

# the Stand

## south side news

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

Syracuse, NY  
**MARCH 2016** Issue 49 **FREE**

### BLACK MUSEUM

Exhibit at Southwest Community Center shares history lessons

**Walt Shepperd revival**  
Producer bringing back 'From the Back of The Bus'

busy lives

New group brings women together to balance many roles

**HIV/AIDS prevention**  
These resources will help you to protect yourself

A DEBATE OVER LOW PAY



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the  
Stand

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**SPECIAL THANKS THIS MONTH**

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THE STAND IS BASED OUT OF THE  
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■ Cover photography by Ashley McBride of a black history exhibit

## CALENDAR | MARCH

**What:** Nutrition & Health Expo for Seniors  
**When:** 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 19  
**Where:** CNY Regional Market "F" Shed (indoors and heated), 2100 Park St.  
**Details:** Because March is National Nutrition Month, Onondaga Elders, Inc., will sponsor a fun-filled event featuring exhibits, health screening, massages, healthy cooking presentations and a t'ai chi demo for seniors  
**Cost:** Free  
**To Register:** Call (315) 435-2362 ext. 4987

**What:** Rotary Community Chat  
**When:** 6 p.m. Monday, March 28  
**Where:** Grace Episcopal Church, 819 Madison St.  
**Cost:** Free to attend; donations greatly appreciated  
**Details:** This regular event is held the fourth Monday of each month. In March, Danielle Laraque-Arena, the newly appointed first female president of SUNY Upstate Medical University, will lead the chat to talk about her vision for the school  
**More Info.:** To RSVP, contact the City Rotary Club by the preceding Friday at RotaryCommunityChats@gmail.com or call (315) 468-1025

Students at the Newhouse School have partnered with The Stand to launch an in-depth journalism project about Syracuse jobs this semester.

This project picks up from last year's focus on segregated housing, which is featured at MyHousingMatters.com. The Syracuse metropolitan area is ranked as one of the worst cities in the country when looking at equality of opportunity based on race and ethnicity. This was true last year when CNY Fair Housing released its study, "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing." It was true again last fall when Rutgers professor Paul A. Jargowsky published a report, "Architecture of Segregation," identifying Syracuse as the No. 1 city for concentrated poverty among blacks and Hispanics out of 100 metro cities in the nation.

The term concentrated poverty means people with better means move out or that more low-income people move into the city. For Syracuse, it appears residents who had the means did leave, resulting in pockets of concentrated poverty and amplifying the challenges for those who remained.

You'll be reading more about this project in the coming months.

In the meantime, a challenge for low-wage earners is the precarious nature of their jobs — work that is temporary and unstable. On Page 4 of this issue, learn about the hazards of low-wage positions as described in conversations between workers and the Upstate Medical University's Occupation Health Clinical Center.

Another initiative is the national minimum-wage movement — the Fight for \$15. Local workers, unions and political leaders have shown support for an increase in the minimum wage. Read about this topic on Page 12.

The Stand reporters continue to cover local community news. In this month's Fatherhood Q&A, we visit again with Ben Jamison, who talks about fatherhood with his newborn daughter. Additional stories from some of our newest Urban Affairs reporters include coverage of efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Syracuse's black community and an upcoming play about race by Media Unit.

And for more news, visit us online at [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com).

Ashley Kang



## MEDIA AWARD



**My Housing Matters honored for storytelling**

Newhouse School students who produced stories last year for My Housing Matters received second place in the 2016 BEA Festival of Media Arts competition for their multi-class, in-depth investigation into local housing data.

The contest drew 1,538 entries.

The Broadcast Education Association is an international academic media organization.

Students who conceptualized, created and published the My Housing Matters project were enrolled in the Urban Affairs reporting course and the Advanced Newspaper Editing course.

For more about the competition, visit [beaweb.org/festival](http://beaweb.org/festival)

To view the project, visit [myhousingmatters.com](http://myhousingmatters.com)

### MEET OUR NEWEST URBAN AFFAIRS REPORTERS



#### Ryan Raigrodski:

Ryan is a senior newspaper and online journalism major at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. From Baltimore, Maryland, he enjoys learning more about the communities he lives in or near. He is especially looking forward to learning more about Syracuse by reporting on the South Side.



#### Ari Gilberg:

Ari is a junior newspaper and online journalism major at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. He covers Syracuse men's basketball and football for Nunes Magician, in addition to working as a fantasy sports analyst for Fantasy Alarm. When not at school, he resides in Livingston, New Jersey.

## SYRACUSE'S CENTER

Occupational Health  
Clinical Center

**Address:** 6712 Brooklawn  
Parkway, Suite 204,  
Syracuse

**Phone:** (315) 432-8899

**Online:** [ohccupstate.org](http://ohccupstate.org)

### MISSION:

The Occupational Health Clinical Center's focus is to provide high quality occupational medicine services, specializing in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of occupational diseases.

Staffed by physicians with a specialty in occupational medicine and with expertise in epidemiology and toxicology, the centers (there are three total) will serve as regional centers of excellence in occupational medicine.

Endeavoring to understand the relationship between work and health in a changing occupational landscape, the Occupational Health Clinical Center remains responsive to the working population in our region.

