

the **Stand** south side news

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Syracuse, NY

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FREE

A BRIGHT VISION

For 90 years and four generations, community is priority at Dunk & Bright

sharon
owens

Syracuse deputy mayor speaks candidly about her new position in City Hall

**South Side
renovation**
Residents are eager to view five-year plan compiled by TNT community group

From fear to the force

They Wear Blue features new police officer Brandon Hanks

SEX ED FOR ALL TEENS



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SPECIAL THANKS THIS MONTH

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IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.

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■ Cover photography by Julianna Whiteway of Joe Bright

CALENDAR | APRIL

What: Imani Winds
When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 14
Where: H.W. Smith Elementary School, 1130 Salt Springs Road
Details: This wind quintet will perform newly commissioned music and culturally diverse works penned by its own members.
Cost: \$25 regular, \$20 seniors (65 and older), \$15 under age 30, free for full-time students and holders of EBT/SNAP cards. Can purchase at the door.
More info.: Visit syrfcm.org

What: Thelikeminded Experience
When: 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday, April 28
Where: ArtRage Gallery, 505 Hawley Ave.
Details: A conglomerate of artistry and inventiveness geared toward entrepreneurs, creatives and revolutionaries to showcase their talents, products and services. Vibrant artists will connect with the small business community through expressions of music, art and wellness.
Admission: \$7
More info.: Visit thelikeminded.net

The Stand is excited to announce that our annual Photo Walk has been chosen as one of seven community journalism projects to receive the Finding Common Ground grant.

As part of a new initiative from the Agora Journalism Center at the University of Oregon, news organizations were able to apply for the grant to expand existing engagement projects focused on gathering people with different views to have a productive dialogue through face-to-face conversations. In our case, those conversations will be ignited through photography.

Finding Common Ground is funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung (Foundation) and the News Integrity Initiative. Additional partners are Zeit Online and the International Journalism Festival. Greg Munno, an assistant professor at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the soon-to-be new adviser for the South Side Newspaper Project, will travel to Italy this month to participate in the International Journalism Festival, sharing The Stand's Photo Walk Project with leaders in community journalism from around the world.

After the conference, the development phase of the grant will take place in May through July. During this time, the project teams will host and visit one of the fellow grantees to learn more about the grantee's community and approach to engagement.

Another goal of this grant is to support cross-border collaboration and sharing of knowledge between organizations doing this type of engagement work. So, with our new international partnership with South Africa's community paper in Grahamstown, we plan to co-host Photo Walks in both the South Side and the South African town this summer. Then we'll share images from each community taken on a typical Saturday.

If all works out, by the end of summer we'll have a photo exhibition. You might even see images pop up in local centers and businesses. Our summer issue of The Stand will reveal more details about our expanded Photo Walk this year.

In the following pages, read about the generations of men who have guided the Dunk & Bright Furniture family business off Brighton Avenue. Our cover story looks to the business's future, set to reside in the hands of the fourth generation. Also, meet the new Healthy Start Fatherhood Program coordinator in our monthly Fatherhood Q&A, read about the journey from police academy to patrol officer in this issue's installment of They Wear Blue, and dive into two Q&As with women working to highlight the city's positives rather than Syracuse's recent epithet for concentrated poverty.

Ashley Kang



UPCOMING EVENT

April 14

Human Library

Check out the "reading" list for this year's **Human Library**, which includes many individuals profiled in The Stand over the past few years.

A Human Library is a way for people to reach out and connect with individuals in their community with whom they might not normally interact. Visitors have an opportunity during the event to "borrow" and engage in conversation with their chosen Human Book.

Human Books this year will include:

- **Clifford Ryans** with O.G.s Against Violence
- A Syracuse police officer and a female firefighter
- Local authors **Roger Knight** and **Damon Gilstrap**
- Two fitness instructors
- Local actress **Tammy Reese**
- And many more

Human Libraries promote tolerance, celebrate differences and encourage understanding of people who come from varied backgrounds.

This year's event will take place from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, April 14, at Beauchamp Branch Library, 2111 S. Salina St.

To reserve a time slot or for more information, call (315) 435-3395

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor can be mailed to:

The Stand c/o Ashley Kang
South Side Communication Center
2331 South Salina St.
Syracuse, NY 13205

or emailed to:

The Stand's director, Ashley Kang,
at Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com

All letters must be no more than 200 words in length and must contain the writer's full name, address and contact information.

5-YEAR PLAN

To be notified when the plan is released, visit apdsolutions.com/tntsouthside5yearplan and fill out the form. As of the printing of this issue of The Stand, APD Solutions is providing a preview link to the report's first 24 pages, found at the same link.

SOUTHERN COMPASS

The South Side plan drafted by Vaughn Irons was given this name because he sees it as comparable to a child, one that will grow into its potential.

"We like to give our plans life," Irons said of why he names each of his development plans. "The goal is for the report to serve as a compass on driving development and investment into the South Side."

OTHER FINDINGS

The community survey also revealed the top concerns residents hold:

- Neighborhood crime
- High number of unsupervised youth
- High number of vacant housing

A NEW SOUTH SIDE

Southern Compass to provide five-year plan to make over community



> During the Jan. 8 public TNT meeting, Vaughn Irons, CEO of APD Solutions, provides an overview of Southern Compass, which includes data and recommendations for neighborhood improvements. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang
The Stand director

Local residents, city employees and community nonprofits wait for release of final report

The South Side neighborhood finally has a comprehensive plan to look to for its future — though it has yet to be released.

Southern Compass, a five-year plan for the South Side, examines the individual character and charm of the area's six neighborhoods by providing a unique look at the makeup of each in order for the city and potential private developers to make the most of each area's assets. It can also serve as a guide for residents and local nonprofit groups to tackle each neighborhood's specific challenges, the creators say.

On Jan. 8, Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) Area 3 Southside group presented its plan to city stakeholders and residents. More than 18 months in the making, the report strives to spotlight the neighborhood's potential rather than offer another stark look at the South Side's rate of poverty or crime.

"We made a specific point of not making this a poverty report," said presenter Vaughn Irons during the

morning stakeholder presentation.

But in the following three months, copies of the study haven't been made available. In March a link was shared with a few people showing the first 24 pages. Now a form has been added to the report webpage to collect names and contact information from residents who want to be notified once the report is released. During the March 5 Southside TNT meeting, it was announced copies would be provided for \$75 each, but no information was given — including to the city's TNT coordinator — on how to pay. By this printing, creators of the report said updates will come in May. The webpage does not mention a fee; it includes the 24-page preview.

"We were told that the report, which is over one hundred pages long, is too large to upload in full and will be shared in chunks," said Tina Zagya, TNT coordinator for the city on why a digital version is not available on the internet. Additionally, Stephanie Pasquale, commissioner of the city's Department of Neighborhood and Development, said at a March 13 Syracuse United Neighbors meeting that the city has not been able to receive a copy of the study.

Irons is CEO of APD Solutions, a neighborhood revitalization and development firm based out of Atlanta, who was hired to write the report using input

from local residents, business owners and city officials — along with real-estate data his company could access. He is also a native of the South Side who grew up at 253 W. Lafayette Ave., graduated from Corcoran High School and went on to attend Syracuse University.

Camille Coakley, who is an active participant in TNT and serves as director of Real Estate and Development at APD Solutions, said in a phone call March 15 that the report is ready to be released but APD is waiting for final approval from TNT members.

Irons says the plan took into account more than 140 data points on each profiled South Side neighborhood. These include: Brighton, Elmwood, Southside, Southwest, Strathmore and Winkworth. Syracuse's Eastwood was included, as well, to be used as a benchmark neighborhood for comparison purposes.

In order to write the plan with resident feedback, Irons and members of TNT began holding public workshops in 2016, collected completed surveys by 165 residents and/or local business owners, met three times with a 15-member governance team and conducted just over 30 stakeholder interviews.

"Some of the things we discovered are a little provocative," Irons noted in his introduction of the report.

Results some attendees found surprising included how clusters of vacant housing appear along green spaces in five out of the six identified neighborhoods. Also, the plan's land use analysis showed a limited

number of land parcels zoned for businesses. "This limits the tax base, putting the burden on residential owners," Irons said. When he noted an even greater drain on taxable properties is the high number of churches — listed at 59 based on the report's data — residing on these parcels, the crowd audibly shared their agreement.

"The state has to stop granting these tax exemptions to every little church," commented Helen Hudson, Common Council president, on the limited tax base found in the South Side. "Nonprofits are eating up the tax base," added Khalid Bey, now At-Large Councilor. He said this report shows the reckless use of land parcels and the need for the city to reevaluate.

One irony in the report is that interviewed stakeholders listed the area's top assets as the community's parks, but when mapped, the highest number of vacant houses surrounded such green spaces.

"This totally defies logic ..." said Pasquale after the presentation, "that people don't want to live next to parks. Maybe it's because of the lighting or perception of safety. One would think people would want to live next to these."

Irons noted that in the past, each park was maintained not only by the city, but also by an active group of residents. "In these parks' heyday, all had individual parks associations run by residents," he said. "If government is doing it alone, you get the results we see now. So, it is important for civic engagement and for residents to step up and get involved."

ATTEND A MEETING

TNT Area 3 Southside regularly meets at 6 p.m. on the first Monday of each month at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St.

The next meeting will be **May 1**.

To learn more, visit the website at tomorrowsneighborhoodstoday.org



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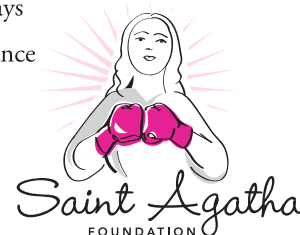
Issue	Due Date
Summer	April 25

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:

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- ▶ Transportation to and from treatment, child care
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- ▶ Medication not covered by insurance
- ▶ Wound care systems
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Anthony Pitts

As part-time coordinator of the Healthy Start Fatherhood Program, Pitts works to connect fathers with needed resources



MEET FATHER ANTHONY: Pitts, 45, was hired at the end of October as the new Fatherhood Program coordinator. Pitts is shown here with his oldest daughter, Naja, and her daughter Laila, along with his grandson, Marcel. | Zach Krahmer, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang
The Stand director

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

A: The first time it was crazy. I was in college, and I was really uncertain about how I would be able to provide for a child. I had a lot of anxiety ... trying to help the mother as best I could while being out of town.

Q: How did you get through that?

A: With my support system. Speaking to my grandmothers, my dad and my mom. My dad gave me a lot of advice and told me what was expected out of me as a provider.

Q: What was your relationship like with your father?

A: It was rough growing up. He was in jail for a lot of my childhood, and I grew up a momma's boy. He remarried and had another family. Me and my siblings are close, but my mother was a teenage mother, so we kind of grew up together. I was always very sensitive and protective of her, so I held a grudge against my dad for a while. It never stopped us from interacting or loving each other, but there were some resentments. Today, my father and I have a great relationship. If I ever have a problem, I go straight to him, and we talk it out.

this program is eager to be involved in their child's life and to be financially supportive. And solid — to be accountable at all times — it's just that they are faced with certain situations at times that makes that hard to navigate.

Q: How does this program help fathers navigate those situations?

A: The group discussions that we have each month are helpful. In them, you find that you're not the only person in that situation, and you can kind of draw from the group the different challenges they face and how they handled it. Then use what you will from them to try and solve your own problems.

Q: What has been a success in your first six months on the job?

A: The first success I had was with a client that was homeless. We were able to find him housing. To some that may not sound like much, but to him it was everything. He's not on anybody else's whim on when he can be comfortable. And that means everything because now he can entertain his kids whenever he chooses. When you're couch surfing and surviving like that, you really can't bring your kids to that situation. So just helping him get stability is huge.

Q: How does that make you feel?

A: It makes me feel good because there's a void in the community

“A healthy baby begins with you”

Q: What advice did he give you?

A: One thing he told me was that the challenges that I had with him, to not repeat those same mistakes with my own children. Of course, I did. We always make the same mistakes more or less. Resentments I had with my dad, my oldest son fights with those same resentments with me because his younger brother has a different mother than the other four. That became a wedge in the family. The kids are all still very close, but just like me, he is supportive of his mom, being his mom's only son. As he becomes a man and enters into the world and relationships, he sees now the challenges I was faced with and the decisions that you have to make that are never really just clear-cut.

Q: What can you share about your children?

A: My oldest is Fuquan, 25. He works for First Student. Next is Naja. She is 22 and is a supervisor at MAS, a non-emergency Medicaid transportation management company, and a part-time student. Inayah, 19, is also a part-time student and works at MAS. Aneisha, 18, is a student, and my youngest, Amarri, just turned 13. All of them are very strong-willed. My girls are real goal setters. When they set out to meet a goal, they do it.

