3395

### Marshmallow Towers

2 to 4 p.m.

Dec. 28

*Work in teams and compete to create the tallest tower using toothpicks and marshmallows.*

*Open to ages 5 and up*

### “Meet the Orchestra” session

2 to 4 p.m.

Dec. 29

*Hear and meet a viola duo from Syracuse’s Symphoria*

### Dewey’s Amazing Race

2 to 4 p.m.

Dec. 30

*Work in teams to complete 10 activity stations. Each team to complete all 10 will receive a small reward.*

*Open to ages 5 and up*

### New Year’s Craft

2 to 4 p.m.

Dec. 31

*Open to ages 5 and up*



ON THE SIDE

## JOIN THE TEAM

To join The Down Unders, interested individuals can attend the weekly meetings held at 1 p.m. Saturdays at Bethany Baptist Church, 149 Beattie St. There is no skill level requirement.

For more information, head to <http://lmuok1998.wix.com/thedownunders>

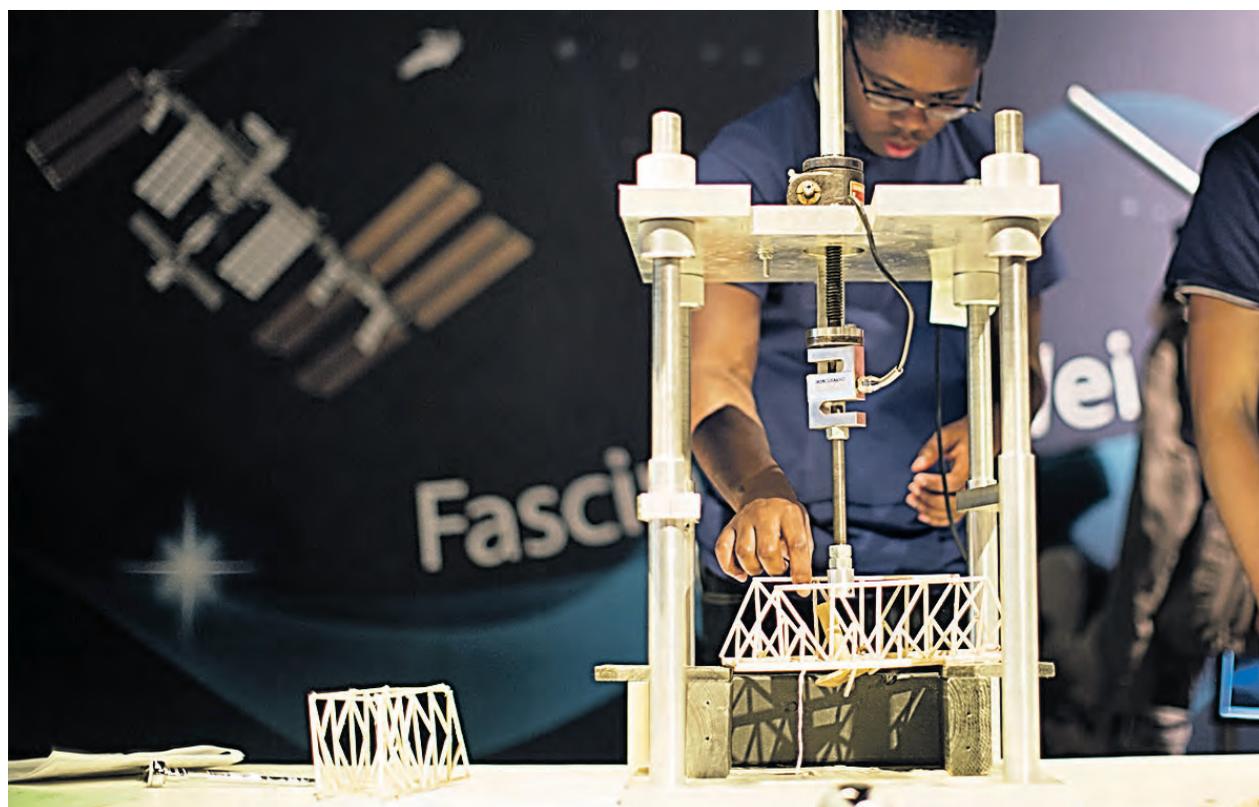
Or contact Laurie at (315) 491-8962 or by emailing [lmuok1998@gmail.com](mailto:lmuok1998@gmail.com) or [thesyrdownunders@gmail.com](mailto:thesyrdownunders@gmail.com)

## HELP THE TEAM

Visit [GoFundMe.com](http://GoFundMe.com) and search for Robotics Team Start Up Syracuse if you want to help fund The Down Unders

# THE DOWN UNDERS

*Starting from the ground up, this robotics team aims for inclusiveness*



> A volunteer from the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology positions one of The Down Unders' bridges to measure how many kilograms can be applied to it before it collapses. | Yu Hua, Staff Photo

By | Ashley McBride  
*Staff reporter*

After feeling like she didn't belong, Laurie Muok created her own robotics team

One of Syracuse's few unaffiliated robotics teams got its start because the founder, Laurie Muok, felt like she was being treated unfairly on her school's robotics team.

