

the **Stand** south side news

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Syracuse, NY

Winter 2010-2011 issue 7 FREE

STAINED-GLASS ART

Brennan glass studio
helps youth design
and create windows

LIVING THE GOSPEL

One of a few female pastors shares her passion for what she does

nap group

These seniors aren't
resting during the day.
They're on the go.

Racial Profiling

Two studies using two methods
reach different findings about police

BE A HOMEOWNER



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BUSINESS | Charles Garland shares his story of how he came to run his family's Garland Brothers Funeral Home, which was not his first career choice when he was younger.



FEATURES | Meet Tony Wade, a postal worker who treats 100 or more families to holiday gift baskets around the South Side every year.



FEATURES | Find out how seniors stay on the move by exercising, meditating, socializing and more through the Dunbar Association's Neighborhood Advisory Program.



BUSINESS | Learn how women maintain their total image at Ma'Dear's salon and spa, which Jackie Emery opened 15 years ago on South Avenue.



SCHOOL AND YOUTH | Share in the excitement of young people who designed and made stained-glass windows as part of their after-school program at the Dunbar Center.



CHURCH | The Rev. Colette Matthews, among the few female pastors in the country, has led New Covenant Baptist Church for the past four years. Read all about her experiences.



FEATURES | A group of longtime friends and a jar of Hungarian peppers. You'll find them every Sunday night at Swallow's Restaurant on South Avenue, a 25-year tradition.



COMMUNITY | Want to own a home? On the South Side? The Syracuse Housing Authority is about to start building 50 new homes for low-income families to rent and then own.

■ Cover photography shows Jamon Martin, a student at Clary Middle School, who created stained-glass windows with other youth from the Dunbar Center. | Danielle Waugh, Staff Photo

CALENDAR | WINTER

What: Syracuse Community Choir 25th Anniversary Concert

When: 3:30 to 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 19, 2010

Where: Nottingham High School, 3100 E. Genesee St., Syracuse

Cost: \$10-\$25 Sliding Scale at Door (children younger than 12 are free)

More details: At the concert, the SCC will announce the 2010 People's Peace Award recipient as community organizer Geneva Hayden for her dedication to community and her demonstration of the power of an individual's determination to effect change.

More Info.: To learn more, call (315) 428-8151 or e-mail syracusecommunitychoir@gmail.com

What: Celebrate the Grand Opening of the South Side Communication Center

When: 3 to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2011

Where: 2331 S. Salina St., Syracuse

Cost: Free and open to the public

More details: Come and receive information about the South Side Communication Center and a guided tour. Refreshments will be served. This event will also kick off the Southside Community Coalition's Dollar Campaign to raise money to help with operating expenses for the South Side Communication Center; donations appreciated.

More Info.: Please contact Linda Littlejohn at lm1ittle@syr.edu or Shante Harris El at contactscs@syrssouthside.org

HOW TO BUY AN AD

If interested in **running an ad**, contact Ashley Kang to request a **rate card** and discuss options by e-mailing Ashley@mysouthsidedstand.com or by calling (315) 443-8664. The Stand's rate card can also be found online at www.mysouthsidedstand.com

This winter issue of The Stand is our last for 2010. It has been a great year.

Featured on the following pages are stories about how the community stepped up to continue a 12-year holiday tradition in the face of budget cuts; a profile of business owner Charles Garland, who maintains the family-run funeral home business; and a story about Jackie Emery and her Ma'Dear's Total Image Body Salon and Day Spa.

This issue also features an update on the projects that Syracuse Housing Authority is pursuing to lower the number of vacant properties in the area by building 50 new homes that community members can rent and then own.

Our December workshop will be taught by returning volunteer and freelance writer Lynn Olcott. She will discuss how to develop ideas for columns and the nature of writing over time to a public readership. No workshop will be offered in January.

Our November multimedia workshop welcomed Betty Pearson, Dennis Conard, Mary Mathis, Brenda Muhammad, Miguel Balbuena, middle-school student Beijing Saleem and her father Kevin Saleem. Several participants worked together and produced a slide show of photos and audio providing coverage of the Community Forum on Youth Violence, which was held at the Mary Nelson Youth Center on Saturday, Nov. 13, 2010. The group did an amazing job. We'd like to thank them for spending the day with us, and we also give special thanks to our volunteer facilitators Stephen Mahan and Stephen Shaner.

In 2011, we have decided to change how our workshops are offered. We will provide a free journalistic instructional series for community members who want to become regular contributors and a few public offerings throughout the year. More details on future offerings will be shared in the February print issue. To inquire about registering for our journalism series, please send an e-mail with your contact information and state your interest in writing or working with The Stand. Send those details to ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or call the office at (315) 443-8664.

Ashley Kang



UPCOMING EVENT

Dec. 4

December Workshop

"Finding the Writer Within"

11 a.m. to noon Saturday,
Dec. 4

South Side Innovation Center,
2610 S. Salina St.

Free and open to the public;
no RSVP required

Contact The Stand's Director,
Ashley Kang, with any
questions by e-mailing ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or
calling (315) 443-8664

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Greetings,

My son was participating in the Syracuse City School's Oratory Contest over the weekend. That's where I ran across The Stand. I felt I had to take a moment to commend Ms. Kang and the rest of the staff on the amazing publication. It's informative, community focused, and easy to read.

You've got to get this out (laundromats, grocery stores, barber shops, etc.) so more people can enjoy it. Thanks for showing my neighborhood, the South Side, in a positive light.

Sincerely,
Yolanda Flowers
Submitted Nov. 15, 2010



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

> Professor Steve Davis, left, and Professor Stephen Mahan, work with Brenda Muhammad on a Soundslides project during The Stand's Multimedia Workshop, held Saturday, Nov. 13, 2010. Participant Mary Mathis looks on in the background. The workshop participants' slide show can be seen on our website at www.mysouthsidestand.com. | Photo provided by Stephen Shaner, a volunteer facilitator during the workshop

FAMOUS FUNERALS

Garland Brothers Funeral Home has handled the arrangements for several noteworthy people, according to Charles Garland.

Police officer Wallie Howard Jr.

Howard was an investigator with the Syracuse Police Department. He was shot and killed while on duty during an undercover drug deal Oct. 25, 1990.

Jonny Gammage

Gammage was the cousin of former NFL defensive end Ray Seals. He was stopped by Pittsburgh police while driving his cousin's Jaguar on Oct. 12, 1995. After being placed in handcuffs, Gammage was beaten with flashlights by Pittsburgh police officers. Autopsies later showed Gammage died from asphyxiation.

Aunt Jemima

The famous breakfast character's real name was Anna Harrington. She worked for the Quaker Oats Company in Syracuse.

GARLAND BROTHERS FUNERAL HOME

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Phone:
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Website:
www.garlandbrosfh.com/

AT REST AT GARLAND

Funeral home assists South Side residents in burying loved ones



> Charles Garland, right, manager of Garland Brothers Funeral Home, carefully prepares to transport a body from Upstate University Hospital. He responds to "death calls" from hospitals or nursing homes at all hours, day or night. | Sierra Jiminez, Staff Photo

By | Sierra Jiminez
Urban Affairs reporter

Charles Garland found his calling as the manager of the family-run funeral home

Charles Garland always wanted to be a doctor. He dreamt of the days he could perform surgeries and save lives. But when Garland was a child, his future profession was already planned out for him. Instead of going to summer camp like the average child his age, Garland spent his summers washing hearses.

"I used to get upset when I was younger," Garland said. "But you just accept the fact that this is your calling."

In 1936, Garland's grandfather opened Garland Brothers Funeral Home, located just off South Salina Street on the South Side of Syracuse. The small, white building and the Garland family name have become a safe haven to the South Side community.