# WORKERS' STORIES

*Occupational health project sheds light on risks of low-wage jobs*

By | Jeanette Zoeckler, MPH &  
Michael Lax, MD MPH  
*Guest columnists*

Conversations with local workers reveal challenges, hardships they face regularly

Because people spend so much of their time at work, it is important to become aware of the ways that work impacts health. Low-wage jobs have become essential to our economy. Low paying, unstable work arrangements have created large numbers of workers with high risks of poor health due to hazardous health and safety conditions, the lack of a living wage, the potential for wage theft, the lack of union representation and discrimination.

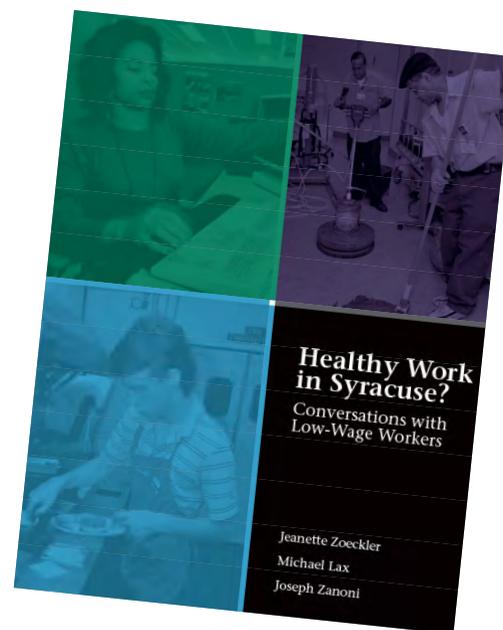
There have always been dangerous and stressful work conditions, but historically, workers in difficult settings were frequently paid higher wages and benefits to compensate for the danger. Under these conditions workers in low wage jobs find it increasingly difficult to make a "decent living" under healthy conditions.

Because these striking national trends are also likely locally, the Low-Wage Workers' Health Project sought to characterize local low-wage workplace conditions and some of their potential impacts on worker health with an aim toward developing ideas and strategies for improving working conditions. The Project is a collaboration based at the Occupational Health Clinical Center in Syracuse.

More than 569 low-wage workers in Syracuse have described their working lives through surveys and focus groups conducted in the past three years.

### What can we learn from low-wage workers?

A living wage is the minimum income necessary to meet basic needs without resorting to any type of assistance. Low-paying jobs serve many important and essential functions in our society, yet these jobs don't offer a living wage. Occupations include cleaning, cooking, bus driving, painting, building, processing products or man-



aging the personal care of the elderly or very young.

Employment for those who earn low wages is "precarious." This means that the work is not steady and is likely to change due to circumstances beyond the workers' control. Most low-wage jobs held by the workers we encountered did not provide a long-term occupational path or medical benefits. The majority have been in their current jobs for less than two years. One-third predicts their current job would not last six months.

More than 30 percent of low-wage workers we surveyed experience physical symptoms as a result of their work. This represents thousands of workers in Syracuse alone.

When asked if there was one thing they could change about their jobs, low-wage workers simply wanted to experience less disrespect. Being treated poorly felt like an assault to their human dignity. Workers were often called names, yelled at, or ignored. This was deemed particularly hard when the job just didn't pay enough "for so much trouble." Many working adults were particularly frustrated and afraid that they might never gain financial stability, especially because better

I think that my job is unsafe. Whom can I contact?

*If you work for a private company:*

**Occupational Safety and Health Administration** 1-800-321-OSHA

Online at: [osha.gov](http://osha.gov)

*If you work for a NY State Government agency:*

**Public Employee Safety and Health Bureau (PESH) in Syracuse** (315) 479-3319

Online at: [https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/DOSH\\_PESH.shtm](https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/DOSH_PESH.shtm)

jobs with adequate wages and benefits were so difficult to find. In fact, they sensed they were losing ground all the time, slipping behind.

### Unsafe workplace conditions

Low-wage workers told us about numerous concerns regarding the health and safety of their workplaces. Some workers were frustrated because workplace conditions could be easily cleaned up with very basic changes made by employers, but employers were not taking care of these basics. For example, when workers experienced poor air quality from moldy, dusty, dirty, smelly or stuffy conditions, they could not get even the most basic ventilation solution in place. In these cases, improvement might be quick, effective and not terribly difficult to undertake, but nothing was being done.

Workers sometimes reported more troubling dangers such as being required to use seriously compromised equipment. These workers were stymied about what could be done about these life threatening circumstances as they could not imagine an easy fix. Workers in these situations were demoralized because they were told there was no recourse or even a future plan for repairs.

Understaffing is yet another very common frustration and leads to dangerous conditions because more work must be done by fewer employees. For example, many health care aides describe difficulties with lifting patients. Certified Nursing Assistants found it quite “ironic” that while there was a grand push for “safe patient handling” so that workers and patients alike can be safer, their everyday experience was that “safe patient handling” was impossible. Similarly, warehouse workers were faced with conditions promoting unsafe practices and few workarounds for the problem of understaffing.

Patterns of physical suffering on the job varied according to occupation. Restaurant workers describe fast-paced work on slippery floors. Cooks expect to endure a number of cuts, scrapes and first-, second- and even occasional third-degree burns. Dishwashers face back pain and skin irritation. Wait staff expect to have their schedules change at a moment’s notice, have concerns about losing out on tips, and about having to hustle too hard to provide good customer service in a constant environment of understaffing.

Office workers reported physical hazards, such as long periods of sitting and stress from issues involving increasing pressure from management to produce more with less. Surviving office politics, workplace bullying and disgruntled customers were paramount in their minds; they reported having difficulty getting these problems off their minds when not at work.