When Muok, now a senior at the Syracuse Academy of Science, didn't go to a scrimmage in Buffalo in October 2014 that the rest of her teammates attended, she said she felt that was the final straw. As the only girl on the team, Muok suspected that it was because of her gender that her teammates minimized her role.

"It felt like I didn't belong and I was the outsider," she said. "Different things made it seem like I wasn't part of the team and I was just someone they had to include because of Title IX laws."

The team coach at Syracuse Academy of Science, Omer Zengin, said this past November in an interview that he was not aware Muok felt that way, and he was surprised. He said he offers field trip opportunities to everyone on the team. "Maybe she missed one of our meetings and didn't hear about it," he said. "When

Laurie was here, I put her in leadership positions."

During her two years on her school's team, Muok said that her teammates did not value her contributions, and that whenever she was given a task, she wasn't allowed to be creative or experiment; she had to do it exactly how they told her.

So this past summer, she decided to start a new team and call it "The Down Unders." According to Muok, in the robotics field there are three categories of teams: school-based, organization-based and basement-based teams. Basement-based teams are not sponsored by or connected with any institution, which means that often the teams are started by people who don't know much about robotics and are starting from the ground up. With the team name, Muok wanted to call attention to the fact that her team is starting from down under.

One of the benefits of having a basement team is that members come from a range of ages, backgrounds and experiences in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics or STEM.

Khaziah Reese, also a senior at the Syracuse Academy of Science, joined the team to support Muok, even though she had not been on a robotics team. But she did echo Muok's sentiments about being treated fairly.

"This program is where I can actually do something

as a team and be recognized,” she said. “I hope to bring individuality to the team and be a helping hand.”

Reese comes with a background in science, and her most recent science fair project was building a solar-powered car.

Other members on the team are new to STEM, and they range in age from 7 to 17 years old.

Muok’s mom, Gwen Muok, provides support and guidance to the team. She knew about her daughter’s negative experiences on her school team before she quit. Gwen Muok said she initially had advised her daughter to “stick it out” for her last year of high school, but patience ran out.

“You can only take so much, and if they didn’t want her to be a part of the team then fine, it was time to move on and do something else,” Gwen Muok said. “I did warn her that it would be a lot of hard work (to start a new team) and it was like starting a business, but if that’s what she wanted to do, I would support her.”

Over the summer, Gwen Muok said, her daughter sent out more than 400 copies of a press release about the team to Central New York news outlets and STEM organizations. One downside to having a basement team is that it doesn’t have a central source of funding, so Muok and her teammates have been applying for grants and sponsorships. They also are selling candy and have started an online crowdfunding effort at GoFundMe.

Although the team is still small, with about six members, The Down Unders had its first test in a bridge-building competition at the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology on Nov. 14. The team submitted two bridges, each built by three members of the team. The judges determined the winners based on how much weight the bridge could hold before collapsing. The Down Unders’ strongest bridge held 13.55 kilograms — nearly 30 pounds — before it broke. Although that wasn’t good enough to place, the team members accepted the loss as an experience from which they could learn better building techniques for the future.

Justin Armstrong, 17, another member who has never been on a robotics team, enjoyed the experience.

“I’ve been to competitions before but none like this,” he said. “There were a lot more people that participated than I expected and it was overall a really great experience. I’m here mostly just to have fun, but what really counts is that I’m learning something for myself, rather than trying to win.”

Besides attending competitions, Muok wants the team members to gain more STEM knowledge and learn the value of working together. The Down Unders and their coach, Lockheed Martin systems engineer Sarah White, are planning field trips to engineering institutions to expose the team members to real-world applications.

“I want people to learn teamwork, leadership and just general acceptance,” Muok said. “It doesn’t matter who you are, you can still be part of something.”



> Laurie Muok, left, and teammate Khaziah Reese watch others’ bridges go under the truss test. | Yu Hua, Staff Photo



> Laurie Muok follows a model to build a truss bridge for a competition at the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology on Nov. 14. | Ashley McBride, Staff Photo



> In the sea of bridges, Laurie Muok points to her team’s final product. Members used wood, nails and glue to construct the truss bridge. | Yu Hua, Staff Photo

## ROBOTS INVADE

**What:** “The Robots Are Coming: It’s The End of the World as We Know It”

**When:** 9:30 to 11 a.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 19

**Where:** Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology, Armory Square

**Speaker:** Damian Schofield, Ph.D., professor of computer science and also director of the Human-computer Interaction program, State University of New York at Oswego

**Details:** This talk will look logically at what we can expect in the future and how machines and artificial intelligence are likely to change the world in which we live.

**Organizer:** Technology Alliance of Central New York Junior Cafe Scientifique, which is a program for middle-school students. Founded in 2005, it features discussions among scientists and students about topics in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in an informal atmosphere. It seeks to encourage students to consider careers in these areas.