"I think my family just assumed it would be something I would join later on," Garland, 45, said. "So when they asked me to join, I said no."

Instead, 18-year-old Garland joined the United States Navy. He traveled the world. He became a father. And at the age of 24, he changed his mind.

"I called my family and told them I would help them," he said. "This was back in 1988. I had no intention of staying."

More than two decades later, Garland is the manager of the family-owned business. Between Garland, his cousin, and a select few hired employees, the funeral home hums almost 24/7.

The ministry never stops. The phone is always ringing. Calls from the local hospitals and nursing homes, or "death calls," as Charles Garland refers to them, can come at any time of the day or in the wee hours of the night. When a call comes, Garland has to drop everything to pick up the body.

He pulls the company hearse around to the back of the funeral home. He opens the back door and loads a large stretcher into the vast empty body of the vehicle. It's less than four miles to Upstate University Hospital. And Garland knows the trip well.

"I've got a good reputation with everybody I know," Garland said as he signs for the body he has come to pick up. The deceased died the night before at Upstate University Hospital. Garland calmly signs to pick up a wallet, \$22 in cash and a T-Mobile cell phone.

He loads the body and gets back in the car. He continues the car ride with a conversation about Syracuse

sports, joking at the number of cars backed up along the hospital roads.

His laughter, joking demeanor and friendliness with the hospital staff show how comfortable he is with his job. He said he has no plans to leave soon. But when he does retire, he doesn't want his children to take over.

"I have children but I haven't groomed them to do any of this," Garland said about his three children. "They have to make up their own minds to do it."

Out of a sense of duty, Garland has taken over and maintained the family business.

"We all want to serve a need," he said. "One thing about working here and helping others is I know I'm needed. It's gratifying."

But Garland said he hasn't always thought that way. At 24, he treated the funeral home just like any other mundane job. It wasn't his passion, and it showed in his lack of empathy for the mourning families.

"Somewhere along the line I changed my mind and realized that this is really serious," he said. That line was drawn more than 12 years ago after Garland dealt with the body of a 12-year-old girl who had run away from home and been murdered. Her body, Garland said, was dismembered.

"It was done by somebody I knew," he said. "It affected everyone in the community. It was just an awful experience."

It was then, Garland said, he made up his mind to

stay in Syracuse and make the ministry of the funeral home his life.

Kelvin Cannon, an assistant at the funeral home, began working there in his mid-20s.

"It's not easy, and it never gets easier," Cannon said.

Now, at 43, Cannon said his approach to life has changed because of his job.

"It's taught me to be more humble," he said "It's also allowed me to be blessed because God could have taken me out at any time."

Every person they see responds differently to a loss. Some get angry, some drink, and some find peace in spirituality. But no matter who the customer is, neither Garland nor Cannon is ever at a loss for words.

"I mean what do you say?" Cannon said. "I never tell nobody I'm sorry. I give them my condolences and that's it. We all have to die one day."


But sometimes it's not what they say, it's what they do. For Paul Dewan's family, Garland offered to help in any way he could after Dewan's brother, Brian Carter, died of a stroke — even going so far as to provide transportation for Dewan's mother after her son's wake.

"We chose them because they've always been there for us," Dewan said.

"When families are going through situations like this, they tend not to have all the pieces together," he said. And Garland Brothers tends to kind of pull that together."



> Charles Garland, manager of Garland Brothers Funeral Home, says he has come to appreciate what he does every day — and night. "One thing about working here and helping others is I know I'm needed. It's gratifying." | Sierra Jimenez, Staff Photo



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OUR OFFICE IS OPEN ALL YEAR

THE TONY SPECIAL

Holiday dinners can be expensive, but they don't have to be. Here is a recipe you can make at home, using primarily the ingredients found in Tony Wade's food gift baskets.

Three-Bean Chili

1 small yellow onion, chopped

1 small green pepper, chopped

2 cans kidney beans, undrained

2 cans red beans, undrained

2 cans black beans, undrained

1 can diced tomatoes, undrained

1 can tomato paste

2 envelopes chili seasoning mix

Directions: Brown onion and green pepper on a large skillet over medium heat; add all remaining ingredients; mix well. Bring to boil; cover. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Recipe modified from AllRecipes.com

COMIN' TO TOWN

Local postman Tony Wade raises thousands to spread Christmas cheer

By | Emily Warne
Urban Affairs reporter

Each Christmas season, Wade uses donations, annual "Bowl-a-thon" to help families in need

When postal officer Tony Wade ventures out into his neighborhoods in mid-December, he might not always be delivering mail, and he might not always be recognizable. That's because once a year, the 33-year veteran of the United States Postal Service trades his uniform for a different kind of ensemble — one that involves heavy black boots, a red-velvet suit coat, and an overwhelming white beard.

That's when Wade becomes Santa Claus, trading in bills and junk mail for presents and food. For the past several years, he's been raising money and spreading cheer throughout the South Side. Through donations and his annual "Bowl-a-thon," Wade typically raises between \$2,000 and \$3,000 a year for families in need.

While he most often serves some people on his postal route, he is not limited only to those.

"I try to help anyone out that I can," he says. "If someone tells me, 'Hey, this family isn't going to have a Christmas meal,' or something, I try to get out there and make sure they have something to help them celebrate."

Wade usually serves his baskets of food — mostly canned and preserved goods that will last awhile — to 100 or more families throughout the South Side. With a limited budget, helping that many people can get tough.

"I have the Bowl-a-thon every year to help raise money for everyone," he says. "We usually raise most of our money through that and have a really good turnout, but I take donations from other people, too."

It's no surprise that Wade is so involved in spreading Christmas cheer. He considers being a member of the South Side community not just a role, but a responsibility.

"I coach all kinds of sports for kids around here, and it's important for me to be able to interact with them," Wade says.

That's one of the reasons he began work with the post office in the first place, he adds.

"I almost got into law enforcement, and I think I would have been good at it, would have been happy with it," Wade says. "But I couldn't turn down a job like this, with good benefits and good people."

So instead of patrolling the streets, he patrols the sidewalks on Christmas Eve with an entourage of volunteer high school students.

They usually gather at the post office where Wade



> Tony Wade usually raises \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year to aid families at Christmastime. | Emily Warne, Staff Photo

works, at the corner of Colvin and South Salina streets. His bosses and co-workers don't mind the extra rush of people.

"Seeing Tony love his role as Santa the way he does, we just want to help him out," postmaster Joe Armstrong says. "He's a great employee and he's a great Santa Claus."

Part of being a good Santa Claus, Wade says, is being able to roll with the punches.

"One year, I had been delivering mail to this woman for a while, and I knew she needed a basket, so we got one all put together for her and everything," he says. "And then we went and tried to deliver it and no answer, you know? So I was upset because I didn't get to give her the food, but then I found out that she passed away. That was a sad time in delivering baskets."

Still, Wade has plenty of happy memories that make up for moments like that.

"Any time you help out someone in need," he says, "it justifies all that hard work you put in the rest of the year."

LIGHT UP THE TOWN

Tree-lighting ceremony will take place despite city cuts to holiday budget

By | Fernando Alfonso III
Urban Affairs reporter

Leaders on the South Side are making it possible for yearly event to be held at 5:45 p.m. Dec. 6

When the South Side heard that the city had cut its tree-lighting funds, the community didn't let it ruin their holiday plans.

A group of organizers and volunteers banded together to make sure the 12-year tree-lighting tradition continued. With an increase in violence over recent months, this year's ceremony was very important to the community, said Judy Turner, a South Side native and event organizer.

"We pull together in all types of situations, and I think that's a testament to the community leaders," Turner said. "This will make this event even more special because we'll have to come together collectively."

City of Syracuse Parks Commissioner Patrick Driscoll also commended the South Side's resilience.

