

# the Stand

south side news

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Syracuse, NY

WINTER 2018-2019 Issue 71 FREE

## THE STRONG

"Kings of New York" win state title and set sights on national championship

## Release and Re-entry

PEACE pilot grant renewed, new case manager named

## A "new normal"

2009 Corcoran valedictorian details personal journey to sobriety in published book

**Leading by Example**  
Charles Rivers dedicates life to helping others since his release from prison

## PROMOTING EQUALITY



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S.I. NEWHOUSE SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**SPECIAL THANKS THIS MONTH**DEAN LORRAINE BRANHAM, VICE  
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PUBLICATION'S EDITORIAL PURPOSE AND IN  
KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.**4** **COMMUNITY** | Learn about the Dunbar Center's 100th anniversary and its century of accomplishments.**5** **COMMUNITY** | Embrace the legacy of Frederick Douglass, who continues to be celebrated in a local mural and the revival of his newspaper, The North Star.**6** **FATHERHOOD** | Meet Arnold Malloy, a father of two young daughters who emphasizes the importance of a father's presence.**8** **COMMUNITY** | Read about Unchained, the local non-profit fighting against the prison system.**10** **PRISON TO FAMILY** | Find out about the Family Reunification Program's initiatives now that it has received a two-year grant renewal.**12** **PRISON TO FAMILY** | In the final piece of this series, meet Charles Rivers, who uses his personal experience to guide him in helping others returning from prison.**16** **FEATURE** | Dive into the story of Seamus Kirst, 2009 valedictorian of Corcoran High School, who shouldered a double life until seeking support to overcome alcoholism.**18** **SPORTS** | Celebrate the Syracuse Strong's recent victory, winning the New York State Minor League Football Championship.

- Cover photography by Kai Nguyen of Shakem Buckmon. Story on page 18.

## CALENDAR | WINTER

**What:** Black Expo: Holiday Marketplace**When:** Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8**Where:** Syracuse Community Connections, 401 South Ave.**Details:** Event will feature food, music, entertainment, raffles and a variety of vendors with items for sale**Cost:** \$5**More Info:** Call (315) 878-2763 or email theblackexpo@gmail.com**What:** Shifting the Power: Health Justice at Upstate 2019**When:** 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Jan. 21**Where:** New Academic Building, SUNY Upstate, 766 Irving Ave.**Details:** Conference will include short sessions and interactive workshops on such topics as: "Racism in Medicine," "Health Effects of Inequality," "Healthcare in the Prison System," "Refugee Health" and more**Cost:** Free**More Info:** To learn more, contact the planning committee co-chairs, Sydney Russell Leed at russelsy@upstate.edu or Adaobi Ikpeze at ikpezea@upstate.edu

A big congratulation to Syracuse Strong, this year's state Minor League Football Champions. Read about the team's big win on Page 18.

Another local football team was also recognized for its ability to support its players — *of all abilities*. Brandiss Pearson, mother to a 16-year-old Nottingham High School JV football player who also has Down syndrome, wanted to thank the players for accepting and including her son on the team.



She did so in a big way.

To celebrate the end of their season and surprise them with a special thanks, she asked local community leaders to share messages of thanks to these special teens. If you missed this story, you can find it on our website at mysouthsidestand.com.

In this issue, we wrap up The Stand's series "Prison to Family." A small collection of Newhouse students and I sought to complete an investigative project to inform the public about a tax-funded re-entry program in their community and to share personal stories of the challenges individuals face when making the transition from prison back to life in free society.

The series pushed students out of their comfort zone, forcing them to engage with residents they would otherwise likely never meet. Students grew greatly in their urban reporting skills. The former offenders also learned to share honestly and find value in their stories. Many revealed this was the first time they opened up about their past and hoped having their story published could help others.

In May 2018, we published an in-depth look at the state-funded pilot program, which was modeled off a successful New York City initiative. Syracuse's effort was co-run by two ex-offenders, Karen Loftin and Charles Rivers. Readers met Loftin in September's print issue and can learn more about Rivers on Page 12.

Funding for the pilot program ran out in February 2018, eliminating Loftin's role. After several months, the state renewed the grant for another two years. Rivers said our stories helped push the state towards that decision. Read more about the grant renewal on Page 10.

Ashley Kang

## STUDENT JOURNALISTS

Student reporters and a graduate student photographer met with a group of South Siders in order to recount what the days, months and years after incarceration are like in our special series "**Prison to Family**"

**Divya Murthy** — profiled Charles Rivers, who completed parole shortly before taking on a role overseeing a pilot program to help other parolees. Read Rivers' story in this issue on Page 12.

**Saniya More** — profiled Karen Loftin, who worked directly with parolees and has been off parole herself for over a decade. Her story was published in the September issue.

**Sarah Perkes and Alexis Scott** — met with Shallah "Brooklyn" Beal, whose motto is "Born to lose, built to win. Still I rise." His story was shared in the October issue.

**Bianca Moorman** — shared the experience of James Rivers, off parole for more than a decade, and also profiled Carole Horan, who has served as a prison pen pal for four decades. Their stories ran in the November issue.

**Zachary Krahmer** — captured captivating portraits of each of the sources, gracing a total of three covers.

All stories and images in this series can be viewed online at [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com)

## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Rescue Mission's 26th annual **Scan-Away Hunger** campaign invites shoppers at Wegmans and other participating stores to donate \$2.24 at checkout to feed a hungry neighbor.

Scan-Away Hunger coupons are available at checkout in participating stores through December including 10 Wegmans locations in Central New York, Green Hills in Nedrow, Nichols in Liverpool and Nojaim in Marcellus.

The Rescue Mission provides three free meals every day of the year to men, women and children who might otherwise go hungry. In Syracuse, the Mission serves nearly 700 meals a day, and nearly a quarter million meals every year.

Scan-Away Hunger coupons are also available at Rescue Mission Thrifty Shopper stores.

For more information, visit [scanawayhunger.com](http://scanawayhunger.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Third annual Winter Art Auction

**When:** 6 to 9 p.m.  
Thursday, Dec. 6

**Where:** Community Folk Art Center, 805 E. Genesee St.

**Details:** Event will feature live and silent auctions of donated works by several local artists. Distinguished local artist Jackie Warren-Moore will share her poetry, and music and refreshments will be provided.

