

the **Stand** south side news

www.mysouthsidestand.com

Syracuse, NY

OCTOBER 2018

Issue 69

FREE

STILL I RISE

Parolee motivated by
daughter's success works
to find steady employment

CHRONIC ABSENCE

Syracuse City School District aims to bolster attendance

co-op remade

As food co-ops struggle,
Eat to Live becomes
Cafe Sankofa Cooperative

**The Cost
of Freedom**
Play depicting slave escape
in Syracuse set to premiere,
explores social justice issues

HEAD TO THE POLLS



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SPECIAL THANKS THIS MONTH

DEAN LORRAINE BRANHAM
AND BEA GONZALEZ

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PUBLICATION'S EDITORIAL PURPOSE AND IN
KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.

COMMUNITY | See what The South Side Newspaper Project has been doing with images taken during the summer's Annual Photo Walk.

FATHERHOOD | Meet Adonis Kinsey, a single father who shares an unbreakable bond with his young daughter.

SCHOOL AND YOUTH | Learn how the Syracuse City School District is teaming up with Harvard University to combat chronic absenteeism among its students.

PRISON TO FAMILY | Explore the latest installment of this in-depth series on the challenges individuals face reconnecting with family after time behind bars.

COMMUNITY | Find out about the former Eat to Live Food Cooperative, which has reopened as Café Sankofa and will serve as a cultural space for the community.

COMMUNITY | Hear from community leaders about the importance of voter education for the African-American community.

ENTERTAINMENT | Read a preview on "Possessing Harriet," a play set during the Antebellum period, which makes its world premiere at Syracuse Stage later this month.

Cover photography by Zachary Krahmer of Shallah "Brooklyn" Beal. Story on Page 10.

CALENDAR | OCTOBER

What: Minority & Women Business & Economic Empowerment Summit
When: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 20
Where: Marriott Syracuse Downtown, 100 E. Onondaga St.
Details: Event will feature speakers and breakout sessions focused on entrepreneurial and business needs. Speakers include Mayor Ben Walsh; Angel Rich, CEO of The Wealth Factory; John Hope Bryant, CEO of Operation HOPE; Sonia Booker, real estate and wealth expert; Jorge Villar, marketing advisor, and recording artist Alexis Spight.
Cost: \$75
More Info: Visit cohi-inc.org or call (315) 469-1106

What: Building Men Annual Breakfast
When: 8 to 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 20
Where: Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central, 258 E. Adams St.
Details: This fundraiser will share how the Building Men Program is moving to the next level and will feature speakers, program forecast and breakfast made by some Building Men students.
Cost: \$40
More Info: Call (315) 440-4357 or visit buildingmenprogram.org

At the end of August, I traveled to Alaska to visit a project that, like The Stand, received grant funding from Finding Common Ground. A portion of those grant funds were dedicated to exchanges that allowed each grant winner to observe and learn from another project.

The Finding Common Ground grant, funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation and administered by the University of Oregon's Agora Journalism Center, supports projects that encourage engagement. Winning projects were designed to get people to look up from their phones, to talk with others who hold differing perspectives and to engage in meaningful and civil dialogue.



WHERE TO VIEW PICTURES

- **Blue Brothers Barbershop,**
2036 S. Salina St.
- **Beauchamp Library,**
2111 S. Salina St.
- **Cut Kings,**
2850 S. Salina St.
- **Elks Lodge,**
3815 S. Salina St.
- **Colonial Laundromat,**
3901 S. Salina St.

The project in Alaska, Community in Unity, run by Anne Hillman, aims to unite people who wouldn't normally interact — residents of prison towns with the prisoners who are housed inside the facility located there.

Hillman asks participants to sit in a circle in order to have an open and honest discussion. Each conversation starts by asking everyone to actively listen to each other with respect, to seek understanding and to accept that the conversation may bring up issues that can't be immediately resolved. The project creates opportunities for Alaskans to gain a better understanding of life in prison, and for inmates to learn how they can fit back into the community.

For The Stand's Common Ground project, grant funds allowed us to expand our annual Photo Walk by adding a photo exhibit to showcase images captured from the South Side to a wider Syracuse audience. Thirty images from the Photo Walk will remain on display through October at The Link Gallery at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse, 350 W. Fayette St. Grant funds also allowed for several images to be on permanent display throughout the South Side neighborhood.

Now that the grant period has concluded, we are seeking sponsors to help display more photos throughout the city. If your business, nonprofit group or center would like to cover the cost to print and hang a photo, contact me at (315) 882-1054 or email ashley@mysouthsidestand.com.

The Stand will promote new sponsors and locations in future print issues and online.

Our fall 2018 student journalists visited the South Side last month to meet board members and see the neighborhood firsthand. Many will be out and about covering events, writing profile pieces and on the hunt for interesting story ideas. If you spot a new reporter with a pen and notepad at a community meeting or wandering down the street, say hi and feel free to pass on a story idea or two.

Ashley Kang

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Every child is precious. And we know how important it is to protect our children from harm.

But we have not paid close enough attention to an unfortunate danger lurking in the very old homes in much of Syracuse: deteriorating lead paint. Lead paint is a worn-out technology that has no place in the 21st century, yet here it is, embedded in our children's homes and play environments.

Approximately 90 percent of all childhood lead poisoning in Onondaga County happens in the city of Syracuse. That is more than 600 kids each year. The way to stop this tragedy is

to organize a massive and positive response — leader by leader, parent by parent.

We urge every leader and every parent to support the countywide campaign to end childhood lead poisoning by 2025, which seeks to protect our kids both today and for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Paul Ciavarri
Organizer, Campaign to End Childhood Lead Poisoning by 2025
Legal Services of Central New York

WHERE TO SEE

VISIT THESE 5 LOCATIONS

- 1 **Blue Brothers Barbershop**, 2036 S. Salina St.
- 2 **Beauchamp Library**, 2111 S. Salina St.
- 3 **Cut Kings**, 2850 S. Salina St.
- 4 **Elks Lodge**, 3815 S. Salina St.
- 5 **Colonial Laundromat**, 3901 S. Salina St.