"The groups that want to step up and help and take

pride in their neighborhood, it's certainly comforting to us," Driscoll said. "It just speaks to how reliable the organizers on the South Side are."

This year Driscoll had to cut the \$112,000 holiday budget by 30 to 40 percent. As a result, the tree-lighting ceremony on the corner of East Colvin Avenue and South Salina Street was one of 10 holiday events that did not get a tree, lights, bandwagon or sound system.

"We're going to have to make some tough decisions here," Driscoll said. "Doing something like this now, I think it can only help us as we go forward and try to fix up our facilities."

The \$30,000 to \$40,000 in savings will be used to improve park facilities like playgrounds, swimming pools and ice skating rinks, Driscoll said.

For about a year, South Side residents and volunteers have planned in anticipation of the budget cut, said Shirley Harris, event organizer.

"We're actually not in bad shape," Harris said.

"Right now, I'm thinking that we have enough contacts out there that we might find someone that would donate the tree to us," said Turner in an interview before Thanksgiving.

Turner and Harris hope to get a 14- to 16-foot tree donated for the ceremony.

If they could not get a free tree, the organizers had received a \$150 donation to purchase one, Turner said.

A-M Electric, Inc. of Syracuse will light the tree using electricity provided by the Beauchamp Branch Library, Harris said.

"We really love to be involved with community events," said Katie Hayduke, children's librarian at Beauchamp. "The community needs it."

Although the cutback will affect how long the tree stays lit during the holidays, Turner understands the type of economic pressure the city is under. In the past the tree has usually remained lit into the new year, Turner said.

Those who attend the Dec. 6, 2010 event, which begins at 5:45 p.m., will be able to drink free hot chocolate thanks to the Key Bank branch across the street from the tree and the Red Cross of Central New York. Every year more than 200 cups are served, said Mike Kinahan, a disaster action team volunteer with the Red Cross.

"The kids really enjoy it," Kinahan said. "It's good to see the kids out, enjoying the festivities."

Each child 10 and under will also receive a free gift from Santa, Harris said. More than 300 gifts were distributed last year.

COLLEGE FUND

Charles Dozier III was a small business owner on the South Side who helped start the tree-lighting celebration in 1997. After Dozier died in 2000, a scholarship was created in his honor.

Each year, one Syracuse high school student is chosen for the scholarship during the tree-lighting ceremony. The student receives the \$500 scholarship in the spring, after acceptance into college.

Last year's winner was Ayanna Williams, from Corcoran High School.

DONATIONS

Several other area organizations are donating to the event.

Wegmans is donating cookies for all who attend.

The Central New York Association of Minority Officers will donate hats and gloves for all the children at the event.

Beauchamp Branch Library will hand out free used books at the event.



> Last year's tree-lighting on the corner of East Colvin Avenue and South Salina Street. | Gloria Wright, The Post-Standard

SENIORS: TIPS FOR THE COLD



"Drive slowly and watch out for black ice. Don't let other people intimidate you. They can't see that you're a senior so they might be honking. You have to block them out."

—Minnie Simmons, 61



"Change the filter in the furnace because you don't want dirty air. Take your temperature regularly. You may feel cold and turn up the heat when you don't realize you actually have a fever."

—Janice Williams, 65



"Always have drapes to keep the house warm, and make sure they are closed in the daytime."

—Mattie Stafford, age undisclosed



"Don't shovel snow. You'd be surprised by how heavy snow is."

—Doris Jackson, 85

SENIORS LOVE 'NAP'

Local program brings friends together to exercise and socialize



> Artresa DeLee, center, and Betty Brandon choose swatches for their next quilt. | Mackenzie Reiss, Staff Photo

By | Jennifer Cheng
Urban Affairs reporter

Program provides seniors with a chance to socialize, exercise and enjoy local activities

Mary Jackson is dressed to the nines every time she steps out of her home. When she is with friends at the Dunbar Center three mornings a week, she always bedazzles in a comely outfit. Jaws drop when her age is revealed – 97. Not only does she have a clean bill of health, she is always wearing high heels. Among the seniors at Dunbar, she is one of the most sprightly, witty and sociable.

Jackson's secret to aging gracefully is getting out of the house as much as possible to socialize with friends. She lives alone and has no access to a car, but she is involved with Dunbar Association's Neighborhood Advisor Program, known as NAP. It sends a van to pick her up for activities and lunch every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning.

NAP is a citywide program with locations scattered all over, including the South Side. Seniors are encouraged to bring their family and friends above the age of 60 who may not necessarily live in the area. According to Census 2000, there are 3,839 citizens over the age of 65

on the South Side, making up 18.6 percent of the South Side's population.

"A majority of the seniors [who come out] live by themselves," said Coretta Washington, who runs the program. "Sometimes you just can't rely on the family."

Along with her colleague Shiann Atuegbu, she visits seniors at their homes to check how they are doing.

The program draws around 25 seniors above the age of 60 together for weekly fitness and sewing classes, bingo, seminars and field trips. The program is funded by the Onondaga County Department of Aging and Youth, so seniors can participate free of charge. Washington brings in speakers every Friday to educate seniors on how to stay independent and well-informed on subjects such as protecting themselves against fraud, how to fill out forms for Medicaid, Social Security or food stamps, how to read food labels or how to make the most out of the heat at home.

The NAP provides seniors with a chance to socialize with peers. Washington recounts that it began two decades ago with the purpose to help seniors maintain financial independence, and stay physically and mentally healthy.

Washington tries to draw more seniors by tapping into church congregations.

“We give assistance that churches cannot provide,” Washington said. She uses Mary Jackson, who has been attending NAP activities for two decades, as an example.

“I am not like other seniors who stay at home in front of the TV,” Jackson said. “I get crazy staying in my apartment.”

She enjoys the socializing aspect the most at NAP. Some seniors leave Dunbar as soon as the activities are over, but Jackson always sticks around to chat. When she noticed one of her peers sitting alone, she went over to talk to her.

“I love making friends,” Jackson said. “I enjoy life, I enjoy people.”

Jackson also believes in looking presentable at all times. “Just because you’re aging doesn’t mean you have to let yourself go,” she said.

James Williams, 83, goes to church with Jackson.

“I’ve known her for 25 years, and she’s a dresser,” he said. “You should see her at church. I call her Mrs. America. She’s a beautiful lady and moves around better than I do.”

Washington has taken the seniors out for shopping, to plays at Syracuse Stage, and to visit Turning Stone. Recently, Washington took the seniors to the movie “For Colored Girls,” which was requested by one of the senior ladies. The seniors at NAP are predominantly female and black, with only around four to five men.

“I tune them out,” said Williams, joking on being outnumbered by women. “I grew up with four sisters and I was the only boy so I just deal with them.”

Williams participates in the fitness class taught by Bernice Stackhouse, 67, every Monday morning along with around 13 to 15 seniors. It is a one-hour class of aerobics, stretching, ball-throwing exercises, weightlifting, arm and leg lifts, balancing and meditation. Stackhouse finds it challenging in selecting the appropriate exercises that would accommodate a wide age range of 60 to 97. She focuses on exercises that would help the seniors at home, such as balancing. Stackhouse even conducts an exercise where she teaches the seniors the best way to get back up on their feet if they fall.

Annie Rankins, 75, has benefited from the exercises.

“The doctors say [exercising] is good for the moment I get up,” said Rankins. “When I get up in the



> Janet Davis threads a needle to help her with her bead work. | Mackenzie Reiss, Staff Photo

morning, I stagger.” She also credits the program with helping her improve her memory.

Stackhouse puts on soft jungle noises in the last 15 minutes of the class for the seniors to meditate.

“It feels like therapy,” Williams said.

