

the **Stand** south side news

www.mysouthsidestand.com

Syracuse, NY

March 2012

Issue 17 FREE

A ROUSING SUCCESS

Students at alternative ITC are learning in class, winning on court

swing votes

Local leaders organize workshops to increase voter education

**Open for
everyone**
Interracial couples find comfort, familiarity at multicultural church

Separate and achieving
Clary adjusts to classes split by gender

STANDOUT WOMEN IN MUSIC



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THE PUBLICATION'S EDITORIAL PURPOSE AND
IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.**4** **FEATURES** | Read about a South Side hair stylist whose new shop on South Salina Street specializes in natural hair at competitive prices.**6** **FEATURES** | Lanika Mabrey honors her late mother by creating Linda's Lights, a foundation that focuses on education, youth, health and community.**8** **FEATURES** | A 50-year-old woman becomes "student of the year" in a program that taught her how to read and write.**10** **SCHOOL AND YOUTH** | Find out how gender-separated classes are progressing at Clary Middle School from the perspective of parents, teachers and students.**12** **COMMUNITY** | The Dunbar Center wants to keep its doors open for the next generation. Find out what the organization is doing and how its special friends are helping.**14** **SPOTLIGHT** | Mikell Clemons' success — on and off the basketball court — shows the positive influence of the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central.**18** **RELIGION** | Read about Syracuse Alliance Church, a multicultural church that welcomes members of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds with open arms and warm hearts.**22** **ENTERTAINMENT** | In honor of Women's History Month, guest columnist Missy Danielle profiles three local, musically inclined women.**24** **COMMUNITY** | Community members explain why the South Side's low voter registration is troubling and why residents should care about local elections.**27** **COMMUNITY** | Find out what Jubilee Homes is doing to continue its work toward revitalizing the community — despite cuts in funding.

- Cover photography of a special moment shared by the varsity basketball team at the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central. Photo by Samantha Okazaki**

CALENDAR | MARCH

What: Political Action and Civic Engagement Discussion
When: 6 to 11 p.m. Monday, March 5
Where: People's A.M.E. Zion Church
 2306 S. Salina St.
Cost: Free
Contact: Preston Fagan (315) 430-3533
More Info.: Session Two of this monthly discussion about voters' rights and lack of involvement will focus on voter information, education, registration and participation. Local residents are encouraged to participate, and refreshments will be served.

What: Cooking Up Literacy on St. Patrick's Day
When: 2 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, March 17
Where: Beauchamp Branch Library
 2111 S. Salina St.
Cost: Free, but space is limited
Contact: (315) 435-3395 to sign up
More Info.: Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a special combination of reading, math, cooking and eating for children ages 5 to 13. Visit <http://www.onlib.org> for more information.

Spring is nearly here and, thankfully, we have managed to escape the extreme cold. The lack of snow doesn't bode well for building snowmen, but the warmer temperatures are pleasant.

My stint as interim director of The Stand has been extremely worthwhile. I have met a lot of new people in the community, come across some inspiring stories and learned a lot about this great South Side newspaper and all that it stands for in the community.

We have such a great team working with The Stand. Students, faculty and community correspondents all have a part in making the paper what it is. But we would still love to hear from you, the community. Let us know your ideas, your suggestions, and what you would like to learn about in future issues.

For now, take a look at our March issue and read about how multiculturalism at Syracuse Alliance Church has welcomed families for years, and find out what Clary Middle School parents and students think about gender separation in the classrooms.

Please don't hesitate to contact me via email at Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or by phone at (315) 882-1054.

I would love to hear from you.

Tara Donaldson



WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor can be mailed to:

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

or emailed to:

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

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

GRATEFUL TO SOUTH SIDE

Durrie Bouscaren
Staff reporter



> Durrie Bouscaren says writing for The Stand has been a life experience.

When Director Ashley Kang asked me if I would present for The Stand at SU's "Spark Your Imagination" Leadership Conference on Feb. 25, it didn't take long for me to say "yes." I thought it would be a great opportunity to get The Stand's message out to students on The Hill. They truly do care about what's happening off SU's campus, but they don't always know how to get involved in the community. We hoped to show them one way.

I really think The Stand is something special. In a world where larger news outlets are laying off reporters to save money and stay in business, it's become increasingly difficult for a newsroom to cover its market. Syracuse is especially hard to cover because of the broad range of issues residents face in each section of the city. However,

that's also what makes it so fascinating.

This creates an opportunity for The Stand to be the strongest voice from the South Side. We can find the stories. We can open conversations. No one can better explain a community than its own residents.

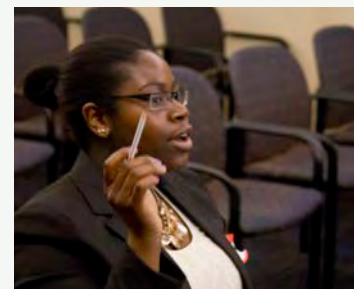
The thing that makes me the proudest is that The Stand symbolizes a collaboration between Syracuse University and the South Side community. Students often enter Professor Steve Davis' classroom knowing nothing about the South Side. It can be intimidating to enter an unfamiliar neighborhood and try to relate to people. I know that it was difficult for me at first.

I come from suburban Colorado; I had no idea how to interview someone about difficult urban issues I had never experienced. How could I possibly relate? But I did find out that I knew how to listen. I started to see how the residents here have a knack for organizing and addressing an issue. Through them, I learned how to tell a story. And for that, I'm extremely grateful.

I've met inspiring leaders, hard-working entrepreneurs, and dedicated students here on the South Side. It's been a life experience. I can't wait to see what The Stand will come up with next.



> John Young, a board member of The Stand, shares an opinion about the effect of I-81 on Syracuse. He has lived in several areas of the city.



> Janai Jones, an SU sophomore, has an interest in underrepresented groups in the media. She says she attended "Spark Your Imagination" to "strengthen my leadership skills."

> Photography by Steve Davis

YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Starting a business can be tricky.

John Torrens, an assistant professor of entrepreneurial practice at the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University, shares some key factors to consider before you venture out on your own.

FORTITUDE

“Are you an entrepreneur, is the first thing. Are you capable of not only just being your own boss, but actually being in charge of this business?”

ASSETS

“You are going to be burning through your money or someone else’s money, so how much money do you realistically need to make it until you start turning profitable?”

OUTLOOK

Entrepreneurs need to “work on the business rather than in the business.” This will allow the entrepreneur to better develop his or her business, gain new customers and prepare necessary contracts.

ALL ON HER OWN

‘I enjoy making people look pretty,’ says proud owner of hair salon



> Brenee Jones receives high praise from loyal patrons of her South Side salon. | Amanda Marzullo, Staff Photo

By | Safa Browne
Staff reporter

Brenee Jones wanted a hair salon of her own, so she saved enough money to rent shop space

After one year of careful saving, a Syracuse beautician realized her dream of opening her own hair salon. The skills she honed dressing customers’ hair at her home, she says, will now be put to use at her new business, the Brenee Jones Beauty Shop.

If the comments of one customer, Ival Vasell, offer any indication, Jones can count on good word of mouth to help her venture, located at 4720 S. Salina St.

“Everyone thinks I have extensions,” Vasell said. “My hair is so beautiful. I think she is doing a good job, and I would recommend her.”

Jones started doing hair in 2001 while in high school. “I enjoy doing hair, I enjoy making people look pretty,” Jones said. She continued doing hair throughout college as she studied hair dressing in Maryland. When she moved back to Syracuse, Jones began working two jobs, in addition to her in-house salon. Jones said having the

in-house salon became too much to handle, and a bigger space would allow her to be more efficient.

On Sept. 1, Jones opened the beauty shop, after having saved enough money to rent space on South Salina Street. Jones said rent is \$600 a month, but rent is not the only aspect to consider when launching a start-up business.

Jones found she was familiar with business start-up considerations. First, she had to obtain a business certificate from City Hall. “I was finally able to go through the necessary process and get my certificate,” she said.

Jones then began building her business. Bringing her original customers, as well as having them spread the word about her new salon, allowed Jones to have a strong customer base from the get-go. By providing her own funds, Jones was able to focus on things like customers and adjusting the shop to make it her own.

This is exactly what Jones said is the most rewarding part of owning her business. “Not having to bug anyone for money or borrow money from the bank, I am able to pay for it by myself,” she said.

However, Jones also works part time as a hair dresser at Rosewood Heights Nursing Home, located at 614 S. Crouse Ave., and as a full-time certified nursing assistant at Loretto Nursing Home, located at 700 E. Brighton Ave.