Q: And how was it becoming a grandfather?

A: That's the highlight. I enjoy that. I have two grandkids — a grandson, Marcel, 10 months (child of Aneisha) and a granddaughter, Laila, 3 (child of Naja). It's like you get a second chance at being a parent, except you can take them home when they get on your nerves.

Q: What is your opinion about commonly held stereotypes about black fathers?

A: While there's a perception or stereotype that fathers don't want to help ... that fathers don't want to be held accountable, every father that I've come across since I've started working in

when it comes to resources for dads — not that there is a lack of resources, but dads often don't have a clue as to how to find them. There's always an agency or organization attempting to help women, and a lot of times fathers are forgotten in the equation when it is statistically proven time and time again that when there is a present father, the family is stronger. I think that's why there is such a push to sustain this program. And that's why I point my clients at the poster there (on the wall): “A healthy baby begins with you.”

Q: How can fathers in need connect with you?

A: They can reach out by emailing APitts@smnfsfcc.org or calling (315) 317-4189. My office is located on the second floor of Syracuse Community Connections, 401 South Ave. Hours are set by appointment, so best to reach out by email or phone first.

Q: Any advice for first-time dads?

A: Don't stress yourself out about your financial situation because that can change with work, but you have to be present. If you're not working and the mother is, then you watch the baby while the mother works so she doesn't have to pay child care. At the end of the day, help her road to be easier. As long as you're doing that, everything will be fine.

Q: Final thoughts?

A: I'm just trying to make sure as many fathers as possible take the opportunity to enjoy fatherhood. It's a challenge, but it's a beautiful thing. My relationship with my youngest son, because I'm a single dad with him, we're together all the time, it shows me what I missed out on with my other four kids. I was actively involved in their lives, but I was doing a lot of ripping and running. Now I make sure to take the time to enjoy it — enjoy every milestone. There's nothing like seeing your child succeed in something he's trying to accomplish. And when your assistance is needed — it makes you feel great.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Many people think of the police force as one unit, like a tribe with a single identity. But beyond the blue of the uniform, each police officer is unique. This project takes you inside the lives of the chief and several officers in Syracuse, showing that the force is truly a collection of individuals. Given the country's major news events involving the police over the past few years, and because this is a city where the minority population has very nearly become the majority, we pay special attention to minority officers in this project. They account for just one in every 10 officers, though Syracuse is 45 percent minority. Our project is not intended to be either "positive" or "negative," but rather an honest and powerful look at this complex issue — all with the hope that it improves police and community relations.

Yet while race matters, it is not everything. As the new chief in Ferguson, Missouri, told a reporter on our team, when citizens see police, they don't see individuals or race, "They see you as blue."

VIEW ONLINE

Visit TheyWearBlue.com to see all stories and videos in this series

NOW AN OFFICER

Follow Brandon Hanks' journey from police recruit



> Brandon Hanks, seen last year in the gym of the Police Academy, mentally prepares before his next step as a cadet in training. "We're getting pepper-sprayed today." | Frankie Prijatel, They Wear Blue Photographer

By | Samantha Mendoza
They Wear Blue reporter

New minority officer preps body and mind to be the person he used to fear: a cop

Brandon Hanks had a hard week. A timid 24-year-old whose eyes always seem to have a faint hint of a smile, Hanks sat in an empty gymnasium — hands clasped tightly together, foot nervously tapping the ground, the shimmer in his eyes now gone — wishing he could fast-forward the day.

"It's been rough," he said with a sigh. "We're getting pepper-sprayed today."

As a new recruit to the Syracuse Police Department participating in the six-month Police Academy, Hanks was accustomed to rigorous training — to waking up at 5 a.m. every day for endless circuits of push-ups, pull-ups, and wall-sits, to routine five-mile runs that span the entire city, to wrestling that often left him flat-out on the

ground. But this week was different. Recruits were scheduled to be pepper-sprayed in the afternoon, and tased later in the week.

He imagined what it would be like: The coughing. The loss of breath. The pain. "Just ... horrible," he speculated.

Hanks never imagined that he would be the victim of such torment at the hands of the police. Or rather, he never imagined that it would happen like this: at the hands of his colleagues as he himself sported a navy-blue police uniform and badge. As a young African-American male growing up on the South Side of Syracuse, however, it very easily could have happened under very different circumstances.

Where Hanks grew up, drugs, gangs, fights and shootings were routine. In a predominantly African-American community where more than a third of the population is considered low-income and students have to pass through a metal detector before entering the local high school each morning, Hanks was surrounded by the "roughest and

toughest” types of neighborhoods and people.

As a teen, Hanks was athletic, studious and family-oriented. But most of all, he was fearful. Fearful that he might one day be shot as he walked past the park to play basketball with his friends. Fearful that like many of his friends and peers, he might one day be drawn into using or selling drugs. And fearful that the local police might one day give him trouble.

“To be honest, all of my interactions with police when I was growing up were negative,” Hanks said. “If you had asked me then if I wanted to be a police officer, I would have looked at you like you were crazy.”

Like many of the kids around him, Hanks developed an aversion to law enforcement at an early age. It was socially acceptable, even encouraged to hate the police, to distrust the very people who were tasked with protecting the community. But unlike many of his peers, Hanks resolved to create a path for himself that would allow him to defy the expectations that were placed on him and so many young South Side teens.

He knew that he was lucky: he had good parents who weren’t in jail, a loving family that had what he described as the “strength” to stay together. After graduating from Henninger High School, he decided to take advantage of his privileges and go to college.

It was during his sophomore year at SUNY Morrisville State College that Hanks began to question his previous notions of law enforcement, and his power to bridge the gap between reality and misconception, policing and community engagement.

Hanks spent his first two years of college as a general studies major, taking basic courses while he figured out what career path he wanted to pursue and, of course, playing basketball in his free time.

The path wasn’t easy.

Hanks balanced a full course-load with a full-time job as a security guard at Upstate Medical University, working the night shift from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. And every morning, as he began his classes at school, he couldn’t help but feel that he was pushing himself toward a brighter future.

Yet even in this new phase of his life — pursuing an education to avoid a life behind bars that many of his friends seemed to be falling victim to — he couldn’t escape the negative comments about police officers that flew around the basketball court. To Hanks, it was perplexing: He wanted so desperately to contribute to the betterment of his community, but was told that he couldn’t trust the very agency that was tasked with its protection. It inspired him to “take a deeper look to find out what’s really going on.”

He declared a criminal justice major his sophomore year, and his entire perspective changed. He began to see policing as an opportunity — to bring the community together, and to be a role model for children from broken

homes who feel that they have no option but to turn to drugs. Hanks grew excited at the thought of becoming an officer/counselor hybrid, a South Side kid who broke the mold but could still play basketball with local kids in the park — even in a police uniform.

“I really see myself interacting with people,” Hanks said. “I want to be the person anyone can come to. I want people to say, ‘Let’s go ask Hanks. And the rest of the department? Those are Hanks’ boys. We can go to them, too.’”

**“Maybe he
can help
people trust
[the police]
again.”**

— Ethel Hanks

Of course, this wouldn’t be easy. Not the process of becoming a cop — Hanks didn’t worry about that. But what he did fret about could be summed up in a list of three, and they happened to be the three most important aspects of his life: his family, his friends and his peers. He wondered if they would support him or scorn him; embrace him or cast him off as a traitor; feel inspired or feel betrayed. Ultimately, it was all of these.

His parents were thrilled.

“I was excited about it from the first moment he told me. A lot of people look up to Brandon, and if they see him doing good things in the community, maybe he can take some of the badness off of the police,” Hanks’ mom, Ethel Hanks, said. “Maybe he can help people trust them again.”

Some peers, however, were not so enthusiastic. Hanks recalls seeing old friends at the grocery store who refused to make eye contact, and being called a “snitch” by friends who were once considered brothers.

He has struggled to balance his efforts to become a role model for teens in his community while simultaneously being cast off as a sellout by those he feels need him the most.

Still, Hanks maintains that he has made the right decision — for himself, and for his community.

“I don’t give up on them,” Hanks said.

WHAT IT TAKES

The Syracuse Police Academy is a rigorous, six-month training program that all new recruits must endure in order to officially join the force. The Academy typically begins in December and concludes with a graduation ceremony in June. Only those candidates who pass a civil service exam, background check and initial physical assessment are invited to participate in the 26-week program.

Once in the Academy, recruits have to pass a variety of written and physical tests, and must complete 1,095 hours of training.

Trainings include:

- Emergency Vehicle
- Firearms
- Defensive Tactics
- Penal Law, Vehicle and Traffic Law and Criminal Procedural Law
- First Aid

Recruits who fail any of these major areas are sent home from the program.

WHERE TO START

If interested in joining the academy, complete the online form found at syracusepolice.org/recruit.asp, contact the Recruitment Section of the SPD at (315) 442-5227 or e-mail Recruitment@syracusepolice.org

Additionally, online find:

- Civil Service Exam Information
- Register for Civil Service Exam announcements
- Download the Civil Service application
- Police Officer Exam FAQ
- Police Officer Exam Guide
- Additional recruitment information



> Now, Officer Brandon Hanks works third platoon patrol. His hours are typically 2 to 10 p.m. or 3 to 11 p.m. on a rotating schedule, so his days off vary. Because he is still new to the force, he remains on a probationary period until he earns further experience. | Zach Krahmer, Staff Photo

And that's exactly what keeps him going.

Hanks admits it was rough when he joined the Academy in December 2016 with 35 other new recruits. Eight of Hanks' fellow recruits had failed or dropped out by spring because of the physical, emotional and academic demands.

He endured hours in the classroom on South State Street learning criminal procedural law, early mornings in the gym practicing defensive tactics and weeks in the field undergoing intensive firearms training. Most significantly, he had inched closer to graduating from the Police Academy on June 5, soon to officially join a police force that is 89.5 percent white and only 7.1 percent black, all while African-Americans are six times as likely to be incarcerated as white males.

He often feels that he is crossing over to "the other side," transcending numbers and statistics that have, at times, felt at odds with his own path. He's sometimes haunted by what might have been, and at times literally comes face-to-face with the life he has worked so hard to avoid. When touring the jail as a part of his police train-

ing, Hanks has seen best friends, brothers, staring back at him from behind the bars, representing everything Hanks is working to avoid and everything he is working to improve.

"Most of me does this for them," Hanks said.

It's impossible for Hanks to escape his childhood on the South Side: the crime, the broken sidewalks, the constant news of old friends being shot at and stabbed. But Hanks welcomes this enduring embrace, this perpetual anchor that will always return him to the people and place that have made him who he is today.

As he woke up at 5 every morning for routine training runs across the city, Hanks' feet fell on familiar ground — his stomping grounds, his home, his South Side community — and he was reminded, as residents, friends, and family called out his name and cheered for him when he ran past their homes, of the challenges he has overcome — and the people he will continue fighting for.

"I grew up in this city. I love this city. And I want to stay," Hanks said. "I don't want to go anywhere else."

BE SMART, STAY SAFE

South African high school students learn about importance of HIV testing



> Lungelwa Mayalo, a teacher at Khutliso Daniels Secondary School, stands with prize-winning pupils, from left: Nosiviwe Twani, Sinovuyo Mantile and Anita Thwala. They won the prizes at an HIV-testing event. | Provided Photo by Sue MacLennan from Grocott's Mail

By | Kathryn Cleary
Grocott's Mail reporter

Advocacy group increases awareness of HIV among vulnerable young adult population

The Raphael Centre hosted a “prize giving” gig at Khutliso Daniels Secondary School in February. Different from a school’s typical awards days, which honour academic achievements, the Raphael Centre event encouraged pupils to know their status and get tested for HIV, with those who were tested entering a raffle for a chance to win a bicycle.

The initiative is part of Khanya - Be SMART, the Raphael Centre’s campaign for better living.

“Our aim for 2018 has been to test 1,150 youth and adolescents for HIV,” according to a press statement from the Raphael Centre. “Among them will be pupils from Mary Waters High School, Nathaniel Nyaluza

High School, Archie Mbolekwa Primary School, Khutliso Daniels Secondary School, Ntsika High School and C.M. Vellem Primary School.”

Khanya translates as “be bright.” “SMART stands for: Shine – Mind – Act – Raffle – Test. It closely refers to the procedure of this project where youth are motivated to take responsibility for their health and to test for HIV,” according to the Raphael Centre. “Finally — as a bonus — every youth who tested for HIV can enter our bicycle raffle which takes place with each high school with who we have collaborated.”