**Cost:** A \$20 donation at the door is required for attendance. No tickets will be sold.

**More Info:** Contact Liz Page at (315) 727-2690

### Women of Color Wellness Conference

**When:** 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, April 27, 2019

**Where:** Dunbar Center, 1453 S. State St.

**Details:** Open to the public and lunch provided

### Dunbar Annual Dinner Celebration

Planned for June 2019

# CELEBRATING 100

*The Dunbar Center celebrates a century of spreading equality*



> Mayor Ben Walsh and his staff at the Election Day breakfast fundraiser held at the Dunbar Center. | Annaliese Perry, Staff Photographer

### Staff Report

### Dunbar Association Inc. is dedicated to bringing the community together

Syracuse's Dunbar Association Inc., an organization dedicated to the promotion of racial equality in a city nationally known for extremely high concentrations of black and Hispanic poverty, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

The Dunbar Association, commonly known as the "Dunbar Center," was officially incorporated in the 1930s, but its roots date to 1918 when Jimmy LaGrin, an ex-convict and barbershop owner, first considered the idea of forming the organization at a time when discrimination was apparent in Syracuse. This is also when African Americans were frequently settling in the city to find work after leaving southern states.

"Dunbar played a big part in finding places for people to live," recalled Clarence "Junie" Dunham, a former Onondaga County legislator, in a video produced by the Dunbar Association.

Since then, bringing residents from the black community together and promoting local discourse have been missions of the organization, today located at 1453 S. State St.

That was evident in early November, on Election Day. The nonprofit hosted a breakfast fundraiser, with diners noting that the meal gave a feeling of "home," like



> Volunteers sell tickets during the annual Election Day breakfast fundraiser. | Annaliese Perry, Staff Photographer

sitting down with family.

"What better day to celebrate and promote coming together than when our country votes to elect those who help endorse and shape the programs and initiatives that affect us all," said Merriette Pollard, a volunteer board consultant with Dunbar.

Pollard added that she feels optimistic that the Dunbar Association will continue operating for generations to come. Phyllis Moore, temporary acting chief operating officer of the organization, and Pollard both noted attendance at each year's Election Day fundraiser continues to grow.

# LOOKING BACK

Reflecting on Frederick Douglass' legacy of fighting for justice



> Syracuse-based illustrator London Ladd painted two murals on the corner of South Salina and West Taylor streets at the end of the summer. One featured Frederick Douglass. | Geena Matuson, Staff Photographer

By Matthew Gutierrez  
Staff Reporter

## Celebrated abolitionist commemorated by local artist, national newspaper columnist

Frederick Douglass, who has been called the greatest American of the 19th century, grew up as a slave named Frederick Bailey. He became a prominent American abolitionist, author and orator.

He made several appearances in Syracuse during his lifetime (1818-95). On Nov. 14, 1861, he gave a speech, "The Rebellion: Its Cause and Remedy," before several hundred people. He advocated for the emancipation of slaves, their role as soldiers and ways in which the Civil War could be ended.

"In order to have a Union," Douglass said that day in Syracuse, "we must have unity of idea, unity of purpose, unity of interest."

Then the next day, on Friday, Nov. 15, he gave a speech on literature, which was a key theme in his life. He was the publisher of a Rochester-based, anti-slavery newspaper, "The North Star." The paper's motto was, "Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the

Father of us all, and we are all Brethren."

The newspaper will be revived online by activist and columnist for The Intercept Shaun King, who made the announcement Nov. 1. King said in a NPR interview his team will bring the paper into the digital age by publishing online. The revived paper will also provide its audience with podcasts, video news services and mobile apps.

While the paper is among Douglass' ties to New York state, he made other visits to Syracuse.

In 1843 at Fayette Park, he was chatting with some locals near a tree. Within hours, he had about 500 people there listening to his ideas.

On Aug. 20, 1850, Douglass gave a lecture on slavery at Syracuse City Hall.

His other appearances focused on justice and human rights. In 1851, Douglass announced at a meeting in Syracuse that he did not assume the Constitution was a pro-slavery document. He said it could "be wielded in behalf of emancipation," especially where the federal government had exclusive jurisdiction.

This summer, Syracuse honored his legacy: A bridge over South Salina Street became a mural of Martin Luther King Jr. and Douglass, who is painted on one side of the wall.

## LOCAL ART

This summer, local artist London Ladd completed murals depicting **Frederick Douglass** and **Martin Luther King Jr.**, along with quotes from each, commemorating the men's Syracuse speeches in 1861 and 1961, respectively.

The cost to create the murals was \$88,000. This cost is covered under the University Neighborhood Service Agreement, which is an annual \$500,000 fund provided to the city by Syracuse University.

The mural of Douglass features the quote: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

# Arnold Malloy

*Nominated by his wife, Lauren Malloy*

By Ashley Kang  
*The Stand Director*

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

A: It was a year after we got married we found out we were pregnant. It was definitely a joyous occasion. It was obviously new and something to look forward to as far as a legacy standpoint for me. It was a great feeling. With our first, we didn't make the sex a surprise, but with the second, we did. We did the whole gender reveal by cutting the cake to find out we were having another girl. We may have been hoping for a boy at that time, but both are a true blessing, and we couldn't ask for anything more. They both provide a new outlook on life for sure.

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

A: Naomi is 2 years old and will be 3 in March; Olivia is 4 and turns 5 in February. They are actually two years and seven days apart. They are both very good girls, and both do ballet and gymnastics. We do have our hands full, and they keep us on our toes. As they've continued to grow, we've started to see their personalities come out more and really started to see them bond with each other.

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

A: Growing up in the early stages he wasn't really there. My mother did get married, and I had my step-father in my life for some time. I didn't really start having a relationship with my biological father until I was 15 or 16. I think what sparked that reunion was an interest in me to want to learn more about him, about myself and that side of my family. To see where I come from, where some of my characteristics come from and learn a little more about the legacy.

**Q:** *Did he offer any advice that stuck with you?*

A: Learn by example. Definitely looking from the outside in, learning from mistakes that he may have made, so wanting to make sure I built those positive



**MEET FATHER ARNOLD:** Malloy, 30, director of group sales for Syracuse Mets Baseball Club and father to two girls. | Zachary Krahrmer, Staff Photographer

relationships and serve as a role model to my two girls.