STOP BY OUR GALLERY EXHIBIT

Exhibit will remain on display throughout the month of October at **The Link Gallery** on the ground floor of the Nancy Cantor Warehouse, 350 W. Fayette St.

SPONSOR A LOCATION

If your business, nonprofit group or center would like to cover the cost to print and hang a photo, contact Ashley Kang at (315) 882-1054 or ashley@mysouthsidestand.com

MIRROR IMAGE

Residents captured on film during Photo Walk reflected in framed images



> Steven Howington watches as Greg Munno, Newhouse faculty advisor and a member of The Stand's board, hangs up a photo of him at Blue Brothers Barbershop. The image was taken during the Photo Walk and will remain on permanent display. "I love that picture," Howington said. "It captures the essence of being a barber." | Sajida Ayyup, Staff Photographer

Staff Report

Photos of the neighborhood and its residents find permanent homes in the community

The Stand ended up with thousands of images from its 2018 South Side Photo Walk, and has been finding ways to share the bounty.

Prints of select images are now on permanent display at five South Side locations.

Meanwhile, on display through October, is a gallery show of 30 images from the walk at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse's Link Gallery, 350 W. Fayette St. The Stand held a reception to open the show in September, drawing photographers who participated in the walk, residents of the South Side, representatives from the mayor's Office of Communications and other Stand supporters.

Each summer our Photo Walk takes place to capture a typical Saturday in the neighborhood, documenting the people who call the South Side home. This past July marked our ninth year. The event's success is in the number and variety of people it brings together around the common interest of photography.



> Newhouse faculty advisor and board member to The Stand Greg Munno shows off the framed image taken during the annual Photo Walk to men inside the barber shop. | Sajida Ayyup, Staff Photographer

This effort to connect people across the divides of geography, cultures and economics was why The Stand was awarded the Finding Common Ground grant.

The grant committee sought projects that worked to turn people toward the world and amplify unheard voices.

We hope that by expanding our Photo Walk with both a gallery show and securing spots for images throughout the community we can help residents feel represented and seen.

To view more photos from the Photo Walk, visit mysouthsidestand.com



> The South Side Photo Walk Exhibit held a reception Sept. 6 at The Link Gallery. Clockwise from top left: Participant Annaliese Perry had two images featured out of the 30 on display. Photo Walk participant Justine Fenu also had two images featured, and Heather Waters proudly stands with her first image to be displayed in a photo exhibit. The exhibit will remain on display through the month of October at the gallery located on the ground floor of the Nancy Cantor Warehouse in downtown Syracuse. | Provided Photos



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.

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Adonis Kinsey

Nominated by Makhai Bailey

By Lianza Reyes
Staff Reporter

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

A. I always wanted to be a dad. That was the No. 1 goal. Her mother and I were together for 10 years. When I found out she was pregnant, I was ecstatic. I always used to talk about how the kid would become a basketball player, how we'd train them or whatnot. I was overjoyed. She and I spend so much time together. And it was a great feeling.

Q. What can you share about your daughter?

A. Gia is a very outgoing. She's not shy of anything. She's a little shy of pictures. But besides that, she's hardworking. That's one thing that amazes me about her. I always knew it was instilled in her, because I don't need to tell her to workout, she wants to do that on her own. Her dream is to go into the Women's National Basketball Association.

Q. How long has she been training?

A. For a year and a half.

Q. What was your relationship like with your father?

A. It was great and still is to this day. He was always there in my life. He was on the road a lot because he was an NBA referee. So he was always out of town. There were times I didn't see him for weeks on end, but I knew it was his job. Even if he was out of town, he'd send things over; he would call. The way he treated us was passed down. (All my siblings and I) treat our kids great.

Q. How many siblings do you have?

A. I have five brothers, and one sister that passed away. All my brothers play basketball. Everyone in the community knows who we are. You hear the name Kinsey, and it's something with basketball. My father was already recognized for what he did, and then he had kids that were coming up in high school playing basketball.

Q. Did your dad share advice that stuck with you?

A. My dad always told us to never be followers. He wanted us to have our own mind rather than follow what other people said. He was away from October to June, then he



MEET FATHER ADONIS: Kinsey, 39, owner of High Octane, a youth basketball program. He has one daughter, Gia Sinoda Kinsey. | Zachary Krahmer, Staff Photographer

would be home from June to September. He also always wanted us to be smart with our money. He's very much like a financial advisor. He's always on about the stock market. He let us be kids, but he always told us to never be a follower.

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

A. I would say all the time she and I spend together. A lot of people say I'm always with my daughter. I get that from women a lot, but I always do have her all the time.

Q. What is unique about your relationship?

A. As far as me having her, she is very overprotective of me, and I'm overprotective of her. Our bond is so tight. We do everything together. I'm her security blanket. Whenever she feels like she needs a shoulder to lean on or she feels threatened, she calls me. The other day, she had nightmares, and she was scared to sleep in her room. And this was at her mom's house. She called me at midnight, and I brought her back to my house.

Q. What does a workout with Gia look like?

A. We do a lot of dribbling in the beginning. We do a little conditioning too, play one-on-one. We try to work out for an hour and a half to two hours. During the school year, we try to do three times a week. During the summer, we try to go every day. Like I said, we put school first. We do homework together, and I try to help her as much as I can. Then when that's done, we go play basketball. Then she gets her Fortnite in. She can't forget her cousin, too. She's always babysitting.

“Make fatherhood your top priority”

Q. Any advice for first-time dads?

A. To be yourself, and make fatherhood your top priority. Show them the love, care and time. And just embrace everything — soak in every moment. All that time is something you can't get back. Next thing you know, they're 12 or 18. Then they're out of the house and doing their own thing. Just try to spend quality time with them. Be patient, and try to work things out with the mother too.