Ultimately, if the difficult working conditions are not changed or avoided, physical symptoms described by low-wage workers will take their toll. For some workers, occupational health illnesses will develop and may lead to long-term battles with serious health conditions, chronic pain and possibly even permanent disability. Mental health is also commonly affected. The troubling work conditions and stressors associated with low-wage work can trigger new health conditions or aggravate existing health conditions. Respiratory disease, skin disorders, hearing impairment, musculo-skeletal problems, or even cancer can emerge, depending on work conditions.

Connecting the relationship between the symptoms and conditions on the job can be challenging and require the help of an occupational medicine specialist. The health implications of work-related illness can be serious for any working person, but low-wage workers face additional threats to their wellbeing.

*For more information, e-mail Jeanette Zoeckler at [zoecklej@upstate.edu](mailto:zoecklej@upstate.edu)*

*This article is adapted from two longer reports. Find the reports at:*

*[ohccupstate.org/projects\\_stories.cfm](http://ohccupstate.org/projects_stories.cfm)*



## 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
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- » 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!**

## ABOUT PrEP DRUG

The PrEP drug has been in Syracuse for the past two years, says Nicky Jennings, who works in Upstate University Hospital's infectious disease unit.

A lack of publicity has left many people unaware of the drug's existence, Jennings says.

"All the partners that have a piece in this tonight (at "Black Love Matters"), we are all desperately working. More publicity would certainly be helpful," Jennings said.

This drug was actually used to treat HIV for about 15 years before doctors realized it could be used to help prevent the disease as well, Jennings says.

Not only is this medication highly effective, but is also quite accessible — and it is covered by insurance and Medicaid, Jennings says.

She also says that those without insurance could get the drug free.

"If they are uninsured, we will put in the paperwork to get this paid for," Jennings said.

For more information about getting PrEP: Contact Nicky Jennings at (315) 571-0013

# HIV/AIDS TREATMENT

Organizations host a night of food and dancing to share their message



> Lanika Mabrey, left, and Karen Loftin stand in front of a poster featuring Loftin during the "Black Love Matters" outreach event last month. Loftin, who is HIV positive, urges people to seek treatment. | Ryan Raigrodski, Staff photo

By | Ryan Raigrodski  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

### 'Black Love Matters' event mixes festivity with serious message at B&B Cocktail Lounge

In a new effort to show blacks in Syracuse how to avoid exposing themselves to the dangers of HIV and AIDS, some nonprofit health organizations decided to offer their message as part of an evening of free food and dancing in a South Side bar recently.

"We don't have a huge following, flooding into HIV awareness events," said Lanika Mabrey, representing Access Care and Resources Health, one of the participating groups. "However, we do have individuals who are interested in having a good time and partying. We want to meet individuals in that space and match information or resources that they need for HIV awareness."

The event, "Black Love Matters," was held Feb. 5 at the B&B Cocktail Lounge at 310 South Ave., and drew a crowd of about 35 people. Attendees munched on a wide selection of foods and then moved to the dance floor.

Despite the festive atmosphere, Mabrey made no effort to play down the seriousness of the challenge facing blacks in containing and eventually defeating the

virus. African-Americans accounted for nearly half the new diagnoses of HIV/AIDS in 2014 in America, she said. This statistic is far higher than their share of the population, which is 12 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

New York state also has more blacks living with HIV/AIDS than any other state in the country, Mabrey said. The ACR Health website puts that number at 34,850.

"The goal of this meeting is to introduce the black community to the resources that are solid and available to them so that they are protecting themselves and we end AIDS in our state by 2020," Mabrey said.

She said she was asked to lead the project after suggesting several creative ideas for how to hold and conduct this event. Mabrey had the assistance of collaborating partners in the FACES program, National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, HIV Stops With Me, and SUNY Upstate University Hospital.

After years of feeling like they have been mistreated by the medical system, many blacks in the communities do not trust the medical system to assist them with the prevention or treatment of HIV/AIDS, Mabrey said.

"We are talking about a group of people who historically have not had a good experience in the medical

system,” Mabrey said. “And now we know the main line of defense with dealing with this virus is, of course, health insurance, meds, you know talking to your doctor. These are challenges for community of color. That’s one of the barriers.”

Mabrey addressed this issue of awareness with help from others in the community who spoke at the event.

Nicky Jennings, an employee in Upstate University Hospital’s infectious disease unit, named four ways — all involving bodily fluids — through which the virus is transmitted: breast milk, vaginal secretion, blood and semen or sperm.

Jennings also discussed a fairly new medicine called PrEP, which stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. When a person takes the medication daily, it will decrease the chances of that person getting the virus, Jennings said.

“This is groundbreaking,” Jennings said. “This has the potential to change the game as far as HIV prevention goes.”

Other speakers included two local people who have lived with the virus for years.

One of the speakers was Karen Loftin, a native of Syracuse who has had the virus for more than 22 years.

Loftin spoke of how she ignored relevant information and now must live with the virus.

“I am a product of this community,” Loftin said. “I am a product of when you don’t take knowledge that is given to you and apply it to your life because you think it doesn’t apply to you. The information about HIV was out there. I was getting high; I was running the streets. South Ave. is my block. I put bricks in this city right here. This my neighborhood.”

Loftin also said blacks often have been associated with negative attributes, such as violence and drugs, and she stressed to the crowd that it was time for change.

“We don’t just have to accept the things that are given to us,” Loftin said. “Our race is at the top of everything negative: murders, HIV, heart disease.”