**Q:** *What are your thoughts on stereotypes about black fathers?*

A: I guess the media feels there are not enough black fathers around. I think that there's a story behind everyone's situation and how they were developed. I think by heart, we want to be providers. But sometimes life happens. I think dads really do want to be that father that is needed in their children's lives, but oftentimes due to circumstances, they don't have the opportunity to do so.

**Q:** *Any advice for first-time fathers?*

A: The most important thing is to have patience. As a father of two girls and as the only male in the entire household, it gives you a unique perspective to understand the



opposite sex. But know you must have patience, love and understanding, all at the same time. You have to pick and choose your battles and pick a balance that will provide everyone with a positive environment. My father-in-law, Lawrence Williams, has three girls, and there's a few other older men I've formed relationships with that have girls. They all pretty much tell me the same thing. It's all about the patience and creating a relationship where they know they can call on you and depend on you. You need to be there and be the safety net.

*Q: Is there anything in your role as a father that would surprise people?*

A: Sibling-wise, I have one other brother and four sisters, so from a male standpoint, I've always served in that role of being a protector. So people may be surprised with the way I joke around with the girls. When people see us together, it is definitely a joyous occasion. At this age, the girls love to dance. So I get in there and dance with them. Their favorite song right now is by JoJo Siwa titled "Boomerang."

*Q: What has been a favorite family tradition?*

A: I think we make time for them to build a relationship with our immediate family. My family is actually from Philadelphia, so we go back often to visit everyone. My mother, grandmother, sisters and father are still back in Philly. They also have cousins around their age.

*Q: Final thoughts?*

A: I think it's very important for men to experience fatherhood and be in their children's lives. Because at the end of the day, kids will internalize and analyze their parents' actions more than we think.

*“You need to be there  
and be a safety net”*



## BECOME A WATCHER

If you are interested in becoming a Court Watch volunteer, Unchained and the Criminal Justice Task Force of the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS) offer trainings.

Attendees will learn about how bail is set at arraignments and be trained on taking notes. Court Watchers serves as public monitors of the criminal justice system as it happens.

Court watchers will volunteer to occasionally attend arraignments in downtown Syracuse and document what they see by filling out a one-page form for each case.

For more information, visit **Unchained** at [weareunchained.org](http://weareunchained.org) or **ACTS** at [acts-syracuse.org](http://acts-syracuse.org)

# COURT WATCHERS

Syracuse nonprofit to coordinate justice system accountability project



> Unchained volunteers and supporters stand outside of the Syracuse City Court building. | Provided Photo

By Nicole Valinote  
Staff Reporter

## The group Unchained hopes to address issues of economic inequality, white supremacy

A new Syracuse-based nonprofit is working to reform the prison system and fight injustice. Unchained was founded in March and aims to use research-based campaigns and input from prisoners and their families to make the bail process more fair, and to make prison programs more focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment, among other initiatives.

The organization was founded by Derek Singletary and Emily NaPier Singletary, a married couple who knows the system well. Derek Singletary is serving a 20-year sentence for first-degree manslaughter. He fatally stabbed Darnell Brown in 2010 on the eve of Brown's 27th birthday.

The Singletarys founded the organization believing that dedicated people can change the toughest parts of society. The goal is to end the system of incarceration and address societal issues such as economic inequality, racism and white supremacy, NaPier Singletary said.



> The Singletarys in the Elmira visitor room. The couple were married at the correctional facility in May 2017. | Provided Photo

“If you created communities where people’s basic needs were met, and where people felt empowered and were treated with dignity and respect, you wouldn’t have the need for the systems of policing and prisons that we have right now,” she said.

The organization is currently working on a court watching project in partnership with the Alliance of

Communities Transforming Syracuse, or ACTS. Their goal is to assess how Onondaga County implements bail, and ultimately to end cash bail. Volunteers with the organizations are attending arraignments and documenting how bail is being applied in Syracuse.

“Bail is supposed to be just assurance that the person will show up to their court dates,” NaPier Singletary said. “It’s not supposed to be tied to the severity of a crime.”

Recently, ACTS worked on a countywide campaign to end youth solitary confinement.

A federal judge ruled in 2017 that Onondaga County must stop housing teens in solitary confinement at the Onondaga County Justice Center. They were

placed in solitary to keep them out of the general, adult population. The county has since moved the teens to the Hillbrook Juvenile Detention Center.

Nancy Gwin, chair of the ACTS’ criminal justice task force, said an inability to make bail was what landed many of those teens at the justice center in the first place.

The Katal Center for Health Equity and Justice found that nearly 70 percent of those detained in New York state local jails are awaiting trial, so are technically innocent in the eyes of the law.

While New York state allows for non-monetary forms of bail, most frequently bail is set through cash or insurance company bonds, NaPier Singletary said.

“It’s essentially forcing them to buy their freedom, to buy their way out of jail,” NaPier Singletary said.

Christopher White, a member of Unchained’s board, said the members of the organization hope to compel judges to set non-monetary forms of bail, such as promissory notes that people can sign stating that they will attend their court date.

“It’s assumed that everyone is innocent until proven guilty through the court of law,” White said. “If we’re saying people are innocent, why are we penalizing them with cash bail?”

Cash bail is a problem, Gwin said, because it creates a large divide between people who have the means to pay their bail and those who do not, and that bail can be set intentionally high so people will be unable to be released.

“I feel pretty clearly that our mass incarceration system is intentional and designed to lock people up,” Gwin said.

White, who served 10 years in prison for second-degree burglary, said he believes he was discriminated

against for his socioeconomic status by receiving a sentence of long-term incarceration, over other forms of punishment.

Thirty-three volunteers attended the first training session in September, where they were taught about bail and how to take notes on forms while sitting in

on arraignments, NaPier Singletary said.

Another issue Unchained will tackle is the costs of being incarcerated in Onondaga County jails, NaPier Singletary said. While many may view incarceration as a free ride, jails and prisons can be costly for incarcerated individuals and their family members, who must pay for commissary items, phone calls and fees for disciplinary tickets, NaPier Singletary said.