Q. Final thoughts?

A. Time is the main thing. You have to show them while they're young. Not necessarily money. That's the most important thing between a father and his kid. I believe that the stereotype against black fathers — it's gotten a lot better from when I was a child or growing up. And I think we just need to ease up on how we think. There's a lot of great black fathers out there.



STUDY'S APPROACH

Proving Ground is an initiative committed to helping education agencies meet their needs by making evidence-based solutions cheaper, faster and easier to use.

The Proving Ground approach is responsive, pragmatic and empowers education policymakers and administrators to:

- Quickly and reliably assess the impact of investments
- Continuously improve implementation by testing new strategies
- Incorporate new and better evidence into decision-making

To learn more: Visit provingground.cepr.harvard.edu/

RAISING AWARENESS

City schools partner with Harvard to improve student attendance



> Syracuse City School District students on this Fall's first day of school. | Photo Provided

By Nicole Valinote
Staff Reporter

District looks to combat attendance issues with initiatives to better inform parents

The Syracuse City School District is piloting new initiatives this year to boost student attendance and combat chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism occurs when a student is absent for at least 18 days — 10 percent of the school year, said Robert DiFlorio, SCSD's executive director of early childhood and elementary schools.

Chronic absenteeism exists in schools across the United States, said Phyllis Jordan, the editorial director of FutureEd, an organization at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy that analyzes education issues. Absence directly harms graduation rates, academic performance, and social and emotional skill development, Jordan said.

"About a decade ago, researchers realized that it didn't really matter why you missed school," Jordan said. "It mattered if you missed school."

Around 7.5 million students are chronically absent from school in the United States, said Joshua Childs, an assistant professor at University of Texas at Austin's College of Education, who has researched the issue.

SCSD is not immune to the problem.

"We run the gamut of kids who have missed 60, 80 days to kids who have missed no days," DiFlorio said. "So, we have this huge spectrum."

Over the past year, SCSD collaborated with an initiative at Harvard University called Proving Ground to develop a set of research-based interventions to address chronic absenteeism in Syracuse. Proving Ground, a program of Harvard's Center for Education Policy Research that was founded 2½ years ago, said Bi Vuong, the director of Proving Ground.

"The idea behind Proving Ground is to work collaboratively with districts across the country to help them generate new evidence to support their everyday decision-making process to remove barriers to student achievement," Vuong said. "We work with districts to identify and test solutions to challenges that are barriers to student achievement."

Proving Ground worked with central administra-

tion and school staff to conduct a “root cause analysis,” Vuong said. The research included analyzing district data to determine potential challenges to attendance and areas for improvement, Vuong said.

A variety of factors influence student attendance, including family life, neighborhood conditions and children falling sick with such illnesses as the flu, said Childs, the professor at UT Austin who researches absenteeism.

“A lot of people focus in on the inside-school factors that we assume to be associated with attendance, and not really thinking about those outside of school factors, like neighborhood conditions,” Childs said.

Some common causes of chronic absenteeism include transportation and health issues, FutureEd’s Jordan said. Additionally, chronic absenteeism is more prevalent among low-income students, who may have less access to medical care, transportation and other factors that impact attendance, Jordan said.

“The logic is simple,” SCSD’s DiFlorio said. “If students are not in school, they’re not learning. But the issues around chronic absenteeism are very complex.”

One research method SCSD worked on with Proving Ground included calling parents of kindergartners who had missed two weeks of school, DiFlorio said. The research found that parents were pre-emptively keeping their children home from school in case of illness, because their work schedules made it difficult to pick their children up from school during the day, DiFlorio said.

DiFlorio said the researchers at Proving Ground also helped arrange conversations with social workers, teachers and parents about ways to address chronic absenteeism. One discovery they made was that seven days of absence causes students to fall two months behind academically, DiFlorio said.

The research also found that certain grades have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than others. For example, kindergartners have a higher rate, Vuong said.

Once these challenges were identified, Proving Ground and the district collaborated to create initiatives to improve attendance, Vuong said.

One initiative to combat this trend that the district will pilot this year includes mailing postcards to parents, DiFlorio said. The postcards will include the student’s name, the lessons that the student missed and the number of days that the student missed, DiFlorio said.

“A lot of times, parents don’t know how many days their kids have missed,” Jordan said.

SCSD also did home visits this past summer to 250 of the 500 fifth graders who were chronically absent in the past school year, DiFlorio said. A family engagement facilitator made parents aware of the number of days of school their child had missed, and tried to help eliminate potential barriers to attendance, DiFlorio said.

Other initiatives that the district will pilot this year



> SCSD want more of its students to regularly attend school, like these pupils photographed in the hallway on their first day back to school. | Provided Photo

include sending home letters that compare the student’s attendance to other students, and the elimination of half days, DiFlorio said, as many students miss school on half days.

The Proving Ground team will analyze the results of these initiatives later this year and determine if there is improvement, Vuong said.

DiFlorio said the district hopes to see higher attendance rates and higher test scores.

“The ultimate goal is to educate kids,” DiFlorio said.

Childs said policymakers should not discuss school reform without placing attendance at the center of that reform.