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

## CONTACT AURORA

Individuals with vision or hearing loss can contact Aurora directly

**Aurora of Central New York Inc.**

**ADDRESS**

518 James St.,  
Suite 100

**HOURS**

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday

**PHONE**

(315) 422-7263

**TTY/TDD**

(315) 422-9746

**VP**

(315) 679-4168

**WEB**

[auroraofcny.org](http://auroraofcny.org)

**EMAIL**

[auroracny@auroraofcny.org](mailto:auroracny@auroraofcny.org)

**INVITE REESE**

Faith-based leaders and local groups can schedule an appearance by Donna Reese to speak to their members

Call (315) 422-7263 or email her at [dreese@auroraofcny.org](mailto:dreese@auroraofcny.org)

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

*Legally blind outreach specialist helps others regain employment*



> Dave DeFrancis, Aurora's director of public relations and outreach operations, helps guide Donna Reese, outreach specialist, to the banquet table during the organization's annual meeting and Excellence Awards in November. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang  
*The Stand* director

## After losing her vision, Donna Reese works for a nonprofit to help people in the same situation

For more than six years, Donna Reese has been a symbol for Aurora, a nonprofit that has spent more than 90 years serving individuals with vision or hearing loss.

Reese lost her eyesight from glaucoma. It's a disease with no early symptoms that damages the eye's optic nerve and can result in vision loss and blindness, according to the National Eye Institute. After her diagnosis, Reese felt isolated. She was frustrated and had a futile mood.

She turned to Aurora of Central New York Inc. to receive help navigating her new reality. With Aurora's support, she retrained and regained her self-confidence. She also started an internship and then a job at Aurora, working there since Nov. 18, 2009 to help others find meaningful and productive employment, too.

"You don't have to isolate yourself," is what Reese

tells those she encounters in her work as an outreach specialist. "Whether you want to update your skills by going back to school or earn a job, Aurora is here to help you."

Reese recently launched an initiative to expand Aurora's outreach to the faith-based community to tell more people they don't have to live in isolation. She has spoken to the congregation at The People's A.M.E. Zion Church and hopes to receive more invitations from local faith leaders in the coming year.

Loretha Baums, a congregant of the church, heard about Aurora's visit and wanted to bring her niece, Wendy Austin, who has been blind for the past 10 years and currently utilizes no services.

"I am familiar with Aurora, but my niece is not. I wanted her to hear what they could offer," Baums said. "Donna shared her own story and let others know that once you become blind, all is not lost."

Nationally, only one-third (32 percent) of working-age people with disabilities were employed on average in the 2010-2012 period, compared to more than two-thirds (72.7 percent) of people without disabilities, according to the Council of Economic Advisors analysis of Census data from the 2010-2012 American Community

Survey. In addition, employment rates among people with disabilities do not vary greatly by gender, but are particularly low among blacks and those with low levels of education.

In Onondaga County, the employment rate for working-age people with disabilities is 35.1 percent, compared to 76.5 percent for people without disabilities, according to a 2012 report by New York Makes Work Pay based on data from the 2008-2010 American Community Survey.

“Having to lose a job I had for 20 years and going on disability retirement was such a challenge,” Reese recalled about her role as a mental health therapy aide at Hutchings Psychiatric Center. “Thank goodness for Aurora. With limited vision ability, I had to retrain.”

Reese’s vision problems began when she developed a corneal infection and later a corneal ulcer in 2007. Then after complications with her seventh eye surgery — performed last February — Reese lost all her vision, becoming legally blind.

“But once again, Aurora was in my corner and helped me learn a new computer program that is totally dependent on keyboard commands,” Reese said. “Also, I have an orientation mobility specialist that reoriented me on using my cane, which I am now solely dependent on.”

To be successful and productive at work, Reese was trained by Aurora on computer software created specifically for the blind. The center works with each client to find adaptive technology to meet his or her unique needs.

Reese previously could make out shapes and shadows and was able to navigate on a computer with magnification using a large mouse. Now that she is legally blind, however, she uses the software program JAWS, which stands for Job Access With Speech. It is a screen reader, developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content or navigating with a mouse. Equipment for the blind, such as JAWS, is funded by the New York State Commission for the Blind at no cost to employers or consumers.

Joel Brennan, director of supportive employment, works in partnership with the commission to assist in job placement. Services from Aurora are free but require a referral from the commission and documentation of visual impairment from a doctor. After being referred, a client meets with Brennan, who conducts an in-person job assessment. Then once a job is obtained, the agency continues to support clients.

Brennan explained that Aurora conducts a six-day assessment and a 90-day assessment.

“During the six-day, we follow them at work and meet with their supervisor to ensure they have the tools they need to be successful,” he said.

At that point, Brennan can install needed software or hardware such as a computer screen reader or LED magnifier, meeting the standards for accessible accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Then,

## ABOUT GLAUCOMA

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month:

- Glaucoma is called “the sneak thief of sight” because there are no symptoms. And once vision is lost, it is permanent.
- Glaucoma occurs about five times more often in African-Americans. Blindness from glaucoma is about six times more common. In addition to this higher frequency, glaucoma often occurs earlier in life in African-Americans — on average, about 10 years earlier than in other ethnic populations.
- Regular eye checks are recommended. If glaucoma is detected during a yearly visit, treatment can begin immediately.

