

Stand

south side news

www.mysouthsidestand.com

Syracuse, NY

Summer 2011

issue 11

FREE

A STITCH IN TIME

Elementary students
try out sewing basics
in after-school class

The I-81 Challenge

Community will be involved in planning for highway's next decade

farm fresh

New community farm
to bring fresh produce
to the South Side

Groceries Galore

Planners hope to start construction
on South Avenue store this summer

EXAMINING URBAN RENEWAL



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THE STAND IS BASED OUT OF THE
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THE PUBLICATION'S EDITORIAL PURPOSE AND
IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.



FEATURES | Aurora of Central New York, Inc., offers options for people seeking assistance with their hearing or vision impairments.



SCHOOL AND YOUTH | Kristian Tull, a student at Corcoran High School, won the Syracuse Peace Council's Poetry Competition for her poem about peace.



FEATURES | The Southwest Community Farm is transforming vacant property lots into farms for teenagers to plant, grow and harvest fresh produce.



FEATURES | Read about the new South Side grocery store project that is set to begin this summer. Planners hope it will create new jobs and community stability.



COMMUNITY | Students, transportation officials and community members are working together to determine the future of I-81 in Syracuse.



BUSINESS | Count It All Joy, a local business selling faith-based items, has seen better business with more use of social media marketing.



SCHOOL AND YOUTH | Learn more about the Elmwood Elementary and Roberts School Say Yes weekly sewing class.



COMMUNITY | A potential Justice Department grant would implement a program aimed at developing anti-gang strategies in Syracuse.

■ Cover photography features Bruce Stephens, a second-grader at the Elmwood Elementary School Say Yes weekly sewing class. Photo by John C. Liau.

CALENDAR | SUMMER

What: Summer Reading 2011: One World, Many Stories

When: Summer Reading Kick-Off at 5 p.m. Thursday, June 30. Cooking Up Literacy at 1 p.m. Saturdays, June 25, July 9 and 30 and Aug. 13; for children ages 5 to 13 years old. Summer Reading Final Party at 3 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 18.

Where: Beauchamp Branch Library, 2111 S. Salina St.

More details: Prizes will be awarded to the top readers. Children will enjoy crafts, treats and games. Visit the library to learn about additional summer programming.

More Info.: Sign up for Summer Reading Programs at the library or by calling (315) 435-3395

What: Southwest Showcase Sundays

When: 4 to 7 p.m. once per month on Sunday evenings: June 19, July 17, Aug. 14 and Sept. 11

Where: Spirit of Jubilee Park, 100 Block of South Avenue

More details: This themed concert series features live performances by local professional bands. In addition to the live entertainment, there are kids' attractions and food vendors. The event is open to the public, and all city park rules are enforced.

More Info.: Call Jubilee Homes of Syracuse Inc. at (315) 428-0070 or visit the website at www.showcasesundays.com

HOW TO BUY 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 at www.mysouthsidestand.com

In April, I met with students in Nicolas Salibrici's Reading and Research course at Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School. His students have been digging through local archives to study Syracuse's historic 15th Ward and research the pros and cons of urban renewal. With the class, I was able to view the documentary, "15th Ward and Beyond." Amatullah Yamini, a member of the Black History Preservation Project, brought the film to show and spoke about local black history over the past 60 years. The class also participated in the recent I-81 Challenge workshops regarding the future of our soon to be expired overpass. These public workshops, offered by the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, have allowed the community's voice to be heard — this time — in regards to plans concerning the highway's next decade.



Then during the April 14 screening of "300 Miles to Freedom," I am happy to report that \$1,440 was raised for the Southside Community Coalition. Filmmakers Richard Breyer and Anard Kamalakar, whose documentary examined the life of escaped slave John W. Jones and his 300-mile journey from Leesburg, Va., to Elmira, N.Y., along the Underground Railroad, donated the proceeds from the premiere to the SCC, which intends to use the money to support its summer film screenings. These free film screenings will be held each Friday evening in July in the KeyBank parking lot on South Salina Street at Colvin Street.

While this summer issue of The Stand will be available through August, check the website at www.mysouthsidestand.com for continuing coverage of local news in the months to come. The website will be updated regularly with upcoming events and stories, including a listing of summer camps for local youth. Also, new community correspondents will provide extensive coverage of Syracuse's Juneteenth celebration, set to be held June 18 in Clinton Square. Syracuse's celebration is one of the largest Juneteenth celebrations in the country. It is held in recognition of the sacrifices and challenges African-Americans endured to achieve freedom.

In addition to training community correspondents, the staff at The Stand will work over the summer to gain support through advertising to help sustain the project. Contact me to learn about opportunities to purchase ads in the print issue and online and to even place inserts. As always, turn the page to learn more about your local community. To reach me, email me at ashley@mysouthsidestand.com or call (315) 882-1054.

Ashley Kang

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 23

Second annual Photo Walk

10 a.m. Saturday, July 23, at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St. Photo Walk participants will travel down South Salina Street, through neighborhoods to Kirk Park and back.

Event will open with a short lesson by professional photographers. Following the walk, photographers will share their photos with the group, and the day's best shots will be published in the September issue of The Stand.

To learn more, contact Ashley Kang at (315) 882-1054 or Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com

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.