Stackhouse explains that this clears the minds of the seniors so they are not constantly consumed by their thoughts. Washington also emphasizes the importance of the fitness class because it is good for seniors who suffer from high blood pressure and arthritis. At the end of each class, Stackhouse takes the weight of each senior. She says there is a steady weight drop in general among the seniors. This can also be credited to the regular NAP activities and extensive advice from seminars on how to eat healthy. The class begins and ends with prayer, usually led by a senior.

“We thank God for allowing what we do at our age,” Stackhouse said.

“She takes no medication and is the model picture of being healthy,” Washington said. “It is a sign of someone benefiting from the program.”



“Make sure to get immunization shots to prevent catching the flu.”

—James Edwards Jr, 68



“Eat breakfast. I eat cereal or oatmeal. It’s good for the immune system. My energy level is not up to par when I haven’t eaten breakfast.”

—Ann Parker, 70



“Always wear house shoes, have sufficient covers on the bed, make sure doors and windows are not letting air through and always cover your head because the body loses heat from the head.”

—Jean Wright, 61



“I advise all seniors to get up off the sofa and exercise. I like to bowl.”

—Sue Dunn, 67

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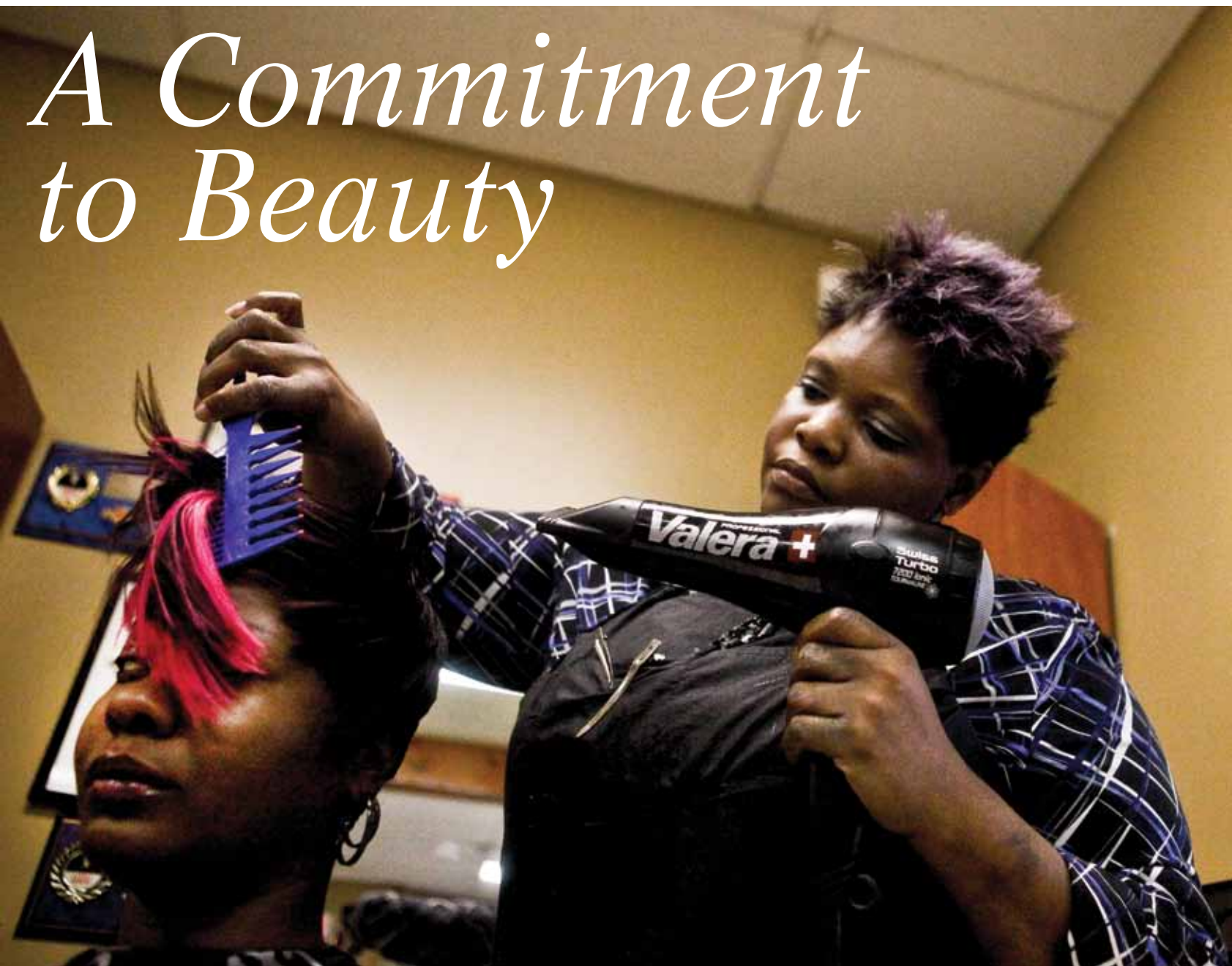
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Sidebar photos
by Jennifer Cheng

A Commitment to Beauty



> Jackie Emery, owner of Ma'Dear's Total Image Body Salon and Day Spa, blow dries Tiffany Alexander's hair. Alexander has been a patron of the salon for 12 years and comes in every two weeks. | Mackenzie Reiss, Staff Photo

By | Kelly Outram
Urban Affairs reporter

Ma'Dear's salon aims to teach customers how to maintain their total image, starting with hair

A blue flash blazes into the salon. A short woman with slight wrinkles wearing white bedroom slippers and blue sweatshirt power walks into Ma'Dear's Total Image Body Salon and Day Spa. Her shoulder-length, gold-highlighted, black hair flies behind her, a small piece of it tied up in a mini-bun.

Before anyone comments on the state of her appearance, the gold-highlighted woman holds up a finger. "Don't you start with me, don't you say nothing about my hair," she says. She graciously hands an envelope of money to a stylist who's with another customer, thanking

her for doing her hair earlier in the day.

"Check you out," another stylist says to the gold-highlighted woman.

The gold-highlighted woman smiles. The smile exposes a gap in her gums, where two front teeth should be. She twirls, with a small shake of her bottom, and points at her "audience."

"Just because I'm old doesn't mean I can't keep trying," she says.

With a last hip shake, she heads out the door and leaves the rest of the women in stitches of laughter.

Welcome to Ma'Dear's, a South Avenue salon that includes a spa area and a clothing boutique, a block from Wilson Farm's. For many blacks, hair is an essential part of identity, an expensive habit and a canvas for self-expression. In a 2009 report released by the Mintel

International Group in Chicago, black hair products, including shampoo and relaxers were estimated to make up about \$165 million in annual hair sales. Historically, beauty salons have been one of black women's first means of entrepreneurship. And for all these reasons, Ma'Dear's offers more than mousse, scissors and barber's chairs. It's a place for strong relationships, a place for invigoration and a place for hair.

MAINTENANCE IS KEY

Jackie Emery opened Ma'Dear's 15 years ago, and the interactions with her customers keep Emery at her black leather chair each day, she says. The shop sees around 40 to 50 customer daily.

About halfway through Emery's task, a woman with uncombed long black hair midway down her back enters the salon and taps Emery on the shoulder.

"Hi, dear," Emery says, a huge smile on her face. She and the woman share a long embrace.

"Just wanted to pop in," the woman says. "We'll talk later. Just wanted to say, 'Hi.' "

"OK, dear, nice seeing you," Emery says.

The woman, a loyal customer, walks away from Emery. She comes in often to visit. "I've had clients who have been with me since I opened the shop 15 years ago. I even have some who have been with me since I graduated beauty school," Emery says.