— Source: Glaucoma Research Foundation

over 90 days, Brennan meets with the new employee multiple times to ensure job success.

“It’s not about getting special treatment,” Reese said. “It’s about having equal access and equal opportunity to employment.”

Similar job skills services are offered for the deaf.

Akeme Capers, an employment specialist working with the deaf, helps her clients with their resumes and job searches. She says a challenge she faces is to end self-perpetuating stereotypes.

Capers says clients tell her, “I can’t work because I’m deaf and people will look down on me.” Capers tries to change that thinking. She says success comes when clients she has helped gain confidence and stop making excuses. She tells them, “You can work, and I can support you.”

A major challenge for Aurora clients is accepting a gap in their job history. When vision or hearing loss suddenly hits, clients must go through an adjustment period to accept and then relearn new ways to execute even simple day-to-day tasks, staff members say. And this must happen before clients even think about re-entering the workforce.

“We run up against a lot of misconceptions from employers that these are people who cannot fulfill their job duties or that they are going to be an accident risk,” said Dave DeFrancis, director of public relations and outreach operations. “We work to alleviate these misconceptions. This is why it’s great to have Donna, who can come in and show how effective she is.”

Reese agrees. “If I can inspire other people that are trying to figure it out every day, then I’ve accomplished something. Every time I interact with someone, I’m paying forward with what Aurora has given to me.”

## OTHER SERVICES

### NEW YORK STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

#### MISSION

Enhance employability, to maximize independence and to assist in the development of the capacities and strengths of people who are legally blind.

#### WEB

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb/>

#### PHONE

1-866-871-3000

#### TTY

1-866-871-6000

### ACCES-VR

#### MISSION

The Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation assists individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living through training, education, rehabilitation and career development.

#### WEB

<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr>

#### EDUCATION

(518) 474-3852

#### CAREER SUPPORT

1-800-222-JOBS

## ANNUAL AWARDS

Aurora of Central New York Inc. held its annual meeting and Excellence Awards on Nov. 12 at the Comfort Inn in Liverpool.

Each recipient received a plaque and spoke about what Aurora has meant to them.

At right are the award winners, including each person's one-word description of Aurora.



**Bob Haege**  
**“Wonderful”**

*Life Time Achievement Award  
 Board member since 1970*



**Syracuse Stage**  
**“Outstanding”**

*Mattie Letham Community Leadership Award (Accepted by Chris Botek, pictured here)*



**Christopher “CJ” Sierotnik**  
**“Supportive”**

*Received support for retinitis pigmentosa*



**Wegmans**  
**“Respect”**

*Employer of the Year (Accepted by Erik Lilly, pictured here)*



**Norma Porter**  
**“Caring”**

*Affectionately known as Aurora’s “grandmother in residence” (Accepted by her daughter Judi Jarmocz, pictured here)*



**Parker Morse**  
**“Amazing”**

*Participant in Aurora’s College Prep Program for the visually impaired*



**Anna Pluff**  
**“Incredible”**

*Received support for hearing*

# DEWAYNE GARNER

*Nominated by his brother Fred Garner*

By | Ashley Kang  
*The Stand director*

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

A: It was probably the best day of my life and the scariest day of my life combined. I was with my wife when she went into labor, but I haven't seen any of my children be born. I get nervous so I can't be there. My mom went the first time, her mother went the second time and my son went the last time. I stay in the waiting room and wait to be called in.

**Q: What can you share about your children?**

A: Dewayne Jr., 21, is a social butterfly, very friendly and well-rounded. He's going to school now for biomedical engineering at Stony Brook University — State University of New York and last year was the student speaker at commencement at Onondaga Community College. The day he spoke, I was smiling from ear to ear. We had about 15 family members attend to hear him speak, and I was very proud. Dreeasia, 15, is a little reserved and still needs to come out of her shell. She is interested in dance and performing arts. And then there is the 2-year-old, Daniah. We're still trying to see what she will be. They all have my initials, and the middle is most like me. My son is like my wife, and I think my daughters will be most like me.

**Q: And what about your wife's siblings whom you raised?**

A: They are out of the house now. They lived with us since they were in grade school. There were some issues, and it was best that they stay with us. We treated them as our own. My son was the only child at the time, and everything he would have had by himself had to be split up and shared with his aunt and uncle. We didn't come into the house with things for him and not for them. Everybody got the same amount of love, and they were our children. Everyone deserves a chance and a good future, so it was a good decision on our part. They are doing good things in life now. I wouldn't have changed it for the world, but it was a challenge. We were young parents. We had our son in high school, and I was a high school dropout who returned to school later. Basically, we all grew together.

**Q: What was your relationship like with your father?**

A: It was good. He didn't live in the same household as us. He lived in a different city and was a truck driver. He loved us, and there was no question about that, but it was a little strenuous because he wasn't there all the time. Growing up, there were times I wished he was there, but he couldn't be.