Joshua King also spoke to the crowd about his struggles with the virus. King has had the virus for about 15 years. King believes the community needs to unite and band together to fight the virus.

“We know that this is happening in our black communities, or we wouldn’t be here,” King said at the “Black Love Matters” event. “So we’re making a com-

mitment with you as agencies, as individuals, as spokesmen to make a commitment and create a movement. The same way we came out of slavery, the same way we came out of women’s suffrage is the same way we will come out of HIV.”



> Joshua King, who is HIV positive, poses next to a poster, left, featuring his image. A poster of Karen Loftin, who also is HIV positive, is at right. Both shared their stories during the “Black Love Matters” outreach event last month. | Ryan Raigrodski, Staff photo

*“We don’t just have to accept the things that are given to us .”*

— Karen Loftin

ON THE SIDE

## MORE INFO FOR HELP

### ACR Health

627 W. Genesee St.  
(315) 475-2430  
<http://acrhealth.org/>

### FACES Program

401 South Ave.  
(315) 671-5844  
<http://smnfwcc.org/f-a-c-e-s-fighting-aids/>

### National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS

2610 S. Salina St.  
(315) 665-1828  
Contact: Denise Welch  
[dwelch@nblca.org](mailto:dwelch@nblca.org)  
<http://www.nblca.org/syracuse/>

### HIV Stops with Me

800-541-AIDS Call for services near you  
<http://hivstopswithme.org/ny/>

### Upstate University Hospital

750 E. Adams St.  
(315) 464-5540  
Contact: Nicky Jennings  
(315) 571-0013  
<http://www.upstate.edu/hospital/>

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# BEN JAMISON III

*Nominated by John Akins,  
Fatherhood Community Health worker  
for Syracuse Healthy Start*

By | Ashley Kang  
*The Stand director*

*We first featured Ben Jamison in the September 2015 issue of The Stand. He was raising Ameerah — the daughter of his girlfriend, La'Chelle Brown — as his own. The couple since has had their first child together, Peyton, and they are expecting another girl this summer.*

**Q:** *How was your first experience with a delivery?*

**A:** It was surprisingly smooth. There were no major complications. She (baby Peyton) came Aug. 5 and was premature and had to be in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) for six weeks. That was a lot because she had to have the tubes in her nose and have the doctors come in and poke at her. After La'Chelle was discharged, Peyton had to stay — we visited as much as we could.

**Q:** *And now you're expecting again?*

**A:** (With a wide smile) That was another surprise. It's a girl. I'm going to have all girls. (He exhales) Whoa. The thought is scary sometimes, but I'm doing pretty good with these two so far, and they're pretty funny. She (pointing to Peyton) cracks me up. For names for the third, we're still working on that. We're thinking of Riley.

**Q:** *What is the biggest challenge?*

**A:** The lack of sleep is the biggest challenge for me. You don't truly appreciate sleep until you aren't getting it. She was sleeping all during the day and being a vampire at night. This was how she was in the womb. We eventually got her on the right track, but those first weeks were definitely, definitely different, especially since it was my first child. Every day I'm growing. And every day I'm learning how to be a better dad.

## NOMINATE A FATHER

To submit a nomination for an outstanding father to be featured in a future issue of The Stand, send a short explanation with contact information to The Stand Director Ashley Kang by calling (315) 882-1054 or emailing [ashley@mysouthsidestand.com](mailto:ashley@mysouthsidestand.com)



**CATCH UP WITH FATHER BEN:** *Jamison, 22, holds Ameerah, 2, and Peyton, who was born in August. | Ashley Kang, Staff photo*

**Q:** *How did fatherhood meet your expectations?*

**A:** I was ready for craziness but I did not know how crazy it was going to get. She could wake up after just a half hour. She takes catnaps throughout the entire day and then it's trying because she likes being held and she knows that dad is a sucker for tears. Whenever she starts crying, I go and pick her up.

**Q:** *So, would you say you are the weak parent?*

**A:** Yeah. I try not to be, but it's hard. She's so cute. La'Chelle always says, she's gonna have you wrapped around her finger. And she sure does.

**Q:** *What type of support system do you have?*

**A:** We have a wonderful support system. I think if we didn't have the support system that we have now, it would have been a lot harder and a lot more trying. My mom, my dad, my sisters and anybody that wants to come over and hold the baby for a little bit — all that really does help. Whether it's for 20 minutes or a few hours, it gives us a chance to all exhale and catch our breath and get back to our sane minds.

## “Every day I’m learning how to be a better dad”

### Q: What special moment stands out?

A: Any time she smiles. Her first smile was in the NICU. La’Chelle had tickled her. She had the tubes in her nose and everything, but she smiled. I saw it and I knew, yup that’s my baby. She has my smile.

### Q: Is she a daddy’s girl?

A: There are a lot of times she will just be crying her head off and as soon as I grab her, she’ll stop immediately or I can just rock her a little bit and she’ll be fine. She loves her daddy. My mom calls her fancy, but I call her fussy.

### Q: What advice do you have for expectant dads?

A: Be ready for change. Know that it’s never going to go the way you expect it. So you have to be ready for some curve balls. Know that there are people out there that are willing to take our jobs as fathers. So if you have a child, you have responsibilities. If you don’t, know somebody else will. When you see somebody else out having fun and doing stuff with your child that you wished you could do, it’s really going to suck. I would never want

anyone taking away this (he raises up his daughter, smiling, and wiggles her while making a silly face).