Jones met Vasell when they worked at Loretto.

“Someone told me about Brenee and said she would do my hair, so I keep going to her,” said Vasell, who has been going to Jones for six years. “She washed my hair, treated my hair, and I’m amazed. She is No. 1.”

Vasell lives on South Salina Street, which makes it convenient for her to get to the salon. Vasell often makes appointments with Jones to get her hair washed and wrapped on Fridays.

One of Jones’ biggest fans is her sister Demetria Tutman, who said doing hair is her sister’s dream. Although Tutman confessed to trying another salon, she said it did not compare to her sister’s work.

“I decided to make the switch from my previous salon because Brenee’s salon was three blocks from my house, she had flexible hours, she specializes in natural hair, and basically that is what I wanted,” Tutman said. “I didn’t want to be bothered with a lot of chemicals and stuff in my hair, and she did a lot of natural hair.”

Tutman also praised her for charging reasonable prices. Compared to other salons that charge up to \$40 for a wash and set, Jones charges only \$25.

Jones’ mission is to provide the necessary services for her customers and keep their hair clean and healthy.

“Whatever customers want, I get it done,” she said.

Want to be healthier?

Making better choices in the foods you eat can mean better health for you and your family. March is National Nutrition Month, and **SU's Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion** has these tips:

Focus on Fruit

Fruit is a delicious part of a healthy diet! Add a daily dose of fruit at breakfast, as a mid-day snack, or for dessert.

Cover Wholes in Your Diet

Switch to at least one whole grain bread, cereal, or pasta. Make sure the term "whole grain" is first in the list of ingredients.

Serve a Sensational Salad

Experiment with your own salad creations, using lots of fresh ingredients, then write down the combination so you can enjoy it again!

Bite for the Better

Eating whole foods—like fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains—increases energy, lowers health risks, and helps you maintain a healthy weight.

Little changes

produce big results!



Smart choices

Cut useless calories—drink water instead of sodas or sweet tea.

Help your heart—bake, steam, or grill food instead of frying.

Take time to eat—eating slowly helps your stomach know when it's full.

These tips—and so much more—are part of the Healthy Monday program of the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion. Based at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, the Lerner Center creates public health programs to help you make healthier choices. For more information, visit healthymonday.syr.edu. Find us on Facebook at **Healthy Monday Syracuse**, or follow us on Twitter **@HealthyCuse**.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY: Scholarship in Action



LOCAL ACHIEVERS

The South Side Achiever is a new feature in The Stand that highlights an accomplished person in the community.

POET ON THE SIDE

Lanika Mabrey is a part of the Underground Poetry Spot. She has been a longtime supporter and performer.

She is an official member of the group and regularly performs as a poet under the stage name Phoenix.

View her signature piece by clicking on the link available at mysouthsidedstand.com

The Underground Poetry Spot holds open mic shows every first and third Thursdays of each month in the lecture hall at the Warehouse Gallery, 350 W. Fayette St.

For information: <http://undergroundpoetryspot.com/>

HOW TO GIVE TIME

For a list of places where you can volunteer, visit mysouthsidedstand.com



SPECIAL ACHIEVER

Lanika Mabrey

Volunteers her time to improve community

By | Sistina Giordano
Staff reporter

Losses lead founder of Linda's Lights to find strength and passion through volunteer work

For Lanika Mabrey, sitting down to talk about all of her achievements is not easy.

"I must admit, talking about myself isn't something I'm particularly used to," she said. "But I think that this is a good way to give voice to some great things happening in our community."

On any given day, Mabrey is running from one place to the next, devoting much of her time to the organizations that matter most to her and reaching out to the community she has always called home. But her life hasn't always been about community-driven work.

Nearly two years ago, she lost her mother, Salendria. Shortly after, she was laid off from her job as a program coordinator.

"For the last few years I have been dealing with severe losses, death, divorce and the loss of my job, and I had a very hard time with it," she said. "But I basically decided one day that I wanted to stop focusing on what I lost, and start focusing on what I still have."

Her new outlook offered different ways to memorialize her mother, and a newfound love of community involvement.

At the suggestion of a friend, Mabrey decided to donate all of her birthday gifts to a local charity in her mother's name. That inspired Mabrey to get involved with local organizations, where she spends two to four hours a day, including weekends.

Mabrey volunteers at two organizations where her mother also devoted much of her time: Syracuse United Neighbors, an organization aimed at improving neighborhoods on the South Side; and the Partnership for Onondaga Creek, which works to educate the community and fight environmental injustice.

"To really educate people and to get them involved in the community is what I love to be a part of, and these things are way more exciting than I am," she said.

But the biggest undertaking for Mabrey, and one she is most proud of, is the recent creation of Linda's Lights, a foundation in honor of her mother.



> Lanika Mabrey instructs students from the Intelligent Young Minds Group. | Sistina Giordano, Staff Photo

The name is based on the spiritual principle of letting your light shine, Mabrey said. It also represents four areas that her mother devoted her life to: education, youth, health and community.

"It was great to watch my mother work from the sidelines because it was an opportunity for her to get involved and make a difference," Mabrey said. "Initially, I started following in her footsteps to focus on the things that reminded me of her, and then I realized they are really important issues, and they mean a lot to me, too."

Linda's Lights is in the early stages of development, but Mabrey is hopeful that by the end of the year, the foundation will be incorporated.

"I want to be a positive representation of my community," she said. "I have the best of both worlds because I have grown up in this neighborhood, and I can relate to the residents and their concerns."

Mabrey says she also gives back to the community through her church, Open Arms International Ministries, where she is a youth leader. "My faith is my strength," she said.

While Mabrey waits for employment again, the proud aunt, sister and friend is content with earning a much different kind of pay.

"We can't avoid those moments when your life will be turned upside down or when you have to find a new normal, but I believe everything happens for a reason," she said. "Even though I've lost a lot, I have found a new love and have gained some wonderful people in my life."

NOMINATE SOMEONE

Do you know a South Side Achiever? Nominate that person by contacting Ashley@mysouthsidedstand.com or (315) 882-1054

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LITERACY STATISTICS

In the latest national assessment of adult literacy done in 2003, the adult literacy for the greater Syracuse area and the New York state findings were relatively close.

According to Amy Schmitz, director of communications for ProLiteracy,

- 23% of adults in the greater Syracuse area function at “basic,” meaning they can’t read above an eighth-grade level.
- 31% of adults in New York function at a “basic” level.
- An additional 19% function below basic literacy, meaning they cannot read above a fifth-grade level, Schmitz said.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is very difficult and expensive to do a national survey for adult literacy.

There have been only two national assessments, in 1992 and 2003, according to Tracy Carman, board member of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse.

RENA CHAMBERS

Determination, motivation and positive attitude define literacy student

By | Laura Liera
Staff reporter

After two years of hard work, Chambers is selected for second ‘Student of the Year’ award

With her casual smile and black leather book bag, Rena Chambers is the first student to enter Room 304 at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center on a Thursday afternoon.

It’s the end of another school week for South Side resident Chambers — who is 50.

Chambers is in her second year learning to read and write English, and she is the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse Student of the Year recipient for 2011. “I wasn’t expecting it at all, but I felt great,” Chambers said.

It is important to know how to read and write English because minimal competency is required for most everything — such as reading a medical prescription. In Syracuse, the need has blossomed in the past two years.

“A lot of these students coming into our program can’t read bus schedules, for example, because they don’t know how to read,” said Marsha L. Tait, executive director of Literacy Volunteers. “So I knew that we had to offer more small-group programs to help accommodate as many students as possible,” added Tait, who has been involved in adult literacy for 16 years.

Two years ago, the program had fewer than 100 students in instruction, but this year there are 165 active student-tutor pairs and more than 80 students in small-group classrooms.

The main challenge the organization faces: finding resources and financial help.

“The single largest funding for our program comes from the New York State Adult Literacy Education Funding Stream, but it’s never enough,” Tait said. The annual budget for Literacy Volunteers is around \$200,000 per year.

Once every year, Literacy Volunteers asks tutors to nominate students for its top award. According to program manager Robin Morgan, tutors submit a written nomination that includes the student’s history, challenges and accomplishments. The staff reviews the nominations and makes its selection; the winner is announced at an annual celebration, Morgan said.

Chambers’ nomination was a compilation of staff observations and comments from Debbie Mann, who is Chambers’ one-on-one tutor. Chambers has been working with Mann since February 2011.

“When she stumbles over reading and writing she



> Rena Chambers learns how to read and write English at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center. | Hannah Cordell, Staff Photo

doesn’t quit, and she asks for other examples and keeps going until she understands,” Mann said in the nomination.