**Q: Why are fathers important?**

A: Fathers help with the social development of their children. Children are mimics. They learn by doing what they see others do. Unfortunately today, our young are mimicking the wrong things ... the violence. Our young are falling to the wayside. Young men model their fathers. So it's important that you are a good role model. And young women



**MEET FATHER DEWAYNE:** Garner, 40, grew up on the South Side, works as an electrical engineer and is the father of three. He and his wife, Kioanna (Scott) Garner, also helped raise two of her younger siblings. | Ashley Kang, Staff photo

usually seek out guys who have characteristics of their fathers. So it's important to be that role model in the family.

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

A: Not really. Fathers do whatever they have to do to keep their kids happy. I'll dress up if I need to with the babies. I don't ice skate, but if they ask, I will. I try to be involved and you won't catch me with the heels on, but I might have on nail polish.

**Q: Any advice for other dads?**

A: Be the father to your child that you want your father to be to you. Everyone doesn't have the perfect dad. Some did and that's very fortunate. But everyone knows what they want or wanted their dad to do. So just be that father you wanted your dad to be for you.

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

A: We have so many. Family vacations we take together stand out. We are tight-knit and do Sunday dinners every week. And we laugh a lot. We are always laughing. We're a good bunch.

*“Be that father you wanted your dad to be for you”*

## LAWYERS PROJECT

If you're facing homelessness because of child support modification or divorce and employment issues, you can get free legal help from Volunteer Lawyers Project

**Call:** (315) 471-3409

**Visit:** onvlp.org

**Stop in:** Rescue Mission Day Center, 155 Gifford St., noon-1 p.m. Tuesdays

If you're interested in getting involved with the Homeless Advocacy and Prevention program, contact Derek English (315) 579-0177 or denglish@onvlp.org

# FREE LEGAL ADVICE

*Volunteer lawyers help people stay in their homes, avoid evictions*

By | Kayli Thompson  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

*'Anything we can do to help people from becoming homeless is a good thing'*

**W**hat if Syracuse's homeless issue were tackled by preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place?

What if instead of trying to find temporary living space, someone created a program that targeted the reasons people end up homeless and used it to combat homelessness?

The Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc., 221 S. Warren St., is doing this for a specific segment of the homeless population.

"While there are great organizations out there working to end homelessness, often times they were missing the legal aspect of the advocacy," said Derek English, staff attorney who is heading up the new program. "That's where the Volunteer Lawyers Project steps in."

Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County is a nonprofit organization that seeks to offer free legal counsel to low-income individuals. It is composed of lawyers, who volunteer their time, and law students.

Instead of waiting until people are homeless and hopping from shelter to shelter, the Volunteer Lawyers Project works to help people stay in their homes before they get evicted and end up on the streets.

"Shelters are not long-term housing," said Bethanie Hemingway, volunteer engagement and development manager at Volunteer Lawyers Project. "Most residents remain in the shelters for only a few months at most. These months are a critical time to intervene and provide much-needed legal work that can be transformative in the lives of the client."

Because of this different aspect of taking on homelessness, the organization was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Central New York Community Foundation in October to help implement the Homeless Advocacy and Prevention program, Hemingway said.

Currently, there is a program at Rescue Mission's Day Center, 155 Gifford St., where clients can get free legal advice and referrals through a confidential one-on-one meeting with a lawyer. The clinic there is open from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesdays.

Hemingway said with the new grant, more clinics will be added in other locations across Syracuse. They will open in four homeless shelters and one soup kitchen.

English said the goal is for the clinics to be open by January 2016 with six to 10 volunteers at each site. He

said permission already has been granted by the shelters' directors to establish the clinics, and now the program is working to find and train volunteer lawyers for the clinics.

Kendall Slee, Rescue Mission communications specialist, said that having the lawyers go to the day center makes them accessible for the guests of the center.

"We are really pleased to have their expertise," Slee said. "Often the individuals that are coming in to the day center don't have access to legal advice and this is a great first step for them to get direction on questions that they have."

**VOLUNTEER  
LAWYERS PROJECT  
OF ONONDAGA COUNTY, INC.**

*Providing Equal Access to Justice to Those in Need*

Hemingway said the decision to start the Homeless Advocacy and Prevention program was made because in 2014, the nonprofit represented more than 900 people in landlord tenant court. Of those, 75 percent were able to delay or avoid eviction, preventing homelessness.

"Because of this clear need in our community, we thought it best to focus our project on eviction and homelessness," Hemingway said.

The grant will enable the group to gather data of where there is a high number of people who are wrestling with evictions, according to John Eberle, vice president of grants at CNY Community Foundation.

The CNY Community Foundation is a group that administers nearly 700 funds with its total asset level at nearly \$190 million. The funds are set up by people who want the money to go back to the community; then the foundation turns the funds into grants. Last fiscal year, the Community Foundation awarded nearly \$10 million in grants; \$2 million of that was awarded through its Community Grantmaking and Initiatives. The Volunteer Lawyers Project received from this fund.

Eberle said the Volunteer Lawyers Project was chosen because the foundation loves to see when diverse groups and projects come together to build up the community. He said it makes more of a lasting difference when that happens.