SOUTH SIDE NEWSPAPER PROJECT PAPER GIRLS

> The Stand's paper girls, Shunda Smith and Kanicia Dunning, distributed issues of the paper the first weekend of April on South Salina Street and South Avenue and also during the April 4 Defend CNY Rally at the Dr. King Elementary School. The two sisters will continue to help distribute copies of The Stand throughout the summer at local public events. | Mary Desmond, Staff Photo

DONNA REESE

Donna Reese is one of the visually impaired people that **Aurora of Central New York Inc.** helped. **She began to lose her vision**, which discouraged her from interacting with the world. After accepting help from Aurora, Reese is now using her own experiences to help Aurora reach out to the South Side as an Aurora **outreach specialist**.

"A lot of people sit home in their house, afraid to come out because they don't understand that there are people that can help them," Reese said. "I'm just trying to help spread the word."

Reese did a public service announcement for the screening test, sent out emails, posted fliers and is continually in correspondence with **minority groups**.

"It's one of the things that I try to bring into the communities of color because a lot of us don't know **these services are available**."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Aurora

Phone: (315) 422-7263

TTY/TDD: (315) 422-9746

Web: www.auroraofcny.org

LIFE BACK ON TRACK

Aurora offered free vision and hearing tests for those who needed it



> David DeFrancis tests the hearing of Carolyn Stanley, who is reacting to hearing aids. | Jason Krakower, Staff Photo

By | Jason Krakower
Urban Affairs reporter

These vision and hearing tests are the first step for people who want to maintain independence

Carolyn Stanley has been losing her hearing for years. She is at the point where communicating with her family is getting too difficult.

When she learned that Aurora of Central New York Inc. was offering free vision and hearing tests, she hurried to the Mary Nelson Youth Center, 2849 S. Salina St., on April 14.

"If someone speaks low like my children speak, I can't hear them and it's very frustrating for me," Stanley said as her voice started to crack. "They always say, 'Momma why don't you do something about it?' But it costs so much." Eventually, Stanley decided she needed to act: "I was missing out on so much."

The test was part of an informational event led by Aurora outreach director David DeFrancis, and was assisted by outreach specialists Adele DelSavio and Donna Reese. It consisted either of a stethoscope-like device to assess and improve hearing capability or a screening machine where DeFrancis can generate what he calls "an accurate acuity rating for vision loss," which he says is essentially a rating based on accuracy according to distance. The test was offered to provide people with information to make an informed decision.

"It's not a medical test today; it just gives people an idea of potential problems that might be there,"

DelSavio said. "We can advise them to see their ophthalmologist, or on the other hand David can reassure them that everything's fine."

DelSavio said Aurora is the only nonprofit in Central New York that works solely with people who have visual and hearing loss. Aurora's work extends into the community by advocating for people with impairments. Essentially, Aurora's job is to organize low-cost services that provide these people with outlets to find local help.

DeFrancis said employees attend health fairs, collaborate with audiologists and other doctors on advice and equipment and refer patients to different programs.

"When you lose your hearing or your vision, it's like you've lost a family member," DeFrancis said. "They tend to feel isolated and depressed, they stay home, and they don't know what they're going to do next. That's where we come in. We come in and show them the ways to stay connected to their family members."

DeFrancis said Aurora's goal is to help these people reach a level of independence.

"You have to be proactive," DeFrancis said. "Independence is the key word. We want to make sure people can be independent as long as possible."

It all comes back to senior citizens such as Stanley, who decided to take action with the help of Aurora.

"I could hear everything, and before I couldn't," Stanley said about the hearing aids she wore during the Aurora testing. "I could hear things that I think I've been missing for a long time, and that was great. That's why I'm here."



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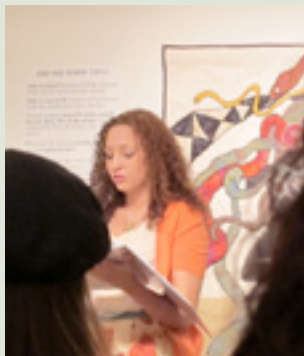
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OTHER
WINNERS

> J.J. Davis, a senior at Jamesville-Dewitt High School, won the Peace Council Poster Contest.



> Yadira Junco won third place in the Peace Council Poetry Contest.



> Ja'Leasa Worley received an honorable mention for her entry in the Peace Council Poetry Contest.

A WAY WITH WORDS

Corcoran high schooler wins poetry contest to promote peace



> Kristian Tull reads her poem. | Durrie Bouscaren, Staff Photo

By | Durrie Bouscaren
Staff reporter

Kristian Tull won the Syracuse Peace Council's Poetry Competition for her poem about peace

When Kristian Tull found out she had won the Syracuse Peace Council's Poetry Competition, she couldn't contain her excitement.

"I screamed. I jumped up and down," the Corcoran High School junior remembers.

The competition is coordinated by the Military Alternatives Education Project. Submitted poems centered around the theme, "How can we build peace?"

The Peace Council received more than 50 submissions of student poems and artwork for the competition. The winners read their work out loud at a celebratory reception at ArtRage Gallery on April 26.

Syracuse Peace Council Member Jessica Maxwell and student intern Liz Hess hosted the event. Maxwell said the competition's purpose is to help young people find their voices and explore alternatives to violence.

"Young people in the district are incredibly talented and creative," she said. "When we're going through budget cuts, an event like this really highlights why it's so important to invest in schools."