Before being tested, pupils under age 16 were given a consent form that a family member had to sign.

Nosiviwe Twani won the bicycle and was excited to do so. “I am very happy,” she said.

Campaigns like Khanya - Be SMART are crucial in South Africa because the youth and young adults between ages 15 and 24 have the fastest growing rate of HIV infection, according to the Raphael Centre.

EXCHANGE CONTINUES

Over winter break, Syracuse City School District students, along with students from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and The Stand’s music columnist, Reggie Seigler, visited Grahamstown, South Africa. Stories from the trip showcase a similarity in cultures, and they create positive, realistic and authentic representations of South Africa.

To continue this cultural exchange, **The Stand** has partnered with the Grahamstown community paper, **Grocott's Mail**, to share stories on similar topics.

This month, we are sharing the story of a program run by the Raphael Centre, a community advocacy group, that is working to test thousands of South African high school students for HIV.

ON THE SIDE

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

HIV Stops With Me is a multifaceted, national social-marketing campaign that aims to prevent the spread of HIV and reduce the stigma associated with the disease. The campaign features real HIV-positive people talking about real issues.

To hear from Josh King directly, visit:
HIVStopsWithMe.org/
Spokesmodels/Joshua

For bookings: Email
maskingandko2013@gmail.com or call (315) 378-6930

MEET JOSHUA KING

Here is a brief look at Joshua King:

- Multiracial
- Father to his two younger brothers, having obtained custody recently
- Earned a degree in fashion design from Cazenovia College
- Working toward a master's degree in organizational leadership and nonprofit management from Regent University
- Focuses on teens, LGBTQ life and bullying in his current partnership with East Side Boys and Girls Club

LESSONS LEARNED

Local advocate uses 'wild' experiences to raise awareness for HIV



> Joshua King explains ways one can contract HIV to a group of teens at the East Side Boys and Girls Club on Jan. 7. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

By | Alexis Scott and Ashley Kang
The Stand

Joshua King targets local at-risk teens using a more realistic approach to sex education

Joshua Michael King will sometimes pause, looking dazed, while having an eerie, out-of-body moment. “Just talking to God,” he explains after shaking out of it.

His faith-fueled mission over the past 18 years has been to educate Syracuse to take the path he is on now, not the one he traveled to get here. His past adventures ended when he contracted HIV. Now he works as a “Josh-of-all-trades” to advocate, educate and motivate.

Awareness is a major component of King’s outreach. On Feb. 7, National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, he darted throughout the city proselytizing. This month, April 10 marks National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day, which is another major focus for him this year. While nationally recognized days such as these are busy work days for him, raising awareness is his daily mission.

In the coming months, he will bring together local teens for a full day of training by organizing a youth

summit. The idea is to expand his voice among these new leaders. King, 36, works as a free agent, picking and choosing his battles by working for groups such as VOCAL-NY (Voices Of Community Activists & Leaders); 1199SEIU, the nation’s largest health workers union; ACR Health; the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, and other HIV/AIDS advocacy groups.

“I work for myself, deciding which causes I want to speak out for as an ally,” he said.

He also runs Masking & Kompany, which offers his services for youth engagement speaking tours at community events and schools — from local high schools to colleges and universities. He speaks candidly to youth, and he reaches them. After his talks, the young listeners are able to share back what they’ve learned and ask informed questions.

Earlier this year, Dekka Dancil, lead health educator with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Syracuse, invited King to speak because of his ability to reach teens and genuinely connect with them.

“As an educator, I always ask myself three questions before I bring an individual in front of my youth,” Dancil said. Her questions: “Can they command a classroom? Are they humorous? Can they relate to my teens?”

To garner an invite by Dancil, individuals must elicit a yes to the first two questions. “The last is always a bonus that makes me work extra hard to secure the engagement,” she added. “Josh has all three. And he is relatable to my group, in particular being a black male and LGBTQ.”

Dancil says 100 percent of the youth she works with are black, and about 25 percent belong to the LGBTQ community.

King, who is black and Caucasian of mixed race, says a focus for him this year is to give youth the opportunity to be educated and empowered.

To be most effective in reaching youth, he says he takes a transparent approach. “I don’t sugar coat things,” he said. “I want to be relevant and give it to them straight.”

King brings the latest data from current research studies and approaches presentations knowing that young teens already are having sex or are considering it. He wants to provide them with information they might not be getting and help them learn how to protect themselves — not simply preach abstinence.

“Many times the sex education is outdated and not comprehensive to the realities of today,” he said about much of the standard public school sex education. “Materials are still pushing abstinence, and that’s not realistic.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports, in 2015, that youth ages 13 to 24 accounted for 22 percent of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States, with gay and bisexual males accounting for most new diagnoses. And, according to the CDC’s 2014 School Health Profiles, many high school courses do not include prevention information for young gay and bisexual men and do not start early enough; as well, sex education offerings have declined over time.

“There is a great lack of educational materials targeting teens who identify as LGBTQ,” said Pete Carney, project director with Pride for Youth, a service agency targeting LGBTQ youth in three Long Island counties. He finds that youth often receive fractured information.

“Many school districts will tell students to use condoms, but they do not demonstrate how to use them,” he said as an example. “So, students end up making decisions based on limited information.”

King hopes his new partnerships with the East Side Boys and Girls Club and with the Syracuse City School District’s Superintendent’s Cabinet, which includes students who have been identified as leaders, can pass on such needed knowledge to the next generation, training them to share safe sex practices with their peers.

Additionally, his planned full-day youth summit will bring current leaders from the HIV Stops with Me campaign to speak with teens in interactive sessions held at local community centers to train them in advocacy and engagement. The evening will end with a celebration.

“I’m creating partnerships where we have allies on

all fronts,” he said about his strategy to make sex education relevant. “Now (the new teen leaders) can be the bridge into the schools, further expanding the message.”

King describes his own teenage years as wild.

He was raised in DeWitt with a single mother and two older siblings. His mother sacrificed a lot for her family but couldn’t keep up with what was going on behind his middle school doors.

As a young boy, the then-shy King says he was bullied. One day he fought back, and fought back hard. He ended up picking one boy out of a group that had beaten him up previously, fighting back with his fists.

He grew up to become an alpha male, he says now looking back, adopting a sort of “it is what it is” attitude that spiraled out of control. He became sexually active with men and women and even started prostituting himself.

“I was doing cocaine, popping pills and just figuring out life,” he said, recalling one drunken night when he said his drink got spiked and his life took that fateful turn. He woke up three days after the incident — frazzled, beaten and raped.

Weeks went by before he sought help. He tried to go on about his life as normal, but knew he was sick. Later, the then 20-year-old went to get tested and found out he was HIV-positive.

Carney, of Pride for Youth, says he has heard stories of denial in his decade of working with the LGBTQ community.

“I’ve heard so many anecdotes over the years of young, gay men — who know the importance of being tested and know where to go to get tested — (who) avoided testing because they don’t want a devastating outcome,” he said.

A handful put off testing for so long, Carney said, that they never learned they had contracted the virus. “They discover too late when they end up in the emergency room,” he said. “It’s mind blowing. For years they went undiagnosed, and by the time they go into the ER, it’s too late; they find out they have a full-blown case of AIDS.”

But today, an HIV diagnosis is not the end, Carney says. King reaffirms this in his local talks. The virus is now manageable with medications, some even limiting one’s sexual partner from contracting it. PrEP, a pre-exposure prophylaxis medicine, can be taken daily by people who are at high risk of being exposed to the virus to lower their chances of being infected.

King tells his audiences if they feel they are at risk, they should be tested and should speak to a medical professional. Never delay. Then keep being tested every three months. His past led to much peril, but he uses it to influence others to make better choices — especially local youth.

“Josh always keeps it real,” Dancil said about his outreach. “Teens can feel that, and they definitely appreciate that.”

U=U CAMPAIGN

U=U, which stands for “Undetectable Equals Untransmittable,” is a campaign based on scientific evidence.

The fact that people infected with HIV who are virally suppressed cannot sexually transmit the virus to others is now accepted in the HIV/AIDS community as a result of evidence accumulated since the early 2000s. In early 2016, the U=U slogan was launched by the Prevention Access Campaign to promote the finding.

A year later, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention joined the movement by endorsing the science in a letter released Sept. 27, 2017, on National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

The research findings show that people who take ART, an antiretroviral therapy used to treat HIV, and have an undetectable viral load, have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV-negative partner.

— Source: Prevention Access Campaign

MUSICAL EVENT

Grammy award-winning artist Joanne Shenandoah will perform with Diane Shenandoah and Joe Driscoll for a musical fundraiser for her medical expenses in connection with her severe liver disease. The event will include raffles and sale of artwork.

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, April 7

Where: All Saints Church, 1340 Lancaster Ave.

Cost: \$20 suggested donation

More info.: Visit gofundme.com/joanneshenandoah

JAZZ FEST BLUES

The annual festival's future is in doubt as it looks for new sponsors



> Past Jazz Fest performer Trombone Shorty plays alongside other jazz musicians. | Provided Photo

By | Reggie Seigler
Friendly Five columnist

Frank Malfitano, founder and executive director, discusses the future of Jazz Fest

For the past 35 summers except for maybe a few, the folks around Syracuse have been treated to a weekend of free top-quality entertainment. We've grown to anticipate it every year and await it like students waiting for the last day of school. It marks the season and indicates to us that the music gods have gotten the word: "The snow is gone in Syracuse."

After our usually long and grueling winters and sometimes nerve-racking seasons of watching Syracuse University's basketball team, the public is always ready for it. The event pokes through the dreariness of "nothing to do" like a ray of sunshine through a broken blind. Thousands of spectators flock to soak up the vibe and listen to the music.

It has presented us with many of the biggest stars in entertainment, such as vocalists Natalie Cole, Lou Rawls and Al Jarreau and vocal/instrumentalists like

B.B. King and Ray Charles, aka Brother Ray. These artists are all deceased now, and their faces have been added to that ever-expanding portrait of artists we love and miss so much. But our community was fortunate that they performed for us and all our friends, right in our own front yard.

I think by now most of you know that I've been talking about the Syracuse Jazz Fest.

The event began humbly at Song Mountain back in 1983. Then, it featured a combination of a few regional and national artists: the Heath Brothers, Cabo Frio, Nancy Kelly and a very young Kevin Eubanks, who later went on to become the smiling leader of the Tonight Show Band from 1992-2010. From there it grew and changed locations a few times. It spent a little time at Long Branch Park and Clinton Square. Finally, in 2001, it moved to Onondaga Community College. It seemed to have found its home there, where it has remained since — except for one year when it had to move to Jamesville Beach because of campus construction. The Jazz Fest even survived a push from the county in 2017 to have it moved to the Lakeview Amphitheater.

The OCC location is roomy enough for the Jazz Fest

to continue growing and has all the amenities needed to bring in some of music's biggest stars. The event welcomed Smokey Robinson, Roberta Flack, Dionne Warwick, Chaka Khan and Nancy Wilson, and the list goes on and on. It even laid out the red carpet for the Queen of Soul, none other than Aretha Franklin.

Then came the news. We might not be having the Jazz Fest this year due to wonk-wonk-wonk and blah-blah-blah. In my head I was thinking, What? Wait a minute! We don't want to hear that. As Bill Withers would say, "Dadgum-it."

Weren't we faithful through this long, cold and snowy winter to believe that the Jazz Fest would again be the highlight of our summer? Haven't we stayed put waiting? I mean, we didn't call the realtors when it was looking like one of our other favorite things to come together for, Syracuse's basketball team, was playing like it would be ending its third season in the past five with fewer than 20 wins. And although one has absolutely nothing to do with the other, they both have a common secondary purpose. They act as our markers for the seasons. Basketball helps us get through the winter, and the Jazz Fest reminds us that summer does come in Syracuse.

Is there not going to be a Jazz Fest to look forward to? We got to talk about this.

The founder of the festival and executive director, Frank Malfitano, posted a story from Spectrum News on his Facebook page. The headline said, "Future of Jazz Fest remains in question and needs corporate sponsor." The Spectrum report focused upon the facts that the event's major sponsor, M&T Bank, had "reached the end of their agreement after many successful years." County Executive Joanie Mahoney mentioned that Onondaga County has poured a lot of money into helping the festival in previous years and said, "I think it all comes down to the private money that Frank has been able to raise in past years, and so far, this year I think he's struggling, but maybe somebody will see this on the news and come through, and we'll have Jazz Fest after all."

I met with Frank after that. I knew that he wouldn't go too deep into details. At 71, he's been around, and his countenance is cool. Frank's too slick of a player to show his hand, so I just asked, "What's up?"