Past Emery's chair, in a separate side room of the salon, Eppie Davis, a faithful Ma'Dear's customer for almost a year, sits under the dryer and chats with the woman sitting across from her. She comes to the salon to relax, to enjoy its atmosphere and its people. "Syracuse is a small city. Sometimes you randomly know people that come in, and you feel comfortable," she says.

Davis makes it a point to come to the salon every two weeks, even if she needs just a wash. "Your hair and your physical appearance is the first thing that people see. It's important to maintain," she says.

Maintenance is the key to beauty, to good feelings, to invigoration, Emery says. Emery wears a streak of purple through her bangs. "Your hair is how you feel. I feel purple today, so I'm going to wear purple in my hair. Someone's happy, so they want to wear a happy style — it isn't ghetto," Emery said.

To Emery, the salon represents just one aspect of good maintenance. But her customers need more than just a weekly wash or a monthly touch-up. That's why Emery started her own print magazine. She calls it Image Ink.

Emery released Image Ink in August, with the next issue in the works. The publication aims to help people cope with life problems. The salon's clients serve as Emery's inspiration. Employees and clients contribute content to the magazine with self-help articles, Q&As with stylists, financial advice and poetry. Emery has high hopes for the magazine's future.

"Your hair is how you feel. I feel purple today."

—Jackie Emery

"I would like the magazine to go national eventually and maybe even a talk show from that," Emery says.

In the meantime, the salon holds monthly women's support groups to teach self-esteem and empowerment. Emery leads these, and females ranging from working women to junior high students attend to discuss life struggles and ways to cope. Emery also hosts hair shows that display different hair creations to the community.

And yes, the final maintenance key is your hair and how you wear it. On a recent Saturday, a visitor finds a full range of house specials: One lady walks in with short-cropped hair and leaves with hair down to her shoulders. A young girl suffers through the pinches and pulls of a braid job. And one woman needs convincing before scissors reach her locks.

"I want it to be long enough to brush," she tells her friend, who sits next to her.

"You'll be OK, sista," her friend says.

A BLOW OUT

Hair matters, even when you're 8 years old.

Toward the end of that Saturday, Jaquaya Gregory, salon receptionist, walked toward the stylists, a man in her wake. "Do we have any time for a walk-in?" Gregory asks the four stylists, all of whom had clients in their chairs. "This man here wants to have his daughter's hair done for her birthday."

The stylists discuss the pending appointments: A 5 p.m. braiding, a 4:30 p.m. wash and set and three clients still waiting under the dryer.

"We'll make it work," a stylist, Lindetta, responds.

A little while later, the man's daughter appears. A girl with long, thick braids halfway down her back decorated with colored barrettes. "Happy birthday," the stylists and clients say in an unplanned unison. She looks at the ground, and then takes Lindetta's hand and heads over to Lindetta's chair.

"What style do you want?" Lindetta asks.

The birthday girl smiles, her faced still turned to the ground, "A blow out."

THE PRICE OF BEAUTY

Jackie Emery thinks it's important to come to the salon at least once to twice a month, but maintenance can get pricey.

- Wrap: \$30
- Wash and set: \$40
- Press 'n' curl: \$40
- Relaxer: \$60
- Time spent in the salon: roughly three hours

According to Chris Rock's 2009 documentary "Good Hair," hair is a \$9 billion industry with blacks making up 80 percent of hair care purchases.

Teenagers spend an average of \$80 on themselves each week. Young women (ages 12-24) out-buy all other age groups when it comes to hair care, skin care, cosmetics and fragrances

Source: "Junior League" by Kelley Donahue. *American Salon*, 2000

infobox BEHIND IMAGE INK

- Jackie Emery, magazine creator and salon owner
- Aims to spread knowledge she learned over the years about self-love and purpose; teaches readers how to maintain their total image
- Image Ink is sold at Ma'Dear's for \$9.99 a copy

DESIGNING A WINDOW

Here are the four main steps to designing a stained-glass window, according to Scott Brennan, owner of Brennan Stained Glass Studio:

1. Create your design.
2. Cut glass into shapes.
3. Lay out the glass according to your design.
4. Fire glass in the kiln at 1,600 degrees.

MORE ABOUT SCOTT BRENNAN

Scott Brennan has been making stained glass since 1975. His shop, called the Brennan Stained Glass Studio, is located at 1288 W. Genesee St. in Syracuse.

Brennan's typical clients aren't schoolchildren — he regularly makes stained glass for churches and museums.

A typical stained-glass window for a church costs about \$50,000, while smaller windows are about \$20,000.

LEARNING BY DESIGN

Local studio partners with students to create stained-glass windows



> Clockwise from bottom left: Domanic Dickson, Uniyah Chatman, Matthew Dickson, Cambria Nelson, Jamon Martin, Jevon Jones and Josiah Jernigan, who made stained-glass windows, visit the Dunbar Center. | Danielle Waugh, Staff Photo

By | Danielle Waugh
Urban Affairs reporter

South Side students create and display new stained-glass windows for Dunbar Center

She hopes her children — and maybe even her grandchildren — will be able to see her artwork someday.

That's because 100 years from now, 12-year-old Uniyah Chatman's stained-glass window could still be hanging in the Dunbar Center.

"When I come back to Dunbar when I'm older, I can say I made that glass and I designed it and my friends helped me," Chatman said.

Her friends are her classmates in the 10- to 14-year-old after-school program at the Dunbar Center. Together, the 13 students designed and created three orange and blue stained-glass windows for the Dunbar Center on South State Street.

Stained glass typically lasts for 100 years, and the students hope that's how long their windows will endure.

"Everybody for those 100 years will be able to see what we did," said Jamon Martin, 12.

The project was a year in the making, and began with a field trip to Brennan Stained Glass Studio on West

Genesee Street.

The after-school supervisor, Adalsa Latty, scheduled a trip to the studio — thinking it would make for a good afternoon visit.

"I had no idea what it would turn into," Latty said.

Scott Brennan, owner of the studio, had the students put together a stained-glass window of a sunset to present to their executive director.

"We were all so impressed," said Peter Cardamone, director of youth services at the Dunbar Center. "The fact that the students were involved in the design and production was what really impressed us."

"That went over big," Brennan said. "They loved it, so I thought we could make something for the building that would last a lifetime."

Brennan taught the students how to make a stained-glass window from start to finish, guiding them each step of the way.

Working in the studio six times over the course of 13 months, they learned how to design a window with geometric shapes and colors, and how to cut and then fuse the glass in a kiln.

"There was this big table and all these different machines," Chatman said. "We got to learn what the different machines were. It was just a different experience."

“Everybody for those 100 years will be able to see what we did.”
—Jamon Martin, age 12

After the students learned about the process, Brennan gave each one basic sketches of a design and asked them to “improvise” the rest, determining the shapes and colors.

The winning design belonged to Chatman.

“I was really surprised,” she said after she found out she had won.

All of the students agreed: The most difficult part was cutting the glass.

“I learned patience, take your time, and if you rush you’ll cut yourself,” Martin said.

Brennan said the students had a few cuts, about the size of paper cuts. With careful supervision and instruction, he and his staff made sure the students didn’t seriously injure themselves.

Though they went through about two boxes of Band-Aids, their supervisor said it didn’t deter them.

“They had a few cuts, but they never seemed to care,” Latty said. “Anything you set for them, they go at it.”

It was also a learning experience for their instructor, who does not usually see a dozen pre-teens in his glass-making studio.

“I, as a non-educator, took a lot of attention to this,” Brennan said.

He was surprised at how fast the students finished each step, and he also was impressed with their “polite manners” along the way.

“That was really nice. They were so receptive,” he said.

Brennan said he hopes to turn the Dunbar project into a larger mission, possibly working with nonprofits to help students create more stained glass to auction and raise money for their schools.