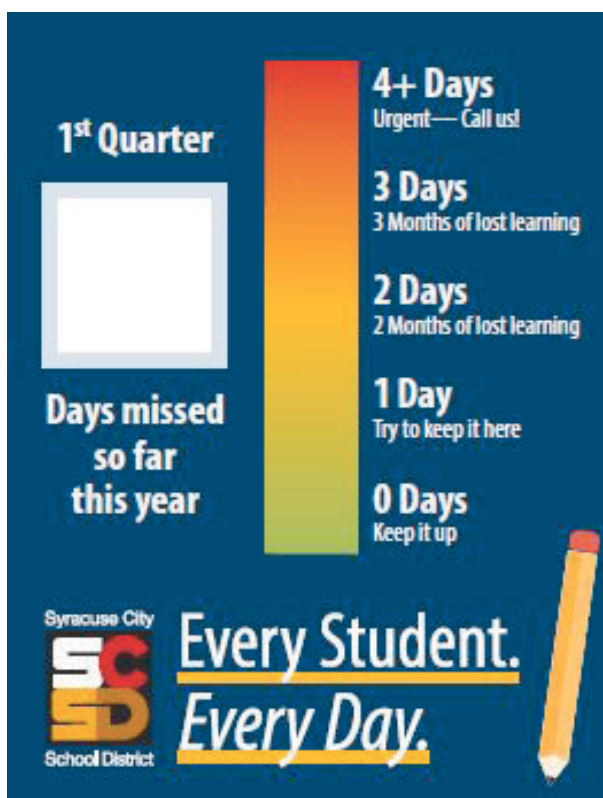
“If attendance isn’t at the center,” Childs said, “then the students who would benefit from those initiatives or reforms aren’t going to be there anyway.”

ONLINE TRACKING

The Syracuse City School District offers an online Parent Home Access Center to allow parents and families to view their student’s current year information.

For elementary students this includes registration information, attendance, report cards, disciplinary history and test scores.

For secondary students, this includes all of the above, in addition to class schedules, interim progress reports, transcripts and class assignments.





Another Chance

> Shallah J. Beal, known as “Brooklyn,” grew up in a housing project in New York City, surrounded by drugs and killings. Now, he’s putting his time behind bars in the rearview to focus on getting a job and re-booting his life. | Zachary Krahmer, Staff Photographer

By Sarah Perkes and Alexis Scott
Staff Reporters

Ex-offender wants to rebuild trust in himself and become a role model for his family

By his own account, “Brooklyn” Beal has “trust issues.” Beal is telling his own story — haltingly, slowly, incompletely. It’s part of the process of building trust, of getting over his issues. There’s a lot to get over, and much to tell about the pain-packed 40 years lived by the man born Shallah J. Beal. Some days he is upbeat, almost chatty. Others, he

borders on morose, and a talk with Beal feels dark. He has his family (two daughters), a girlfriend and an apartment with his brother. Missing from that list: a steady job. “I didn’t go to school to work at McDonald’s,” he said, noting he’s taken civil service exams, but hasn’t found work. Over the summer, he found temporary work, doing manual labor with a demolition crew through Manpower, a staffing agency. But by summer’s end, the downtown project had been completed and local construction opportunities had declined. His biggest life challenge now is securing what he deems a quality job. “I call Manpower every Monday,” he said. He’s

found several small construction jobs and warehouse positions that help cover the bills, but no steady work. He described a week of working overnight, unloading trucks or stocking shelves. This summer he also earned three certificates at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center, becoming OSHA-10, OSHA-30 and lead certified, all of which are construction health and safety trainings.

“I’m told those certificates will go a long way in making me desirable for future construction jobs,” he said of Manpower. “But I don’t wait for them to call me because then nothing would happen. I call every week — every Monday — to make sure they know I’m seeking work.”

Finding a job is one of the hardest things for parolees like Beal, who was released from prison in 2016 after serving three years for assault. An Urban Institute study found that only one-in-three parolees had found a job within two months of release. And difficulty finding work is a key factor in whether a person released from jail is arrested again, the Bureau of Justice Statistics concluded in 2018.

The bureau tracked more than 400,000 people released from state prison in 2005, and found that 83 percent were arrested at least once by 2014, according to its 2018 report. Blacks had the highest recidivism rates, at nearly 87 percent, and male parolees were more likely to be re-arrested than female, the study also found.

Opening up helps Beal, though talking doesn’t come with a paycheck. It does inspire self-reflection and a measure of optimism. That’s part of the goal PEACE Inc., the local community-service agency whose primary mission is to help individuals and families living in poverty, has in engaging men like Beal.

At PEACE’s Southside Family Resource Center, Beal speaks up around others at the encouragement of the center’s coordinator, Charles Rivers, who spent three decades in and out of prison. Rivers’ own journey has seen him evolve from a withdrawn ex-con to a confident advocate, comfortable leading groups of strangers through intimate discussions.

Rivers says one of the hardest things to endure for ex-offenders is coming out of jail when there’s no family or friends to greet you, and nowhere to go. PEACE makes sure Beal has that, and a friend when he might think there is no one.

Beal completed a three-year parole term at the end of 2017, and when he first arrived at PEACE, he was guarded and quiet. Many of the members knew him as someone who would come to PEACE to chat briefly with those he knew and then go about his business.

But after some time, he took to more people and started to relax. He is still private. He was not comfortable with reporters visiting where he lives, preferring to meet at PEACE. He also promised to connect reporters with his oldest daughter. He never did.

He says being jailed repeatedly, dealing with family and friends’ deaths and being away from his own children built the emotional walls around him.

“Never give up.”
— Shallah “Brooklyn” Beal

“That’s one of the things I’m most happy about,” Beal said. “I told myself I’d open my mouth more, and I am. I want to tell my story. That’s the whole reason for this. I got trust issues. ... I been through some real (stuff) a lot of people wouldn’t understand. But I am getting better with who I’m talking to.”

Middle school and puberty were tough for Beal. He was sent to a juvenile facility for defending his mom from her abusive boyfriend, he said. More assault charges followed. He was last charged for assault in 2013.

Beal’s nickname comes from growing up in the projects of Brooklyn, New York, during the 1980s and ’90s. Those decades were the worst years to grow up in the city, Beal said. Crack, cocaine and PCP were all out of control.

“It was hell,” he said when describing the drugs and killings that surrounded him.

Born when his mother was 16, his grandmother assumed full custody. Beal credits her for raising him. His mom was one of 10 siblings. He has over 50 cousins. His household was always crowded — with an average of three people to a bed, he said.