Listening to her daughter present her winning poem, Valiten Tull couldn't stop smiling. "She's been doing it so long, we couldn't believe it's our daughter," she said.

Kristian has been writing poetry since junior high school. "My mother says I get it from her," she said.

Corcoran teacher Kristie Yarnell said Kristian was in her ninth-grade English class two years ago and has always loved creative writing. "She has such a natural way with words; she just puts it down on paper and it sounds awesome," she said.

Kristian hopes to attend college and study psychology, but says she wants to minor in creative writing.

"I want poetry to stay with me my whole life."

IF EVERYBODY FOUND
SOMETHING THAT THEY LOVED
TO DO ... THERE WOULD BE
MORE PEACE

I think I was born with iambic pentameter in
my veins.

My words flow through my bloodstream
and out of my mouth like capillary action
causing reactions.

Shifting syllables and letters
To the rhythm of my stride...
My voice cracks...but is mine.

The eloquence of my words...so powerful
Cannot be fully understood.
Comprehension is therefore misrepresented
by someone who
Has not undergone my journey.

The words that I later read on paper
Do not seem to be mine
Tracing the letters through my mind
Quickly, yet discretely
maneuvering through time.

The words perpetrate my soul
And infiltrate my spirit
And all others who hear it.
The pencil and the paper
I was born to use.

Poetry takes me to a place of peace beyond
Earthly dimension
A scribbled, erased space of heavenly
extension.

Showing me exactly who I am.
As a poet laureate and author,
I stand.

Shaky, yet confident.
All the while
Emotionless.
Failing to fail.
Preparing to prevail.

With my pen and paper...
I find my peace
By saying my piece.

—Kristian Tull

GOING TO COLLEGE

Local students spend a day experiencing life at Syracuse University



> Students from the Roberts School visit Ernie Davis Hall to get an idea of dorm life. | Photo Courtesy of Say Yes to Education

By | Jennifer Cheng
Urban Affairs reporter

More than 400 eighth-graders learned about college life and the importance of an education

Seventy-five students from the Roberts School, at 715 Glenwood Ave., joined their peers from Frazer and Grant middle schools to spend an April day at Syracuse University. The eighth-graders learned how to be accepted into college and what an education at that level can offer.

The event was organized by the university and the nonprofit organizations Say Yes to Education and the Prevention Network.

Rachael Gazdick, director of Say Yes, said the schools were chosen to represent Syracuse's South, North and West sides. Say Yes provides services to Syracuse City School District students to help them get into college, and it ensures free college tuition to students accepted into certain universities on their own merit. The Prevention Network sends representatives to Syracuse schools to warn students about the dangers of illegal drugs and addictions.

Shaquoyia Armstrong, an eighth-grader from Frazer, said she loves pets and wants to be a vet. After hearing from faculty and students, she said she learned what she would have to do now to achieve her dream. "They say we had to get good grades to go to college," she said.

Kristi Eck, Say Yes site director at Frazer, said getting university faculty and students to talk about careers that can come with having a college degree meant teaching the eighth-graders to recognize that going to college is "going to make you money, it's going to make you feel like you're doing something worthwhile."

The students' visit began with a greeting from Kheli Willetts, a professor of African American Studies, who told them, "Today is a very special day. I see artists, doctors, educators, lawyers, physicists, engineers, and yes, even professional athletes."

She said she had come from a single-parent household, an environment that she said many students share. She said she worked hard in school, ignoring those who might have discouraged her, so she could reach her goal of higher education.

Joe McMahon, a Roberts School teacher, said, "I believe some of the students who come from poverty or single-family homes, they think college is for rich people." But, he added, "I see and hear from professors and Ph.D. candidates, and they come from similar backgrounds, and students can see that college can be attainable for them."

Gazdick told students that Say Yes may provide the free tuition, but students still need to be accepted into college on their own merits to receive it. "One of the things in Say Yes is to keep in mind that kids have got to be competitive," Gazdick said. "They've got to get into college."

THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES

Although more than **400 students** attended the event, the students spent their time in small groups.

Each group attended 30-minute "**classes**" to meet university faculty and undergraduates, from such varied disciplines as **English, business administration and sport management**. The students heard about good study habits and career opportunities.

The eighth-graders stopped by a **residence hall** to get an idea of college living, and they ate a boxed lunch at the **Carrier Dome**.

The students also were entertained by members of the African American fraternity, **Alpha Phi Alpha**. Members performed a step dance, then ended by inviting the students to stand up and do "The Dougie," a hip-hop dance. The fraternity members told the eighth-graders that besides having fun, they take their academics seriously, making it part of their fraternity's mission. Said one: "**We strive for A's, B's — and never settle for C's.**"

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Say Yes to Education

(315) 443-4260

info@sayyessyracuse.org

FLOW OF FUNDS

\$67,000

Grant from Midland-Lincoln-Bellevue Community Initiatives Working Group

\$50,000

Grant from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

REMAINING FUNDING

from Jubilee Homes' community development block grants — a federal program

\$80,000

Startup costs, including materials for building fencing, preparing the site for agriculture and buying seeds

\$144,000

Yearly administrative costs, including employee wages and ongoing site maintenance

\$10,000

Cost of all 12 properties

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Southwest Community Farm, contact LaRhonda Ealey

(315) 428-0070

lealey@jubilee-homes.com

SPROUTING CHANGE

Teenagers will harvest fresh produce from once-empty property lots

By | Dan Scorpio
Urban Affairs reporter

An urban farm project hopes to renew the abundance of fresh produce on the South Side

City officials and neighborhood activists are transforming the South Side's landscape, turning a dozen vacant properties into an urban farm. The farm will employ the neighborhood's teenagers during summer months and help alleviate the shortage of fresh produce on the South Side.