But for now, he is focusing on the immediate benefits of the project.

“I think it’s important for the kids to see how other people make money, and that there’s an industry like (glass making),” Brennan said. “They were tickled every time they got (to the studio). It’s great to get out in the field and see what other people can do.”

Now he has a picture of the students in his studio. The name: “The Future Glass Makers of America.”



> After-school Supervisor Adalsa Latty teaches students at the Dunbar Center. | Danielle Waugh, Staff Photo



> Students gave Adalsa Latty a stained-glass sample to put on his desk. | Danielle Waugh, Staff Photo



> Scott Brennan works in his studio, examining different glass samples. | Danielle Waugh, Staff Photo

CRIME RESPONSE

As of mid-November, Syracuse police have responded to 296 calls for shots fired, recovered 277 weapons from the city, and made 204 arrests for gun possession.

According to the official Syracuse Police Department's Response to the City of Syracuse Police-Citizen Encounter Study, 91 percent of shooting suspects were African-American, and 78 percent of shooting victims were African-American in the first part of 2010.

In response to community calls for more open communication between the police department and citizens, the Syracuse Police Department is creating both a citizen advisory committee and youth advisory committee to address issues concerning police-citizen relationships. They will also be conducting a survey on individuals who have been arrested by the police to document their experience with the police.

STOPPING VIOLENCE

Two studies show different results concerning racial profiling



> Mayor Stephanie Miner joins Police Chief Frank Fowler, who is speaking to a crowd during a public forum held Nov. 13, 2010. The gathering was devoted to stopping violence in Syracuse. | John C. Liao, Staff Photo

By | Christine Mehta
Urban Affairs reporter

Two different methods to detect racial profiling in Syracuse lead to different results

Chief Frank Fowler has continued his passionate defense of the police department over the past few months — especially after the results of two separate studies on racial profiling were released Nov. 15, 2010.

The Syracuse Common Council and the Syracuse Police Department publicly presented the results of the two studies examining racial profiling in the city of Syracuse over the past four years at a Public Safety Committee meeting held the week before Thanksgiving.

Two economists — William C. Horrace of Syracuse University and Shawn Rohlin of the University of Akron — were commissioned by the Syracuse Common Council to do a study titled the “City of Syracuse Police-Citizen Encounter Study.” It was released on the Syracuse Police Department website, along with a parallel study commissioned by Fowler through the John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety. Horrace and Rohlin found that blacks were stopped, frisked or searched, and arrested more than twice as often as whites. However, they cautioned that the numbers alone did not indicate racial profiling.

Fowler’s study found no evidence of racial profiling. Horrace and Rohlin did a similar study in 2006, but

only had one year of data to analyze. The 2010 study uses data collected from 2006 to 2009. The two researchers analyzed data gathered from forms filled out by individual patrol officers after each citizen stop not resulting in an arrest. The forms enabled the researchers to determine the reason for a stop, whether the citizens were searched or frisked, and the officers’ actions after the stop. The researchers only used data from “discretionary stops,” or stops made by an officer using personal judgment and observations in deciding to stop someone while on patrol.

Horrace and Rohlin said that their study conclusively showed a slight difference in police officer behavior according to race, but were hesitant to say that racial profiling was evident. “We have to combine 100,000 observations to make broad generalizations. The problem with analyzing behaviors is that it doesn’t get at specific behaviors and incidents. ... We don’t know if Officer X hates blacks. We will never know that unless we interview him and he confesses. As I said, identifying bias is a very difficult process,” Horrace said.

The study commissioned by Fowler through the Finn Institute presented different results.

The John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety is a non-profit research organization specializing in social research nationwide on public safety and security. The institute used the same data given to Horrace and Rohlin by the police department, but employed an approach they called

the “Veil of Darkness” method, a method also applied in researching racial profiling in Cincinnati and Oakland. The method assumes officers are unable to distinguish the race of an individual after dark, especially during the twilight hours between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m.

The institute compared the number of stops made between the hours of 5:02 p.m. and 9:39 p.m., with the number of stops made during daylight hours. “If there was a great discrepancy between the number of stops made during the day and at night, then that would be evidence of racial profiling. However, that is not the case according to our data,” said Dr. Robert Worden, of the Finn Institute.

The data presented by the institute showed no appreciable difference between the numbers of stops made during the day and after dark. However, Worden did qualify his results, saying any analysis would not “be definitive or conclusive.”

“I can’t tell you whether there is racial profiling or there isn’t,” Worden said.

Then, it was Fowler’s turn.

Although Fowler said police behavior and eliminating instances of racial profiling were priority concerns, he has been vocal in defending the actions of his police officers, saying that he sends officers to the areas showing the highest crime rates. Fowler says that the way he deploys police officers is data-driven, and his utmost concern is to protect the people in high-crime areas.

“I told you before, I’ll say it again and again, as long as I’m chief of police, I will dispatch my officers where the problems are. ... We’re dealing with people in our city that are firing off guns in highly populated areas and it’s only a matter of time before one of those stray bullets goes flying through a window and hits some child or elderly person minding their own business. And I am charged with the awesome task of keeping everybody in these communities safe,” he said.

Citizens expressed approval for measures Fowler is taking to address crime in their neighborhoods. “We do have to start paying attention,” said Helen Hudson, director of Mothers Against Gun Violence. “My civil liberties are being violated every day, when I have to worry about driving down the street and shots being fired.”

Syracuse Common Councilor and Public Safety Committee Chair Bill Ryan said he was “pleased that we, as a community, are willing to look at this issue. We have both studies and I don’t think they are necessarily competing. I was pleased with the way the whole meeting went and that people are concerned about it.”

He also said that as public safety chair, he tends to receive more complaints about police demeanor — a police officer being disrespectful or rude — rather than actual complaints of racial profiling. In light of the recent violent crime, he said, racial profiling issues become secondary in the eyes of many people.

“We’re all concerned about the same issues,” he said.

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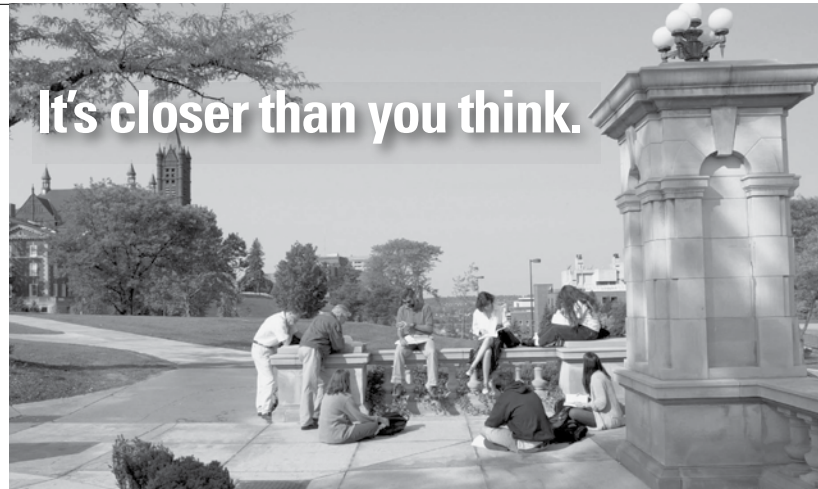
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The Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program is funded by a grant from the New York State Department of Education.



FAVORITE MEMORIES

AT A YOUNG AGE:

“It was one summer in July that I felt the power of God. I was 12, and I was at revival. I knew I had just connected with God.”

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE:

Lamentations 3:21-23.
“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.”

FAVORITE SONG:

“He Looked Beyond My Faults” by Dottie Rambo

FIRST SERMON:

I’m Not Ashamed of the Gospel

“It’s funny, because many years later Pastor Johnson told me this was the title of his first sermon as well. He never even saw the sermon before I delivered it. We didn’t plan it, it just sorta happened that way.”