Beal has suffered a lot of loss. His mother died recently, and he lost several friends last winter and spring, including one who was shot and killed at a party in Syracuse. Beal said he had thought about attending the party.

His first brush with trouble was at age 12, when he said he stabbed his mother’s boyfriend after one of the many times she was beaten. He said he doesn’t remember how many times he was sent to jail before he was given a chance in the summer of 1994 to attend Cayuga Community College. He received his associate’s degree in business administration.

WIDER AUDIENCE

Past features in our “Prison to Family” series on Karen Loftin and the Family Reunification Grant were republished in The Crime Report

The Crime Report is a nonpartisan, nonprofit multimedia news platform run by John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. The publication produces comprehensive reporting, commentary and analysis of the criminal justice system.

This in-depth series “Prison to Family” was completed as part of a 2018 John Jay/H.F. Guggenheim Justice Reporting Fellowship awarded to The Stand’s director, Ashley Kang.

For more, visit thecrimereport.org

NEXT IN THE SERIES

In the November issue, meet James Rivers who will share what over a decade off of parole looks like. Also learn how Carole Horan supports those behind bars as a pen pal. She has written regularly to one incarcerated South Sider since 2014.

LOCAL JOB TRAINING

The State University of New York Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center provides workforce development programs and support services for eligible adult learners.

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> Beal talks with both of his daughters every day. He credits them, as well as his late mother, for being his motivation to improve his life and reunite his family. | Zachary Krahmer, Staff Photographer

But he fell in and out of trouble again, the last time in 2013 when he was convicted for assault and gun possession. The three years in state prison that followed, combined with participating in programs and playing basketball, which Beal says changed his mindset. He knew he had to get out of the projects, get out from under a “black cloud” and start fresh.

PEACE worked hard to support such efforts. Over the last year, the organization used a \$95,000 state grant for a pilot program to help just-released offenders reunite with families in public housing, which has strict rules limiting who is allowed to move in. Experts acknowledge family support is vital to break a chain of repeat offenses.

PEACE also used the funds to help people like Beal, who now lives with his brother in private housing, by preparing for a job with resume-building, setting up mock interviews or returning to school, according to the organization. PEACE also provides a place to go, to hang out, to remember good times and to reflect on positive experiences.

Funding ran out for the pilot program in February 2018. The state is still reviewing the renewal application. Rivers said PEACE will continue its role whether or not the grant is renewed.

Beal credits his strength of getting through his lows to memories of his late mother and his two daughters.

“Never give up,” he said. “That’s one thing I do.”

But that is not easy. When he tried to get a job before — and again now — he becomes frustrated.

“That’s when reality hit, and I had a reality check,”

he said.

He describes prison as a place where you activate “fight-or-flight” survival mode. He said he has had to relearn what it meant to strive for things like a steady job.

Beal says now he just wants to reach his goal: to be “comfortable.”

One threat to that “comfort” is being around the same things that got him in trouble in the first place. While he was incarcerated, Beal said he was around a lot of fighting, drugs and homemade alcohol.

“Being around all that is something I don’t want to keep doing,” Beal said. “I’m trying to make smart choices. I ain’t on no block or on a corner. I know the consequences of what can happen. I’m a grown man now.”

Beal has big goals for his future, his family and what he wants to achieve over the rest of his life. He has two daughters he talks to every day. His first-born is 22 years old and set to graduate from Buffalo State in May.

“That’s my motivation,” he explained. His second daughter lives with his aunt in Brooklyn, and is just 6. He hopes that one day they can all be reunited and live happily together as a family.

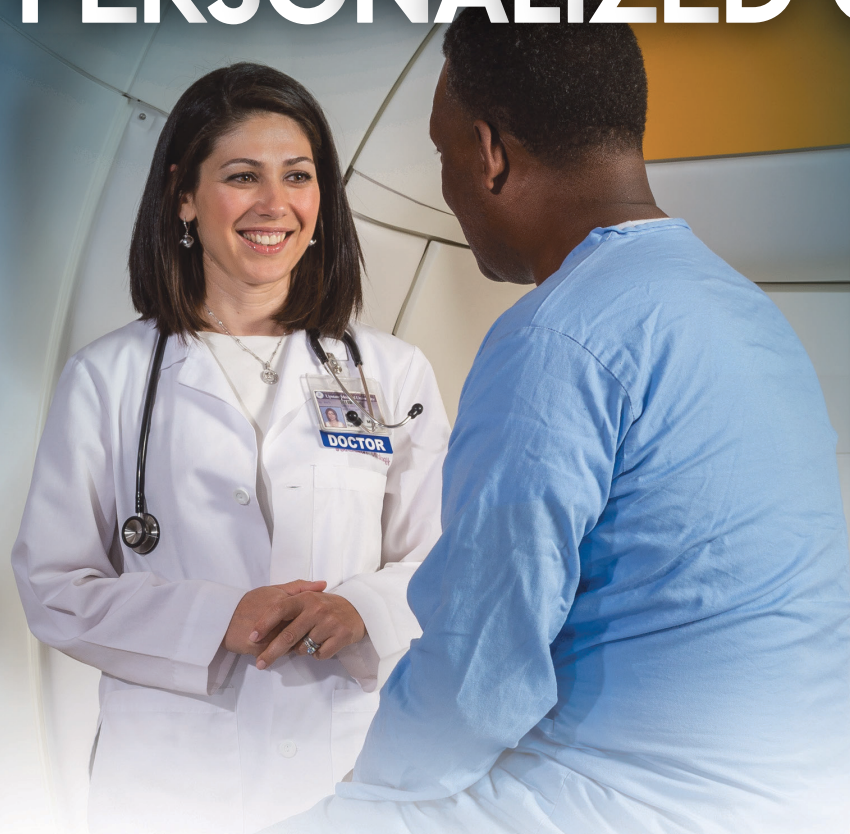
“I love my family,” he said. “They’re my rock.”