Before Chambers started the program two years ago, she wasn’t too sure about joining. “I was just too ashamed to come back to school because of my age,” she said. “But I wanted to learn to read and write before I left this world, so I told myself I had to try it.”

Her first experience sitting in a classroom in a small-group class made Chambers uneasy.

“I was very nervous the first time I got here because I saw the teacher in front of the board and saw that everyone was reading. When the time came for me to read, I said I couldn’t read but the students helped me sound the words out and I started loosening up, day by day.”

Before she joined the program, Chambers had a difficult time. “My own family didn’t believe me when I would tell them I didn’t know how to read or write,” she said. “I used to sit there, take the newspaper, stare at it

and it would look like I was reading but I really wasn't."

Fighting back tears, Chambers recalled what it was like when the mail would arrive at her door. "I would wait for guests to leave and then I'd call one of my kids to read me the mail because it was so hard I couldn't even do that," she said. "But now, I can read it myself, and if there is some things I can't understand, then I call my kids, but it's no longer for them to read me the mail. Now it's just to explain to me certain things."

Credentialed teachers at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center teach the small-group classes, where students learn in regular classrooms with peers.

Kevin R. Lucas, 42, started teaching last fall and is currently Chambers' small-group teacher. "Kevin has helped me a lot," Chambers said, "because I understand the words and I like how he writes on the board and shows us how to write it and pronounce it at the same time."

Chambers and six other students go to class every Tuesday and Thursday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., where they learn to pronounce and write different words in packets that Lucas provides. At a recent class, Lucas told the students: "We have a new set of words but let's review the pronunciation of 'et' in the word 'pet.'" Later, the students read the new words out loud with Lucas. Then he used them in a sentence while the students wrote the words in their packets.

The process continued throughout the whole packet, with each student reading sentences out loud and using the words they had learned throughout the session. If a student had difficulty, others pitched in, sounding out the words and helping one another.

Students at Literacy Volunteers are not on a specific semester teaching program.

"Because we are working with students at the lowest level of literacy skill, the time it will take them to progress



> Kevin Lucas, who started last fall as a teacher at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center, mentors Chambers as her small-group teacher. | Hannah Cordell, Staff Photo

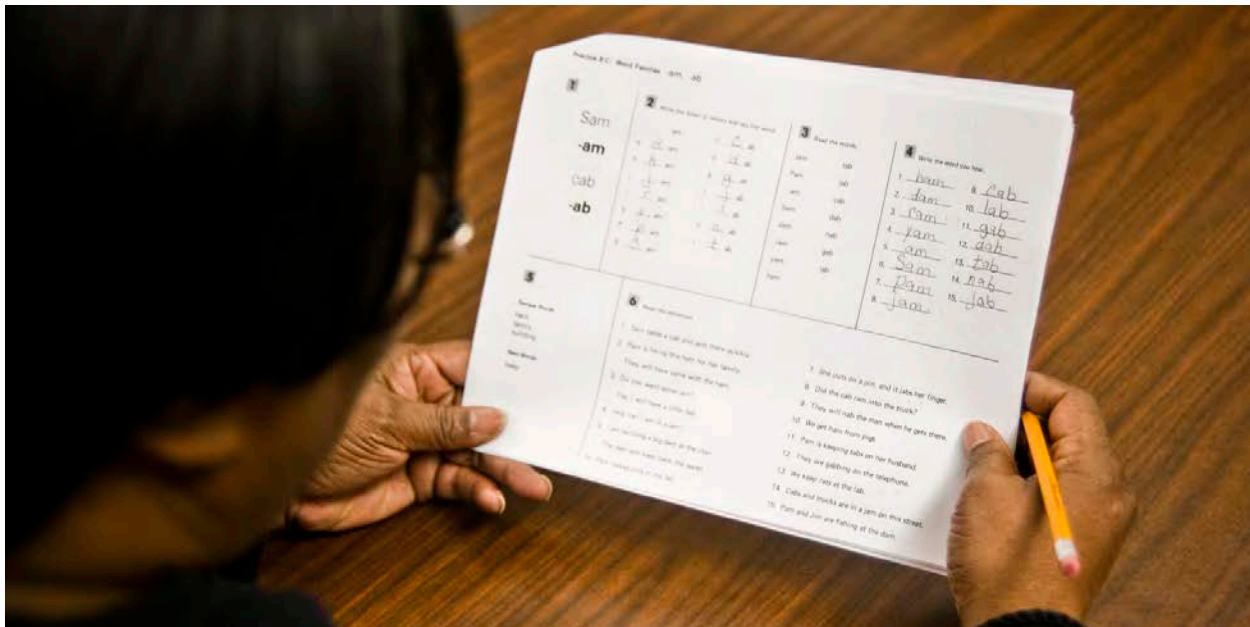
is highly variable," Tait said.

"It's all a question of where they came from, what their literacy level is and their motivation to accomplish their learning goals."

Chambers is motivating others, too. "I talk a lot about my education to young kids, adults, anyone, because I feel good and proud of myself and also tell them about how much this program really helps people."

She talks to her own 12 grandchildren about school. "I get upset when I hear that my grandchildren aren't doing too well in school. I tell them to keep going to school because they have the help at a young age that I am now experiencing at 50."

Having the opportunity to go back to school to learn to read and write was a blessing to Chambers. "I can't help but thank God, who answered my prayers for me because I did want to go back to school and learn. "He opened the doors to this program that has helped me so much from the very start."



> Rena Chambers says she wanted to go back to school and is grateful for the opportunity. | Hannah Cordell, Staff Photo

SUCCESS REWARDED

Rena Chambers was selected as a New York Association for Continuing/Community Education Student of the Year award winner for 2012.

She will be honored at an awards banquet in Albany in mid-March and will visit the Legislative Office Building in Albany to meet her local Senate and/or Assembly person.

This is the second consecutive year a Literacy Volunteers student has been selected for the award.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Syracuse is the birthplace of Literacy Volunteers.
- In 1962, Ruth J. Colvin founded the program when she discovered that 11,000 people in her hometown of Syracuse could not read, according to the program's website.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse
- The organization is located on the second floor of Beauchamp Branch Library, 2111 S. Salina St.
- Call (315) 471-1300 or visit www.lvgs.org

ON THE SIDE

STUDY: SEPARATE IS BETTER

Stetson University conducted a three-year study in 2005 on gender-separated classrooms and their effectiveness on standardized testing. The results are as follows.

- Boys in coed classes: 37% scored proficient
- Girls in coed classes: 59% scored proficient
- Girls in single-sex classes: 75% scored proficient
- Boys in single-sex classes: 86% scored proficient.

RESOURCES:

National Association for Single Sex Public Education

<http://www.singlesexschools.org/evidence.html>

FAST FACT

In addition to gender-neutral public schools, there are 134 private all-girls schools and 170 private all-boys schools in the state of New York.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

WHERE IS THE SCHOOL?

Clary Middle School
100 Amidon Drive,
Syracuse, NY 13205

(315) 435-4411

GENDER SEPARATION

Clary Middle School puts boys and girls in different classrooms

By | Richie Calabro
Urban Affairs reporter

Teachers and students at local middle school adjust to new gender-specific classrooms

Clary Middle School is halfway through its first academic year of gender separation in the classroom, and one constituency enthusiastically endorses it. Others are still adjusting. Clearly loving it: parents. Not quite so much: some students.

"I think it's great. I think it's the best thing they could have done," said Diana Milton, who has a daughter in sixth grade.

The city school board voted last January to separate boys and girls in the classrooms at Clary, making it the only city school with official gender separation. Principal Pamela Odom-Cain sought the school board's permission to separate the genders to improve students' academic performance by cutting down on social distractions and tailoring instruction to each gender. Although the school is split into two separate academies, one for boys and one for girls, there are still some instances where boys and girls are in the same class. Clary has 407 students.

Separating genders in the classroom is based on the idea that male and female brains develop differently and that different teaching methods for them work best. Some instructors say they teach the same concept, such as algebra, multiple ways for different genders.

At least 506 public schools in the country have single-sex educational opportunities in the 2011-2012 academic year, according to the National Association for Single Sex Public Education. Of those, about 390 are coed schools that offer single-sex classrooms with some coed activities, the association reports on its website. It also reports that of the 506 schools, 116 are single-sex schools, with most or all of the students' school activities being all boys or all girls.

While reaction from parents has been overwhelmingly positive, some students aren't so thrilled. "I have some classes like Spanish with girls but besides that class I don't see some of my friends all day," said Marcus Rhodes, a seventh-grader at Clary.