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“To whom much is given, much is required. Luke 12:48. I strongly believe we are blessed to be a blessing.”

PRAY TO ENDURE

Rev. Colette Matthews stands out in a male-dominated ministry



> The Rev. Colette Matthews is not easily deterred. She waited a year to be licensed to preach. | Mackenzie Reiss, Staff Photo

By | James S. McConico
Urban Affairs reporter

After studying political science and running for office, Matthews felt ‘God was calling me’

Purses in the pulpit, stilettos stomping to the beat of drums, lipstick-laden lips singing praises to God and skirts draped at the knee with handkerchiefs.

These are the sights and sounds of New Covenant Baptist Church on the South Side of Syracuse under the leadership of the Rev. Colette Matthews. In a country where female pastors are rare, Matthews has been the leader and driving force here for the past four years.

At 5-foot-3, it’s as if she can barely see over the pulpit, but that doesn’t stop her from delivering a powerful message. Matthews has an engaging disposition and preaches the word of God harder than 20 men put together. Nearly a month ago at the 11th annual Candlelight Service at New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, the Rev. Jimmie Lee McMillon Sr. was so moved by her words, he shouted, “She’s just a short little ol’

fireball. She can tear a church up!”

During one 11 a.m. service, Matthews reached the climax of her sermon and transformed. No longer able to suppress her intense emotions, with an embroidered towel that says “Pastor” draped across her left shoulder, she put one hand on her hip, dipped to the side three times and unleashed the fire she felt inside.

The drummer saw she was on a roll, and heightened his level of playing. This nudged her on as she shouted, “We have to break the curse of mediocrity. ... God can take a mess and make a miracle.” In agreement with their leader, the three female associate ministers she has taken under her wings throughout the years jumped from their seats in the pulpit, and a congregation of nearly 100 sprang to its feet. They needed more, and Matthews gave them more. “God is like a gas station. When you’re running on empty and you need to fill up, God will put His pump in your belly and fill you up,” she exclaimed.

As hard as she preaches, once praises have been lifted and the crowd has simmered down, Matthews is as graceful as a dove. Though her preaching can match that

of any male, she is certainly all-woman; as she beckons onlookers to give their lives to Christ or come down for special prayer, she speaks in a sultry voice that captivates.

“She’s just a short little ol’ fireball. She can tear a church up!”

—Rev. Jimmie Lee McMillon Sr.

As captivating and intriguing as Matthews is, women in the pulpit are not always embraced, and female pastors are rare. According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, religious organizations like the Southern Baptist Convention, the Free Methodist Church and the Assemblies of God are known to be more conservative. Combined, the pastoral population for these organizations totals nearly 60,000 — but fewer than 10 percent are women.

As fiery a preacher as Matthews is, she didn’t set out to preach the word of God. “I studied political science at Syracuse University and ran for office a couple times. I was about 25 or 26 years old working in local government, but I felt this tugging in my spirit. God was calling me,” she said.

When Eric Dickson was asked if he ever thought his childhood friend would be the pastor of a church, he thought back. “Colette has always been a good person with a good heart. Even when we were growing up together she loved God, and I knew He had a bigger plan for her,” Dickson said. Though Matthews was called to lead a church, statistics show not every female minister is allowed this opportunity.

According to an article published by The State Journal-Register of Springfield, Ill., in a survey conducted by the Barna Group, one in 10 churches employs a woman as head pastor. The Hartford Institute for Religion Research estimates there are roughly 335,000 religious congregations in the United States, which suggests only 33,500 or so are led by a woman.

Yet according to the U.S. Census, the American population totals just over 282 million people, and at 144 million, women out-number the male population of 138 million.

Matthews is a rare case in more ways than one. In addition to New Covenant, she also pastored at United Baptist

Church for two years. “United is an American Baptist church, and they tend to be more open to female pastors. National Baptist churches are not as open,” she said.

During a time when most female ministers only dream of pastoring a church, Matthews knows she’s blessed, but the journey to hold the esteemed title of pastor or even minister for that matter, was not easy. “It took me about a year to convince my pastor to license me. I had to keep meeting with him and made sure I worked hard and stayed visible in the church,” she said.

Her pastor was the Rev. Leslie Johnson of Tucker Baptist Church. “I didn’t believe in women preachers, but the more she kept asking, the more I thought about it,” Johnson said. “I asked God to send me a sign if it was His will for me to license her. One day I was watching Bishop G.E. Patterson on television, and I heard him say, ‘If women can sing in the choir, work on the usher board and be deaconess in the church, then why can’t they be ministers?’ That was all I needed to hear, and I knew that was my sign from God,” he said.

The day Matthews announced that she had been called to preach was memorable. “As soon as I said it, I got a big round of applause from the church, but afterwards, an older member walked up to me and shook her finger in my face and said, ‘You’ll never preach in this church.’”

But that comment wasn’t enough to deter Matthews.

Shortly after becoming a licensed minister, Matthews quit her job and enrolled in Colgate Rochester Divinity School. “People thought I was crazy. I was young, I had a good job and could have been a rising politician, but God had something else for me.”

As Matthews pressed forward in the ministry, her new calling did not come without opposition. “Some pastors didn’t want me to preach in their churches, and even when invitations were extended, they told me I had to preach from the floor,” she said.

Declining those invitations, Matthews also faced other opposition from a less obvious group. “Often times it would come from women — mostly from women my age. There was a group of women in the church in their 30s and 40s; they stirred up a lot of trouble. Those were some rough times, but the elders and deacons were on my side. Those women eventually left — they all left at once.”

Despite the struggles she faced early on, there is one woman who is proud to stand by her side, Armor-bearer and Minister Brenda MacDonald. “I’m so glad to have Pastor Matthews as my friend, but most importantly as my mentor. She has taught me so much in the ministry.”

Even with all that Matthews endured while charting “male-only” territory, she has remained humble and made light of her struggles. “My journey is not unique. Any female pastor has probably experienced some of the things I’ve experienced, but without prayer, there’s no possible way I would even be able to withstand the things I’ve endured.”

MANY ROLES

In a spirit of community involvement and entrepreneurship, the Rev. Colette Matthews is an advocate for the following organizations and causes.

FOUNDER OF SYRACUSE 100:

A professional women-in-ministry organization that focuses on networking, leadership development and civic involvement

IN THE FIGHT AGAINST:

HIV/AIDS, poverty and illiteracy

CVM WORLDWIDE:

Specializes in leadership development and life coaching

CLARION PRODUCTIONS AND CONSULTING:

Specializes in event planning and small business development

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Wednesday Bible Academy:
6:30 p.m.

ON THE SIDE

THE ART OF THE SPICE

A long-standing tradition for the Sunday night Swallow’s regulars is for someone in the group to bring Hungarian peppers to munch on. Swallow’s bartender Steve Jenkins, who also works for the Syracuse Fire Department, explained some of the key ingredients for the spicy and crunchy recipe:

- Hungarian wax peppers from Candella’s Farm in Marcy, N.Y.
- Apple cider vinegar
- Water
- Oregano
- Garlic
- Non-iodized salt
- Carrots (optional)



>The most important rule of Sunday nights at Swallow’s is to not forget the homemade Hungarian peppers. | Andrew Hida, Staff Photo

A SUNDAY TRADITION

Local men keep up ritual of spending the end of the weekend together



> Friends, from left to right, Joe Antuna, Chris Lange and Paul Casey enjoy beers and peppers each Sunday evening at Swallow’s Restaurant, located at 1914 South Ave. | Andrew Hida, Staff Photo

By | Jennifer Moncayo
Staff reporter

South Side men maintain their friendship through Sunday night trips to the bar

A group of six casually dressed men in their 50s and 60s cluster around a dimly lit bar, watching the football game on TV. The men calmly drink beers, and eat cheddar cheese and crackers with homemade Hungarian peppers prepared especially for this gathering. For the past 25 years, this group of longtime friends can be found at Swallow’s Restaurant every Sunday evening for what they describe as “guy’s night.”