The Southwest Community Farm, located at the intersection of Bellevue and Midland avenues, is a joint project of the city of Syracuse and Jubilee Homes, a housing advocacy organization on Syracuse's South Side. Jubilee Homes purchased the empty property lots from the city last year.

"Our goal is to make this project a meaningful investment in our community's youth," said LaRhonda Ealey, associate director of Jubilee Homes. "We're also taking 12 vacant parcels of land and turning them into something more than a community eyesore."

Local teenagers will plant seeds in May, work the fields during the summer and harvest the crops by November. Ealey said she hopes they can develop skills to hold steady employment and build job experience.

When completed, the farm will provide much-needed fresh produce for the South Side. "There are no grocery stores within a one-mile radius of the farm site," Ealey said. "The farm can give our community the fruits and vegetables they can't find at a corner store."

Fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes and carrots are among the crops to be planted at the farm, along with herbs like basil and cilantro. The farm will be ready for this summer's growing season, Ealey said.

Luke Dougherty, neighborhood revitalization specialist for the city of Syracuse, said the farm provides more than food for the South Side. "This is a community-building exercise in an effort to revive the neighborhood," Dougherty said. "We're dealing with a place that certainly once was a thriving residential neighborhood."

Syracuse has been hit hard by recent economic struggles, as the city now has more than 3,000 vacant property lots, representing about 10 percent of the city's land, Dougherty said.

The city sold the empty parcels to Jubilee Homes after previous owners failed to pay their taxes, Dougherty said. Jubilee Homes paid a total of \$10,000 for all 12 properties. "We worked with Jubilee the best we could to get them the lowest possible selling price," he said.

Jubilee Homes faced several obstacles in developing the farm project, including the city's zoning regulations, said Gregory Michel, sustainability analyst for the city of Syracuse. Michel works on issues of youth involvement and urban agriculture, especially with the Jubilee Homes Urban Delights farm stands of produce on the South Side. The Urban Delights program gives a small number of teenagers entrepreneurship experience each summer as they manage a select number of produce stands.

There is no official form of city zoning that allows for farming. "There is no predecessor for a farm in this neighborhood," Michel said.

Michel said the farm's designers are creating raised-bed techniques for growing, designed to simulate the soil quality of rural farmland. Raised-bed farming elevates the growing surface, giving crops better access to necessary nutrients in the soil. Volunteers participated in the project's first building session last November by spreading four inches of willow wood chips across the farm site.



> Raised bed structures will hold crops at the Southwest Community Farm. | Dan Scorpio, Staff Photo

The farm will serve as an ongoing educational tool for South Side residents, said Jessi Lyons, resource educator at the Cornell Cooperative Extension. The CCE researches different land-use programs for Central New York in the areas of sustainability, agriculture and economic development. The program is sponsored by Cornell University.

Lyons is developing what she calls a "community engagement area," where neighbors can plant personal gardens and learn about weed management or composting.

Through these youth learning and employment programs, Lyons said she hopes to start a trend in Syracuse. "Once we get this farm up and running, we hope it will lead to other opportunities for creative and productive land use in the city," Lyons said. "This really is a model program."

EMERGING MARKET

Construction on new grocery store scheduled for this summer

By | Dan Scorpio
Urban Affairs reporter

Developers and community members hope new store will help solve South Side problems

The dream of a full-service grocery store on Syracuse's South Side will take a very big step toward becoming a reality, as construction workers plan to break ground on the nearly \$3.5 million project by June. All that remains for the project's planners is to locate and sign a tenant for the retail space.

"Everything is in progress to break ground on the building by the time summer starts," said Carolyn Evans-Dean, business consultant for the Southwest Economic Business Resource Center, the business and entrepreneurship wing of Jubilee Homes. Evans-Dean has helped organize the business plans since the project began more than three years ago.

Located in the 600 block of South Avenue, the renovated store will fill the existing 22,000-square-foot structure, formerly home to Holt Paint Co. and, in its distant past, a grocery store. Plans include an 11,000-square-foot addition for a pharmacy, dry cleaner and eating space. Jubilee Homes purchased the property in 2009.

The building's tenant could be a chain store, or the grocery store could remain independent, Evans-Dean said. But Evans-Dean remained empathetic to the neighborhood's need for local employment. "It's important that the store employ people from this community," she said. "We will not compromise on that."

Evans-Dean said one goal of the new store is to increase dependence on local sources for food. Urban planners will grow fresh fruit and vegetables at the neighboring Southwest Community Farm, and local teenagers will sell the produce at South Avenue farm stands until construction is completed. The urban farm will grow enough produce to potentially help supply the new grocery store.

"We're big believers in the 100-mile diet idea," Evans-Dean said, referring to the theory that local food sources are less expensive and healthier than produce shipped across the country.

"This project is quite an undertaking," said Kenel Antoine, the project's lead architect. "But we're going to completely modernize the existing building."

Developers hoped to begin construction before January 2011, Antoine said, but they were held up by lack of money. Private donations and federal grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development provide the financial backing for the project.