“We think that that’s a really big problem that needs to be addressed,” NaPier Singletary said. “Our jails shouldn’t be financed by the people caged inside of them and their loved ones. That’s just ludicrous.”

Derek Singletary, who is currently at the Elmira Correctional Facility, said he helps provide Unchained with the perspective of those who are currently incarcerated.

Gwin, who said she was incarcerated for a period of six months after trespassing during a social justice protest, said she is passionate about prison reform because during her time in prison she saw how the system of incarceration disrupts society and families, and does not always give people access to enough useful resources to re-enter society.

Singletary is currently taking classes in prison offered through Cornell University. Despite telling the judge at his sentencing that he had no intention of changing his ways, Singletary says he has been rehabilitated. He credits his wife and access to higher education as the forces that inspired the change.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy, a non-profit organization that seeks to increase accessibility of higher education, found that recidivism rates were 46 percent lower amongst incarcerated people who had taken college classes.

Unchained isn’t here to tell the Syracuse community what needs to be changed in the system, because the community already knows, the Singletarys said.

“Our message would be, we know what’s wrong because we’ve lived it,” NaPier Singletary said. “We know that other people know what’s wrong because they’ve lived it. So let’s get together and fight back.”

**“Why are we penalizing them with cash bail?”**

— Christopher White

## HOLIDAY HELP

Unchained has set up a GoFundMe to raise money for incarcerated fathers to be able to give their children toys this Christmas.

All funds raised go to purchasing gifts for children chosen by their fathers, supplies and gift wrapping.

**To learn more**, visit [weareunchained.org/getinvolved/](http://weareunchained.org/getinvolved/)

# Grant renewed

**PEACE names new case manager to oversee program's next two years**



> Marrell Edwards, newly hired case manager for PEACE Inc.'s Family Reunification Grant, is a trained alcohol and substance abuse counselor. Because of his own past, he is empathetic and has a passion for helping others. | Ashley Kang, The Stand Director

By Ashley Kang  
The Stand Director

**PEACE will continue to be able to help individuals returning from prison, their families**

**C**o-run by two ex-offenders, a state-funded pilot program worked last year to help recent parolees re-enter society by supporting their transition back to their families.

On hold for nearly seven months after funding ran dry, the program has been renewed by the state with a two-year \$95,000 grant.

The Family Reunification Pilot Program created a

partnership with three Syracuse agencies to find suitable living arrangements for people released on parole and to support their progress toward self-sufficiency. Partners included the Syracuse Housing Authority, which allowed those recently released from prison a chance to move into public housing with their families; PEACE Inc., a nonprofit agency providing case management; and the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, which continued as parole monitors.

Money for Syracuse's pilot ran out in February of 2018, but the three agencies continued to stay in touch, and SHA oversaw at least one person's move into public housing after being released from prison despite the funding lapse.

That family was recently able to move out of their unit and into a private rental.

In October, PEACE began to interview candidates to replace the pilot's case manager position. More than 20 were interviewed and the position was given to Marrell Edwards. He was highly recommended by Rasheada Caldwell, coordinator for PEACE's Eastside Family Resource Center. His first day was Monday, Nov. 5.

"He's an exceptional person to fill that spot because of his life experience and because of his heart," said Caldwell, who says she has known Edwards all of her life. She said they both grew up on the city's East Side.

This is just the most recent success story from the partnership, says Charles Rivers, coordinator of PEACE, Inc.'s Emma L. Johnston Southside Family Resource Center.

During the funding lapse, Mary Beth Welch, director of Family Services at PEACE Inc., says PEACE did not take on additional clients, but it never stopped supporting those who were a part of the pilot program.

"When we lost funding temporarily, we didn't disengage the clients," she said. "We stayed active with them as much as possible, even being down a case manager."

Rivers says they did this to not lose track of those enrolled and were able to track their progress.

"We did that not only for refunding, but in fairness for the participants," Rivers said. "Oftentimes when a program lapses and they lose that support, they tend to go back to their old ways."

Welch and Rivers met to review each client in early October. She said eight out of the 23 individuals enrolled had been reincarcerated. "It seemed to be the same scenario for each," she said with disappointment in her voice. "Nearly every time it was due to substance abuse."

In the back of her mind, she said, she wonders if the grant funds had been renewed sooner and the case manager role hadn't vanished, maybe that number could have been lower.

"My only concern and disappointment is the period where we had that lull without a case manager," she said. "There's no crystal ball to know for sure, but that could have prevented so many returning to prison."

Former case manager Karen Loftin had to leave PEACE when grant funds depleted last February and her role was suspended. She took on a new full-time position in May.

"I wish I could have waited, but it wasn't a sure thing that it was going to be renewed," said Loftin, who noted that financially she couldn't continue to wait. She needed an income.

Welch says the grant has been renewed for two years and the language has not changed. The grant is for \$95,000 each year, totaling \$190,000 over two years. Grant participants still must move into public housing, and the goal is to enroll a total of 12 individuals each year.

Loftin is bothered to hear the wording of the grant was not changed in the renewal, noting that implies there was nothing to learn from the pilot. Her biggest suggestion at the conclusion of the pilot was to expand the grant to include options for clients to move into Section 8 housing.

One adjustment Welch noted is adding a goal of five clients for non-public housing, basing this change on the numbers from last year.

"We submit a work plan to the state with our target," Welch said. "We must put down 12 because that is what the memorandum of understanding (MOU) requires, but we are also adding a target of five to reunite with family in the community in non-public housing."

This target will be evaluated and adjusted each quarter based on progress, and was added because of the need seen from the pilot year, Welch noted.

Loftin advises the new case manager to not view this role as typical social work.

"The new hire is going to have to be empathetic and have the ability to identify with their struggles," she said. "Because when they emotionally and psychologically reach a place that is going to be challenging for them to overcome ... you've got to have somebody that knows what that place is."

Both Loftin and Rivers have long histories on the South Side, have been incarcerated and completed parole. Welch believed Loftin's past, combined with her educational degree, made her uniquely qualified to connect with grant participants.

Welch sees all these qualities, and more, in Marrell Edwards, the newly hired case manager. She credits his ability to work with substance abusers from his training as a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor trainee. Welch also sees his potential from his time working at Syracuse Behavioral Healthcare, now known as Helio Health.