Jackie Johns-Shocklee has a daughter and a son at Clary. "They don't think it's a good thing," she said. "They like to be around their friends and now some aren't in their classes. As a parent, it's great. It helps eliminate the problems for single parents like myself having to keep up with all the latest styles — it's tough financially," she said, referring to new shoes and hats.

Socially things are different, too.

"School is most important, and with no boys there is nothing else to do," Milton said. She has experience in gender-specific classrooms; she attended an all-girls school in New York City. Of her daughter, Milton added, "With no boys around it's helped make her a lady, also."

Parent Patricia Holmes supports the concept. "They do need a break from each other occasionally," she said, adding that sometimes there can be a lot of drama.

Sharon Pernisi, a math enrichment teacher at Clary, said there are big social benefits to the move.

"Boys have definitely benefited from this socially because now they are being groomed into young men," Pernisi said. Pernisi said that being required to wear

"They do need a break from each other occasionally."

— Patricia Holmes

uniforms and being away from the distractions of girls helps boys to focus.

Some parents have already seen the academic rewards of the separation.

"My daughter was already a good student but she definitely has improved," Milton said.

Sandra Jimenez also spoke of the educational benefits as she waited to pick up her daughter from school. "This has definitely improved her grades," Jimenez said. "She has become much better in Spanish this year."

It's not only an adjustment for the students. Teachers at Clary were trained in teaching gender-specific classes, tweaking some lessons.

"Professional development was needed. My biggest challenge is how the different genders grasp the same concepts," Pernisi said.

Pernisi, who teaches sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students, is in her first year at Clary and couldn't wait to teach in a gender-separated environment.

"I chose to come here. I was so excited," she said.

Pernisi added that not only does she think the separation is great because of the academic gains but also that the students are getting used to it.

"I think the students have responded very well. They are beginning to realize the benefits."

MARTIAL ARTS LESSONS

Students learn how to defend themselves, react to bullies and know when to walk away

By | Candace Dunkley
Staff reporter

Beauchamp Library event brings together youth, parents and professional instructors

When Daniel Hammond gets ready to break bricks, he sees more than the pile in front of him. Careful to ensure the bricks don't slip on the ground, he arranges three around a towel on the floor. Hammond raises his hand and breathes in, envisioning the brick broken into rubble. He then smashes his hand through the brick on top, breaking it in half.

Hammond was one of three professional instructors who demonstrated martial arts at the Beauchamp Library at a recent event. The demonstration was not just a martial arts demonstration, though, for the youth and parents who crowded around. Hammond said brick-breaking takes focus and concentration, and it is a measure of a person's inner power.

"It takes 22 pounds of pressure to break a brick, but only six to 16 to break a bone," Hammond said.

According to Master James Brown, the organizer of the event, the martial-arts gathering was held to suggest an alternative to crime for kids.

"It gives them a sense of character," Brown said. "We have to do a lot more if we're going to capture the mind of the youth. We have to get them before the streets get them."

Naseem Fielder, a 13-year-old martial arts student and demonstrator at the event, said he used to get bullied at school. Now an orange belt in Ninjutsu, Fielder said if he is being hassled, he is able to protect himself.

"I used to get mad and out of control. I didn't know how to stop it," Fielder said. "Now I know what to do."

When asked by an adult in the audience what kids should do when confronted with drugs, Hammond said to keep it simple. "Just say no," Hammond said.

Hammond said he knows about drugs firsthand. He said one of his students had a child with his daughter; Hammond made the young man promise not to use drugs, but Hammond said he believes that promise was broken. The man killed his child — Hammond's grandchild — and Hammond believes he was under the influence of the drug known as "water," which is a marijuana cigarette that's been dipped in embalming fluid and then laced with PCP.

To help the youth of Syracuse avoid crime and live a life of prosperity, Hammond said he advises that they keep training, have confidence, and keep their minds from wandering.



> Master James Brown acts as the aggressor against student Willy Shepard to help demonstrate self-defense techniques to a group of children and adults at Beauchamp Library. | Lena Budd, Staff Photo



> Naseem Fielder, 13, and Bishop Sims, 12, practice karate at Beauchamp Library on Feb. 23. They say karate helps them deal with bullies. It teaches them how to defend themselves and how to walk away. | Lena Budd, Staff Photo



> Sifu Dan Hammond learned how to break bricks at the age of 9. He says that in breaking bricks, concentration and discipline are as important as strength. | Lena Budd, Staff Photo



> Using a bow staff, Sifu Dan Hammond gives a demonstration with the help of one of his students, Alice Smith, 71. Smith says she is a cancer survivor, and she says martial arts helped to save her life. | Lena Budd, Staff Photo

DUNBAR'S PLANS

- Continue to provide community programs designed to enhance educational support, academic growth, and overall youth development for the community
- Establish stronger connections with different businesses in the community
- Rekindle the relationship with Syracuse University by offering master's students internships at Dunbar. Allow interns to serve as its program developers, researchers and data collectors, as a way to strengthen Dunbar's current business model
- Campaign to raise a target of \$1 million
- Keep searching for ways to maximize the not-for-profit company's revenue
- Remain a staple in the community

Sources:

Julius Edwards,
Patrice Chang and
dunbarassociation.org

STROLLING *the* SOUTH SIDE

Dunbar Center puts major plan into action to keep its doors open



> Julius D. Edwards, left, and Steve Williams answer questions at Dunbar's open house Feb. 9. | Allison Milligan, Staff Photo

By | Candace Dunkley
Staff reporter

Friends of Dunbar share their success stories as the center looks to serve next generation

When you walk into the office of the Dunbar Association's new executive director, Julius Edwards, you will see a man grinning from ear to ear. As someone who understands the impact Dunbar can have on a community, he has an open-door policy. With the doors wide open, people flutter in to shake his hand, set up business meetings and just say hello.

Edwards exits the room briefly to fix his tie. He is preparing for the open house meeting he hopes will be the beginning of the revitalization of a company that once offered him food when his family was out of groceries and hosted sports activities, like basketball, that kept him grounded.

It was the recreational activities coupled with the family help programs and services, like food pantries, that helped to keep the black community in Syracuse unified and focused. When the open house began Feb. 9, the room was packed with people ready to hear what the Dunbar's representatives had to say.

Steve Williams, the board president of Dunbar,

was the first person to speak. Williams quickly began to encourage people to take charge in the future of the organization.

"We always think somebody else will do it," Williams said. "I am looking at a room full of somebody elses. Dunbar needs your support, physically, mentally, financially," he added.

Lack of finances is one of the main problems chipping away at the organization. Last October, Dunbar lost more than \$200,000 in United Way funding, which as of July has dwindled completely.

The organization's representatives refuse to let finances get in the way of Dunbar's progress.

"We as a community can't afford to think Dunbar is going anywhere," Edwards said.

When the news of a struggling Dunbar got out, a group of seniors — "The Friends of Dunbar" — came together to support the organization. To testify about why Syracuse just couldn't afford to let Dunbar go, Edwards called on the friends of Dunbar to share stories of how the not-for-profit company changed their lives.

One of the friends is Manny Breland. He said Dunbar allowed him to overcome obstacles such as racism, which helped him become the first African American from the Syracuse area to receive an athletic scholarship to Syracuse University, and eventually the

SUGGEST A LOCATION

To submit an idea for Strolling the South Side, contact Ashley Kang at (315) 882-1054 or Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com

first black varsity basketball coach hired in Syracuse, at Central High School. He later was the principal there.

“It all goes back to me here at Dunbar,” Breland said, attributing his success to mentors he had at Dunbar. “If I wasn’t here, I would probably be downtown trying to get into parking meters.”

To ensure others have the same access to such role models, Edwards is developing plans to get Dunbar the funds needed to thrive. Edwards said one of his main priorities will be to make stronger connections with different businesses in the community, including SU.

“Dunbar wouldn’t be what it is if it wasn’t for SU students that met Jimmy LaGrin,” Edwards said. “Somehow we lost that connection.”

In 1918, LaGrin, an ex-convict, realized there was a growing amount of discrimination in Syracuse. In an effort to keep the youth out of criminal activity, he created a recreational program held at the A.M.E. Zion Church. LaGrin connected with SU students who were also members of The Paul Lawrence Dunbar Society.

Almost a century later, Edwards is looking to rekindle the relationship with SU students. Edwards said one way Dunbar can unite with the university is by allowing master’s students to intern for Dunbar, serving as its program developers, researchers and data collectors. This will help Dunbar to strengthen its business model, Edwards said.