The delay in the store's construction has not stopped

South Side residents from preparing for the store's opening. More than 2,000 community members have signed up for shopper's club cards, signaling their support for the project, said Ron Ehrienrich, a member of the Syracuse Cooperative Federal Credit Union and part of the project's planning committee.

"The community has been very supportive of the grocery store," he said.

The grocery store renovation is long overdue, said business consultant Evans-Dean, and is part of a larger plan to revitalize the South Avenue corridor.

"In my 22 years living in Syracuse, there hasn't been much of a rush to provide necessary services to the South Side community," she said. "We hope this store will turn that trend around and lead to more development in the neighborhood."

Valerie Hill, director of community services for the Southwest Community Center, said she believes the new grocery store will positively affect the South Side in ways far beyond fresh produce. The Southwest Community Center, located on South Avenue just two blocks from the store's site, is a hub of activity for the neighborhood.

"We see this store as a plan to provide jobs close to home, help our neighbors provide for their families and save money," Hill said.

"It would solve a lot of our problems," she said. "This store will give our community the balance it's needed for some time. It will make a major difference in our neighborhood."

ANOTHER POSSIBLE OPTION



> Another South Side grocery store — in Valley Plaza — is also vacant. Tops Friendly Markets has announced plans to explore opening a store there. | Dan Scorpio, Staff Photo

PLANNED BENEFITS

COMMUNITY

- New jobs
- Gathering place
- Reduced violence
- Reduced drug trafficking

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Porous pavement to control water runoff
- Solar panels
- Energy-efficient appliances
- Local produce



> Nicolas Salibrici works with ninth- through 12th-graders at Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School, located at 1001 Park Ave. Over the past month, students in his classes have researched urban renewal and how it affected the city of Syracuse, including I-81. For student perspectives, see Page 13. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

By | Bethany Bump
Urban Affairs reporter

Community members and transportation officials examine I-81's role in Syracuse

Years before President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System spread across American cities and eventually through Syracuse, the city's 15th Ward was a vibrant, diverse community. Within it were high- and low-income residents, white and black neighbors and the city's first black dentist.

But in the 1950s and '60s, the largely African-American community was razed to make way for an elevated interstate highway that would displace nearly 1,300 residents to the South Side. Whites took to the suburbs, leaving abandoned buildings in their wake.

No one asked the community what it wanted when I-81 was built 50 years ago, said James D'Agostino, director of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, the organization responsible for Onondaga County's transportation planning.

Today, portions of Interstate-81, the expressway that cuts through Syracuse, are nearing the end of their lifespan. The visibly decaying viaduct, the 1.4-mile elevated strip, prompted the transportation council and the New York State Department of Transportation to launch The I-81 Challenge, a public outreach campaign to address the future of I-81 in the next decade.

"We're in some ways tripping over ourselves to involve the public and make sure people know about this project so that no one feels that this is being done in a back room behind a closed door," D'Agostino said.

The I-81 Challenge has a website, blog and Facebook page with case studies, newsletters, fact sheets, maps and a questionnaire available. The state agencies will hold the first round of public workshops in early May to inform the community of all the options, he said.

After thorough analysis of I-81's physical conditions, D'Agostino said it became clear something had to be done. Options include burying or depressing the highway, relocating it, replacing it with a boulevard or simply maintaining it as is.

"We had to ask, OK, do we just pour tons of money into maintaining something that is close to the end of its life?" D'Agostino said. "We thought we should get ahead of it and get the community involved to determine what works best for Syracuse today and in the future."

Memories of I-81's construction and stories told by parents and grandparents linger in the minds of South Side residents. The interstate is a barrier to the rest of the city — physically and symbolically — community members have said.

"It impacted low-income communities more than other areas. That's pretty obvious," D'Agostino said. "A lot of people were displaced because of I-81, but it wasn't the only factor. Whether it being a barrier is real or perceived, that's something we're going to look at."

Walt Dixie joined the challenge's Community Liaison Committee, composed of 37 local organizations, to make sure the future of I-81 doesn't segregate communities. As executive director of Jubilee Homes, a local corporation that works to revitalize housing and economic development of the Southwest side, he said it's his job to bring the historical perspective of the South Side to the discussion.

"Whatever 81 becomes, there should be a larger version of the 15th Ward, in terms of true diversity and ownership," Dixie said. "We need a vibrant city. We don't need a gated community."

GETTING THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED

Prior to The I-81 Challenge, NYSDOT and the transportation council held 23 focus groups in the community to discuss preliminary concerns. But many South Side residents didn't realize what was being done because they were never engaged in the process, Dixie said.

"It's important that you bring that diverse population together to sit at the table so it truly reflects that," Dixie said. "And I think they have a ways to go with that. That's why we've got to make sure we have all the right actors and participants at the table before they even start talking about options."

D'Agostino said anyone on the South Side who asked to be involved in the process was included. He said he hopes more residents come to the May workshops so they can share what they need for the neighborhood.

A Syracuse resident all his life, Dixie said he has witnessed the South Side become a vacuum, to some extent

because of I-81.

"You can't just continue to condense buildings and keep a certain income population impacted together," he said. "You need to diversify people, diversify businesses and celebrate your history at the same time."

Bill Egloff, NYSDOT's project planning manager, was surprised to hear similar desires expressed for the future of I-81. City and suburban residents, stakeholder groups and others told him they recognize that the vitality of the city is important to Central New York.