The next steps for Edwards is to resume regular meetings with partners, meet with current participants and recruit new ones into the program.

"The new case manager must have patience," Loftin said. "When you are talking about hungry bellies, crying kids, can't find a job because of your rap sheet, you go back to what you know."

Knowledge of such struggles is still fresh for Edwards, who was a drug addict for 18 years and spent time in and out of prison for crimes committed as an addict. Now 50 and sober for nearly 13 years, Edwards has a passion to help others because he has been where they are.

He recognizes that garnering small victories can help such individuals progress.

"I know what they are feeling and what struggles they face," he said. "I was once the one that was thrown away."

## RE-ENTRY PILOT YEAR

11 applications received by Syracuse Housing Authority

- 2 were rejected: One because of incomplete/inaccurate information on the application and one due to family health/safety concerns
- 9 applications accepted

Over the course of the pilot:

- 2 moved out voluntarily, due to change in family circumstance
- 2 reincarcerated
- 5 continue to be housed by SHA

PEACE worked with 23 individuals over the pilot year. Out of those:

- 6 have made no contact
- 8 have been re-incarcerated
- 9 remain active in the program, meaning they have employment or are involved in employment search

### MEET EDWARDS

In the February issue, learn more about **Marrell Edwards**, who overcame addiction, graduated college and has helped countless individuals overcome their difficulties. He says when he stopped doing drugs, the crimes stopped. Then when he started to feed his addict brain knowledge, he grew an appetite for education.

# Fighting the Odds



> Charles Rivers spent 19 years of his life behind bars. Now he helps others leaving prison to start over. | Zachary Krahmer, Staff Photographer

By Divya Murthy  
Staff Reporter

## How one man's past led him to create a brighter future for others coming home from prison

Charles Rivers tore through a dark backyard, trying to shake a police pursuit. But they would catch up — as they always had.

Part of him even wanted that, he says today, recalling what he felt as a great sense of relief. Relief for the escape prison would offer from constant crime, partying and drugs. He sat in the back of a police car, exhausted, almost happy.

“I wasn’t necessarily runnin’ from the police, I was runnin’ from myself,” he said. “Jail was an escape for me.”

It was 2007, and the epiphany helped Rivers come to terms with being caught and sent to jail for the third time

in his life.

Rivers thought the charges were harsh and challenged them, but his lawyer warned that as a repeat offender he faced up to a quarter-century of time. Somehow, Rivers says, he walked out with much less. He remembers that feeling of relief, again, this time tears running down his face.

“I wasn’t worried. I prayed. I asked God: ‘If you show me my life is in your hands, I’ll worship you every day of my life,’” he said. “And I sincerely meant that. Next day, I went in. I was sentenced to seven years.”

That was the last time Rivers went to prison. He walked out in 2012, and in the four years since, he got a steady job, bought a home and continued his education. He wanted to close the chapter on crime the last time he went behind bars, and he has. The new chapter? A life helping others, some no doubt on a path like his when life went wrong: Kids with no dad at home, kids skipping

school, kids already in trouble. Single parents unable to help — unequipped to help.

Rivers understands how hard it is to avoid a life of crime and then break out of it. Day by day at PEACE Inc., he offers the kind of help and support that could help some avoid a life of crime, and others fight their way out of it through programs such as one that offers support to ex-cons who are re-entering life on the outside.

“Everything that happened in my life is administered in the services given out at this center — not eating right, not budgeting, not managing re-entry,” Rivers said. “It was a struggle coming back out into society.”

The struggle continues for many.

## PROVIDING FOR HIS COMMUNITY

Rivers moved slowly, but seemed to be everywhere at once at PEACE Inc.’s Emma L. Johnston Southside Family Resource Center one day in April 2018. A fraternity from Syracuse University had arranged for some barbers to provide free haircuts and food at the center that day. Men and women were flocking in and out, writing their names forcefully on the center’s sign-in sheet.

The sheet filled up quickly, and Rivers, the center’s coordinator, was the one fiddling with the printer to generate another page to accommodate the crush. He dove into his office and handed out a power strip when the barbers asked. He snuck out an extra box of raisins to a man who had stopped by the center for food. His wide smile showed the gaps between his teeth and his beanie cap betrayed the sparse hairs on his head. When a joke tickled him just right, his laugh bounced off the walls he had redesigned.

Moving in and out, he tried to make sure all the promised haircuts were given, and all the families were being provided for. Feeding hungry families is one of the center’s main commitments, as the steadily depleting stock of bread loaves at the center indicated. Quality, affordable food is sometimes tough to find on the South Side, a high-poverty neighborhood that’s been categorized as a “food desert.” Rivers takes care of the sprawling pantry upstairs.

Family development is especially important to Rivers, who grew up without a male mentor in his own life. He was his mother’s only son and his father’s youngest, and was raised by his mother alone in Newark, New Jersey,

before they moved to Syracuse when he was 13 or 14. Here, he stopped going to school, and prison soon replaced the classroom. Though he didn’t spend much time at school anymore, the value of education stayed with him through the years, and the epiphany he had in prison — the relief from a reduced sentence and a spiritual re-awakening — propelled his journey back to books.

The Rivers of today has a near-obsession with education. He worked three part-time jobs and took classes at two different schools before he took on the full-time job of program coordinator at PEACE. He has a master’s degree in human service management and in criminal justice. Besides that, he’s also a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor through SUNY Empire State College’s Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) program.

At PEACE, Rivers is hoping to build a renewed support network for people re-entering society and seeking stability. A man who had come in for a haircut met Rivers for the first time, and at Rivers’ prodding promised to return to get help with a job. Rivers, in the meantime, headed out to shepherd others back to the center in his red van for the free haircuts.

“The mission and goal is to help individuals become empowered with the goal of them being self-sufficient,” he said. “Some people need more help than others. It’s like letting a baby bird go — either you gonna fly and survive, or not fly and die.”