We talked about his childhood and his introduction to jazz. "I started out playing the clarinet in fourth grade and was introduced to jazz in high school," he said. Frank had skipped a couple of grades in primary school, so he was a little younger than most students by the time he got to high school. "I made all city and county and went to SUNY Fredonia. I was 15 years old when I started college, man. I came home after my first year when my father passed. He died on the day of my final exam." Frank went on to graduate from OCC and later from SU.

"Back in those days, I used to go to the 800 Club for lunch every day," he said. "I liked to go where all the

'Brothers' hung out because I liked the music. OCC used to be at the old Midtown Plaza back then."

One day, one of the bartenders asked him if he wanted to come back later that night to hear some real music. "When I walked in, they had a little table reserved for me with my name on it. It was handwritten on one of those homemade table tents. When I sat down, I was blown away."

Playing that night was none other than John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones. "I've always felt that if I am going to do something I have to be able to be the best at it. I saw the best that night; I witnessed greatness," he said. "I knew that I would never be able to play like that. So, I went home and wrapped my horn in plastic, dug a hole in the back yard and buried it."

The man certainly has a feel for greatness and has had plenty of opportunity to present it. A visit to his website at syracusejazzfest.com will prove it. You'll see the biggest names in jazz: Ramsey Lewis, Stanley Clarke, Wynton Marsalis, Dizzy Gillespie ... it just keeps going. And these only represent who he's presented at the Syracuse Jazz Fest. Beyond that, he's lived and worked with big names all over the country. He has written for a jazz magazine in Washington, D.C., booked big names as an agent in New York City and has run the Detroit Jazz Fest, where he befriended Aretha Franklin.

"I believe each of the experiences I've had in life have helped to prepare me for my next endeavors," he said.

We are all wondering what that next move will be. Since he didn't talk about it in our conversation, I guess we'll all have to wait. Whatever it is, though, he doesn't have anything to prove.

He's the man behind the creations of Syracuse Area Music Awards: The SAMMYS, the Syracuse Walk of Stars and OCC's Arts Across Campus.

Whatever he's gotten and from wherever he's gotten it, he's brought it all back home and presented it, Frank Malfitano style.

The following is a direct quote from his Facebook page. It's probably our best source of knowing what's on his mind at this time.

"Our primary goal is to make sure we can continue to present a high-quality festival in 2018, - and have it continue on for the next two decades and beyond for our children's children, - and we want to make absolutely certain we can present the kind of Big Name talent at Syracuse Jazz Fest that the community and audiences have come to expect from us the last 35 years. Thanks for your patience."

No problem, Frank. Greatness takes time.

Have A Friendly Five suggestion?

Contact Reggie at

reggie@softspokenband.com or (315) 479-9620

ART WITH BEYONCÉ

When: 3 to 5 p.m.
Friday, April 20

Where: Betts Branch
Library, 4862 S. Salina St.

Details: Not *that* Beyoncé, but she'd likely love to join this program with the library's Teen Advisory Board member and artist who is her namesake. Attendees will learn to draw figures based on a live model's poses and photos in books from the library's collection. All materials (and snacks and drinks) will be provided.

To register: Call (315) 435-1940 in advance, but unregistered participants are welcome

BEHIND THE NAME

Reggie Seigler's "A Friendly Five" column is named in memory of a singing group in which his two uncles — Mango Gray and George Gray — were members.

The group was called "The Friendly Five," and his uncles moved it from Clarksdale, Miss., to Syracuse in the 1950s.

ON THE SIDE

ABOUT THE STUDIO

Unorthodoxed Studios provides:

- Studio rental
- Music production
- Video production
- Professional photos — from headshots to weddings

CONSCIOUS RAP

Record label Unorthodoxed Studios serves as platform for local rappers



> Rob Butler, a producer, works on equipment at Unorthodoxed Studios. | Jack Henkels, Staff Photo

By | Jack Henkels
The Stand reporter

This local label gives opportunity to musical artists with uplifting messages to share

Once a young rapper himself, A.J. Williams picked up his production equipment back in 2016 and left his business partners to take a leap and launch his own studio.

That’s how Unorthodoxed Studios got its start.

“We did a lot of good work,” Williams said, referring to his former colleagues. “But my idea of the direction I wanted this studio to go was just totally different.”

Williams moved his recording equipment to 404 Oak St. in Syracuse.

Now, almost nine months after it opened its doors, Unorthodoxed serves as a place for socially conscious and gospel rappers in the Syracuse area to let loose, be creative and lay down their tracks using state-of-the-art

music production equipment. The studio is a room with a microphone and headphones separated by a glass wall from a computer screen and a production board. Rappers record songs with positive, uplifting messages — which, Williams says, isn’t always the type of rap on the radio.

Branden Lotts, a.k.a. B. Supreme, an up-and-coming rapper from Cortland, needed a facility where he could put a few songs down to get his name out there. He heard about Unorthodoxed and reached out to Williams, and the two started working about once a week in the studio.

“When I first got in there, I was a little shy,” Lotts said of his first session with Williams. “But now, I’m able to open up and just get to work. He just wants me to be comfortable.”

Figuring out how to breathe properly while rapping has been one of Lotts’ challenges, but Williams has been working with him. Although Williams no longer performs himself, he first fell in love with music as a teenage rapper

growing up on the South Side of Syracuse.

It started when Williams was 13, on a day when his older sister challenged his musical talent by rapping the lyrics of a new song on the radio. Williams, not realizing that his sister had simply memorized the words to the radio song, rose to the occasion by grabbing a pen and paper and writing his own rap to get even with her.

"When I got it down on paper, I rehearsed it, got it down, and then went after my sister and just starting rapping," Williams said. "She asked, 'What song is that?' And I was like, 'What do you mean what song is that? That's my song.'"

The next day, Williams' sister ran and told all of her high school friends that her little brother could rap.

"So, then I just had this one rap, but I couldn't just keep singing this one rap," Williams said, laughing. "I started writing more, and I got known around here as a pretty decent rapper."

Now, other than the rare occurrences when he'll grab the mic and prove to his clients that he can still rap, Williams stays behind the scenes, managing the studio and working with the artists.

"As much as I did love being an artist and performing, I think I like being more of a cornerstone to help build up and make things happen," Williams said. "I love being able to grow this facility for creative types to come and create and do things."

"I love being able to grow this facility for creative types."

— A.J. Williams

The musicians on the label aren't the only ones who appear to benefit from Unorthodox. Rob Butler, who has always had a passion for music, called Williams in September and asked if he could come on and do production work with the artists. The two had worked on a few compilation albums in the past, and Butler was hoping Unorthodox could reunite the two.

"He's been like a big brother to me. He's given me a home to work out of," Butler said of Williams. "He opens up his doors to those who have a hunger for it, and he's created that lane. I thank him for it."

Music production is the tip of the iceberg that is Unorthodox. Williams is a small businessman in his neighborhood. Adjacent to the recording studio, he has



> A.J. Williams is the founder of Unorthodox Studios, a music label in Syracuse. | Jack Henkels, Staff Photo

opened a full-fledged photography and videography studio equipped with a green screen. Not only does Williams do his own photoshoots there, he also rents the space out to photographers and videographers who don't have a professional place to work.

Additionally, Williams takes his photography outside of the studio and makes himself available for hire to shoot fashion shows, weddings and other events.

Paul Crisafulli, a school teacher at Westside Academy at Blodgett at 312 Oswego St., tied the knot in late December and hired Williams to do the photography and videography for the wedding ceremony.

"The night before, A.J. actually came to the church to get an eye for it," Crisafulli said. "He just went above and beyond. He had great ideas, great insight, and he just put in so many more hours than we even anticipated."

The finishing touches are still being put on the final product, and Crisafulli and his bride are thrilled to see what Williams puts together.

Williams describes Unorthodox as a two-fold operation.

There's the label, which currently has three rappers who push a positive message and theme through their music. And there are the facilities, which include the recording studio and the photography/videography studio, which can be utilized with Williams' oversight or fully rented out to experienced artists.

"What I'm doing now with the photography and video, that's kind of my main grind," Williams said. "I would do that even if the studio was closed." But sometimes I get in this mood where I want to do some production, and that's where Unorthodox as a label comes in."

WANT TO VISIT

Location: 404 Oak St.

Phone: (315) 870-9012

Follow on Facebook:
@UnorthodoxStudiosNY

Four generations of the Bright family



> Dunk & Bright Furniture's vice president, Joe Bright, on the roof of the South Side Innovation Center with his father, Jim Bright. | Julianna Whiteway, Staff Photo

By | Julianna Whiteway
Staff reporter

Family-owned store stands out as an icon in heart of South Side through four generations

Johnnie Knight shifts from room to room at the massive furniture store, piecing together someone else's vision: a living room, a kitchen or a room that has no purpose yet in the minds of the customers she's helping.

For Knight, becoming a designer fulfilled a passion. She didn't take this job thinking it would be a career of 30 years. But in filling spaces for others, she has found one for herself as well. Working with clients to create their home is a very personal responsibility that she doesn't take lightly.

"When people give you the opportunity and ask and invite you, whether it's here in the store, a conversation over the phone, or in their home, it is an honor," she said.

Knight is part of the family at Dunk & Bright Furniture, a 90-year-old institution in Syracuse that soon will be marching toward the century mark — under Joe Bright. He came home this past September to take on the fourth generation of leadership, a milestone few businesses of any kind ever see. Family-owned businesses can outlast others, but even among them, some 95 out of 100 or so would have been long gone by now, experts say.

It may sound like a commercial or feel-good ad, but the store's near-century as an anchor on the South Side has earned it a loyal following that believes the Brights' "community over profit" message is authentic.

Dunk & Bright is indeed a part of the community through its donations to dozens of local charities and efforts like the summer Jazz in the City series that the store has long supported, hosting one of the concerts on its own grounds each year.

JOE BRIGHT COMES HOME

Joe Bright, who has stepped in as vice president during the leadership transition, and his father, Jim, say it was never assumed Joe would take over from his dad.

"My dad's the best business person I've ever come in contact with," Joe said recently in an interview in the store. "I'm learning a lot from him and learned a lot from him growing up."

A Bright has been at the helm of the ever-growing store at the corner of South Salina Street and Brighton Avenue since the beginning in 1927. Its 100,000 square feet of space is large enough to accommodate the entire floor space of the White House and still have 45,000 square feet to spare. (Sports fans could think of it as nearly the size of two football fields.)

Dunk & Bright Furniture has grown through three expansions, not just in the ground it covers but in the livelihoods it supports. On a monthly basis, the store donates

to some five to 25 organizations, and it employs 77 full- and part-time employees. To get a glimpse of how many people have worked at the store and how much business the Brights have done over the decades, Joe looked at numbers as far back as he could and made some guesses.

He estimates that the family has hired and employed around 6,000 people since the store opened. Going back over data that covers only part of the store's history, he estimates salespeople have sold 3 million pieces of furniture over 90 years — with living room sofas the most popular piece.

Associate professor Alexander McKelvie, who is the chair of the Department of Entrepreneurship & Emerging Enterprises at the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University, said few businesses of any kind make it this long. He said the majority of companies last just one year, and 80 percent fold within a decade.

"Going into fourth generation, if you're thinking 60 to 80 years, there are not a lot of companies that do that," he said.

Deborah Streeter, a senior professor of personal enterprise and small business management in the Department of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University, noted that a common statistic she sees is that 30 percent of family businesses make it to the second generation, 10 to 15 percent make it to the third, and just 3 to 5 percent to the fourth generation.



> Johnnie Knight, a Dunk & Bright Furniture designer of 30 years, feels fulfilled at work. | Julianna Whiteway, Staff Photo

THROUGH THE YEARS

Dunk & Bright Furniture was **founded in 1927** by William Bright Sr. and William Dunk Sr.

In the years to come, Bright ultimately paid Dunk \$5,000 for his share of the business.

In 1939, Bright died and his brother-in-law, John Monahan, took over. He was in charge until he died in 1952.

In 1952, Pat Bright Sr., son of the founder, became president.

In 1991, 12,000 square feet were added to the store.

In 1993, Pat's son Jim purchased the store from his father after moving back to Syracuse.

In 1998, a 13,000-square-foot addition was added in order to get more furniture in the store.

In 2002, a new facade was put on the building.

In 2006, another addition was built — 25,000 square feet. That same year, the South Side Innovation Center was born.

DECADES SPANNED, ONE SPOT

Dunk & Bright Furniture remains in the very spot where it started.

The store was originally owned by Bill Dunk and Bill Bright, and eventually Dunk sold his part of the business to Bill Bright for \$5,000. When Bill Bright died, his widow and brother-in-law ran the place until Pat Bright Sr., Bill's son, took over in 1952. In 1990, Bill's son Jim moved home to Syracuse to work in the store.