"Anything we can do to help people from becoming homeless is a good thing in this community," Eberle said.

CORCORAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE THE STAGE



> Andrea (Cecilia Root) restrains her boyfriend, Devin (Dimitrius Webb), from a fight with his nemesis during a performance of the play "Prospect High: Brooklyn" in November. | John Berry, Provided by Syracuse City School District

UPCOMING MUSICAL

**What:** "Dream Girls"  
**When:** Various times Dec. 3 through Dec. 19; some shows have sold out  
**Where:** Red House Arts Center, 201 S. West St.  
**Cost:** \$30  
**Details:** Based on the successes of R&B acts like The Supremes and James Brown, this musical follows the story of a female singing group from Chicago called "The Dreams" as they become musical superstars  
**For tickets:** Visit [theredhouse.org](http://theredhouse.org) or call (315) 362-2785

ON THE SIDE

Do you need help with your breast cancer bills?

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

The following costs can be covered:

- ▶ Treatment, procedures, testing, office visits
- ▶ Transportation to and from treatment, child care
- ▶ Prescription and procedural co-pays
- ▶ Medication not covered by insurance
- ▶ Wound care systems
- ▶ Breast reconstruction
- ▶ Lymphedema sleeves



We can help you.

[www.saintagathafoundation.org](http://www.saintagathafoundation.org) | (888) 878-7900

31ST ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CELEBRATION

REMEMBER.  
 CELEBRATE.  
 ACT.



ACTIVISM AND AGENCY FOR THE FUTURE

A night to engage with generations on activism and agency—past, present, and future

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2016  
 CARRIER DOME, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

DOORS OPEN 4 P.M. | DINNER 4:30 P.M. | EVENING PROGRAM 5:30 P.M.



Celebration Speaker:  
 MARC LAMONT HILL

Award-winning journalist, Marc Lamont Hill is the host of *HuffPost Live* and *BET News*, as well as a political contributor for CNN.

TICKETS

- Tickets on sale November 2, 2015 - January 30, 2016
- Available at the Schine Box Office, 315-443-4517 (credit cards, cash, IDs, and checks)
- All seating is general seating (new this year)

GENERAL PUBLIC \$30

STUDENTS \$15 at the Schine Box Office (without a meal plan) or one meal swipe at the dining centers. Meals will be charged the week of January 25, 2016.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

A collaboration with Maker Hall, Syracuse City School District, Parent University, and Onondaga Community College

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30  
 NOON-4 P.M.

Check website for location

The day will include a series of workshops, performances, and recognition of youth unsung heroes



Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and American Sign Language (ASL) will be provided. Other accommodations can be requested; contact Hendricks Chapel at 315-443-2901, [gyerdon@syr.edu](mailto:gyerdon@syr.edu), or visit [mlk.syr.edu](http://mlk.syr.edu) for more information.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

## SCHOOL SECURITY

High schools in the Syracuse City School District started doing daily security checks on Oct. 5

Security checks start at 7:15 a.m.

Classes start at 7:50 a.m.

It takes less than a minute per student to get through security. From the start of placing one's bag into the scanner and walking through the detector, it takes 30 seconds or less for each student to go through security — if directions are followed. This includes the students putting their cellphones in their backpacks.

— Source: Thomas Ristoff, director of public safety

# SAFETY SCREENINGS

Syracuse City School District high schools begin metal detector use



> An Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central student pushes a backpack into the baggage scanner, which is meant to detect weapons, while school sentry Michael Burke checks the screen. | Leonard Adams, Staff Photo

By | Rawan Ashoor  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

Students adjust to new daily weapons checks; some parents voice concerns about searches

Syracuse high schools have been checking students daily for weapons for two months now, in response to the threat of gun violence locally and nationally, particularly at schools and colleges.

Thomas Ristoff, director of public safety for the Syracuse City School District, said the purpose of the security checks is to be “preventative and proactive,” since schools are affected by larger community problems.

Since Oct. 5, all high school students have been required to pass through metal detectors, which screen

them for weapons, before they enter the schools. Previously, students were required to go through random screenings. Now screenings are carried out daily; they begin at 7:15 a.m., and the goal is to be finished before the start of classes at 7:50 a.m., Ristoff said.

Mark D. Muhammad, a school board member, said schools are a microcosm of the larger society. He cited the mass killing June 17 by a white assailant in a predominately African-American church in which nine people died.

“The sore reality of having to search and have security is just what it is — it’s a reality,” Muhammad said. “Not just in urban America, but in America. So we just have to get used to it. I think if everybody is searched, the students will be much more comfortable

being in school.”

Muhammad also said he spoke with parents who said that the only reason their children were carrying weapons was because other students had them.

Jaime Alicea, chief operations officer for the school district, said it took students awhile to get through the screening process at first, but that the process has since gone more smoothly. The exception is at Henninger High School, 600 Robinson St., where the student population is the district's highest. The school has nearly 1,700 pupils, according to the guidance office at the school.