## EXPANDING FAMILY SUPPORT

Systemic inequalities and racial injustice are only one part of the problem for him and others, Rivers believes. Parenting and family development had to take the bulk of the blame for him. Had he had a positive male presence in his life, things might have turned out differently, he said.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 31.6 percent of black families don’t have a male presence such as a husband or father, for all income levels. Growing up, Rivers relied on his mother for most everything — and even that was a challenge because she worked two jobs, out of the house for 12 hours of the day. Rivers was left on his own after school and only later realized that he missed what he called the “in-house socialization.”

“No child should be without both their mother and father in their lives,” he said.

He isn’t alone in that thinking. Ira De’Lee, youth

“Not going to school was a culture”

— Charles Rivers

## GRANT PROGRESS

**December 2016:** PEACE awarded \$95,000 pilot grant from state

**February 2017:** PEACE hires Karen Loftin as re-entry case manager

**March 2017:** Gov. Andrew Cuomo publicly announces the program

**December 2017:** State loosens guidelines — program funds can be used to help any parolees, not just those living with families in public housing

**February 2018:** Syracuse’s grant funds run out, eliminating Loftin’s job

**March 5, 2018:** State reaches out to PEACE for progress report and consideration of a grant renewal

**March 31, 2018:** New York state lawmakers approve 2018 state budget

**April-July 2018:** New York Department of State continues to assesses each pilot program in consideration of grant renewal

**August 2018:** Grant renewal confirmed for two-year term, funded by the Community Services Block Grant

**November 2018:** PEACE hires new case manager Marrell Edwards to oversee grant clients

## BY THE NUMBERS

Syracuse has one of the highest suspension rates for any district in the country, one that disproportionately has fallen on black students.

Twenty-five percent of black students received an out-of-school suspension, compared to 12 percent of white students, according a 2014 report from the state attorney general's office.

Black students were also twice as likely to be disciplined for non-violent conduct as white students.

The Syracuse City School District was given orders to comply with federal and state laws to foster a positive learning environment and a monitor was appointed to make sure the district brought down the high number of in- and out-of-school suspensions.

coordinator at Onondaga Earth Corps and Rivers' friend, said life for them used to be upside down without positive male role models. De'Lee and Rivers go way back: De'Lee offered Rivers his first job out of prison. De'Lee himself has been through the system after the streets took him the wrong way.

"It's easier to go out, hustle and settle," he said, almost as a reflection of the fact that crime rates and arrests disproportionately affect the black community. In 2016, black people made up 12 percent of the country's adult population, but 33 percent of the sentenced prison population, according to the Pew Research Center.

Looking back, De'Lee said the place where he and Rivers are now is phenomenal compared to where they used to be. De'Lee is raising his daughter alone, and a smile spread across his face as he revealed that she is a straight-A student. Raising her alone isn't easy, but a single parent household is a reality for many.

"They need more fathers involved. More men being an example for transition from streets to real life," he said. He adds that Rivers is the kind of rare example they need. The support Rivers wants to foster through the center extends to his friendships, too. Every day, De'Lee and Rivers exchange long "good morning" messages wishing each other well and sharing encouragement to make the most of their day and life.

That's why the job at the Family Resource Center is more than just a job; it's Rivers' way of recreating the male presence and support he missed, and that he largely blames for his own years of crime. He spent 30 years in the criminal justice system, 19 of them behind bars on various charges — robbery, grand and petit larceny, criminal mischief and trespass. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, about two-thirds of released prisoners get rearrested within three years of release and over 75 percent within five years of release. Rivers went back to prison three times and had served three state sentences before the police — and his lifestyle — caught up with him in 2007 for what he says is the last time.

## PUSHED FROM SCHOOL, LURED TO THE STREET

Inequalities built into the system were apparent to Rivers even in his early school days, when he observed first-hand the school-to-prison pipeline.

"We needed ID to get in, we had security guards, metal detectors in school, which prepared us psychologically for prison," he said. "The only contact I had with white folks was in ... medical check-ups, some in school."

Rivers stopped going to school in the ninth grade because school took up too much of the time he'd rather have spent doing the "negative things" he wanted to do. And in the schools, change has come slowly for the 50 percent of students who are black.

The disparity is hard to forget for Rivers, who notices it even today on his visits to Danforth Middle School. He described a dark and dingy building where the air quality is poor and the prospect of improved education — smart boards and new textbooks — seems distant. Combined with the racial disparities in school discipline, he says, the streets today remain an almost welcome alternative to the classroom for too many kids.

"Not going to school was a culture," Rivers said.

As a boy, Rivers enjoyed reading and the occasional gifts of Atari games over Christmas and his birthday. But not going to school carved out more time for things he'd rather do outside the classroom — what De'Lee called "trouble around the corner."

About the same time he stopped going to classes, Rivers started using marijuana. By age 17, he got into cocaine and was arrested for the first time for robbery.

Between ages 17 and 42, the criminal justice system consumed most of Rivers' life. He was angry. Back then, a day would be good in his book if he got his hands on drugs.

The lifestyle didn't develop overnight, and his feelings soon caught up with him.

"I felt 'beneath.' Nobody wakes up and says 'Imma be a dope fiend or Imma be an alcoholic,'" he said. "That's something you progress into. You start losing things. You

> PEACE Inc.'s Southside Family Resource Center is located at 136 Dr. Martin Luther King West. The center houses a food pantry on the second floor, complete with three refrigerators, stacked cereal boxes and fresh and frozen produce. It is open from noon to 4:30 p.m. each Thursday and also offers daily food giveaways.

| File Photo



have to take the sun and make it into a cloud.”

Rivers decided some introspection was in order and began studying psychology in prison to better understand himself and his anger. Besides, he didn't trust the prison administration with any psychological issues because he didn't want medicine to be the only response.

Apart from studying, he joined an anger management group, where he soon realized what could help him the most.

“The counselor asked me ‘what is it going to take for you not to come back to jail?’” Rivers recalled. “I said ‘education.’”

### ‘I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE BY EXAMPLE’

Getting an education was easier said than done. When he came home from prison in 1991 for the first time, Rivers went to Syracuse University for free, but there was no support network around him, no friends or family lending him a helping hand. He went into one of the stores and stole a pair of pants. The store's buzzer went off, and he got arrested and kicked off the campus.