He wants to be someone they can look to. He is talking his way through it, feeling better.

“I’m not far,” Beal said, “from being where I want to be.”

Additional reporting by Ashley Kang, The Stand’s director

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SHOPPING WISH LIST

We Rise Above the Streets request the following items to use in its street outreach:

- Deodorant
- Tampons and sanitary pads
- Socks
- Soap
- Toothbrushes
- Flushable wipes
- Gallon Ziplock bags

Travel-size toiletries:

- Toothpaste
- Lotion
- Shampoo
- Conditioner

Items can be purchased online through the organizer's Amazon Wish List at <http://a.co/f3jX7ye>

SERVICE TO OTHERS

Local man pushes forward to put an end to homelessness in Syracuse



> Founder of We Rise Above the Streets Al-amin Muhammad washes the feet of Syracuse's homeless who attended the organization's final summer cookout. | Nicole Valinote, Staff Photographer

By Nicole Valinote
Staff Reporter

Al-amin Muhammad continues to expand his nonprofit in order to help those in dire need

Hundreds of members of the Syracuse community circulated through Billings Park for We Rise Above the Streets' end of the summer Cookout for the Homeless on Sept. 22.

During the event, volunteers served hamburgers, hotdogs, cake, cotton candy and more to the waves of guests who attended. Community members and local restaurants donated the food.

The event also featured a DJ, and guests smiled and danced to the music throughout the afternoon. Other forms of entertainment included free books, sidewalk chalk and bubbles for the children. The cookout also had a foot-washing station, where volunteers washed guest's feet and provided free socks and shoes.

We Rise Above the Streets is a charitable organization that focuses on meeting the needs of the homeless community. In addition to organizing these cookouts,

We Rise Above the Streets also hosts weekly "Sandwich Saturdays," where volunteers make lunches and deliver other donations, such as clothing and books, to members of the homeless community, said Amy Venskus, a volunteer for the organization.

Harris Eisenhardt, a student at The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry who has volunteered with the organization since last summer, said they anticipated hundreds of people at last month's event based upon the number who attend "Sandwich Saturdays."

"That's just a fraction of the entire population that's actually experiencing homelessness in the entire city," Eisenhardt said. "We like to think that it's touching a lot of people, but also we can always do more."

The event began at noon, and by 1 p.m., volunteers had already served more than 600 guests, said Al-amin Muhammad, the founder of We Rise Above the Streets. By the end of the event, they had served approximately 1,100 guests, he said.

This was the second cookout the organization hosted this summer. Volunteers hosted four last year, Muhammad added. The organization also partnered with other

groups to host this most recent event, such as Team A.N.G.E.L., a group that focuses on helping and inspiring Syracuse's youth.

The goal of the cookout was broader than providing food and essentials to the homeless community, said Nasirah Muhammad, a member of the organization and the wife of Al-amin.

"It's getting the entire community together and trying to change the perception that people have of our homeless community," she said. "People see somebody on the street asking for change or asking for something to eat, they don't realize that's somebody's father."

Nasirah said her husband organized most of the cookout.

"He's very passionate. He's real with it, and he loves the community," she said. "I think that's the most important thing."

Venskus said she likes being a part of events like this because of how volunteering has changed her own perspective.

"I used to roll up my window and not look because I'm embarrassed for that person on the side of the street," Venskus said, adding that now she carries things in her car specifically to give to those in need.

Nasirah says the organization wants to one day open a facility to further help the homeless community.

"That's at the top of the list," she said. "After you've met the basic needs of the homeless and underrepresented, then it's time for training. It's time to talk to them about sustainability and being able to sustain those things on their own."

Al-amin said some features he wants the facility to have include sit-down places to eat, showers, places to get haircuts, places to stay and access to agencies to further address the needs of the homeless community. The goal behind opening the facility will be to end homelessness in Syracuse, he said, adding that he understands how to communicate effectively with the homeless community because he was once homeless himself.

"I'm a humble person, but I'm going to be bold with this statement: I will end homelessness in Syracuse," he declared.

Eisenhardt said he likes being a part of the organization because he believes the impact the group has is immediate, personal and lasting.

"Everybody's human," Eisenhardt said. "That's the theme."

"When you see somebody struggling, give them another chance," Al-amin said. "Give them an opportunity to change. Never ever walk past anybody unfortunate. Always smile. It's not about money. It's all about being kind."

GET IN TOUCH

Who: We Rise Above The Streets Recovery Outreach

Mission: To deliver high-energy messages that encourage people to live up to their full potential by breaking the cycles of homelessness and crime many face daily.

Location: 404 Oak St.

Phone: (315) 491-7164



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FOOD \$EN\$E

One of the Food Bank's longest running programs, Food \$en\$e is a monthly food buying co-op for anyone who wants to stretch their grocery dollars. Food \$en\$e provides a monthly box of 12 to 15 staple grocery items at a discounted price.

Cafe Sankofa Cooperative became the most recent Food \$en\$e location over the summer.

Each package costs \$20.50 without limitation to the number of packages you may buy. While the items vary from month to month, the package always includes:

- Meat items like chicken, ground beef or fish
- Four to five staple pantry items like pasta, soup and rice
- Two fresh produce items like apples, carrots or oranges

Deadline to order:

Oct. 15

Delivery:

Oct. 24 through Oct. 26

To order: Contact Tanaya Thomas-Edwards at (315) 214-5999

CAFÉ SANKOFA

Former co-op reopens as café, cultural center to empower community



> Community programming like beginners yoga with The Zen G are new offerings at Café Sankofa Cooperative, formerly the Eat to Live Food Co-op. | Sajida Ayyup, Staff Photographer

By Keturah Raymond
Staff Reporter

Community space reenvisions itself to focus on promoting health and wellness for residents

They say third time's the charm. For the former Eat to Live Food Cooperative, board members have their fingers crossed that the business at 2323 S. Salina St. will emerge as a community success.