### Q: Anything else to add?

A: The great things about being a dad are the little things. When I was little, my parents did what they needed to do — and I love my parents to death — and what they could do, but I always had wished we could have gone out more and done more stuff together. Now that I have my own family, we can make our own traditions. Get dressed up for Halloween, go see the Lights on the Lake, take them to the library and little things like that.

### Q: What do you find rewarding about being a dad?

A: One of the most rewarding things about being a parent is seeing a smile on my kids’ faces and knowing that I put it there. Every time I come home, they are so excited ... it’s ‘Oh daddy’s here!’ and I can see the excitement on their faces. I love being a dad. I don’t understand why people don’t want to be dads.



> Ben Jamison holds his daughter Peyton. He says she has his smile. | Ashley Kang, Staff photo

## 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

ON THE SIDE

## WANT TO JOIN?

**Women On the Move** meets regularly

**When:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m Saturdays

**Location:**  
Mary Nelson Youth Center,  
2849 S. Salina St.

**To learn more:** Contact  
Christina Taylor at  
(315) 418-1235

# COME TOGETHER

Youth center creates support group for women to share their struggles



> Christina Taylor, left, director of Women On the Move, closes a recent meeting with a call to action: Go out, love, smile and hug somebody. | Yu Hua, Staff Photo

### COMMUNITY EVENT

**What:** Believe in Syracuse Organizational Meeting

**When:** 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday, March 10

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

**Details:** This meeting will be a coming together of all committees and teams within Believe in Syracuse and a chance for new members to join. Current committees include: Neighborhood (Syracuse Olympics), Pro-Syracuse, Education/Community Service, Marketing & Development, North Side Team and South Side Team

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

By | Ashley McBride  
Staff reporter

### Empowering one another, having an outlet is the motivation behind Women On the Move

When Brenda Thornton was a teenager, her mom told her she was on her own because her mom was just tired. Thornton has carried pent-up anger at her mom for years, until her son made her realize it's been affecting her parenting skills.

"One day, my son said to me, 'mom, you've got to turn the page,'" Thornton tearfully told a group of women at the Mary Nelson Youth Center recently.

In January, the center launched a women's support group to help women balance their personal needs with their other roles. Every Saturday, Women On the Move meets at the center on South Salina Street for discussions about relationships, identity, mental health and whatever else the women need to unburden.

"We have a voice, but sometimes we are so many things to everyone else, that we forget about taking care of ourselves," said Christina Taylor, the director of the group. Taylor said the idea for the group came from Nelson but she has since taken the reins, because empow-

ering women is a passion of hers.

Although the group is still small, with three to six participants at each meeting, Taylor said she hopes that it can grow to be an international sisterhood.

"We believe that when women come from all ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds, that each one can teach one," Taylor said. "We want to say, 'hey, you're my sister, it doesn't matter where you came from.' You are important."

Women On the Move hosted a breakfast fellowship Feb. 13. Women gathered to talk about relationships over breakfast pizza and coffee. Thornton shared details about her relationship with her mother and how that has affected her behavior as an adult and as a parent.

Thornton, 57, speculated that her mom having her at a later age contributed to their strained relationship. She stressed how women's relationships with their parents affect not only their relationships with their own children, but also romantic relationships and friendships. Thornton recalled one time when two of her sons fell asleep while she was extensively explaining why they were being disciplined; giving explanations was something her mother never did. She volunteers today as a foster grandparent at Franklin Elementary School.

Taylor's motivation for helping women comes

from her own circumstances as a young woman. Taylor left her home when she was 15, had a child at 16, and endured abusive relationships, a suicide attempt, alcoholism and drug addiction before getting clean in 2000. Taylor said that because of a lack of love from her mother, she deliberately got pregnant at a young age so she could get out of her house and have something to love her back.

“I went a long way around to get where I am, and I just want to not see a young woman struggling to go through what I’ve gone through,” she said.

Taylor isn’t the only one of the group who hopes to use her experiences to lend a hand to other women. Rosalee Jenkins leads a chat session each week for women to discuss specific aspects of their womanhood.

“I want to talk to women about the sacrifices they made,” Jenkins said. “We make sacrifices for our children, our husband, our sister, our cousin, but not ourselves.”

Jenkins references herself when talking about sacrifices, since she made the choice to get a degree in her 50s. She came to Syracuse in 1989 with no education, acquired her GED degree at 50 and is now working toward an associate degree in human services at Onondaga Community College. While working toward her degrees, Jenkins has worked with the Salvation Army’s homeless women’s shelter and currently works with teenage mothers at the Transitional Apartments and Parenting Center.

“It’s valuable to have a relationship with women in the community,” Jenkins said. “It strengthens me as well. Because I can see myself in some of these women.”

Taylor chose identity as the first topic for the first women’s chat session in January. She said it is fundamental for women to establish who they are in order to move forward in life and to find a purpose. Because women are so often taking care of other people, they rarely have time to figure out who they are when not playing those roles, Taylor said.

Mary Pagan, a professor at SUNY Oswego, attended the breakfast fellowship and talked about her mother, the child of an alcoholic, and how that affected Pagan’s upbringing and even Pagan’s own parenting. Pagan finds the group essential for bonding with women in the community.

“Women don’t realize where their blessings are, and I’ve been really really pushing these meetings,” she said.

For Taylor, the group’s aim is threefold: to empower, to encourage and to equip. She said that in the future, she hopes that the group can offer more resources, like college and job preparedness, health screenings, and cooking classes. Right now, the group does offer childcare for women with no other options Saturday mornings. To get the word out, the group goes door to door, makes announcements at church and puts up fliers.