The company has also started fundraising. Accord-



> Manny Breland attends the open house at Dunbar, which he credits for his success. | Allison Milligan, Staff Photo

ing to Patrice Chang, who is on Dunbar’s board of directors, the company is collaborating with the Southwest Community Center to create the Aim High and Achieve Program. Chang said the program launched a capital campaign in March 2011 with a telethon. The goal of the campaign is to raise \$1 million to sustain community programs designed to enhance educational support, academic growth and the overall youth development.

Edwards said Dunbar will continue to find ways to help the not-for-profit company maximize its revenue and remain a staple in the Syracuse community.

DUNBAR DEFINED

- Not-for-profit group
- 1453 S. State St.
- (315) 476-4269 for additional information
- Provides recreational activities, family help programs and services
- Offers community programs created for educational support, academic development
- Gives access to positive role models for youth

Sources:

*Julius Edwards and
Manny Breland*

“I’m a big fan of The Stand. I think it gives a different perspective on things. The Stand just sticks to the issues and lets the story tell itself.”

*- Frank Fowler,
Syracuse Police Chief and The Stand reader*

How to purchase an ad

If interested in running an ad, contact **Ashley Kang** to request a rate card and discuss options by emailing Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or by calling (315) 882-1054. The Stand’s rate card can also be found online.

www.mysouthsidestand.com





> Mikell Clemons is a starting senior on the varsity basketball team at the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central. Clemons says he hopes to continue playing basketball after he graduates in June. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo

PAVING THE WAY

Basketball player balances athletic opportunities, academic success

By | Josh Wetmore
Urban Affairs reporter

Mikell Clemons leads his teammates both on the basketball court and in the classroom

Mikell Clemons sits in the front of Stephanie Sobon's social studies class. He is jammed in the corner where two chalkboards meet, and it's easy to miss him when you walk in the room. But Sobon knows exactly where he is.

As the students sit at their desks studying their textbooks, the boys around Clemons start to focus more on side conversations than their studies. From her desk in the back of the class, Sobon tries to refocus the group, but her efforts don't have much effect. Then she looks at Clemons, who knows what to do. Clemons turns around in his chair and tells his classmates to listen to the teacher.

They listen.

"He's actually very much my ally in the class," Sobon said.

Clemons, who is from the South Side, is a senior at The Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central and the captain of its basketball team. He is a model student and plans on going to college — but Sobon's right-hand man might have another story entirely if it weren't for ITC.

ITC is a public school formed five years ago as a smaller alternative to the large schools in the Syracuse City School District. The vision for ITC is that a smaller learning community will breed better academic success. Students who go to ITC have to apply to the school before their freshman year.

So far the project seems to be working. Mike Hensey, the school's communications coordinator, said the



Syracuse City School District has an overall graduation rate of about 52 percent. By comparison, science teacher and basketball coach Joe Boronczyk said ITC's graduation rate was in the 70-percent range last year and could be as high as 80 percent this year.

"In terms of the smaller project, it seems to be working," Boronczyk said.

Clemons' mother, Latrice Mabams, knows that ITC's success goes beyond the numbers. While Clemons started at ITC his freshman year, he transferred to Henninger High School for better athletic opportunities. After the basketball season was over, however, Clemons started to skip classes. After finding out, Mabams sat him down for a serious conversation.

"I put my foot down and told him, 'Look, I didn't come this far with you to let you get away with all this. You're going to go to school and you're going to do what you're supposed to do and get an education,'" Mabams said.

Continued on Page 16



> The ITC Eagles varsity team celebrated a home-court victory at the Senior Game on Feb. 9. The win pulled the team's rank to the No. 5 seed of its division, a powerful feat for the seniors, including Mikell Clemons. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo

STUDENT STATS

2010 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

SCSD: 50%

HENNINGER: 51%

CORCORAN: 58%

FOWLER: 38%

NOTTINGHAM: 57%

ITC: Graduation rates not yet official for 2011, ITC's first graduating class

2010 STUDENT POPULATION

HENNINGER: 1,648

CORCORAN: 1,448

FOWLER: 1,214

NOTTINGHAM: 1,314

ITC: 273 (no senior class)

ITC BASKETBALL RECORD

- 16-4 as of Feb. 21
- Mikell Clemons' team-leading scoring average: 15 points/game

ON THE SIDE

MEET D'ANDRE

D'ANDRE DODD
SENIOR

ITC SPORTS
basketball, football,
track & field

FIRST-CHOICE
COLLEGE
The College at Brockport

CAREER INTERESTS
psychology, business
management or
criminal justice

THOUGHTS ON ITC
"I love this school. I
wouldn't trade these four
years for anything."



> D'Andre Dodd says he received his first college acceptance letter. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo



> Although he jokingly admits that he would rather practice basketball than study economics, Mikell Clemons makes his schoolwork a top priority. Clemons encourages his peers to do the same. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo

Continued from Page 15

Clemons remembers those conversations a little differently, but in the end, the result was the same.

"She noticed that this bigger school, and this bigger atmosphere was probably the reason why my grades were slipping," Clemons said of his mother's reaction. In his mind it wasn't just his mother's decision. "I thought my high school career would be better if I transferred to Tech."

A little more than a year later, Clemons came home with the first report card of his senior year. Mabams said Clemons usually starts the academic year out slowly and gets better as the year goes on. This time when she looked at his first grades of the year she saw something new.

"His first marking period report card was actually good, and I was actually shocked," Mabams said. "Mikell has come a long way, a very long way."

The success has come in every area for Clemons. He is the leading scorer for ITC's league-winning basketball team and wants to go to SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome for business management.

Clemons' mother, teacher, coach, and Clemons

himself know it wouldn't be the same at another school. Sobon said the smaller environment allows teachers to know each of their students, be more active in their education and even personalize their schedules and assignments.

"At a bigger high school there's so many students that teachers can't take the time to do one-on-one with every student. Here they can do that," Clemons said.

Now Clemons is the one trying to convince other ITC students of the lessons he learned. He and teammates Joe Boatwright and D'Andre Dodd, who also is from the South Side, said the team members get one another in line when they see teammates hanging out in the halls instead of going to class.

"We see them in the hallways skipping and we tell them, 'You gotta get to class. You're not going to make it in life if you're not in the classroom. You have to do your school work,'" Clemons said.

As his time in high school winds down, Clemons thinks back to the conversations with his mother and the decision he made to return to ITC.

"It was a good choice."



> The ITC Eagles varsity basketball team may be new to the court. But the players' successive wins prove that they are not to be dismissed. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo



> Eagles' senior guard and top scoring athlete, Mikell Clemmons, re-injured his ankle midway through the game, which sent the team and the crowd into a hushed nervousness. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo



> Just three years earlier, the very first basketball team at ITC was formed. The current seniors were sophomores then. | Samantha Okazaki, Staff Photo

MEET JOE

JOE BOATWRIGHT
SENIOR

ITC SPORTS
basketball

FIRST-CHOICE
COLLEGE
Delhi State University
of New York

CAREER INTERESTS
culinary arts

THOUGHTS ON THE SEASON END

"It isn't gonna hit me 'til it hits me. When they tell me I can't play basketball for Tech."



> Joe Boatwright says he has been accepted to Delhi and is all set to go there. | Josh Wetmore, Staff Photo



Multicultural Church

> Hayward and Nonie DeBose with their goddaughter, Makaela Volcy, in the sanctuary of Syracuse Alliance Church. | Marina Zarya, Staff Photo

By | Aaron Pelc
Urban Affairs reporter

Syracuse Alliance Church welcomes all races and ethnicities with open and loving arms

Just three months before Hayward and Nonie DeBose were due to have a baby in 1980, they were looking for a church to serve as a foundation for raising a family. At the recommendation of Nonie's OB-GYN, an Egyptian man, the two visited the Syracuse Alliance Church at 3112 Midland Ave.

As an interracial couple — Hayward is black and Nonie is white — the DeBoses wanted to raise their son in a multicultural setting. Not only did that mean staying in the city instead of moving to the suburbs, but also finding a church that welcomed anyone, regardless of

race or ethnicity.

While the Syracuse Alliance Church was made up mostly of whites at the time, Hayward and Nonie felt comfortable there. One couple, Ona and Len Smith, sat in the pew in front of the DeBoses and were particularly instrumental. "She turned around with a big smile," Hayward said of Ona, "introduced herself and her husband and invited us back."

"After that, they would look for us on Sundays," Nonie added.

"That's why I feel that we stayed here," Hayward said. "People didn't judge, they knew that God was about accepting others, making them feel comfortable, making them feel loved. That's the common denominator for me."