“This is my social networking opportunity,” said 63-year-old Paul Casey, a Sunday night regular for the past 20 years. “It’s a night to talk politics and sports,” added Mike Sargis, a 59-year-old regular.

Though a few of the men have known each other since childhood, all the men attend the same parish, Most Holy Rosary Church. Initially, the guys played basketball together at the church on Sundays.

“We started coming [to Swallow’s] after our basketball games,” said 59-year-old Chris Lange, who is lightheartedly referred to as the “transplant” because he’s originally from Long Island.

While the majority of the men no longer play basketball at the church, the Swallow’s tradition continues. “We joke we are the ‘no sweat club’ because we don’t play basketball anymore,” Casey said.

There is no official name for the group, said 61-year-old Joe Antuna, who is considered the informal ringleader by his friends. Similarly, there is no formal communication between them about who will bring the peppers or who will attend each week. “You just show up,” Antuna said.

Though the friends consider it an informal gathering, they do have some rules. First, it is understood that if there is a national holiday like Memorial Day, when there is no work on a Monday, they all know to go to Swallow’s on Monday night instead of Sunday. Secondly, if there is a family holiday, such as Mother’s Day, that falls on a Sunday, it is assumed that their family gathering must be over by 6 p.m. so they are free to go to Swallow’s, explained Pierce Ryan, 62, a Swallow’s regular and owner of Ryan Windows and Doors.

Sunday nights at Swallow’s is an expected get-together for these South Side men. “My wife gets worried if I don’t go to Swallow’s,” Ryan said. “She asks me if I’m feeling OK if I’m home on a Sunday night,” he said, laughing.

CALL IT YOUR HOME

Building of low-income houses to rent, then own, will begin in spring



> These homes at the intersection of Cortland Avenue and Oxford Street will be torn down by the Syracuse Housing Authority and replaced with new homes that will be available for lease-to-purchase in spring 2012. | Nate Hopper, Staff Photo

By | Nate Hopper
Urban Affairs reporter

The Syracuse Housing Authority aims to increase homeownership with 50 new homes

This upcoming spring, the Syracuse Housing Authority will begin yearlong construction of 50 homes for low-income families on the South Side. The program aims to increase homeownership in the city while also filling its many vacant lots.

At least five of the homes will be designed for the physically disabled, including some for the visually or hearing impaired.

The homes will go to those whose income falls between 30 percent and 60 percent of Onondaga County's median annual income, which depends on the family's size; currently, for a family of four, that ranges between \$16,800 and \$33,600.

The selected tenants will participate in what the SHA calls a "lease-purchase" program. For the first 15 years, tenants will lease the properties at rents ranging from \$320 to \$750 a month. Then, in 2027, the houses will be made available for the renters to purchase for the homes' appraised values. To help people do that, part of the rent over the years will go into an escrow account that will help pay for the mortgages.

The Stand spoke with Bill Simmons, executive director of the Syracuse Housing Authority, on what impact the SHA hopes the program will have on the South Side, who it is looking for and how people should apply.

Q&A WITH BILL SIMMONS

The Stand: Why start this program on the South Side?

Bill Simmons: Two reasons. First, it has the greatest needs. The previous homes that were demolished over the past 10 years on the South Side created a sort of gap-toothed appearance in many neighborhoods. And then also because, since the Housing Authority is going to manage these properties for the first 15 years, it makes sense to be geographically close to where our operation is located.

Why clusters of houses?

We're trying to have the greatest impact on the neighborhood. And what we've learned from the city's Department of Neighborhood and Business Development is that the best way to have that impact is to focus on a concentration of homes. So we are working on clusters — or, as we call them, "nodes" — where we could put 10 to 15 houses and really have an impact on the neighborhood.

Who are you looking for to participate in the program?

People who are looking for long-term housing, individuals who are stable and don't move around a lot, who've been in their jobs for long periods of time — we're looking for that kind of stability. But also individuals who maybe today could not go out and purchase a home because they may want some time to clean up their credit and get some down payment savings and take some of the homeownership classes that we're going to require through Home Headquarters. It's an individual who

QUALITY OF LIVING

Where are these located?

The Syracuse Housing Authority estimated that houses will be built on vacant properties in these four areas:

- 11 in Central Village
- 11 around the intersection of Midland and Bellevue avenues
- 15 by Brighton and Corning avenues
- 13 on Oakwood Avenue near the Dr. King Elementary School

What are the houses going to be like?

- Ranch or colonial style, with a wooden frame and a combination of solid surface and vinyl exteriors
- Double- or single-story
- Equipped with Energy Star rated central air-conditioning, refrigerator, dishwasher and lights, as well as low-flow toilets and other fixtures
- Fenced yards with a covered porch in front
- Three or four bedrooms
- Rents from \$320 to \$750, depending on the size

There will also be a community building in the Midland cluster that will house laundry facilities, community meeting space and a small space for the property manager's office.

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ON THE SIDE

A MEMORY

“It was definitely a sense of pride — it was that feeling that I own something,” Desaree Dixie remembered of the first time she bought a home for herself and her son. “It was like, ‘This is mine.’ I can paint whatever color I want to paint my walls. I can hang pictures up of my son. He has a backyard that he can play in. It was very meaningful for me.”

Dixie has helped others feel that way in her five years as housing director for Jubilee Homes, a nonprofit organization that builds and renovates homes on the South Side for middle- to low-income individuals and families.

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wants to get in on a brand-new home, is in no rush to move and enjoys living on the South Side. This program falls apart if we don’t find individuals committed to buying the homes.

How can people apply?

The process is not narrowed down yet, but we are developing a waiting list from the individuals who call. What we’re going to do is weigh the factors for future tenants as you would any other property: a lot of it’s going to be based on income and how long you’ve been at your job, your interest in being on the South Side, references from your current landlord — those kinds of issues, those typical indicators that are important for any landlord.

Why must tenants wait 15 years to buy the homes?

This is an IRS tax credit program that is administered by the state. Every project that these tax credits fund, there are certain benefits that the investors receive that will last 15 years. So these properties have to be available to the tax credit investors for the 15-year time period. I know a lot of people take exception, saying, “Well, I’ve got to wait 15 years before I can purchase it,” but that’s how the program is structured. The good news is that if you’re leasing the house to buy it, you build up equity over that time so that X amount of your dollars will be set aside as escrow, leading to the purchase of the home.

Who will maintain the properties for 15 years?

It will be the Syracuse Housing Authority, but hopefully there won’t be a lot to maintain. The homeowners will likely be responsible for smaller stuff like mowing their lawn. We will also have a property manager to make sure that they keep the homes the way they should. And what you have to realize with this tax credit program is that not only do you have the Housing Authority looking at the investment, but you have the investors and New York state too. You’re going to have a lot of people looking at these houses to make sure they’re kept the right way.


Say that after the 15 years has ended, the renters either do not want or simply cannot afford to purchase the homes. What happens then?

They can continue renting for however long they wish. And we expect that out of the 50 homes there might be one or two people who want to be long-term renters, but it won’t undermine the general goal of creating more homeowners. ... The goal is not to have people rent, but you can’t help it if people change their minds.

Will people who decide not to purchase the homes get their escrow money back?

No. At that point, they would just be considered as a regular person who rented the home. The escrow only goes to the individuals who are ultimately going to buy the home. That’s part of the incentive.

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A

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