> Brenda Thornton reflects on the lessons her mother taught her growing up, such as the advice to always be present and prepared. | Yu Hua, Staff Photo



> Rosalee Jenkins, right, says women don’t have an outlet in their everyday lives, and she wants the women’s chat sessions to be that outlet. Christina Taylor, left, director of Women On the Move, says women need to take care of themselves as they care for others. | Yu Hua, Staff Photo

Taylor said the biggest barrier to getting the group off the ground is compelling women to accept the help and resources that Women On the Move offers. Often, she said, women are used to balancing everything on their own without any help, and she wants to combat that complex.

“We don’t want people to feel like they have to do this by themselves.”

## ABOUT THE CENTER

**The Mary Nelson Youth Center** is a community center focusing on education, health, career services and career resources. It was founded by Mary Nelson in 2002. Volunteers operate the center. It hosts a range of civic programs and events, including:

- Emergency center
- Free meals
- Computer lab for those looking for employment and/or housing
- Tutoring/homework assistance
- Food pantry

## HOURS

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Monday through Friday

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Saturday

## CONTACT

Phone:  
(315) 751-2587

Address:  
2849 S. Salina St.

Online:  
youthdaybarbecue.com

## WHAT IS A PILOT?

The Common Council unanimously approved a PILOT last month to help the PriceRite grocery store that will be built on the South Side.

*Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) is used to help pay the government back some of the money it loses in property taxes because of how a certain property is owned and developed.*

— Source: U.S. Department of Interior

# 'FIGHT FOR \$15'

Syracuse supports New York state's effort to raise the minimum wage



> Attendees listen during a rally to support a statewide \$15 minimum wage. The rally was held Feb. 5, at the People's A.M.E. Zion Church on South Salina Street. | Ashley McBride, Staff Photo

By | Justin Mattingly  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

## The approved \$15 minimum wage resolution raises debates about alleviating poverty

The Syracuse Common Council voted 8-1 in February to urge the state's lawmakers to adopt a measure that would set \$15 an hour as the minimum wage for all workers in the city.

The approved resolution lends the city's official backing to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposal to raise the minimum wage for workers statewide.

"I don't understand how it can be controversial just to give people an opportunity to live their lives with a certain standard," Councilor Helen Hudson, who introduced the resolution, said before the vote. "If we give those folks an opportunity to take care of their own lives, it not only helps them but it helps our economy."

The resolution also drew vocal support from organized labor. Ruth Heller, vice president of Local 1199, Service Employees International Union, said, "It shows the city of Syracuse is behind the people of the city of Syracuse, and as the city with the highest concentration of poverty among the Latino and African-American communities, it's really important that we be attentive

to changing things and the best way to lift people out of poverty is to pay people more." The union has long been involved in lobbying for a higher minimum wage.

Minority Leader Joseph Carni, the lone Republican on the Council, was the sole vote against the resolution. He did not return requests for comment.

City workers in Syracuse have made a \$15 minimum wage since Mayor Stephanie Miner raised their pay last October. Alexander Marion, the mayor's press secretary, said Miner had no comment on the resolution.

In the private sector, the minimum wage remains at the statewide rate of \$9 per hour. The state is moving to adopt the \$15 minimum wage in the next five years. Cuomo announced in July the move to get the statewide minimum wage to \$15 by 2021 through gradual increases each year.

The vote means the city formally supports New York state's efforts to raise the wage.

Syracuse itself cannot adopt a \$15 minimum wage for all workers because in New York state — unlike states such as Washington and California — cities don't have the power to set the wage.

"In New York state, you can't do that, so we're trying to do this statewide" Heller said. "The fact that Syracuse is in support of it is really positive, and we expect to see



> Common Councilors Khalid Bey and Helen Hudson speak at a rally last month in support of a statewide \$15 minimum wage. | Ashley McBride, Staff Photo

more of that across the state.”

Supporters of a new minimum wage and its opponents, including some economists, disagree on how it would affect the state’s business climate.

An increase in the minimum wage would increase purchasing power for city residents, said Common Councilor Khalid Bey. “It’s very impractical to assume that people will be able to sustain themselves with the same minimum wage while the cost of living steadily increases,” Bey said. “So I think we need to be a little bit more responsible and a little bit more practical.”

Carl Schramm, a professor of economics at Syracuse University, said he believes the increased minimum wage in Syracuse would have an adverse effect on development. He added that when an above-average minimum wage is combined with New York state’s taxes, “no business would ever relocate” to the state.

Supporters of the increased minimum wage say it will ultimately benefit business for the new PriceRite grocery store on the South Side, which was given a Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes agreement at the Council meeting. Bey said in the immediate vicinity around the PriceRite, the concentrated buying power is on average with the rest of the city and Onondaga County.

Heller said the increased minimum wage would keep stores like PriceRite, which is located in what for years was considered a food desert, in business by putting more money in people’s pockets to spend on goods.

“A minimum of \$15 for entry jobs means fewer people get them, can’t be socialized to working culture, and results in more — not less — poverty,” said Schramm, citing economist E.J. McMahon, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and president of the Empire Center for Public Policy.

“There is a food desert in every central city,” Schramm said. “Instituting an above-market minimum wage will have the eventual effect of shutting the market.”

Karen O’Shea, a spokeswoman for Wakefern Food Corporation, which owns PriceRite, said in a statement last month that Wakefern “can’t speculate on what may happen in the future with regard to the minimum wage proposal.” She added that the company recognizes employee contributions through “competitive wages” and other incentives.