More equipment is being ordered to deal with that; there currently are two search stations, and there will be a third station when the new equipment arrives, which is scheduled for shortly after Thanksgiving break, Ristoff said.

There is still a class tardiness issue at Henninger because it is the most populous school, Ristoff said, but this varies, depending on when students arrive to campus and go through security. Students could show up at the security stations either one minute or 10 minutes before class, and this determines whether they make it to class on time. The department of safety has little control over this issue, Ristoff said.

Students and staff members have gotten more accustomed to the searches, Ristoff added, and students have been helping, for example, by putting their cellphones in their backpacks before entering school.

Joyce Suslovic, a teacher at Henninger, said that tardiness to class occasionally causes a distraction, but that the screening process has been streamlined with more personnel since the first couple of weeks.

“Nobody likes to say this, but it’s not a major source of delay to students,” Suslovic said.

Public safety is using sentries from different schools to assist with the security procedures, and the department is going to seek help from teachers to get bags through the scanners faster, Alicea said. And, he added, after the screening process at high schools has been established, the department plans to go back to doing security checks at middle schools once or twice a month.

The daily searches were supposed to begin at the start of the school year, but there was a delay until October because members of the department of safety wanted to go to New York City first to observe how the searches are carried out at schools there, Alicea said.

Superintendent Sharon L. Contreras said that anybody who walks through the school buildings at any point in the day goes through metal detectors, and it is not just a morning procedure. In addition, security forces check the school grounds for weapons. The searches are strictly for weapons, but students could be charged if they have drugs or other prohibited items, Contreras said.

Security is recovering very few weapons, and they usually are items such as pocketknives and pepper spray,

Ristoff said. He added that students are usually told to carry weapons by adults, and it is because they are worried about city violence, rather than school violence. Many students walk to school and pass by neighborhoods with high crime rates, he said.



> An ITC student places his backpack through the school's new baggage scanner. | Leonard Adams, Staff Photo

Maxwell Ruckdeschel, a school board member, said parents and community members were surprised by the decision to install security checks at schools, and were not ready for it.

Ruckdeschel recalled being confronted in a grocery store by a mother of two students at Henninger High School, who asked him, “When did my children start going to school in prison?” He described his reaction: “I think that’s what the fear was, that maybe she didn’t know something about how dangerous the schools are,” Ruckdeschel said.

Weapon searches have been going on at schools in the district since the 1990s, said David Cecile, a school board member. The schools would receive faxes or calls

## ASK ITC STUDENTS

ITC students describe the daily security checks in one word:

**“Helpful”**

— Bridget Kent

**“Hindering”**

— Dante Geddes

**“Indifferent”**

— Marcus Jacobs

## MIC THA POET ART

**What:** Holiday Art Sale and Poetry Performance

**When:** 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19

**Where:** Art Rage, 505 Hawley Ave.

**Cost:** Free to attend

**Details:** Syracuse-native and accomplished spoken-word artist, Mic tha Poet, welcomes all to a showcase of poetic prowess and aggressive wordplay. Mic will also offer a sale of his visual art, both before and after the poetry recital. Light refreshments will be provided.

**More Info:** Call (315) 218-5711

every month telling the administration to pick two days to perform random searches, he said. Parents were as concerned then as they are now — wondering why the searches were happening.

“I tried explaining to parents that it is protecting your kids, it’s protecting your staff,” Cecile said. “You should feel good that we are doing it. Unfortunately, it is a way of the world right now.”

Bridget Kent, a student at Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central, 258 East Adams St., said the security checks are important for safety purposes.

“I think it’s a lot safer, because of all the shootings going on. But then again, it kind of is difficult because not a lot of us are on time to classes now,” she said.

Dante Geddes, another ITC student, said the security is helpful, but that it should be carried out twice a week.

“I don’t think it’s changing the school much and making it like a prison. I just think it’s unnecessary,” he said. “Not every day.”

Marcus Jacobs, an ITC student, agrees with Geddes that a daily search is too much, although he acknowledges that it is useful in making students feel safer. He said that many of his peers have mixed feelings about it because it makes them late to classes.

“It does affect school attendance most of the time; not just with me, but with other students here around the school,” he said.

While class tardiness in high schools might partially be attributed to school security, Ristoff said other factors are that students could be stopping at their lockers, talking to their peers and/or going to the cafeteria. Some students also move slower than others, he noted. The department of public safety tries to help solve the issue by sending notifications to parents, encouraging students to put cellphones away and limit conversations while in the security line.

Contreras said she does not take the decision to



> Sentry Michael Burke checks an Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central student for weapons as part of the recently enforced daily security check. | Leonard Adams, Staff Photo

*“I don’t think it’s changing the school much and making it like a prison. I just think it’s unnecessary. Not every day.”*

— Dante Geddes

implement security checks lightly, and that it was one of the hardest decisions she had to make.

“I don’t want Jonathan going through — my own child — going through a metal detector, but I can’t control anyone’s actions. I can just do the best I can to make sure the students are safe,” she said.

Muhammad said that if students were determined to have weapons, they would find ways to keep them outside school. But, he said, it is essential to make sure there are no weapons in the community at all.