Rivers tried taking on an accounting degree at Bryant & Stratton College next, but street life won, again. But he was hooked on learning. He became an administrative law clerk and worked in the law library at prison. He got an associate degree in paralegal studies and a degree in psychology with honors. When his brother died after contracting HIV, Rivers became an HIV educator — and it was then that he learned what it was like to help others.

When he got out of jail, Rivers got his first job at Syracuse Haulers Waste Removal, thanks to De'Lee. De'Lee chuckled about Rivers tripping over hammers; construction wasn't his calling. A year later, Rivers returned the favor by offering De'Lee a job at Onondaga Earth Corps. Support begets support, and that seems to be the way forward for Rivers and the community he hopes to help.

“I really don't want young folks to follow the path I do. I fear if I don't do anything, they will,” he said. “I would like to live by an example. I knew what it was not to be a father, husband, man, to be on drugs, to not be a positive figure.”

At one point, Rivers was living only for the prospect of drinking and taking drugs. Indulging his substance abuse was the only way he could forget the stress and worry of being a father and husband. Now, after a full day's work, he can return to a home with his wife and children, celebrate birthdays. He keeps a photo of his grandchildren near the dashboard of his car.

It took nearly three decades for Rivers to stop running from himself, face the life he had lived and start building a new one. It took a spiritual epiphany, a relentless and determined pursuit of education and a growing support network. The choice Rivers made and the journey to his stability today hasn't been an easy one. His uncle, James Rivers, also works at the center.



> Charles Rivers greets a resident to the center last year. | Zachary Kraemer, Staff Photographer

He's seen his nephew's journey and is moved by it.

James watched Charles rebuild and rebrand the South Side center from the ground up. As he trudged through the cold basement this past spring, he pointed out the organized chaos of desks, bags and containers. He sat in a lounge room bordering the food pantry upstairs, looking around at the television and the beanbag, knowing that the color and the life of the center would have been dimmer without his nephew's work.

“I am proud of the Charles of today. He has a compassion for what he's doing,” James Rivers said. “It takes a lot to do what he does and have the dedication to do it. I couldn't do it.”

The grind doesn't stop for Rivers. During this year's celebration of Earth Day at the center, the skies were blue and cloudless. The children at the center dug their hands through the mud, planting scores of flowers in the front yard.

Rivers, as usual, seemed to be everywhere at once: sifting through mulch and making trips to the store to replace the supply of seeds, a pack of Newport Lights peeking out of his pocket. He cheered on the kids loudly and cursed just as loudly after he lifted a heavy bed of seeds and mud. He held his back for a moment before his eyes landed on the next bed — it was time to get moving again. He hailed one of the kids to help.

“Come on,” he said. “Me and you.”

## WIDER AUDIENCE

This is the final piece in this special series.

Past features in our “Prison to Family” series on prison pen pal Carole Horan, Shalla “Brooklyn” Beal, 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](http://thecrimereport.org)

## KIRST'S PODCASTS

“**Mental Health Hangouts**” is available on iTunes and other services, and can also be listened to on its own website

To listen, visit [mentalhealthhangouts.com](http://mentalhealthhangouts.com)

“**Social Justice League**” is available on iTunes

## TIMELINE OF KEY LIFE MOMENTS

- Graduated from Corcoran High School: June 2009
- Graduated from Brown University: May 2013
- Graduated from Syracuse University: June 2015
- “Shitfaced” published: February 2017
- Podcast “Mental Health Hangouts” launched: September 2017
- Podcast “Social Justice League” launched: November 2017

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Corcoran grad is helping others understand mental health issues



> Seamus Kirst, who grew up on Syracuse’s South Side and graduated from Corcoran High School as the 2009 valedictorian, is a published author who is now working to break into stand-up comedy. | Provided Photo

By Lyle Michael  
*Staff Reporter*

**Seamus Kirst has turned his own struggles with substance abuse into a teaching tool**

**H**e achieved valedictorian at Corcoran High School and graduated from Brown and Syracuse universities.

So perhaps the fact that Seamus Kirst went on to publish a book isn’t a surprise. But the title might be: “Shitfaced: Musings of a Former Drunk.”

It’s been a rollercoaster ride for Kirst, who graduated from Corcoran in 2009 and now productively spreads himself thin as a freelance writer, social advocate, stand-up comedian, and podcast and web-show host.

The Brooklyn-based writer is excited about his projects in development, including a web series, “Modern Day Gay,” an illustrated children’s book about a little girl and her two dads, and a podcast, “Breaking and Enter(tain)ing.”

Kirst has come a long way in his five years of sobriety. His dad, who helped edit his book, couldn’t be happier.

“Seamus is a great guy with a lot of soul and talent,” said Sean Kirst, long-time local columnist who now writes for The Buffalo News. “I knew his memoir would be inspirational.”

“It was frightening the first time we discovered he had a problem, but since he got sober, everything has been easier,” his dad added.

Sean Kirst said he would travel miles to be with his son in his moments of vulnerability and weakness. He was also the one who pointed out his son’s imbalanced personality as a senior at Corcoran in his quest for valedictorian and his incessant revelry.

Seamus delivered the valedictorian speech in 2009 and continued to lead two lives as an A-plus student by day, and a substance abuser by night.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, over 600,000 adolescents aged 12 to 17 suffer from alcohol use disorder, and an estimated 88,000 people die from alcohol related deaths annually.

Seamus knew he did not want to be one such fatality and looks back to August 2013, when his life changed for the better.

It was a bleak summer morning in New York City. He had blacked out the night before, woke up and called his parents to tell them he decided to permanently quit drinking.

It certainly wasn't easy, but Seamus is now confident in his "new normal," as he describes life since.

He sifts through his planner and sips his coffee at a Pret a Manger in Manhattan. It's a cool Monday morning and he goes back to a defining moment in August 2015 when he first published a 1,600-word essay on his experiences with substance abuse on his blog.

"The post got 100,000 views," Seamus said. "It really was a boiled down version of what I experienced."

The essay was republished in *The Scribbler* in India and in *The News Lens International* in Taiwan, two places he had spent time.

A crowd-funding campaign followed for the book he had envisioned, putting Seamus Kirst firmly on the path to releasing "Shitfaced."

The summary description in the book reads, "Kirst goes back to find a self that he barely survived."

Jeremy Harding, Seamus' current roommate and friend since sixth grade, has been with him through those tumultuous years.