"They all said that what they wanted to see different was that the burdens and the benefits were shared — unlike the feeling of the minority community, who bore the brunt of what happened 50 years ago," he said.

Also a lifelong Syracuse resident, Egloff said he remembers when Syracuse University was referred to as "those folks on the hill," after the interstate was built. He understands the perception that I-81 separates University Hill from the rest of the city, including the South Side.

In combing through case studies, NYSDOT was certain that public participation was the key to a successful project, he said.

"No matter what community it was, the success of whatever option they implemented was tied to the intensity and the transparency of their public outreach," Egloff said. "Everybody says that public participation is crucial, and we recognized that early on."

Some residents want to leave I-81 the way it is. Ron Williams wakes up every day and sees the interstate from his window on the 21st floor of Toomey Abbott Towers.

"It's part of my décor. Imagine that view," he said.

The interstate should be left alone, said Williams, who describes 81 as the best thing that ever happened to Syracuse. He acknowledges that the highway is old and brittle, and that it needs to be repainted and maintained in certain areas. But he says there is no reason to tear it down, relocate it or rebuild it.



> From left to right, Charlette Murray, Phillip Howell, Christian Medina and Sashairis Arce created this display with items they discovered in their research on urban renewal. | Ashley Kang, Staff Photo

THE I-81 CHALLENGE EXPLAINED

The I-81 Challenge is a joint effort of the New York State Department of Transportation and the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council to engage a broad cross-section of community members in developing and evaluating options for the future of the I-81 corridor in Central New York.

CHECK IT OUT

For more information or to fill out the online questionnaire visit:

WEBSITE

www.i81challenge.org

BLOG

www.thei81challengeblog.org

FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/thei81challenge

ON THE SIDE

LEARN MORE

The first round of public workshops for The I-81 Challenge will be an open house. Interactive stations will display the interstate’s history and the state of the highway today. The community is invited to share its vision for the future and be part of the process for determining which options work for Syracuse.

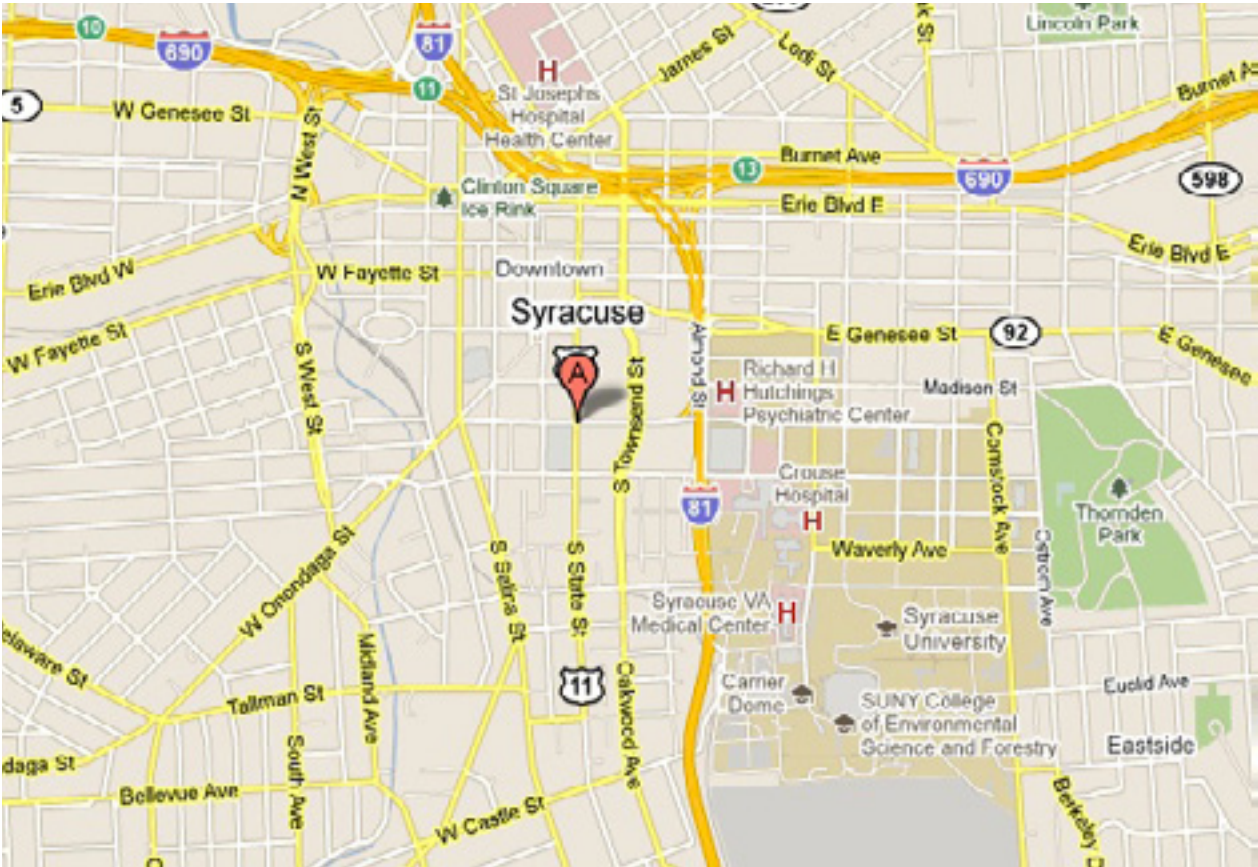
WHEN:
 9 a.m. to noon
 Saturday, May 7

Two previous workshops were held on May 3 and May 4.