The PriceRite grocery store will be located at 601 South Ave.

# Better Government Be Heard.

**Consensus, the Commission on Local Government Modernization, is shaping a vision for more effective and efficient government across Onondaga County. We can do better to improve economic growth in Central New York, but we need your input first.**

Go to [www.ConsensusComment.com](http://www.ConsensusComment.com) to learn more and to share your opinion on building a better community.

Consensus **US**

By the people, for the future.

## IF YOU ATTEND

**What:** "From The Back of The Bus"

**When:** 10:30 a.m.  
Saturday, April 2

**Where:** Southwest  
Community Center, 401  
South Ave.

**Cost:** Free

**For Tickets:** Visit online  
at reachcny.org

# PLAY FIGHTS RACISM

*The Media Unit highlights age-old issue in 'From the Back of The Bus'*



> Media Unit members Shannon Williams, left, and Elijah Sheridan, right, rehearse a key argument while preparing for their upcoming show at the Southwest Community Center. | Ari Gilberg, Staff Photo

By Ari Gilberg  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

## SPRING MUSICAL

**What:** "Nice Work If You  
Can Get It"

**When:** 7 p.m. Friday and  
Saturday, March 11 and 12

**Where:** Corcoran High  
School auditorium, 919  
Glenwood Ave.

**Details:** The Corcoran  
Association of Student  
Theater presents this  
musical comedy with music  
by George Gershwin and  
Ira Gershwin based on the  
book by Joe DiPietro

**Cost:** \$4 students; \$6  
adults

**More Info.:** [hipius.com](http://hipius.com)

## In light of recent, racially charged events, Walt Shepperd revives back-of-bus production

At 75 years old, Walt Shepperd says he has learned a lot when it comes to the effects of racism. In an interview, he spoke about the impact it can have, the lives it can affect, and how it is still prevalent.

In response, Shepperd, executive producer of a Syracuse-based broadcast and theater production group called The Media Unit, decided to revive a 20-year-old production, "From The Back of The Bus," which tackles racism head-on.

The play was written in 1996 by a group of teenagers working with The Media Unit, and it will be featured in the production group's spring tour. Shepperd said the group hopes the play will reach young audiences and help educate them on these issues.

Shepperd founded The Media Unit more than 40 years ago out of the conviction that theater could effectively address issues of race, inequality and social

injustice.

Recent killings of young, unarmed black men — Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner and Michael Brown — have received intense, global attention from international news media, leading Shepperd to say he believed his work to be at least as important now as it was when he first started more than 40 years ago.

Throughout his time with The Media Unit, Shepperd has attempted to recruit local youth to star in his productions. He said he tries to feature black and white actors in order to properly showcase and address the issue of racism.

"These are things that confront these young people every day, and they don't have outlets often, and performing is the best way to raise the issues and deal with them," Shepperd said. "I can't tell you how many times a teenager will say to me in the school, or the youth center, 'Wow, it's really good that you've got teenagers telling it to teenagers, and it's not some adult lecturing at us.'"

"From The Back of The Bus" runs for 45 minutes, and is followed by a 45-minute open dialogue with the audience, focusing on racism and white privilege in America. The critically acclaimed play has received awards from the NAACP, the Human Rights Commission, the Southside Business Association and Urban CNY.

A primary storyline in “From the Back of the Bus” focuses on interactions between two high school students, both applying to colleges. One character named Holden, a white student, claims that affirmative action will inhibit his chances to get into the college of his choice. Instead, he believes another character in the play, an African-American girl named Aquila, will be chosen simply to fill a racial quota at the college.

Aquila believes she has had to work twice as hard due to the color of her skin, and she is worried that more people will start to share Holden’s sentiment that everything is handed to her.

Holden is played by Elijah Sheridan, and Aquila is played by Shannon Williams. Despite being only in their teens, Sheridan and Williams said they recognize the importance of the issues they will be addressing through their performances.

“I’m the person that everyone shoots the evil looks at, and to be honest, I love it because it means we’re getting the message across,” Sheridan said. “And that’s really what the point of the whole show is, to get the message across and that this is still a very evident issue in our society.”

Williams said she shares Sheridan’s assessment, saying it’s important to establish a connection with the audience to get their message across, because it’s this

generation of youth that will either help end racism, or allow it to continue.

“The more we keep it in darkness, the more it’s going to grow,” Williams said. “If nobody just nips it in the bud now, it’s going to thrive for years.”

Shepperd said he has seen racism remain constant throughout his entire career. He said when he first decided to reprise the 20-year-old play, he was worried they would have to re-write a large portion of it. Instead, after reading through the script, he realized they could leave it almost completely intact. This realization came with both pleasant and unpleasant notions.

“We only had to change one line in the entire show,” Shepperd said. “Which is unfortunate because it shows from 1996 – two decades – racism is racism.”

Those within The Media Unit, however, said they believe they can change that. James Patterson, who has worked as the vocal coach with The Media Unit for 12 years and has starred as the lead singer for the local R&B group, The Blacklites, said he believes the unit has already made significant progress — especially in Syracuse. But he said he recognizes more work remains.

“We’d like to think that we have already made a difference,” Patterson said. “But we still have a lot of work to do. It’s just like James Earl Jones said, ‘We’ve come a long way, but we’ve got a long way to go.’”

## PREVIOUS REVIEWS

“Leaves you spellbound.”