"I have seen Seamus struggle with substance abuse in high school, but he's always been lively. So you don't see the dark side," Harding said. "Today, he is so much more clear-minded and focused. Still wacky as ever."

For a taste of that wackiness, consider the name of his two cats: Bernie Sanders and Sugar Baby.

Seamus must be focused as he works on his various projects: crowd-funding his comedy web series on finding love as a gay man in the modern world, awaiting publication of his picture book and launching his podcast on entering the entertainment world.

Lily Gildor, co-host of Seamus' first podcast, "Mental Health Hang-outs" and a classmate at Brown, says Seamus is dedicated to his work, and fun to work with.

"We bring a sense of humor to serious issues in a way that humanizes them," Gildor said. "We have both been through alcohol abuse and sought help for mental recovery. So we wanted to offer a conversational space for those going through similar struggles."

Seamus is quietly working on two more picture books, one for middle schoolers and one for adults. He continues to freelance on politics, entertainment and mental health for publications including *Huffington Post*, *Vice*, *The Washington Post*, *Mic*, *Them* and more.

"There's so much to do," he said. "I would like to write a second 'Shitfaced' that's on a funny note, perhaps."

His mother, Nora Kirst, looks back on that morning in 2013, when her son announced his call to sobriety for the first time. "It will remain one of the most memorable moments," she said. All she could do was be there for her child.

"My mother even paid for my therapist when I was recovering and has helped me in so many ways," Seamus said.

Nora Kirst says despite the help she provided, it was always within Seamus' power to help himself.

"There were days — like when my husband and I were out at dinner and got a call that Seamus was in the hospital after a blackout from excessive drinking at Brown," she said. "I would say to him, 'This is all you Seamus, you did this, you have to deal with it.'"



> Above, 2009 Seamus Kirst giving the valedictorian speech at Corcoran High School's graduation. At left, Kirst with copies of his book "Shitfaced."

| Provided Photos

## Do you need help with your breast cancer bills?

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## SUNSHINE BOWL XVIII

With Syracuse Strong's Nov. 10 win, the team moves on to the national minor league championship.

According to Semi-Pro HQ, more than 1,000 teams in the United States refer to themselves as semi-pro, minor league, professional development, senior amateur or adult amateur in more than 60 different leagues.

The **18th-annual Sunshine Bowl National Championships and Bowl Games** will be held Jan. 18-20, 2019, at Carter Park in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

# KINGS OF NEW YORK

*Syracuse Strong defeats Hudson Valley to capture state crown*



> In November, the Syracuse Strong beat the Hudson Valley Mountaineers in the New York State Championship game to be crowned "Kings of New York." | Kai Nguyen, Staff Photographer

By Mike Zawisza  
Staff Reporter

13-0 victory propels the Strong to a New York state Minor League Football championship

The Syracuse University Orange aren't the only football team in the Salt City making noise this fall. The Syracuse Strong, a semi-professional team playing in the Northeastern Football Alliance, are the new "Kings of New York."

On a frigid Saturday night at Henninger High School, the Strong defeated the Hudson Valley Mountaineers of the Empire Football League 13-0 to capture the New York State Minor League Football Championship.

The contest was highlighted by stalwart defensive work, timely scoring plays and a brutal wind chill. After the two teams played to a stalemate in the first quarter, Strong running back Rashad Burns finally got things rolling. Burns took a handoff from the 4 yard-line and

*"I was patient and picked my moment and took off."*

— Halfback Rashad Burns

bulldozed his way into the end zone, putting his team up 6-0. Burns, who led the Syracuse offense this season with 820 rushing yards and eight touchdowns, said he knew the touchdown was his for the taking.

"The middle was open the whole game," he said. "I was patient and picked my moment and took off."

Burns' score was a big one, as the Syracuse offense was unable to put any more points on the board.

Strong quarterback Marty Clanton had trouble finding open receivers downfield and threw three ill-advised

passes into double coverage that resulted in interceptions.

Fortunately for Syracuse, Hudson Valley was unable to capitalize on any of the turnovers. The Mountaineers offense was stagnant without all-star quarterback Al Dockery, who retired following the team's EFL Championship victory earlier in the fall. Hudson Valley had three turnovers of their own, including two interceptions. The biggest of which would come in the second half.

On just the second drive of the third quarter, Syracuse defensive back Blair Taylor undercut his receiver's route and intercepted a pass deep in Mountaineer territory. Catching the ball at full speed, Taylor blazed his way across the goal-line for six more points — extending the Strong lead to 13-0.

It's a lead they wouldn't give up.

After the game, Taylor — who was named the game's MVP — said the defense knew they needed to contribute in a big way.

"We were struggling offensively, so the whole time in the locker room we were saying 'the defense has to put up some points,'" he said. "We came through."

Taylor and the defense certainly held up on their end, as they prevented Hudson Valley from scoring in the final two frames of play, securing the 13-0 shutout and championship win.

Following a minor scrap on the field and a contentious handshake line, the Strong huddled around their championship trophy as snowflakes began to fall from the cold, night sky.

It's just the latest in a season full of accolades for the Strong.

The Strong's 2018 campaign went about as well as a season could go. They went 13-1 through the NFA season — a perfect 10-0 during league play — and defeated the Lockport Wildcats in the NFA Championship.

Though they've been deemed the "Kings of New York" with the win, game MVP Blair Taylor says he won't let the title go to his head.

"I'm just here to play football," he said. "I've been playing with this team for four years and we've won four championships. It's for the love of the game."

Now, with yet another championship under their belts, the Strong will begin practicing for their trip down to Florida to play for the Sunshine Bowl. It's an opportunity Rashad Burns doesn't take lightly.

"We've had a long journey and a long season," he said. "To play this late in the year and still get the job done, it's a big accomplishment."

And of course, for a team that plays in the harsh elements of Central New York, taking the trip down to Florida doesn't sound all too bad either.

"I just moved down there actually, so it's a short drive," he said. "I'm looking forward to not playing in the snow anymore," he added, with a laugh.



> A first-half rushing touchdown paired with a staunch defense paved the path to a shutout victory for the Strong. To view more pictures, visit [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com). | Kai Nguyen, Staff Photographer

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