LOCATION:
 Oncenter Ballroom
 (Lower level)
 800 S. State St.
 Syracuse, NY 13202

Free Parking Available

YOUTH SHARE PERSPECTIVES
 Students from **Nicolas Salibrici’s Reading and Research Class** participated in the May 4 public workshop to learn more and share what they have discovered in their research efforts



> I-81 cuts through the middle of Syracuse, causing mixed feelings in the community. | Google Maps image

The 57-year-old painter and carpenter said the interstate contributed to the success of urban renewal in the area and is a source of pride for the community. It brings people into the city, through the city and back out of the city, he said.

“You’ve got a highway smack-dab in the middle of the city. What else do you want? Highways going around the city? In the back of it? This does the same thing, but it goes right in the middle of the city. You can look at what’s in the city. You get at the top of the mountain in the city and you can look directly into the city from 81. It’s beautiful. It’s breathtaking.”

Ultimately, residents should play the largest role in whatever decisions are made about I-81, Williams said. Many people don’t know what has been discussed so far, he said.

“Everyone needs to come together and make a decision on this,” Williams said. “You have a lot of guys with their hats in the ring that are just laying back dormant and saying, ‘Whatever you want to do.’ And that’s not fair to the residents or to the business people in the city.”

I-81 IN THE CLASSROOM

Some see the controversy over the interstate’s history and its current conditions as a teaching experience. When Nicolas Salibrici told his class at Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School that they were going on a field trip to the library, he was met with blank stares. “They looked at me like I had three heads,” he said.

But as the ninth- through 12th-graders combed through microfilm and Syracuse newspaper clippings from the 1950s and 1960s, they wanted to stay longer than time permitted.

“They were just completely immersed, and I think a little awestruck by the sense of history at their fingertips,” said Salibrici, who is educating his class on I-81, urban renewal and the history of Syracuse’s 15th Ward.

Involving young people in the process is crucial, said Dixie, executive director of Jubilee Homes. The focus meetings missed the opportunity to hear a young perspective, he said.

“How can you do a design that will be around for the next 30 or 50 years and not include the young kids?” he said. “Kids should play some role for the future.”

Salibrici hopes that by the end of the school year, the class will have a plan in place to address the future of I-81. The hands-on interaction of the class project makes it the first “authentic and experiential” education of Salibrici’s 10-year teaching career. He said the students, who live all over Syracuse, feel empowered by their involvement.

“We want to be involved with the dialogue about I-81 and what should be done and what could be done to help correct the mistakes that the city made 50 years ago when they didn’t involve the community,” he said. “We want to be a part of that process, to empower the students and give them a voice and let them tell the city what they think.”

15TH WARD STUDIED

Students' conclusion: Renewal of a city, destruction of a community

By | Students in Reading and Research
Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School

Students create a position on urban renewal and how they say it destroyed a community

The 15th Ward was a neighborhood in Syracuse that held about 90 percent of the city's black people in the 1950s and 1960s. The newspapers claimed that the 15th Ward was full of blighted houses and lots of violence. That was mostly not true. What it was full of, were families that cared about each other and helped each other out. Planning began in 1935 for the I-81 project, but it did not go smoothly. Neighborhoods were destroyed and riots broke out because of the destruction of the 15th Ward community. After gathering as much information as we could, we started to form our own opinions on what urban renewal can do to a city. We were presented with an assignment: to assume the voice of an individual living through this social issue. We had to create a clear position on urban renewal and reference specific facts or key points. To the right are some of our student perspectives on this local, historical issue.



"I understand upgrading the city could be a good thing, but taking people's lives, joy, happiness, and history away from them is not a good thing, whatsoever."

—Dominic Rideaux



"Now don't get me wrong, the 15th Ward wasn't the best place to live, but the people were friendly. They treated you like you were their family. All of the neighbors got along and looked after each other."

—Quientea Rivers

ABOUT THE STUDENTS

We are students from Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School, located at 1001 Park Ave. We are in a Reading and Research class taught by Nicolas Salibrici.

For an entire month, we conducted research about urban renewal and how it affected the city of Syracuse.



For more student perspectives on this social issue, visit www.mysouthsidestand.com

"The Stand is concerned about people and their stories, the ones that rarely end up in Syracuse's mainstream media."

— Ruthnie Angrand, *The Stand* Correspondent and 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



| Durrie Bouscaren

HISTORY

The **International Baccalaureate Program** was founded in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland, and has been a part of Corcoran High School since 2005. It is recognized in 75 countries and more than 2,000 universities. This prestigious program is structured to build character and prepare students for higher education.

All exams are either timed or audio/video recorded and sent to various countries to be graded. Other requirements for the IB diploma include 150 service hours, various essays and oral assessments.