The former co-op, which sold fruit, vegetables and other nutritious fare, reopened earlier in 2018 after being closed for three months. Board members said it now has a new name and a fresh outlook. Renamed Café Sankofa, the co-op is being reimagined as both a café and a cultural space for the Syracuse community.

When the co-op closed last year, the board set about taking steps to assess their business shortcomings and apply the lessons learned.

Babette Baker, a board member and a non-profit management consultant, said that in the café, the board has a solid business model and is paying close attention to consumer demand and financial trends.



> Marcelle Haddix of The Zen G leads the community yoga class each Sunday. | Sajida Ayyup, Staff Photographer

"It's not that the co-op was a bad idea, but co-ops around the country are closing," Baker said. "I think when the co-op was opened the first time they thought about just the need and not really about the model, and we are (now) very much trying to do both. We're really trying to pay attention this time."

As Baker mentioned, co-ops around the country are struggling and one of the reasons is due to increased

competition. After 40 years of operation, the East Lansing Food Co-op in Michigan, closed its doors in 2017 when sales had gone down by almost 30 percent following the opening of a Whole Foods nearby.

Similarly, when Eat to Live reopened for a second time, a Price Rite had opened 1.3 miles away. With more options for grocery shopping, the co-op's \$100 membership fee, which has since been eliminated, became even more of a barrier.

Tanaya Thomas-Edwards, president of the co-op's board, described the co-op as having a business model and layout similar to a grocery store in its early days. The co-op no longer operates as a grocer but still runs a monthly food buying program called "Food \$en\$. For \$20.50 it provides anyone with staple food items and fresh produce. Steering away from its reputation as just a grocery store, the co-op is transforming into a space that supports education, culture and arts, Thomas-Edwards said.

"Café Sankofa is very important at this time when the city of Syracuse is currently going through a major change and it can be where we re-empower and realign our community resources so that everybody's at the table or it can be gentrification. And it looks a lot like gentrification is coming," Thomas-Edwards said. "And we are trying to make sure that the resources that will be spent in the community will benefit the community and that the people will not be pushed out."

The café is now open every Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m., serving smoothies, coffee, tea and baked goods.

The café also had several events during the summer to engage the community, board members said. From June to July, board members promoted Meatless Mondays with a local chef who specialized in vegan soul food. Menu options included vegan mac and cheese and collard greens.

The café has also served as a space for community

dialogue. It once hosted a "Doula Open House" in August where people learned about ways to advocate for "birth justice," the act of advocating for rights during pregnancy.

"This is filling the void of having a café-like meeting space," said Lauren Malloy, vice president of the board. "With our location being so close to the university, being on the strip of the South Side and close to two major highways — not just the eight blocks of Sankofa will benefit, but the whole city of Syracuse will benefit from a café cultural center."

She said the café is planning a series called "Soulful Sundays," which will include a yoga and other activities.

The series, at \$10 a class for eight sessions, will be run by Marcelle Haddix, who holds a doctorate in education, is a certified yoga instructor and is chair of the Department of Reading and Language Arts at Syracuse University.

Haddix is passionate about food justice and wellness. She emphasized how important it is for people to have access to healthy options, whether it's in food or wellness.

"You start off by asking the question 'is the community well?' and if that answer is 'no' it can affect generations to come," Haddix said. "It is up to us to make that answer a 'yes.'"

The yoga classes are meant to make yoga accessible to people who may feel like yoga is not for them, board members said.

All proceeds of the class will go towards supporting Café Sankofa to hold more events that serve the city, board members said.

"In the next five years," Thomas-Edwards said, "I see Café Sankofa as a thriving business in the community that brings to the community artists, lecturers and hosts classes that people would not generally take, while still providing that small niche of health and wellness."

SPEAKERS SERIES

What: Strathmore Speakers Series

Who: Emad Rahim

When: 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 25

Where: Onondaga Park Firebarn, 500 Summit Ave.

Details: Refugee Emad Rahim will share his remarkable journey from the Cambodian Killing Fields to Syracuse, where he learned not just how to survive, but to thrive in "Against the Odds"

More Info.: Visit strathmorespeakers.com

CAFE INFO

Café Sankofa Cooperative is now open limited hours to sell smoothies and offer community programming

Location: 2323 S. Salina St.

Smoothie Saturdays

9 to 11 a.m. every Saturday

Soulful Sunday Yoga

Time: 3 to 4 p.m.

Dates: Oct. 14 and 28, Nov. 4 and 18, and Dec. 9 and 16



YOU CAN VOTE, TOO

Many people being held at the Onondaga County Justice Center can vote in November's elections — if they're registered.

Eligible citizens can vote Nov. 6 if they register by Oct. 12.

In fact, the only people who cannot vote in New York are convicted felons during the time of their prison sentence and those on post-release parole or supervision.

U.S. citizens 18 or older can still vote if they are:

- Charged with a crime, but not yet convicted and awaiting trial
- Convicted of a misdemeanor or violation
- On probation
- Convicted of a felony but have completed their prison sentence and any post-release parole or supervision (re-registration is required)
- On parole for a felony but have received a voting restoration pardon from the Governor

People and organizations interested in volunteering for upcoming get-out-the-vote efforts may contact the League of Women Voters of Syracuse Metropolitan Area at (315) 396-8225

CREATING CHANGE

Community leaders urge South Siders to register to vote

By Billy Heyen
Staff Reporter

South Side activists take to the streets to educate fellow citizens on importance of voting

All one needs is a single, quick look at Charles Pierce-El to know he votes, and that he thinks you should, too.

Pierce-El has recently been sporting a button, affixed to his left breast, just over his heart.

It reads: "I'm voting. RU?"

Two city districts, both on the South Side, saw just one-in-four registered voters turn-out for the 2017 city elections. Pierce-El and the other members of a new Southside Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today sub-committee aim to change that.