The DeBoses still attend the church today — this

month will mark 32 years — and they hold prominent roles there. Nonie works as an administrative assistant and Hayward is one of several church elders, or elected spiritual leaders. Racial minorities make up roughly half the church's congregation.

Pastor Tom Brunner, who has been at the church for five years, takes pride in his multiracial congregation: a church with no racial group making up more than 80 percent of its members. Of the church's average 300 to 350 worshipers each Sunday, Brunner estimates about 50 percent are white, 20 percent are black, 20 percent are Asian, and the remaining 10 percent are other minorities. According to a study by author and professor Michael Emerson published in 2007, only 8 percent of churches in the United States are multiracial.

"I think we're trying to be a multicultural church because ultimately that's who we feel God has called us to be," Brunner said. "Maybe because that's what the church in heaven will ultimately look like, and that's what the city he's called us to reach looks like."

On any Sunday, visitors who walk into the church get an immediate sense of the diversity. Two banners hang on the wall behind the stage. One of them reads, "Reaching up to God in prayer & worship," and the other, "Reaching out to others in evangelism & service." One depicts illustrated hands of different colors all reaching together up toward God, and the other shows those same hands reaching down to people of different colors. Before the sermon begins, there is a moment when people greet their neighbors — many races greeting many races. Onstage during any service might be pastor Brunner, who is white, or assistant pastor Ricardo Volcy, who is Haitian.

"We never felt anything but love here."

— Hayward DeBose

Brunner calls this multiculturalism "stretching," growing from being around others who are different. In a recent sermon, he used the analogy of the church as a hand.

"In a multicultural church, it's like we're all fingers and we're all different, and if I lose any of those fingers I don't grasp the same way," he said.

For a family like the DeBoses, the church can provide a place of tolerance and equality that is not always assured in their everyday life. Nonie and Hayward have

been married since 1970 and said they have experienced some intolerance, like being seated at the back of restaurants that had room in the front.

Hayward grew up in Florida before moving north in 1969 for better job opportunities; he's experienced racial discrimination firsthand.



> Syracuse Alliance Church at 3112 Midland Ave. | Aaron Pelc, Staff photo

"When we were first going together we'd get on the bus and I'd want to sit up front and he would head for the back," Nonie said. "Finally, one day I said to him, 'Why do you always go to the back of the bus?' He said, 'Because I had to sit there,' and that just floored me. It just opened my eyes to what it was like for him growing up down South."

Nonie said some discrimination still goes on today in the form of racial profiling. Their son has experienced it in recent years while living in the Boston area, she said. "People aren't aware of it, but that still goes on."

The church, on the other hand, was welcoming from the start.

"We never felt anything but love here," Hayward said.

Regarding their son, Brett DeBose, Nonie said, "We knew he would be accepted there because we had been accepted."

Brett, now 31, moved to Massachusetts to attend college and still lives there, for the most part missing out on any firsthand experience of the church becoming more multiracial and multicultural over the years. He said that though he always felt accepted and liked, looking back on it, the church as it was at the time was not supporting him in all of who he was.

"I didn't experience discrimination in any overt sense," he said, "but there was something else at work

Continued on Page 20

WHAT'S HAPPENING

WEEKLY EVENTS

- Mom to Mom
Wednesday
6:30 p.m.
- Open Basketball
Thursday
7 p.m.
- KidZone
Sunday
10:30 a.m.
- Chinese ministry
Sunday
9:15 a.m.

SUNDAY SERVICES

- Classic Worship
8:15 a.m.
- Contemporary Worship
10:30 a.m.

Contact INFORMATION

Information is available about the following:

- small groups
- community service events
- clothing and food giveaways
- game days
- annual finance class

www.syracusealliancechurch.org

or

(315) 492-1741

info@syracusealliancechurch.org

ON THE SIDE

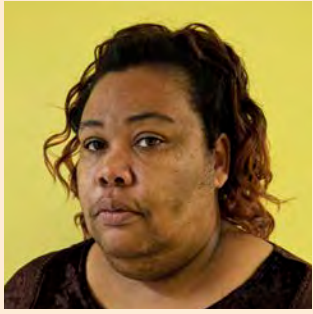
CHURCH AS FAMILY



> “Not only in church, but in society in general, we should be multicultural.”
— Tomoko Stultz | Marina Zarya, Staff Photo



> “It becomes a better picture of what the Body of Christ, the Church, is supposed to look like. It’s not supposed to be just whites or just blacks.”
— Beth Southwick | Aaron Pelc, Staff Photo



> “Everybody connects with each other; it’s not a racial thing. We all are one. We’re all spiritual family members here.”
— Grinelle Jackson | Marina Zarya, Staff Photo



> Kaylee Gaj, 18, Angela Reid, 21, and Andrea Yupanqui, 18, sit chatting in the sanctuary. | Marina Zarya, Staff Photo

Continued from Page 19

that was more subtle. There was a desire to fit in and be a part of the dominant culture.”

During this time when the church still had a dominant population of whites — the DeBoses described it as being “more like a suburban church in the city” — there were serious discussions by the congregation about actually relocating to the suburbs. “There was a significant core of people who really felt called to stay here, that this is where God wanted us to minister, in this area,” Nonie said. “So obviously we stayed, and people stayed with us when they made that decision.”

Nonie and Hayward credit a variety of small outreach efforts for spreading the word that the church is welcoming to all people. They said the church experienced one of the first major spikes in its black population in the 1990s after a pastor simply made an effort to befriend some people at the local YMCA.

Today, the church opens its doors for open basketball Thursday nights. “It’s where guys in the neighborhood can come and play ball, and just gets them off the streets and gives them a nice safe place to play,” Hayward said. These have mostly been young black males, and some of them now attend church services.

Nonie leads a support group for mothers in the church called Mom to Mom, which she said also has a racially diverse membership.

Other ways the church reaches out to members of the community include a monthly food pantry, annual

clothing giveaways, and community days in the past when church neighbors gave away school supplies.

As for worship, the church has Bible study groups that are conducted in several different languages and offers two separate worship services every Sunday. One has traditional hymns; the other features a rock band. Right now these different services may cater to different age groups more than anything, Brunner said, but he hopes that will change.

“We need our worship to be more culturally diverse,” he said. “At this point we’re kind of in the middle where we’re just kind of contemporary worship.”

Brett said he supports that the church has embraced cultural diversity more since he’s left.

“I think it’s a wonderful thing,” he said. “I only see that as the community of the church becoming richer. It has a root in the spirit of the community, which has always been inviting of people with open arms.”

That spirit was alive, perhaps in a different form, when his parents first started attending more than 30 years ago.

Cliff and Virgie Scott were two of the few blacks attending the church at that time. After moving to the area and trying other churches that weren’t for them, they settled on the Syracuse Alliance Church in 1980, attracted by its inviting nature.

“We came here, and they welcomed us with open arms, and it’s been like a family ever since,” Cliff said.

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HITTING HIGH NOTES

Local women praised for inspiring through teaching, music, worship

*Reggie Seigler
A Friendly Five columnist*

March is set aside as Women’s History Month to show appreciation, love, respect and honor for women and their achievements in areas such as arts, culture, business and politics. Its roots can be traced to the early 1900s when women stood up in solidarity to create a day in which to promote their quest for equal rights.

In recognition of Women’s History Month, I asked my daughter, Maricia Seigler, 23, to select and write about three women for this month’s A Friendly Five column. “Missy Danielle,” as she prefers to be called professionally, earned a bachelor’s in vocal performance from Syracuse University and a master’s in jazz studies from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

She has performed at the famed Philadelphia International Records and most recently was selected to be a member of the Praise and Worship Group for national gospel recording artist Tye Tribbet. She lives in Philadelphia, but she is very much connected to the Syracuse community, having been born, raised, educated and inspired here.

In keeping with the spirit of this column, I asked that her choices be women who are local, musically inclined and have been an inspiration for others who are exploring their own musical talents.

Missy Danielle
Guest columnist

Three women making history: Donna Alford, Andrea Armbruster and Twiggy Eure

During celebratory seasons like Black History Month and Women’s History Month, many focus their attention on well-known figures. Services are held in their honor, monuments are built, books are published and lessons are taught with hopes that students will be inspired to higher achievement. While those legacies are important to remember, few take the time to recognize the (s)heroes they encounter on a daily basis — the teachers, ministers, parents and others who dedicate their lives to the uplifting of other people.

There are countless unsung (s)heroes in Syracuse, but for me three come immediately to mind. They are: Donna Alford, lead singer of the Soft Spoken Band; Andrea Armbruster, former music teacher at Nottingham High School; and Twiggy Eure, co-pastor of The Promise Land Church in East Syracuse. These women were instrumental in my own musical development and have given freely of their time and talents.