Now, Joe's shadowing and preparation for the succession follows that history. Pat Bright sold the business to Jim after Jim worked for three years getting ready. "I was working in New York City, and he had asked for help if he were to sell Dunk & Bright, how he would package it, how he would get investors interested, and maybe buyers interested," Jim said. "I helped him package it and said, 'You could get a lot of money for it.' Then he said, 'Well Jim, why don't you move back to Syracuse and buy it from me?' I said, 'Well, it's not worth that much. It's not worth as much as I said,'" Jim Bright recalled with a laugh.

McKelvie, the Whitman professor, said these kinds of handoffs are a combination of vulnerability and opportunity.

"With the incoming generation, you have to think, 'What is the respectful way of changing what we've done and respecting grandma, grandpa, and parental roles while preparing the company for the future?' A lot of the innovative shifts that come in, come in with the new generation."

Joe Bright steps in among a team where some have known him since he was a boy.

"I think I always wanted to be in business," Joe said. "Even when I was young, I'd get excited to do garage sales or whatever, and you know, sell some products." Although he grew up visiting the store, even being featured in some of the advertisements with his grandfather and cousins, it never was a given that he would be the one to own the business after his father.

He had thought about being a manager and leading an organization as he grew up. He also has gained experience since graduating from Cornell University and then earning a master's at the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. Joe worked for Aldi, the supermarket chain, attended Darden, and then worked for two years in California for Danaher, a wide-ranging conglomerate in science, tech and healthcare.

When Jim moved back to Syracuse in 1990 with his wife, Cynthia, Joe had recently been born. Cynthia is a pediatrician and has a practice in Camillus. Jim said the store didn't do much until his father took it over. Jim called him a merchandising genius and the one who really developed the business.

"It wasn't much before my dad got into it," Jim said. "It just kind of chugged along and my dad got into it in the early 1950s and built it up."

Jim grew up around the store. He remembers going

OPEN EVENINGS ALL THIS WEEK

Dunk & Bright Furniture Co., Inc.

Grand Opening Monday, Nov. 14

ANNOUNCE

FULL LINE OF THE LATEST AND BEST FURNITURE MADE

The Opening of Their New Store

2849-51 South Salina Street

Unlimited Parking Space NO TIME LIMIT

RADIO Department
Exclusive of full line of Stewart-Warner Radios and Equipment. Expert Management of William Bright.



OUR POLICY
While quality is our motto, we are quite certain that on account of our very low expenses in running a business a mile from the extremely high property values we can certainly make it an object for anybody to trade with us.

William Dunk twenty-five years with Franklin, Vermont, the Company; seven years at which he was paid manager for their exports, the knowledge of construction is very extensive and he knows in doing everything he aims to sell along the lines of quality.

William Bright twenty-five years in the furniture business and for the past six years with Dunk, Coffin & Brown.

Our Opening Specials Are

Full sized Coxwell Chair that will be welcome in any home. We have sixteen different patterns, best Jacquard Velours and some beautiful panelled seat and back tapestries	24.50
Extra heavy walnut finished frame, sag seat chair	19.75
Walnut dresser, four poster bed, coil spring and Kapok (silk floss) mattress	95.00

All Other Furniture Discounted for the Week

INTERIOR DECORATING
IN THIS NEW STORE BY
L. A. WAKEFIELD CO.
504 South Geddes St.
PHONE 2-8724
WALL PAPER --- PAINTS --- GLASS
Jobbers for Stanley
Paints and Varnishes
Estimates Cheerfully Given

> Advertisement announcing the opening of Dunk & Bright Furniture in 1927. | Provided Photo

next door to the Brighton Lanes bowling alley and even to the warehouse downtown, helping to unload boxcars of mattresses as a 14-year-old, when the furniture would come on trains.

Now that building is the Nancy Cantor Warehouse, which houses Syracuse University's School of Design programs.

FATHER AND SON

Jim said his father neither discouraged nor encouraged him and his four siblings to join the business. The father preferred they be independent and work elsewhere to gain experience and not be distracted by the family business. The mindset was passed down to Jim as he planned for the future of Dunk & Bright.

"If you're going to bring someone in to help you run your business, you want them to be competent, of course, and have some experience," Jim said. "I think if he (Joe) had never been out of Syracuse working elsewhere, he'd have a different view."

Jim said Joe is modest. Joe was in the Top 10 of his class at Darden.

O'DUNK 'N' O'BRIGHT
Irish Bargain Party

RONALD O'BRIEN, PETER O'MULLEN, JANE McDERMOTT, BILL O'KELLY, DANNY O'LOUGHRAN, NINA O'BRIEN, IDA RUTH O'CONNOR, MAY O'LEARY, BILL O'WRIGHT, HELEN O'OTIS, GACE FITZGERALD, IRVING O'COLLICK, PATRICK O'BRIGHT, BILL O'BRIGHT, MARIAN O'CONRAD, PEG O'JARVIS, BOB O'HENRY, KATE O'BURGESS, DANNY O'MILLICICH, JACK O'KINCILLA, LARRY O'STARR, KIERON TIERNEY, JIM O'SIMONS, CHARLIE O'THOMAS

ICA'S MOST FAMOUS FURNITURE SALE
SPECTACULAR SAVINGS ON FURNITURE, CARPETING and BEDDING. 25% OFF ANYTHING* WITH A TOUCH OF GREEN
New surprises, much fun and excitement for the entire family---Impediment---Outstanding FREE gifts with every purchase

O'DUNK & O'BRIGHT'S IRISH BARGAIN PARTY
Tonite Thru Saturday, St. Patrick's
Salina St. (near Brighton)
We're Open Nites Till 9 P.M., Saturday
*First First Merchandise Store

> This 1962 ad publicizes the annual St. Patrick's Day sale with the O'Dunk 'n' O'Bright name change. The company has been owned, at least in part, by the Brights since it opened in 1927. | Provided Photo

"That's a competitive group of people," Jim added.

He called the passing of the store through generations "a dream come true but not mandatory. If it wasn't right for my kids, I wouldn't force it by any means, and I'd be fine. We'd be OK."

A perk of the job for Joe is that he can move around. The staff changes the designs and layout of the rooms regularly. He's not at a desk often. When talking about similarities with his father, he said they are both generally calm. Joe sees the differences on the business side.

"With my previous work experience, I've worked a lot to be analytical, data-oriented. (Now) I'm learning the sales and marketing aspect of the business," Joe said.

"I see him make decisions every day, that if you have a choice and can make decisions that make the store more profitable or you could make the store be a better neighbor, better employer, better partner, and better community partner, he consistently chooses to be a better neighbor, community partner," Joe said. "And it's liberating. That'll de-stress you in itself instead of always making the choices that make the store more profitable."

A PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Dunk & Bright charges modest rent to the South Side Innovation Center, which is on its property across the parking lot. Syracuse University oversees the center, which houses 25 small businesses in transition, offering support and space to work. These businesses may also get guidance from various schools at the university, including the business and law schools.

Southside TNT (Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today) holds a meeting the first Monday of every month in the SSIC. Joe has started attending the meetings and also tries to attend TNT events. The store supports that organization, as well as Model Neighborhoods, another South Side organization.

Part of learning and training for Joe is handling donation and support requests from the community.

The store has a donation-of-the-month section on the website where mostly nonprofits make requests. It also gives gift certificates that can be used at silent auctions. Dunk & Bright is a sponsor, as well, for Jazz in the City, a neighborhood outreach concert series, and the store hosts one of the events every summer. The 2018

ABOUT THE STORE

Here are details about Dunk & Bright Furniture's hours and contact information:

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Monday through Saturday;
11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sundays

Address: 2648 S. Salina St.

Phone: (315) 475-2000

Web: dunkandbright.com

Email: info@dunkandbright.com

SOUTH SIDE ICON

Dunk & Bright Furniture is the **largest furniture mattress and carpet showroom** in New York state, located in the heart of the South Side.

Furniture selections include bedrooms, dining rooms, living rooms, mattresses, wall-to-wall carpeting and area rugs, as well as office and contract furniture.

schedule for the free-admission event will be announced this spring. The program features national and local jazz artists, as well as community performers and students from the Syracuse City School District.

Over the decades that Jim has led the business, he has noticed changes in the neighborhood.

"I think there's a spirit of optimism," Jim said. "I think it's the best it's ever been in terms of optimism and a spirit of community."

His son is also optimistic. "That's a change from what I remember in the mid-'90s and early 2000," Joe said. "In terms of what it looks like, there's development, with the Dollar Store next door. That's refreshing and definitely different. A new business going in in the last couple of years, that's a big change. SU investing in the South Side Innovation Center is a big change."

Another change, of course, is the digital revolution and the role of online shopping.

"In the last three or four years, how to do business is changing so rapidly so it's very important to stay on top of trends and be open to trying new things," Jim said.

CUSTOMERS SPAN THE YEARS, TOO

Yet, some things do remain the same: Over the 30 years the designer Knight has worked at the store, she has seen the same clients come back, and they refer their children.

"It's generational shopping," she said.

The loyalty of the customers has added to the longevity of the store.

"People were loyal to buying local before buying local was cool," Knight said.

Ika Mobley has been a customer since 2009. She came in last year to buy her son a new bed and mattress and came back to find a dresser to match.

She brought her cousin, Candice Dunbar, with her. Dunbar hadn't planned on buying anything but tagged along since they were running errands.

"I knew what it was like but she didn't, and now she's golden," Mobley said. "She found a bed."

Dunbar had been looking online but hadn't seen anything that she really wanted.

"I just happened to see it and I had always wanted this bed," Dunbar said. "I couldn't leave without it."

Mobley said sales consultant Moe Tadros offered to make them coffee.

"I just like the environment," she said. "It's just warm and fuzzy here."

Joe is optimistic about the store's ability to participate in digital marketing and e-commerce.

He's sure there are some potential customers who may be shopping at Dunk & Bright but then who choose to purchase elsewhere online. But there are the loyal and longtime customers as well.

"We have a bed in a box," Joe said. "We sell online. We

advertise online. It's a necessity if you want to exist today."

Studying the generations of owners in family businesses, McKelvie has seen the importance of the next generation being sent out to learn new things because they experience new industries and draw inspiration from other areas. He said they tend to do better, and they most likely grow in their appreciation of the family business as well.

"A lot of the new, innovative shifts come in with the new generations," he said, generations that have stepped away and returned. "Five, 10 years down the road, those entrepreneurial skills are going to be very useful for the company to help it grow and sustain to the next generation."

'IT CHANGED MY LIFE'

Sherrie Beaudette is an interior designer who has worked with the business for 37 years. She was working in Endicott and got a referral to go to Syracuse to interview at the store. When she arrived, she changed her mind. She questioned if the opportunity was worth moving for and started to head home.

"I went back on the highway to go home but then I said, 'No, you have to go in,'" Beaudette said. "Best thing I ever did. I'll never forget what they said to me here: 'We cannot wait to get you. We cannot wait for you to come.' It changed my life."

With Joe joining the team, there will be some change. Beaudette is excited to see what he will personally contribute.

"I think it's great," Beaudette said without hesitation. "Joe's very bright, very personable, and very approachable. I think it's very good for us."

She might not have remembered the time his father gave him a project to track the employees' time cards.

"They put me in the middle of all the sales people and had me audit their time cards," Joe said with a laugh.

Jim chimed in that his son was always good with numbers.

"He (Jim) said just tell them that's what you're doing and then they were all jazzed up about it," Joe said.

Jim mentioned that they might have been upset, as he began to recall the story. The activity was assigned simply to provide Joe with something to keep him busy, and they had the employees believing they were checking to see if they left early.

"It was definitely just a show," Joe said. "They took it very seriously."

Today, not having a desk suits him, as he shows customers to couches stretching to the other side of the store or asks customers' names to remember them when they visit again.

Knight remembers two elementary school teachers who came in on separate occasions and asked for her. Both women had a great impact on her life and choices, and each visit was a surprise that still moves her today.

"It wasn't about them buying furniture," Knight said. "It was just to see who I am today and to acknowledge that in our conversation. That meant a lot."

DUNK & BRIGHT PROFILES



TANIA BLASI

Designer

Years at Dunk & Bright: 30 this summer
Has worked for three generations with Joe joining the business

Memory that stands out: "Pat (Bright) was wonderful. When he entered a room, he just lit up a room like nobody's business. And not that they (Jim and Joe Bright) don't, they definitely do but there was something really special about him. He was incredibly personable and connected to his employees."