"They think that politics doesn't make a difference," Pierce-El said of those who don't vote, especially younger residents. "So I'm trying to get a movement together to show them that it does make a difference. But it only makes a difference if you do it collectively and not individually."

Southside TNT is part of a partnership with Onondaga Votes!, the Dunbar Association and the League of Women Voters of Syracuse that recently received a \$4,800 grant for grassroots get-out-the-vote efforts. The grant comes from the Gifford Foundation's "What-if..." grant committee, which seeks to support grassroots organizations in Syracuse.

The grant will assist with voter registration, as well as education on candidates, issues and the power and mechanics of voting. It will also provide childcare, rides and meals at the Dunbar Association on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 6.

Pierce-El used to go around by himself, knocking on doors, encouraging people to get out and vote, he said. With a high neighborhood turnover, there were always new neighbors for him to meet.

"I'm retired, and I'm just giving back," said Pierce-El, who also sits on The Stand's board, among other efforts. "I'm giving back where there's a need."

Heather Allison Waters, the membership director for the League of Women Voters of Syracuse, shares Pierce-El's desire to get more people registered and to see them make it to the polls.

Waters said "obstacles" can prevent some registered voters from actually exercising their right to vote.

In areas with higher levels of poverty, such as the low-voter turnout districts in the city, transportation and



> Charles Pierce-El is an active resident. He is a member of Southside Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today Voter Education/Outreach Task Force and serves on the board of The Stand. | File Photo

child supervision can be hard to find, Waters said.

This new partnership wants to alleviate these types of obstacles.

"Some of the things that are barriers for people at poverty, (such as) childcare and transportation, are two key drivers," Waters said. "We wanted to make sure that those are part of our approach."

A sense that voting doesn't affect change is another barrier, and one that apparently starts young.

Rachelle Scrivens works with children at the South Side Communication Center, and she sometimes teaches them about politics and voting.

Scrivens sees the "our vote doesn't matter" mindset among the kids and doesn't quite know where it comes from. She suspects it just might not be a topic that's broached enough in school. So she said she tries to do her part to turn ignorance into understanding.

When Scrivens arrived at the center on Primary Day in September, she told the kids that she voted. The kids asked, "why?"

"When you don't vote," she said, "you don't exercise your right to have a voice in that process."

WORLD PREMIER

Historical play 'Possessing Harriet' to debut at Syracuse Stage

By Rachel Burt
Staff Reporter

Onondaga Historical Association commissions local playwright to revisit Syracuse's past

Freedom has a cost that the heart pays. This is the underlying message of the new play "Possessing Harriet," written by Kyle Bass and directed by Tazewell Thompson.

Based on the story of Harriet Powell — a young, mixed-race, enslaved woman who slips away from her southerner owner while staying in Syracuse — the play makes its world premiere Oct. 17 at Syracuse Stage in the very same city Powell made her escape.

"Possessing Harriet" is set in 1839 and was commissioned by The Onondaga Historical Association. It runs 90 minutes and tells a story of freedom, the underground railroad and Syracuse's part in American slavery and its abolition.

Gregg Tripoli, executive director of the historical association, said he believes the play will attract a large and diverse audience.

"It's a story about our underground railroad history, women's rights history and speaks to who we are as a community," he said. "It speaks to issues we are still dealing with today like racism and social justice."

With the aid of a mysterious free black man named Thomas Leonard, Powell finds temporary safe harbor in an attic room at the home of impassioned abolitionist Gerrit Smith. With the slave catchers in pursuit, Powell spends the hours before her dangerous departure to Canada in the company of Smith's young cousin, Elizabeth Cady, an outspoken advocate for women's equality. Elizabeth Cady Stanton would later become known to the world as the primary writer of the Declaration of Sentiments, a key document in the history of women's rights.

Confronted with new and difficult ideas about race, identity and equality, Powell is forced to the precipice of radical self-re-imagination and a reckoning with the heartrending cost of freedom.

"The stories that we have in our history are inherently dramatic, cinematic really, so we thought a play would be a great way to bring that out and attract a larger local audience," Tripoli said.

Bass, who wrote "Possessing Harriet," also teaches playwriting in Syracuse University's Department of Drama and theater courses in the Department of African-American Studies.

"I hope the audience connects to the play," Bass



> Kyle Bass is the associate artistic director at Syracuse Stage and a two-time recipient of the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship. In this play he tells the story of Harriet Powell who came to Syracuse with the Mississippi family that owned her. | Provided Photo

said. "I hope that people connect with the human desire."

Though 1839 was quite a long time ago, such stories are still relevant today as questions of identity, race and gender are still hotly debated.

While it is believed that Powell and Cady Stanton met, there is no record of their meeting, so Bass says he enjoyed being able to make it up. His interest in the history of slavery and its connection to his own family compelled him to write the play.

Bass began working on the play about five years ago. The play has been through many workshops and readings and has been put aside and revived many times. The play was even recently workshopped in New York City. Immediately after the session, Bass went back to his room and made some revisions.

"Everyone has been telling me for six weeks that the script is done," Bass said with a laugh. "But only the playwright gets to say when it's complete."

WHEN TO SEE

The play, based on the life of Harriet Powell — a young, mixed-race, enslaved woman who slips away from a hotel in Syracuse to escape her Southern owner — debuts this month

What: "Possessing Harriet"

When: Oct. 17 through Nov. 4

Where: Syracuse Stage, 820 E. Genesee St.

Cost: \$20-\$51

Box Office: Call (315) 443-3275

More Info.: Visit syracusestage.org

CAST:

- Nicole King
as Harriet Powell
- Daniel Morgan Shelley
as Thomas Leonard
- Wynn Harmon
as Gerrit Smith
- Lucy Lavelly
as Elizabeth Cady Stanton

"...an exhaustively researched, vividly realized and, above all, unignorable book."
The New York Times

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