DONNA ALFORD

For nearly 25 years, Donna Alford has spent the majority of her weekends sharing her voice with audiences across New York state, the surrounding states and the Bahamas. Her heartfelt performances have inspired other singers and musicians and touched the hearts of many listeners.

“I didn’t figure out that I was making an impact until later in life,” she said. “I began to realize after a woman came up to me crying and thanking me for my performance. I was floored. I had no idea that I was making that kind of impact on people’s lives.”

Alford has breathed life into the Syracuse music scene through her performances in countless ways. However, the way that was most inspiring to me was my being able to grow up in her home listening to her sing and receiving her tutelage. You see, Donna is my mother.



> Teacher Andrea Armbruster inspires in the classroom and helps students with practical needs, too. | Photo provided

ANDREA ARMBRUSTER

Like many teachers, Andrea Armbruster has devoted her career to helping students develop tools that will last a lifetime.

“That could mean teaching students to read music, working with other people or learning things in a different way,” she said. “We want to build the necessary skills so that they can make things happen for themselves in the future.”

For Armbruster that means meeting practical needs first, such as ensuring rides to and from school to maintain steady attendance, providing meals during late rehearsals, staying after hours to teach lessons, transporting students to auditions and concerts in other cities, and



> Pastor Twiggie Eure helps to empower women through her ministry at The Promise Land Church. | Photo provided

setting up private lessons.

“I simply want students to leave my class having gained some knowledge or experience that they couldn’t get somewhere else,” she said. “Something uniquely ascribed to the music room.”

Clearly her extra efforts were successful. Within six years at Nottingham High School, she helped at least a dozen students get into collegiate music programs. A number of others have entered into nonmusic programs. Many of her students have credited Armbruster for their success.

Eveny Parker is one of them. “Ms. A. was the first person to have me consider my character and not my talent,” Parker said. “She allowed me the space to be a leader and helped me with recommendations and scholarships. She gave rides, made sure I was set on a practical level and then an educational level.”

TWIGGY EURE

A love of music and a passion to help others succeed are the traits that define Pastor Twiggie Eure.

“Life is about us pouring into people,” Pastor Twiggie said. “We pour into you, you pour into others, and then the people you pour into will pour into other people. It’s about being able to make those connections. Everything is birthed out of relationships.”

Pastor Twiggie is a member of numerous organizations that are geared toward serving people, including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, The Promise Land Church and Women of Promise. She also owns her own consulting company, Virtuous Business Solutions. She is the proud mom of four children and the wife of Pastor Erik Eure.

She explains how she manages it all. “I think what

drives it is my passion to see other people reach their destiny, being all that they can be. I think that the opportunity to give back what God has freely given me is part of the call on our lives as people.”

Through her ministry work at The Promise Land Church, Pastor Twiggie has inspired countless young women to arise and live victorious lives. She has organized numerous conferences, retreats and seminars — all geared toward empowering women within the Syracuse community.

Pastor Twiggie is also a phenomenal singer and worship leader. Nearly 10 years ago, she started a small music ministry at The Promise Land Church. Through that ministry, she created space for young musicians to develop musically and spiritually.

Some of the world’s greatest (s)heroes will never make it into the history books: Claudette Colvin, the first to resist giving up her seat on a public bus during the civil rights movement; Sarah Elizabeth Ann Griscom, the seamstress who gave Betsy Ross sewing lessons; or Gustavo Dudamel, who revived the Los Angeles Philharmonic and helped to give students the opportunity to make music. However, they are key components in the history of our nation and deserve recognition.

The same is true for people like Donna, Andrea and Twiggie. Their presence and service within the Syracuse community makes a tremendous difference in the lives of residents. It’s important that they be recognized and commended for their hard work.

Have a Friendly Five suggestion? Contact Reggie at reggie@softspokenband.com or (315) 479-9620.

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the
STAND

Listen online to Donna Alford’s music, produced by Reggie Seigler

Click on her song, “Be Happy,” at mysouthsidestand.com

ON THE SIDE

BY THE NUMBERS

Experts say residents on the South Side could have a much greater effect on politics and in their community if more people turn out to vote. Here's a look at the story through the numbers:

65 PERCENT

of eligible African-Americans voted in the 2008 election, the highest turnout for that demographic in U.S. history.

50 PERCENT

of respondents to the American National Elections Studies survey said they don't think citizens have a say in government.

59.3 PERCENT

of Onondaga County residents voted for President Barack Obama in the 2008 election.

62.8 PERCENT

of New York state voters cast their vote for Obama in 2008.

Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau and Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections

CALLING ALL VOTERS

Community organizers rally South Side to cast ballots in next election



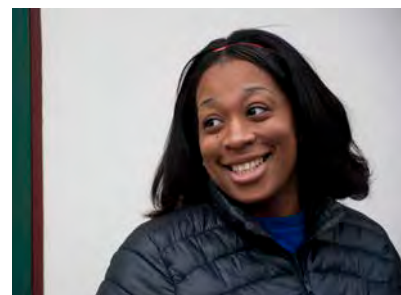
> Alicia Russell offers one political solution to the country's economic downturn: Tax the rich. | Cheryl Mowczan, Staff Photo



> Ray Williams criticized Republicans for the political gridlock in national politics. | Cheryl Mowczan, Staff Photo



> Jordan Benz named hydrofracking as the major political concern in the 2012 election. | Cheryl Mowczan, Staff Photo



> Kashmera McGee calls for improvements to the American health-care system. | Cheryl Mowczan Staff Photo

By | Christina Levin
Staff writer

A local partnership hopes to raise the voice of the South Side by increasing voter turnout.

The historic victory of President Obama and the political excitement his 2008 campaign generated evoke “Yes, We Can” memories for many, especially as the country heads toward the next presidential election this November. But many South Side residents are not registered and won't show up to vote.

“I will say the South Side was startling, in terms of how few people registered and how few people voted,” said Jeffrey Stonecash, a political science professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, who analyzed voting in the city. “I think there is a population in Syracuse that could have far more impact and get a lot more out of mayors. But they don't register, and they

don't vote, and they just don't have that much impact.”

The South Side — which is primarily made up of low-income families, Hispanics and African-Americans — consistently yields low voter registration and turnout, Stonecash said. That, in turn, yields political inequality. That might surprise some, considering African-Americans had some of the highest levels of national voter turnout in the 2008 election at 65 percent, according to the U.S. Census. Black citizens voted at higher levels in 2008 than in any presidential election since the U.S. Census Bureau began consistently measuring citizenship status in 1996. The same was true for Hispanics, according to the Census.

But even in the hyped-up 2008 presidential elections, which marked the first election of an African-American president and yielded a 64 percent turnout for voting-age citizens, nearly half of survey respondents agreed that people do not have a say in what the government does,

according to American National Elections Studies.

This year, the Syracuse/Onondaga County NAACP and the Syracuse Alumnae Chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. have partnered to coordinate a "Voter Awareness Series" to promote voter education and awareness. The first workshop took place Feb. 13 at the People's A.M.E. Zion Church, at 2306 S. Salina St.

For subsequent meetings, organizers plan to invite speakers, host voter registration drives, and listen to the questions and concerns expressed by audience members, said Syracuse/Onondaga NAACP President Preston Fagan. It's crucial to explain to South Side residents that local elections are just as important as presidential elections — sometimes more so, he added.

Voter turnout in the last election was a disgrace, said Johnnie Hill-Marsh, social action chair of the Deltas and one of the series' lead organizers. "It seems that our community needs a special invitation for action," she said. "We need to cite specific examples of what worked. We need perceived leaders to be out front, telling their stories and encouraging people to participate and vote."

In the last presidential election, 59.3 percent of Onondaga County residents voted for President Obama, compared to a 62.8 percent popular vote for Obama in New York overall, according to the Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections.

The Voter Awareness Series is important for the South Side. If you don't vote, you don't influence public policy, Stonecash reiterated.

"I have been around a lot of politicians who would turn to me and say, 'Have you looked at voter registration in the South Side?' And I would say, 'Yep.' 'Is it the case they really don't register to vote?' 'Yeah.' And they go, 'Oh, to hell with them,'" Stonecash recounted.

But residents do not see the correlation between casting a ballot and their socio-economic status, Hill-Marsh said.

"Members of our community do not understand the relationship between voting and the responsiveness of



> Troy Tell explains that crime is a major community concern that requires political action. | Cheryl Mowczan, Staff Photo

elected officials," she said. "Also, they don't realize that local elections have more impact on our daily lives than the presidential elections."