"It's been neat to see the company grow. We've added and added. We're a conglomeration of all these old buildings and we have names for each of them, which are the places that they used to be. We used to call this 'Mario's aisle' because it was an old supermarket called Mario's. We used to call that (pointing farther back in the store) 'The Tea House.' In fact, I think we still do when we're referring to it, named after a saloon on Salina."

"I've been blessed, I've gotten customers that are young and starting out, and then I'm with them when they're getting married, then they're pregnant, and then they come in and they have two kids, and I'm like, 'What?' I love that."



KATHLEEN REED

Designer

Years at Dunk & Bright: 31 this summer

Memory that stands out: "I was so intimidated when I walked in here, just looking at all the furniture. I say that to customers now, when I've gotten to know them better. 'You must have felt very intimidated when you walked in here.' I was young, around all these seasoned designers and sales people."

"I was extremely shy as a kid. This place has totally changed me. I am not shy anymore. It's like a stage. ... It's such a dance when you're with a client and you know, it's not just about the furniture, it's about the interaction of getting to know them, trying to pull out a common denominator when you just met, and I'm pretty good at that. And after you know them, you get that connection."



MOE TADROS

Sales associate / carpet specialist

Years at Dunk & Bright: 16

Started part time as a carpet specialist while working at Corcoran High School. Stopped teaching in 2014 and now works full time at the store.

Career before Dunk & Bright: He worked at Corcoran for 30 years as a teaching assistant and started there because he wanted to coach. He was the varsity boys head soccer coach for 15 years and junior varsity for 10 years.

Memory that stands out: He made a house call and ended up being the cable guy. "I went in and a couple of older ladies were struggling to put their TV together, hooking it to cable. I hooked up the cable for them. They were sisters. I sold to the sister before so when I went in, she said, 'Moe, do you know anything about this?' I could see them struggling and said, 'sure.' So I finished putting the TV together for them."

RECENT HONOR

Last year, **Jim Bright**, along with others from the community, were honored by Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today Southside.

- **Charles Pierce-El** received a Community Hero Award. The longtime activist and advocate, Pierce-El sits on the boards of organizations such as The Stand and Home HeadQuarters Inc., and he is an active member of TNT Southside.
- **Geneva Hayden** received a Community Hero Award. The founder of Light a Candle for Literacy, Hayden brings awareness to the need for better literacy practices for children.
- **Chief of Police Frank Fowler**, of the Syracuse Police Department, received the Public Service Award. Fowler noted he feels grateful to serve his community.
- **Jim Bright** received the Community Business Award for Dunk & Bright Furniture. Bright said the store recognizes it is part of a larger community.

ON THE SIDE

PAST EMPLOYERS

Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens has an extensive résumé. Here is where she has previously worked:

- Home HeadQuarters
- Jubilee Homes
- RE.A.C.E. Inc.
- Dunbar Association
- Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility, Inc.
- City of Syracuse

POLICE AND POVERTY

Syracuse deputy mayor talks of diversification and revitalization



> Syracuse Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens is currently focusing on efforts to find a new police chief and to diversify the police department. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo

By | Steve Davis
The Stand founder

Sharon Owens' work ranges from searching for new police chief to empowering the community

The Stand founder, Steve Davis, sat down for more than an hour with Syracuse Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens in her City Hall office. This is a lightly edited transcript of parts of that March 1 conversation. Owens, the former CEO of Syracuse Community Connections, ran the Southwest Community Center. She was named to Mayor Ben Walsh's team in December. Owens previously worked in the office of the former mayor, Stephanie Miner.

STEVE DAVIS: Can you give us a quick description of what the deputy mayor does?

SHARON OWENS: The title is deputy mayor, and I act in the capacity of chief of staff. I have direct reports: fire, police, neighborhood and business development and parks and recreation, and then I'm looking across the board at all of our departments. The biggest thing on my plate (now) is the search for the new police chief. What we're doing now is nailing down the first phase of that, which is the community engagement process. We're meeting with constituent groups geographically as well as special demographic groups. We're just going to be meeting and meeting and meeting. We are going to look for an outside consultant to help with the search who's done this on a national basis. The idea is to have someone on board by the end of December (2018) so when we come in in January (2019), we are starting with a new chief and Chief (Frank) Fowler leaves to get to go on to the well-deserved new life he has.

The good thing about being back is that most of the people are still here so you don't have to spend the first two months figuring out where to go and who to talk to. We already know. And now we have a different perspective coming back. And there's such an energy in the city. We're hearing people ask, 'Can we try this?' Yeah, let's try it! What do we have to lose?

ON SYRACUSE POLICE

SD: You have referred to community policing. Police are out in the community already. What does that mean?

SO: It takes it a step further. You guys (The Stand) do a great job of this: You engage that community in the reporting, so the reporting isn't just about the community, the community is engaged in the narrative. Community policing has suffered because of budget cuts, so the closest we get to it now is community satellite offices. Westcott has one, Southwest has one, there's an officer there so that the community gets to know that

officer. But I remember when, all summer long, partner teams (of officers) would just walk up and down and the thing about that is that you get to know the people in the neighborhood, and the neighborhood gets to know you, and it's not always perceived that you're just driving through in a car that's tinted up so that no one can even see your face. (With community policing) you don't just become a symbol of a vehicle — just a car driving through the neighborhood — but you're a heart-beating, blood-pumping human being walking in and talking to people to the point where if people are engaged in something you've gotten to a relationship where you know 'Miss Smith' and you know her grandson, and (you can say), 'Look we're going to talk to your grandmother.' Because no matter who you are, how tough you are, there is somebody who you'll listen to, and typically it's grandma. Chief Fowler says this, 'We've got to get cops out of the cars and walking beats, onto the streets. We've got to get them back in neighborhoods at community events, getting them in the parks and not in a car watching for trouble but walking around talking with people and engaging.' And you know what, if I develop a relationship and I see you regularly in this location I might tell you a couple things about that street and that house in this situation.

(Chief Fowler) and I are also focused on making sure that we can diversify this next wave of cadets. The mayor made a commitment to 25 to 30, so that process is engaging now. We're waiting for the list of eligible civil service candidates. So, I'm sitting with the chief saying, 'OK I want to be immersed in this process to understand who is eligible and seeing how we can get that class diverse.'

SD: But only 10 percent of our police force is made up of minorities, while we are pushing 45 percent minority population in our city. The minority is almost the majority. The chief talks about how hard it is to find those minority persons who are interested in being a cop, because community members may not see them as a fellow minority on the force but just as someone in 'blue.'

SO: Once you get enough people who are interested (in being a cop) we get to the other dilemma, which is the process. The process for me is we're a public entity and civil service is the methodology for determining how you're going to hire public employees. And the civil service law looks at the highest-tested people. And I don't know about you, but I'm not good at tests.

What I've come to learn is that all of the candidates for law enforcement are under one civil service process that starts with the sheriff's department. They tabulate an entire list of candidates who have taken the exam and have it available to any municipality in Onondaga County. And what the federal consent decree did for us is

ABOUT OWENS

Sharon Owens graduated from **Geneva High School** in 1981 and from **Syracuse University** with a degree in economics in 1985.

While at SU, she was a Big East Indoor and Outdoor Women's Track and Field Champion. She was also a Syracuse University Orange Plus Hall of Fame Inductee in 1986.

What changed her path from economics?

In 1983, Owens interned with the **Dunbar Association**.

"That internship with Dunbar changed my life," Owens told The Stand during a 2013 interview. "It was then that I realized I had been majoring in the wrong thing for the past three years. Through the program, I worked with so many kids, most of them living in the 'bricks' down the Hill from SU. I found then that I was meant to help people."

UPCOMING MEETINGS

City officials are hosting a series of public meetings to receive feedback from Syracuse residents on the next chief of the Syracuse Police Department.

- 5 to 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 10
City Hall Atrium
201 E. Washington St.
- 5 to 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 11
P.E.A.C.E., Inc. Eastside
Family Resource Center
202 S. Beech St.
- 5 to 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 17
St. Lucy's Church
432 Gifford St.

you can set a priority for minority candidates.

Fowler is looking at prioritizing those minority candidates. But after the test and before you get on the list, you have to pass the agility requirement.

Now, the chief says that (a number of candidates, including minorities) do get past the civil service test, but they don't get past the agility. Being able to lift, being able to run, all of that kind of boot camp physical testing you have to go through — people don't always make it through it. He's told me stories of high school football players or basketball players that look like tanks — 'Yeah, get help, study for the test, you're big, let's get you in there ...' — and then they did not pass the physical. Which was amazing to me, but it is what it is.

Then I would say the third leg of this is community engagement, for individuals who are interested, with organizations like Jubilee Homes, Alliance Network, ACLU, to help prepare people. There are individuals who are African-Americans who are coaches at different schools who will say, 'I'll do a six-week boot camp just to get people ready for that.' Or there are a couple companies who will say, 'Yeah, we can do an agility test and

physicals and get people ready. But this is my business.' Yeah, he's not going to do it for free.

The chief is working on this, because this class is critical. It's Frank's swan song, it's the priority of the mayor, and we've got to get this right. If you're black and you grew up in the city of Syracuse, you are going to have affiliations, they're probably at your family picnic, so you really have to look at the individual for the individual's sake. This is Syracuse, you know, my mom and my aunt grew up in the same house. My mom raised us one way, my cousins were raised by their mom a different way. That doesn't mean we don't see each other, that doesn't mean we don't hang out on the weekend, but that doesn't mean I do what you do just because you're my family. We have to really home in on making sure people aren't pre-judged by affiliations. You grew up with that guy, you went to middle school, high school, elementary school with that person. They went a route you didn't go. The fact that you know them should have nothing to do with (how you are judged).

My god, what if we had more people on the street who actually knew the culture of the street? Not because



> Regarding poverty in Syracuse, Sharon Owens discusses initiatives carried over from previous Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner's administration. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo

they are engaged in the culture of the street, but because it's their community.

ON SYRACUSE POVERTY

SD: What about work to revitalize parts of the city?

SO: The South Avenue study was started under the Miner Administration. The consultants are in town. ... When Price Rite (grocery) was completed, we said the commitment with the investment of this company was, 'What else are we going to do in the neighborhood?' The 'What else?' is real. So SIDA (Syracuse Industrial Development Agency) took it on, and SIDA is funding the market study. With SIDA funding the study, to me it's a model for every business corridor.

The heart-warming part of that whole (Price Rite) project for me is when I see people walking from that store with their bags. I am saddened for what happened with Nojaim (closing of that West Side supermarket), and I know there are many seniors in that high-rise over there. The Housing Authority has been amazing in coordinating bus routes to include Price Rite right now.

What I did not like is the way neighborhoods were pitted against each other. For what purpose? ... I was really disturbed by that. It wasn't (owner) Paul (Nojaim) ... It was entities who besides 9-5 (office hours in the neighborhood), they're gone.

It took convincing of Price Rite by Walt (Dixie) and other people. In their market study, they already had a Price Rite on Erie Boulevard, so the typical market study would say that store (proposed for the South Side) would be too close. And I was like, 'They are worlds apart. You're worlds apart from the Tops. You're worlds apart from the Western Lights stores. Folks who don't drive can't get there.'

I wasn't sitting in this office at that time, but as the Southwest Community Center director, I was vehemently vocal about, 'I'm not going to allow you to do that (pit neighborhoods). I just am not. I'm not. You know, letters to the editors and all that kind of garbage. Get out of here.'

I love planning. I love theory. You have to have it in order to strategically plan. But at some point, the plan has to hit the ground and people have to feel it, and



> Transferring theory and strategic plans into tangible effects for Syracuse is one of Sharon Owens' roles as the deputy mayor. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo

SOUTH AVE. STUDY

In 2017, the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency voted to award a **contract for \$75,000** to Camoin Associates, an economic development consulting firm based in Saratoga Springs. The money was to be used to come up with a plan to **revitalize the South Avenue corridor** from West Onondaga Street to Glenwood Avenue and Valley Drive.

The study is said to:

- Analyze the corridor's infrastructure, land use, history and pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow
- Recommend three parcels for development and identify strategies for implementation
- Review technical and organizational issues needed to move forward with the process, including public participation events

Learn more at the consulting firm's website:
camoinassociates.com

PEACE AWARD

If you are a student or know a student who has been involved in activities for peace and justice to better our world, you can apply for the **Youth Peace Award**.

The **Syracuse Peace Council** is accepting applications and nominations until April 30 for the award, organized by the **Nuclear Free World Committee**. To apply, students must write a **one-page essay** describing their activities using the following questions as a guideline:

- What social justice problem do you address?
- What do you do to work on this problem?
- With whom do you do this work?
- What else would interest your friends about your work?