“It is not a school district problem, which I continue to say,” Muhammad said. “It is a larger city problem, nation problem, that we have to address as a community.”



> Baggage scanner and metal detection equipment have been used daily since Oct. 5, 2015 to screen city high school students for weapons. | Leonard Adams, Staff Photo

## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Volunteers Needed to Serve as Holiday Angels

ACR Health needs additional "Holiday Angels" to help fill requests for assistance from families in need. The long-standing Holiday Angel program pairs community members, the Angels, with a qualified ACR Health client and their family. The Angels get a list of the family's needs and then make holiday purchases.

The lists usually contain requests for basic needs: clothing, bathroom items, towels, kitchen supplies, shoes or coats. Participants can buy as many or as few of the items on the list as they wish. Many community groups, churches or extended families pool their resources every year to sponsor an ACR Health client and members of their family. Several hundred people rely on Holiday Angels for whatever holiday gifts they receive.

"Poverty is a constant companion for some of our clients and their families, who struggle financially year-round," said ACR Health Development Director Carrie Portzline-Large. "They have nothing to give their loved ones at holiday time. We are immensely grateful for the generosity of the Angels."

If you would like to be a Holiday Angel, call (800) 475-2430

### Lace Up Your Ice Skates

Meachem Ice Rink  
121 W. Seneca Turnpike

#### Skating Specials:

- Senior Skate (55+): 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Fridays, \$2, includes admission, skate rental and free coffee or hot chocolate
- Skate & Shoot: 9 to 11:45 a.m. Thursdays, \$4/person. Must bring own skates, helmet, stick and gloves
- Tots-on-Skates: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays, \$4/person includes admission, helmet rental and hot chocolate (children required to wear a helmet)

#### Open Skate Times \*

Closed Monday, Saturday and Sunday  
Noon to 3:15 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday  
Noon to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday

*\* Please call in advance to confirm hours as there are tournaments/games throughout the year that may interfere with open skate times.*

#### Holiday Schedule

Open noon to 3 p.m. Dec. 24 and 31 for Open Skate  
Closed Dec. 25 and Jan. 1

**More Info.:** Call (315) 492-0179

**What:** Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today Area 4 Valley Meeting

**When:** 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13

**Where:** Bob Cecile Community Center, 176 W. Seneca Turnpike

**Details:** TNT Area 4 Valley regularly meets at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month. Meetings are subject to change if necessary. The Valley neighborhood is dedicated to providing an inviting, diverse and historical community, which is safe, clean and comfortable for residents and businesses.

**More Info.:** Email TNT@SyrGov.net

**What:** Believe in Syracuse's 3rd Birthday Party

**When:** 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 28

**Where:** Landmark Theatre, 362 S. Salina St.

**Details:** The celebration is the group's biggest annual event and recognizes the progress Syracuse has made over the past year.

**For sponsorship info.:** Email the event organizer, John DeSantis, at john@believeinsyracuse.org



## THE STAND IS ONLINE

➤ Sign up for monthly eNewsletters

➤ Check updates on news & events

➤ Read past issues of the print editions

➤ Connect with twitter, flickr, facebook & youtube



# SUPPORT FOR BABY KING

Community members attempt to 'Be the Match' for toddler with immune deficiency

Photos by Bob Schultz  
Community Contributor

The Stand co-sponsored a Bone Marrow Registry Drive with the William G. Pomeroy Foundation on Nov. 14 at the South Side Innovation Center to seek a match for King Nazir Leon, 2, known as Baby King. He was featured on The Stand cover for November. The drive registered 15 people.



Born with CD40 Ligand deficiency, a hereditary immune deficiency that without a bone marrow transplant will become fatal, King has yet to find a match on the Be the Match registry.

The need for diverse donors is great, as the most likely match is someone of your same race. Potential donors must be between the ages of 18 and 44 and meet the health guidelines.

Nicole Blue, 24, of Syracuse, came out to register after learning about the drive from her mother. "My mom saw it on the news," Blue said. "She's too old to donate, so I did it on her behalf."

If you were unable to attend November's drive, you can still join the registry online. Visit Be The Match Registry at <https://join.bethematch.org/babyking>. A kit will be mailed, requiring simple cheek swabs, and it will take about four weeks to determine if you are a suitable match.



> Above, Paula Miller, executive director of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, talks with Fanita Johnson of Syracuse, during the drive. "I was moved when I saw him on the news," Johnson said. "I have five kids of my own, and if I needed something for my child, I'd want people to help."



> Leondra Polk, 24, far left, explains to Nicole Blue, 24, of Syracuse, how to collect a DNA sample with a cheek swab. Polk is Baby King's aunt.



> From left to right, Jerome Omar Sharif, Jr., 30; Derrick Jamar Jimmerson, 37; Jeremy Sykes, 24; and Dalasha Trapps, 27, all of Syracuse, fill out forms during the drive for 2-year-old King Nazir Leon.



> Xristoph Huntley, 22, swabs his cheek to collect a DNA sample during the drive for King Nazir Leon.