Khalid Bey, 4th District councilor and an African-American South Side resident, agreed. He said he got involved in politics because he was dissatisfied with the government and knew he needed to contribute to change.



> Donald Correa says hunger and joblessness are the biggest issues facing the country. | Cheryl Mowczan, Staff Photo

"Most communities of color in this city suffer economically, and so their immediate socio-economic condition holds their attention," rather than something like voting, Bey said. "Their experiences have not demonstrated to them equal representation in government, and so, they endeavor to find their own way."

Kashmera McGee, an African-American mother who recently moved to the South Side from New York City, said most of the people she knows on the South Side do not vote because they do not care or do not understand politics.

"But I care, because it involves me and my kids," said McGee, who was picking up her 4- and 6-year-old from school on South Salina. "I'm not always going to be around."

McGee said she voted in the 2008 presidential election and plans to vote for Obama again this November, adding that she hopes to see him bring better healthcare if he gets re-elected, because there is not enough coverage for everybody.

But those who are just trying to provide for their families, as Bey suggested, may not prioritize civic duty.

Stonecash explained the concept. "People really struggle with their day-to-day existence," he said. "They don't have any sense that local politics is going to help them, they don't read newspapers, they're not informed ... they sort of withdraw."

One of them is Jordan Benz, who is originally from the North Side but has lived on the South Side for the past six years. He said he did not vote in the last general election because he was working two shifts at the time. He might vote in 2012 but remains undecided.

SOUTH SIDE STATISTICS

Jeffrey Stonecash, a professor at Syracuse University, used 2000 data, classifying the South Side as census tracts 42, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59 and 61.01.

41.6 PERCENT
of South Side residents were registered to vote.

39.7 PERCENT
of those registered were actually voting.

16.8 PERCENT
of South Side residents were registered and voting in off-years such as 2002 and 2006.

59.3 PERCENT
of South Side residents were in minority groups (black or Hispanic).

Stonecash stressed the difficulty of matching census tracts, which can contain information about people over the age of 18 in a given area, with election districts.

The Board of Elections, however, organizes voting data by election districts and wards within those districts, which may not match the census tracts.

REST OF CITY

70.5 percent of residents 18 and over were registered to vote at the time of the analysis in the mid-2000s. The percentage of those who actually voted of those registered in the rest of the city was 44.3 percent. The percent of those both registering and voting in Syracuse in an off-year like 2002 or 2006 was 32.2 percent.

Source: Jeffrey Stonecash

Continued on Page 26

IF YOU GO

What: The next event in the Voter Awareness Series

Where: The People's A.M.E. Zion Church
2306 S. Salina St.

When: Monday, March 5,
6 p.m.

Contact: Preston Fagan, president of the Syracuse/Onondaga NAACP
(315) 430-3533

Voter registration forms will be available at the meeting, but the focus will be on voter education — your rights as a citizen and why you should vote.

Continued from Page 25

"I'm not too political, but I try to get into that," said Benz, who thinks hydrofracking is one of the major issues facing the country. "I just don't like it all that much."

Alicia Russell, an African-American South Side native, was of age but chose not to vote in the last presidential election because she was afraid "that somebody was going to kill the president" (Obama) if he were elected. She did not want to contribute to that, she said.

Maria Barow, an African-American South Side resident who has lived in Syracuse for 10 to 15 years, said the economy is the first thing President Obama should address if he is re-elected. She plans to vote for him.

"Central New York says it has jobs, but I'm out here every day. I sent out applications, and nothing's coming back," Barow said while catching a bus on South Salina Street. She said she only has a GED, a barrier in her job hunt. "I would love to get a student loan. But, you know, who's going to give me a student loan?"

Donald Correa, a South Side native, cited hunger and joblessness as the biggest problems in the country, adding that he knows voting is the way to rectify that. Correa said he likely will vote for Obama but does not know any of the other candidates.

Troy Tell, a Republican African-American who has lived on the South Side for five years, said crime is one of the central issues today, adding that "more cops" is the solution. Tell said he plans to vote for Mitt Romney

because he is the best choice among GOP candidates.

The racial composition of local political offices may explain political apathy among some.

"I feel alienated when I see the appointments made by elected officials, and notice their hiring practices," said Hill-Marsh, citing the mayor's office and the county executive's office. "Africans are not represented."

Mayor Stephanie A. Miner's Citizens Cabinet of 19 includes two African-American members, and new appointments will be made in July, said Lindsay McCluskey, a City Hall official. The makeup fluctuates because members are selected based on their Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today groups, McCluskey said.

But Fagan, who said attending President Obama's inauguration was his most memorable political experience, knows the unity politics can bring to a community.

"I can't describe the feeling," he said, referring to President Obama's inauguration in 2009 and recalling that he and his wife showed up at 4:40 a.m. in Washington, D.C., that day. "We met people we didn't know, and we all acted like we knew each other for a long time. That was probably the peak and the joy of my life."

Hill-Marsh believes workshops like the Voter Awareness Series could make a significant difference on the South Side.

"The people who attend the workshops will tell someone and they will tell someone," she said. "The word of mouth is powerful."

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MAKING NEW PLANS

After cut in funding, Jubilee Homes continues to revitalize community

By | Alexandra Hitzler
Urban Affairs reporter

Jubilee Homes refocuses plans on smaller, less costly projects after facing financial setbacks

With less money to work with, Jubilee Homes is doing things differently. The nonprofit that has worked in the area for decades will build fewer homes for Syracuse residents over the next year, refocusing on less costly rehab projects instead due to a cut in federal funding.

Walter Dixie, executive director of Jubilee Homes, said the organization relies heavily on the Community Development Block Grant that it receives from the federal government.



>Walter Dixie, executive director of Jubilee Homes, has said the organization must shift its energies because of cuts in federal funding. | Justin Murphy, Staff Photo

\$310,000, he has to start reconsidering Jubilee's plans.

"We have to shift our focus from small-scale home construction projects and start thinking like a larger, for-profit company."

Dixie said the organization started building new affordable housing on the South Side and repairing housing in poor shape to sell it for affordable prices. Dixie also said the organization is looking into larger development projects such as supermarkets and office spaces that can generate income.

"We need to utilize our facilities by getting involved in bigger building projects so that we can lease our property to other companies," Dixie said. "We need to generate funding through things like rent for our spaces because we can't afford to keep things the way they are."

Desaree Dixie passes by the countless number of community service awards that adorn the walls of the Tallman Street Jubilee Homes office when she arrives to work each day.

"The most enjoyable part of this job is working so closely with the community," said Desaree Dixie, the Jubilee Homes housing director. "We work hard to help

build up a community that has often been overlooked. Syracuse Common Councilor Bob Dougherty said that the cuts in funding for agencies that improve and construct housing in Syracuse will especially affect the South Side community, where one in five homes is vacant.

"Less funding for these agencies means less housing," Dougherty said.

"These agencies that build and repair homes are a great help to the community because they improve housing structures on the South Side, which are typically very old."

Phil Prehn, a community organizer of Syracuse United Neighbors, a nonprofit community improvement organization, said the lack of federal funding for housing nonprofits affects the overall value of the community as well.

"When there's not enough money to tear down or improve these vacant homes, it just adds to the problem, which kills the property values of the area," Prehn said.

Other cities, like Buffalo for example, also struggle to improve neighborhoods where as many as one in three houses are vacant, said Caitlin Godin, program director of Heart of the City, a nonprofit housing development organization in Buffalo.

"Adequate funding is hard to come by in this economy, especially for areas that are in great need of assistance," Godin said. "The government can only do so much, and then it's up to the efforts of the individual organizations to really work for their community."

Desaree Dixie said that while the organization is looking to shift its focus, it is still working to help the community through continued housing assistance, as well as youth employment programs and programs to improve the appearance of vacant lands on the South Side.

"We're doing our best to rebuild the community," she said. "We're invested in the community and we're not going anywhere."

BEYOND HOMES

Jubilee Homes also holds various programs throughout the year to help improve the community.

THE SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY FARM PROJECT

This youth-run program transforms vacant lots into urban farms. Volunteers are welcomed to help maintain the farm every Tuesday from 3 to 6 p.m. at 100 Bellevue Ave.

YOUTHBUILD

The program helps out-of-school youth earn their GED and learn career-development skills through community service activities.

SOUTHWEST ECONOMIC RESOURCE CENTER

The resource center provides education, training, development and technical assistance to small businesses run by women and minorities in the community. The program also holds skill-development workshops open to the public. Call (315) 471-2720 to learn more and participate.



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