Send applications and one letter of recommendation to:

Margrit Diehl
114 Milnor Ave.,
Syracuse, NY 13224

Email: margrit.diehl@gmail.com

Visit: peacecouncil.net to download the application and learn more

touch it, and smell it and taste it. And that's one of my roles here.

SD: What about the city's relationship with Syracuse University under Chancellor Kent Syverud?

SO: Well, I think that with new leadership, you have different focuses and with (former Chancellor Nancy) Cantor her focus was physical investment in neighborhoods. The person in charge is hired by the (SU) trustee board and they've determined they want to take a different direction and do more research and more of that kind of thing and that, too, can benefit us. We had a great conversation with the law school because they were doing a symposium on poverty, and one of the best moves that this chancellor made was appointing Bea (Gonzalez) as community liaison. As soon as he did that, that spoke volumes to many of us in the community that his commitment was real because Bea is real. She was just here the other day with some staff. So, the conversations are happening.

I think the most exciting thing that people won't see — can't see because it is going on one person at a time — are conversations that are happening that may not have been happening.

I meet with county staff every week. And with the philanthropic and business community, we're having ongoing conversations. You know people feel the window's been thrown open, the door has been thrown open and they are coming in droves to say, 'OK, what can we do, what can we do, what can we do? Let's do this.'

With Syracuse University, the work you are doing around technology and systems integration, how can we use that as a municipality? How can your resources and your experts (help us)? We were talking about lead exposure, and we're doing research and we're looking at how we can address the lead issue in our housing stock and our commissioner now, Stephanie Pasquale is — because she's from Boston — calling people in Boston, and the person there is saying the best researcher on lead is at SU, the best researcher in the country.

We've got folks in here for the South Avenue study, presenting to the mayor right now. So, it just is getting from the conversation to implementation.

We hope that the study will give us the baseline that we can talk to business about investment, and we'll know what infrastructure we need to prioritize for South Avenue, we'll know what the people who live around South Avenue are looking for. They talk all the time that we have no amenities. You know you got the world-famous Jerk Hut but you are limited. ... That's something neighbors have said, 'Yeah you can get some great jerk chicken at the Jerk Hut, but what's the marketing campaign to help the rest of city know that?'

SD: Are you still a part of the poverty initiative called HOPE (Healing Opportunity Prosperity Empowerment)?

SO: I am. As a matter of fact, we have a meeting this afternoon. We got running and got out in front of it. I always say this community was shamed into action. One thing about Syracuse, we are a prideful bunch of people, and I don't know about you, but I am sick of all the negative stats. Our city is more than that. You know, something was just out that was funny. Someone posted that Syracuse is in the Top 25 of great places to live among cities our size. And, so, looking at it, Rochester and Buffalo are there, too, but when I looked at it, we ranked higher, and when I looked at why, it was interesting. It's because you can get anywhere you want, quick. From here, you can get to Boston, you can get to Cleveland, you can get to Chicago, New York City, Canada. It's a central location, and the potential is that central location.

Regarding HOPE, we got out there and we got momentum going, you know Helen Hudson and myself and Rita Paniagua came on and we hit the ground. We did so many community meetings and so many summits and all of that was to gather information. And then the ESPRI hit, which is the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative. So, the state says we have money, and Syracuse is eligible for the top tier of it, \$2.75 million. So, here's the money, but you've got to do all of this stuff. And that's what slowed it down. We had to issue an RFP (Request for Proposals) because you have to show the state how you are going to spend the money.

So, we issued an RFP, we had applicants come in and now we are selecting applicants for initiatives that were proposed and would be part of the ESPRI initiative driven by HOPE.

But HOPE, for me, is not an initiative or a program. It has to be a movement. It has to be fluid enough to morph to whatever opportunities come. So, when the next ESPRI comes, HOPE is positioned to drive it.

ESPRI also required that we create an executive committee. That is the governing body for the money. The grantee is the United Way. The United Ways across the state are the grantees. Now there are some people who have said, 'OK,' and there are some people who hate that. Hate it. They feel that — I can only speak for this one — they feel that the United Way hasn't funded the programs that really get to the people on the ground. But the United Way has to be responsible to its donors and set financial standards. While people do great work on the ground, they might not have the capacity to meet those (United Way) standards. Somehow, we have to fill that gap. Find a way to support people like Alamin Muhammad (founder of We Rise Above the Streets), who has garnered trust from a population that trusts no

one, but he doesn't have the capacity to sit down and write a grant for a million dollars or \$250,000, financially manage it, write reports ... he's too busy feeding people. How do we fill that gap with an entity that can help manage that without him losing who he is? And the smaller guys are apprehensive of the larger guys because they don't want to be assimilated and watered down into something bigger.

I talk to people (who say), 'Well HOPE isn't running programs.' But that is not our purpose, to run programs. Our purpose is to look at the opportunities and the visions and the models and see how we can move the needle on poverty. The person doing the work is going to be somebody else. HOPE has to be a movement and the movement has to shift and change with the need. Poverty is a constant need, but how you address it changes.

That \$2.75 million, this is the game plan from the state: 'You communities in New York state (16 of them) have been identified by your data, and you get money depending on how big you are and severe your data is — your poverty is.' So, we, unfortunately, hit the top threshold. The idea is that, 'We're giving you money to

try some stuff, and in trying that stuff, our hope is that it's going to be able to be replicated across the state.'

I'm like, 'Come on, let's award something, let's get it done.' Hopefully we'll be able to get the awards out, get going with what really are pilots, pilots of, 'This is what we think can be done to move the needle for people.'

SD: People might ID me — think of me — as a professor or a Baldwinsville resident ... but when I think of Syracuse, often I see stories and conversations that define our residents as 'poor.' If that is a person's identity, what does that do to him or her emotionally, psychologically?

SO: Poverty is defined by a financial standard by the federal government. But it is a living, breathing organism that affects your mind, body and spirit. It emanates from you as a person to your neighbor, your family and your community. By definition, it's economic. So, when people say, 'Well, you can't throw money at it,' I say that's an oxymoron. It's defined financially, so you need to get people work. But in getting people work, you also have to employ their sense of hope beyond the paycheck that,



> Sharon Owens says that Syracuse is more than all the negative stats about the city. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo



> New SU leadership led to new focuses on the Syracuse community, says Sharon Owens. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo

FUNDING FOR ARTS

CNY Arts was recently awarded \$100,000 from the **Empire State Development Corporation** in partnership with the **Regional Economic Development Council** to create a master plan for the arts and entertainment districts in five cities in five counties of Central New York, including Syracuse.

CNY Arts will manage the planning process, which will take place during an 8- to 10-month period, with planning projected to start this month.

In 2014, CNY Arts completed a yearlong assessment and cultural planning process called **ENGAGE CNY** to guide this region's art and cultural industry for the next decade. **ENGAGE** assessed how best to reposition arts, culture and heritage as catalysts for improving the region's vitality. This 10-year cultural plan was informed by a 72-member, multi-sector leadership council, a 121-person regional planning summit, feedback from more than 500 artists and 160 arts and culture organizations — along with 7,000 residents.

To learn more: visit weare.cnyarts.org

— Source:
CNY Arts Press Release

LEAD EXPOSURE

Syracuse has one of the nation's highest rates of lead exposure for children. The newly formed **Syracuse Lead Prevention Coalition's** monthly meetings have brought together concerned citizens, nonprofit workers, elected officials and other community organizers.

In April, the group will discuss this complex problem and possible solutions and discuss the path forward with coalition building. **Legal Services of CNY** will be present and speak on its effort toward canvassing and community outreach.

Meeting details:

6 to 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 9
Iron Workers Local 60,
500 W. Genesee St.

For more information:

Contact Paul Ciavarri, community development organizer with Legal Services of CNY, by email at pciavarri@lscny.org or phone at (315) 703-6500 ext. 6557

'Now I can achieve homeownership and I can achieve a college education for my children, and I can achieve being an active part of my community and changing the dynamic of my community one family at a time.' But don't tell me it's poverty, and you can't throw money at it. Bull. It's defined financially. Defined!

I always said at Southwest, 'You don't know what you don't know.' I experienced the concept and the culture of work because I watched my parents go to work every day. I watched how they managed coming home after a bad day and venting with each other and saying, 'This is how I process, so when I go back to work I know how to deal with it.' I watched them call in when they were sick or schedule a family vacation and the whole dynamic of, 'When is your time off?' And, 'This is when we can go and do something.' I watched that. If you've never been a part of that experience, how do you know it? So, at Southwest, we had kids, their parents don't work, their aunts and uncles don't work, their neighbors don't have a job. It becomes a culture. It becomes its own existence. It becomes a new normal that is not normal at all. It's not normal. And that affects you. Not just financially, but physically: You don't eat like everybody else eats, you don't live in houses like everybody else lives, you're probably walking around clinically depressed and you don't know it because you don't have time to deal with it. You are clinically depressed, while trying to raise your children.

I wish an artist could just listen to the stories of what poverty is and what it does to people and then render this monster, showing what it does to communities of people. It's evil. It just is. It locks you down in a dark space. (But you're thinking), 'All I need is a crack to get to some sunlight. Give me the tools to find my way.'

One of the acronyms is ALICE, 'asset limited, income constrained, employed.' It's a United Way acronym. 'The working poor.' I work one job, two jobs, maybe three jobs. I'm catching buses from one job to the next. You remember the story of the pregnant woman walking up to Jamesville (Correctional Facility)? There was an article about it. The woman is employed there, she's pregnant. The bus stops by that senior home out on Jamesville Road, but she has to walk (several miles) to the prison, and she is still chugging her way to work. Or I've got to get my kids to school, school starts at 7:30 but work starts for me at 8, so I got to get them to school, then get a bus that runs on its schedule not mine, and then transfer.

I will never forget being on West Genesee Street and I'm coming east. I'm at the corner of Geddes. And a woman's out there with these grocery bags, and it was starting to sprinkle. It was getting dark, about 7 o'clock. I roll the window down and ask, 'Are you all right? Do you need a ride? Because we're headed downtown.' She says, 'Yeah, but I'm not going that way, I'm going this

way.' She lived in the city, just inside the Solvay boundary, that's where her apartment was. And (I think) she just moved there because she had a bunch of mops and cleaning supplies and that kind of stuff. She says, 'Yeah I would like a ride but I'm not going your way I'm coming back, I live this way.' And I said, 'OK, why are you on this side of the street?' And she said, 'Because I have to catch the bus to the hub. The bus leaves the hub to go to my house at 9 o'clock.'

I'm like, 'This is crazy.'

What do you do when you're income-limited in a car-dependent community? When basically your ability to get somewhere shuts down at 10? And then most people in entry-level jobs work a swing shift. And then you deal with it in the winter we've been having this year, on top of that? What does that do to your psyche? And people say, 'Well they just gave up.' What the hell, yeah! They didn't give up. They got beat down. You just get tired.

WHO IS SHARON?

SD: I've seen you mention your mom a couple of times. She must be really proud of you.

SO: She is. Very proud. The interesting thing is you know your parents as you're growing up, but when you become an adult you begin to have a different kind of dynamic. You're always their child but your conversations change, your perception of who they are changes, and it was then that I realized that my mother was a social activist. I never knew that. So, as we have conversations, as I became a woman, and particularly what I have done in my life, I know now that she missed the March on Washington (August 1963). She would have been there except for the fact that she was in the late term with me. And I'm like, 'I so much inherited that from you.' So, what drives me, and when I talk to her about who she is and what she's done and the battles she's fought for individuals and against systems, 'Yeah that's who you are.' You know you get stuff from your parents but when I listen to her now as two adult women talking and then I realize now that her granddaughter, it's passed on to her, too. And it's just an absolute, you're just there and you care about people and you just are indignantly mad when people are wronged. 'What gives you the right to do that, to treat people that way?' And I just always have tried to be a person that is going to try to be on the side of right. Getting to right, you might not agree with. But my ultimate goal is right.

The thing that this generation has figured out is that doing the right thing can actually be profitable. Just the dynamic in this world ... even that campaign, being behind (candidate Walsh) and believing in who he is and what he wanted to do, was not the first benefit for me. The first benefit for me was all those young people of color that for the first time in their life got



> Sharon Owens discusses family and future generations with The Stand. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo

involved in politics and saw how it would affect day-to-day life and how it really meant something to them. And they're still off and doing their thing. They'll call and say, 'Sharon, we got this idea.' And I'm, 'Tell me how you need me. Do what you're going to do.' I have the privilege of being the commencement speaker at Cazenovia in May, and someone was saying, 'What are you going to talk about?' It was, 'You guys are poised and you get it.' Helping and benefiting humanity and driving industry and making money doesn't have to be two isolated occurrences. You have figured that out and don't let anyone turn you away from what your brilliance has figured out. Helping the world and humanity helps your bottom line. It does. It's a win-win. We don't get many of those these days.

THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

SD: The digital world has helped. You don't need a lot of people to get your message out.

SO: One thing about the campaign, I kept up to date every moment with what was going on because I got on Facebook. Now, social media has a good and a bad. The bad, what we see day-to-day particularly with young people, is the instant gratification of emotion. When

you and I were growing up, if I'm mad, I'm going to call someone and tell them and give them a piece of my mind. I had 10 digits to change my mind, or even seven because you didn't need an area code. I had seven digits to change my mind. And maybe by digit five I changed my mind and I hung up the phone. Now you 'bah, bah, bah' on social media and hit 'send.' You can't take that back. It's out there.

SD: And with the phone you're telling one person, not the whole world.

SO: I had this conversation with my daughter. I said, 'Everybody in the world doesn't need to know every emotional roller coaster you go on. I'm (angry) and I post it. OK, in two hours you are not going to feel like that. But it's gone now.' My parents would say, 'Don't tell your friends all of your business.' It might go from that person to that person to that person. In our circle, it might get to 10 people. (But today), you just posted it on Facebook. It's been shared 55 times.

On the other hand, you've got a man sitting in a car with his girlfriend and telling the cop, 'I have a licensed weapon, officer,' and the world sees (streamed on Facebook) that he's murdered. ... That's Philando Castile.

WHAT IS ESPRI?

The **Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative**, ESPRI, is a \$25 million initiative to help support community-driven, poverty reduction strategies that increase economic opportunity for all New Yorkers.

As part of ESPRI, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the creation of the Empire Corps in 2016 with \$6.7 million in funding over three years. The Empire Corps, run using AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members, would work to fight poverty in 16 communities — the Bronx, Rochester, Syracuse, Binghamton, Oneonta, Buffalo, Utica, Elmira, Jamestown, Oswego, Troy, Hempstead, Newburgh, Niagara Falls, Watertown and Albany.

— Source: Gov. Andrew Cuomo press release Dec. 6, 2016

CREATING HOPE

Local organization works to combat social problems in Greater Syracuse



> Ocesa Keaton serves as the director of Greater Syracuse H.O.P.E., which works to examine systems and policies that relate to poverty in the local community. | Dominique Anne Hildebrand, Staff Photo

By | Bianca Moorman
Staff reporter

Program director Ocesa Keaton fights poverty on three fronts: policy, perception and people

Greater Syracuse H.O.P.E. is an anti-poverty initiative standing for Healing Opportunity Prosperity Empowerment. Syracuse is one of 16 cities chosen to participate in the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative or ESPRI. H.O.P.E. originally was created to model the Rochester Anti-Poverty Task Force to bring the community together to fight poverty.

The executive director here is Ocesa Keaton, a native of Syracuse. The Stand sat down for a chat and added some additional questions through email to discuss H.O.P.E. and what's next.

*Indicates those questions answered via email.

THE STAND: Can you tell me how Greater Syracuse H.O.P.E. started?

OCESA KEATON: Greater Syracuse H.O.P.E. was created in response to the concentrated poverty in the city of Syracuse and is funded through ESPRI (Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative), but started to take root prior to its funding.

It was a response to a report done on poverty called “Architecture of Segregation,” by Dr. Paul Jargowsky. He determined that the city of Syracuse has the highest concentration of poverty for blacks and Latinos in the country. So, the community started gravitating around the issues of economic disparities. From those community conversations, my co-chairs Sharon Owens and Helen Hudson went to Albany for something referred to as Policy Day. They, along with other key leaders from other Upstate cities, started to speak out about the disparities that were really driving the poverty numbers up in their

area. That's why the governor created ESPRI, which in turned funded the movement that started H.O.P.E.

THE STAND: How did you get involved?

KEATON: I was hired to help streamline the process and implement the strategies that the community helped the team come up with to address issues of economic disparity and unequal access. I guess the short version of it is that I have always been very involved in my community, so learning that H.O.P.E. was having its different listening sessions and having different meetings, I (got interested). ... But I had to go through the application process like everyone else, interview and then was chosen.

THE STAND: You said that you are a social worker. Can you explain the social work aspect of what you do?

KEATON: The funny thing about social work is when people think social work they only think about direct service, but there is macro and micro social work. Micro is the direct service and macro is the broader view of social work, like looking at systems. My social work background helps me because I can look at systems and policies and how those things interact to impact people on a local-daily level. I wanted to clear that up because a lot of people have that singular view of social work.

THE STAND: What does H.O.P.E. and its partners do in relation to poverty?

KEATON: One thing is to have listening sessions around the city. Those listening sessions happened on each side of town and some sides were able to have more than one because of how big the area was. From those listening sessions, the community was very vocal about the fact that not-for-profit agencies in the area work in silos.

One agency might not know what another agency is doing; sometimes there is a duplication of services, and that goes back to systems work. It's causing a gap in the greater economic system. So how do you fill that gap and become a broker of information so that one agency and another join forces for more effective services for the greater community? That's what we mean by partners, not necessarily in the traditional sense in that we would share clients. That type of information is a two-way street, and not only are we getting information from the community but (learning) how they are impacted.

We are also talking to policymakers in New York state and at the county level to give them the viewpoint of the citizens. This is how the policy reads out on paper, but how does it translate in real life? (Here are) the unintended consequences (of) this policy.

THE STAND: Can you describe this type of collaboration between organizations?

KEATON: For example, let's say that you have an individual named John, and he lives on the South Side of Syracuse. John has a high school diploma, but he may have low literacy skills. He is seeking work, but John does not have a car. John goes to a job fair at one of the community centers, and he gets hired by a manufacturing company that is in DeWitt. John can't get to DeWitt. So, John tries to get to DeWitt the best way he can by bumming rides with friends or getting the bus and walking, but that causes him to constantly be late. The employer does not recognize that John must catch three different buses or that the bus only goes to a certain point and he must walk more than three miles.

What H.O.P.E. does is bring the employer of that DeWitt manufacturing company, the president of our transportation service and John to the same table so that everybody can have a conversation, (learning) each other's point of view ... identify the roadblocks and obstacles that make it difficult for John to get to work constantly on time.

THE STAND: What kind of policies does H.O.P.E. fight for?

KEATON: H.O.P.E. fights poverty on three fronts: policy, perception and people. We bring to light policies that negatively impact persons in poverty, and we fight to change the perception of people in poverty as a narrative. When people talk about poverty, they look at it as it's the person's fault — they're blaming the victim. However, it's more than that and it's more than telling somebody to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. It's OK if you want this person to do things on their own (but) then you need to allow them the room to do so because they won't be able to get as far as they should if at every turn you are cutting their assistance. The truth of the matter is that we all get assistance in some way. Some people are more fortunate that their family can provide them assistance, and some people's families don't have access to be able to provide that assistance.

THE STAND: How does H.O.P.E. view poverty?

KEATON: One of things about poverty is it is not just in one segment. It's the worst-kept secret that it is not just Syracuse that is experiencing poverty, it is the county as a whole. Mattydale, Solvay, Camillus ... they're experiencing high rates of poverty as well. However, it is not spotlighted in the same way because their poverty is more spread out. So when Syracuse is identified with a high concentration rate of poverty among blacks and Latinos, that means Syracuse is a highly segregated city, and we push people that look the same all into one area and somehow we keep them there.

We are not the only community that does that. This is where ESPRI comes in because it happens across the

BY THE NUMBERS

Since September 2016, the **H.O.P.E. executive committee and executive director** have compiled data and information obtained from:

- 2 public summits
- 7 listening sessions
- 5 committees that made recommendations (Health, Housing, Education, Economic and Data & Marketing)

Additionally, individuals who were identified as living in poverty attended the seven listening sessions and both summits.

H.O.P.E.'s **four focus areas** in 2018:

- Education
- Housing
- Economic Opportunity
- Health

LEARN MORE, JOIN

Visit:
greatersyracusehope.org

Email:
greatersyracusehope@gmail.com

ON THE SIDE

WHO IS INVOLVED?

- The Greater Syracuse H.O.P.E. community involves:
- People who have experienced poverty
 - Nonprofit and community-based organizations
 - Faith-based communities
 - Elected and government officials
 - Private businesses
 - All concerned individuals

— Source:
greater-syracuse-hope.org



> Ocesa Keaton wants to work toward making Syracuse an “inclusive” city. | Dominique Anne Hildebrand, Staff Photo

state. There are 16 ESPRI cites, including Syracuse, and they are all along the interstate; some of the cities are Rochester, Buffalo, Oswego, Utica, the Bronx, Newburgh. Those are just a few of the cities but one of the things that we all have in common is high concentrations of poverty, and that is when people interweave the I-81 debate into the situation. How much did the construction of the highway contribute to the segregated housing, which has now created the high concentration rate of poverty?

***THE STAND:** What do you think is the biggest single change that would move us the furthest toward addressing this problem?
KEATON: The biggest single change will be learning how to build on the strength of our community and work together to achieve the same goal of having an inclusive city.

***THE STAND:** How damaging is it emotionally and socially to be defined by your income as “poor” when there is so much else that defines a person? Did

you experience this growing up in your own home or neighborhood, or see it affect others?
KEATON: The damage associated with defining a person as poor is that this definition becomes THE definition attached to an individual. It also allows the broader community to feel a sense of separation from the topic of poverty, and the syndrome of “otherness” comes into play. Meaning “we” know how to work hard and pull ourselves up, but those “other” people over there are lazy, uneducated and deserving of all the horrible things that happened to them. The effect that I see is not isolated to a person or a neighborhood but a city. A city that once was a leader in innovation and fostering community relationships, a city where people had a chance for economic mobility, but now I see a city that has forgotten all the things that make us great and instead allowed a word to become our sole focus.
It is time to stop talking about poverty and the stats and instead recognize the strengths and natural resources that we have. Poverty is not a good thing; period the end! However, we are good people in this city of Syracuse that can overcome this issue.

THE STAND: What is the latest with H.O.P.E.?

KEATON: We just finished a request for community partners. We're hoping to gain from that request innovative ideas and approaches related to our four focus areas of housing, health, economic opportunity and education.

We got a very positive response from the community. In December, we had a proposal meeting and around 90 different community organizations and not-for-profits came and wanted to be a partner in H.O.P.E. We have seen over 30 applications, and we're still going through the fine-tuning details in who we might partner with and what our partnership will look like. Our focus would be in trying to facilitate collaboration in the areas where it makes sense for organizations to collaborate. And particularly with organizations that either a) may not be fully aware of each other and what they do and b) maybe never really thought that a collaboration was possible between them.

***THE STAND:** What are the key dates to come in 2018 for H.O.P.E.?

KEATON: Some milestones are the selection of our community partners, as well as community advisory board members.

***THE STAND:** When will the community advisory board be announced? What's the process leading up to that?

KEATON: This group will be assembled over the course of the next several months. The process includes selecting members of the community who express a sincere interest in providing input on strategies that will impact the community of Syracuse.

***THE STAND:** What are key priorities from now until May? Then, over summer?

KEATON: The immediate priority at this point is submitting our proposed plan to the state of New York for approval. Implementation will occur once the plan is approved.

THE STAND: What can people do right now?

KEATON: I would encourage anyone that is interested to contact me. We are looking for community members that want to change the narrative about poverty. We are accepting youth between the ages of 12 and 19 with a designated number of spots set for them. They have the highest stake in the community of anybody because they are going to experience the growth or the lack of growth more than anybody in any other age group. We need to know that you have a commitment to the process, and we are accepting those applications until we fill all designated seats. The advisory board and I want to cap it at 13, but there will be other opportunities to volunteer.

WE ASKED...

We asked residents for their observations on poverty and what they think the city could do to address the issue.



LINTER WYNN

Poverty on all sides of the city is because of lack of jobs and lack of job training.



ALVA JOHNSON

The city could give kids summer jobs — have them pick up all the papers (trash along sidewalks and at parks). It would give them something to do and help them make money.



DIANE BECKHAM

The city needs to have more programs for younger people. The demand is higher than what is offered.



JOSEPH GODLEY

To address it, the city can discuss it. Get people together to discuss it and that could change it.




ANNIE MOSS

The city could have more programs to educate single mothers and their children. To provide them with ways to live better and to promote education so their children do not continue to live in poverty.



NECIEFE "JJ" REDDICK

Poor is more than just being financially unstable — it's also a mind state. If you have a good amount of money but you are depressed, you'll feel poor.



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