— Charles Jackson,  
Urban CNY

“So powerfully imagined and energetically performed that it’s hard to find enough superlatives.”

— Neil Novelli,  
The Post Standard

“Kaleidoscopic.”

— James MacKillop,  
Syracuse New Times

“This show will knock you out.”

— Rome Observer

## Alumna of Media Unit shares inspiration for her first full-length movie that she’s producing



> Tammy Reese, writer and actress, will produce her first full-length movie, “Loving the Same Man.” The film will tackle the tribulations of love and friendship. | File Photo

By | Tammy Reese  
Community Contributor

Filming will begin later this month for a local film called “Loving The Same Man.”

This drama/comedy is based around four friends. The plot follows couples Yez and Camire and also Don and Mya, whose love and friendship are tested with an affair.

I have been acting and interested in the arts since age 12 and began my career as a producer for the local TV show “Rough Times Live,” making me an alumna of The Media Unit television and stage company. I have also written and produced public service announcements on topics such as domestic violence and suicide prevention.

I have written projects before and wrote this film’s script. However, this will be the first full-length movie I am producing. I have great help from Syracuse talent such as Lakisa Terrell, who is CEO and founder of LSK Modeling & Events Company. She is also a makeup artist, stylist, fashion coordinator and runway coach.

Terrell will play the role of Mya, who finds out her best friend, Camire, loves the same man as she does — Don. Because of this betrayal, there are intense conse-

quences. The role of Camire is played by Cathy Butler, and Don is played by Ron Funderburg.

Butler, who was Aida in “Aida” at the CNY Playhouse in 2015, recently performed in the Redhouse Theater production of “Dreamgirls” as Michelle. Funderburg is founder of UnicoRe clothing line.

I am honored to also take this journey with director Nykeace Bachus, who is a successful photographer and film producer. His recent film, “Self Made,” co-produced with Shamroc Dancil, is becoming a Syracuse urban movie classic and has inspired many African-Americans to pursue films in Syracuse, including myself.

My inspiration also comes from my love for the arts. I believe many can relate to the concept of best friends being infatuated with the same guy. Even though it is wrong, many have been through this situation or have known someone who has gone through it.

I live by the motto: Lights, camera, action, and love and live life. I am excited and ready to bring life and love to this film for all to see.

The film premiere will be announced in December 2016.

*Tammy Reese is a CNY award-winning writer and actress. She can be reached at Tammyreese7@gmail.com*

## HISTORY LESSON

### FAMOUS LEADERS & THEIR DISABILITY

**Harriet Tubman**, who suffered from narcolepsy and seizures; **Whoopi Goldberg**, who has dyslexia; the rapper **Foxy Brown**, who suffers from hearing loss; and **Stevie Wonder**, who is blind

### OTHER EXHIBITS

**Neighborhood Advisor Program**, a program that aids senior citizens in living independently, interviewed and displayed responses from four Syracuse residents about their life experiences

“My intention was to give young people a little story about their elders,” said Kathy Pearson who conducted the interviews. Their quips included advice about staying motivated and avoiding drugs.

Angela Scott created the exhibit for the **Family 1st program** and chose to focus on poetry. She decorated the door with the pictures and words of black female poets, like Nikki Giovanni, Maya Angelou and Stacey-Ann Chin. Scott also collected poetry by youth to distribute.

# REVISITING THE PAST

Youth showcase black history museum to spotlight achievements



> Explaining the stories of the people she chose to spotlight, Kathy Pearson emphasizes the lessons that youth could learn from the older people in the community. | Ashley McBride, Staff Photo

By | Ashley McBride  
Staff reporter

## Southwest Community Center spends Black History Month creating exhibits

Students at Southwest Community Center got a dose of black history when they prepared a museum to showcase their history and culture.

On Feb. 25, the exhibits were opened to the public to walk through and judge, considering creativity, presentation, knowledge of the topic, organization and imagination. Each program at the center prepared a different exhibit relating to the program’s focus. For example, Mainstream, a program for people with developmental disabilities, created an activity for participants to match a famous black person with his or her disability.

“The whole purpose of this was to educate our kids to know more about black history,” said Valerie Hill, the director of community services at the center. “So they did the research, and they have to tell us what they thought about it and how it applies to their life.”

On Friday, Feb. 26, the students involved in the black history museum put on a performance on all they’ve learned putting together their exhibits. The girls involved in PRIDE (Promoting Responsibility in Drug Education)

collaborated to put together a fashion show for attendees at the black history museum. The PRIDE room at the center was decorated with pictures of famous black American fashion designers, like Tina Knowles, Steve Harvey, Jay-Z and Nicki Minaj. The girls, ages 5 to 10, modeled clothing that was donated to the center.

“We’ve come a long way from ripped pants and dirty T-shirts, and now we’re dressing the world,” said Monique Hill, who worked with the girls to create the fashion show. “We explained to them, fashion is really what you make of it; you can wear purple, orange and green, but if you put it together right, it’s awesome.”

The students involved in the Intelligent Young Minds program created a quilt of influential African Americans and included information about their legacies.

One of the more somber exhibits was that of the Saving Our Youth program. Ed Mitchell designed a board filled with black and white pictures of Syracusans who had died as victims of gun violence or otherwise victims of homicide. Mitchell founded the Team Angel movement to persuade youth to stay away from violence.

“I created this because of my life, growing up and losing my friends and family to the violence or them going to jail,” Mitchell said. “So I try to teach kids positivity and be a support system to them.”