5 TIPS FOR SENIORS

Expert advice on handling International Baccalaureate, exam stress

By | Megan Ripley
Corcoran High School columnist

High school seniors work through stress for nationally recognized diploma, college credits

Corcoran’s International Baccalaureate exams generally begin in March and continue through May. This time of year, many IB students are studying and preparing for exams and recorded presentations in order to succeed. Whether you’re in the IB program or not, senior year is very stressful. Students are applying for colleges, preparing for SATs, studying for finals or fulfilling graduation requirements. Relieving that stress in a healthy manner is one of the biggest challenges teens face today. Many students “bottle up” their stress and emotions, which can eventually lead to mental and emotional breakdowns and cases of depression or anxiety. So set aside your stress balls and relax. Elizabeth Scott is here to help!

Scott is a wellness and health coordinator who writes a stress management blog at stress.about.com. She also published a guide on top stress-relieving activities.

Here are Scott’s five tips:

1. **Music/Art Therapy:** Many individuals listen to music or “doodle” while doing paperwork and other academics.
2. **Exercise:** Need to relieve anger/emotions? Exercise helps increase blood flow to the brain, which calms and soothes the body.
3. **Sleep:** Walking away and taking a nap is always a teenage favorite. Sleeping relaxes the mind and helps one refresh and restart.
4. **Time Management:** Planning your time wisely is a big help. Procrastinating only increases stress/anxiety levels.
5. **Surround Yourself With Positive Energy:** Spending time with close friends or relatives always brightens up one’s day. Laughter and a happy atmosphere generally put people in a better mood and help them forget about worries and stress around them.

With these tips and a determined attitude, students preparing to receive an IB diploma at graduation, as well as seniors studying for their general finals, shouldn’t face any challenges they can’t overcome. Good luck!

WANT A JOB IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

eCUSE case managers provide Syracuse residents with help getting jobs in the emerging green economy

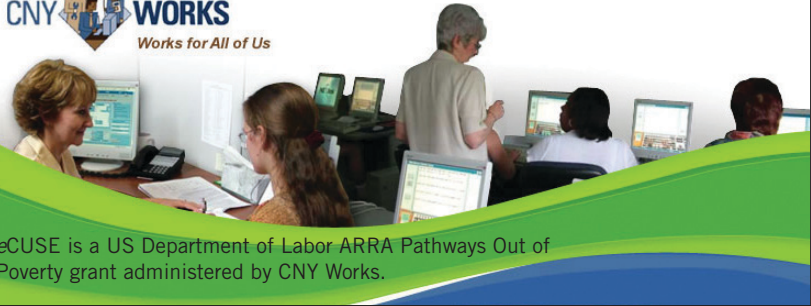
Need help?

- overcoming a criminal background
- to improve reading, math, English skills
- getting trained or certified in construction, landscaping, and office work
- getting a job and keeping a job

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443 N. Franklin St. Syracuse, NY 13204
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For more information: [www.cnyworks.com/Green Job Resources](http://www.cnyworks.com/Green%20Job%20Resources)



eCUSE is a US Department of Labor ARRA Pathways Out of Poverty grant administered by CNY Works.



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Jacquelyn
Grace-Rasheed
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Vanessa Johnson
Dave Knittel

StoryFest IV

a family storytelling event at the
Ted Grace Reading Grove

May 19, 2011 • 6:30 PM
Corcoran High School

For tickets call 315-383-4018
Adults: \$10 • K-12 students: \$5 • Under 5: Free

FIRST-YEAR EFFORTS

SU students make a big difference at 'The Big Event' on South Side



> Despite the rain, two members of SU's leadership program are ready to do some planting. | Dan Scorpio, Staff Photo

By | Dan Scorpio
Urban Affairs reporter

Volunteers spend a Saturday cleaning parks, painting murals and giving back to community

More than 100 Syracuse University student volunteers spent Saturday, April 16, cleaning up parks, revitalizing streetscapes and restoring landmark buildings on the South Side. The project, called The Big Event, was the year-end project for SU's OrangeSeeds organization, a leadership-training program for first-year students.

"The Big Event was a great way to get first-year students working on civic engagement projects and involving themselves in the Syracuse community," said Greg Victory, director of first-year and transfer programs at SU.

Victory said community members identified every clean-up project as a need, and the volunteer group worked closely with the South Side Coalition to integrate themselves into the neighborhood. The primary focus was reviving a five-block stretch around South Salina Street, Victory said.

Valerie Hill, director of community services for the Southwest Community Center, worked with SU students April 16 as part of an Earth Day celebration near the Southwest Community Center. "The students were amazing," Hill said. "It didn't matter to them that it was raining, they just put everything they had into it."

Hill said she recognized many students as previous volunteers at the community center. "We often have a

good number of volunteers from SU," she said. "They really are very important to what we do."

At The Big Event, students said they appreciated the response from community members. "We received great reactions from the neighbors we worked with," said Jubilee Westergaard, a first-year SU student and OrangeSeeds volunteer.

*"I'm so grateful
for the experience."
—Jubilee Westergaard*

"They told us how much they loved seeing students as part of the community," she said.

OrangeSeeds has sponsored a version of The Big Event every year since its creation in 2004, with Victory as the group's staff adviser. The group, open to all first-year students at SU, is designed to develop communication skills and provide leadership training for students.

The student volunteers planted more than 150 pots of lilies along South Salina Street, painted a mural on the decaying wall of a building near the East Colvin Street intersection, helped refurbish the inside of the A.M.E. Zion Church and prepared the South Side Community Garden for the summer.

SUMMER EVENTS

JUNE

Juneteenth Festival

When: Begins at noon with parade, Saturday, June 18

Where: Clinton Square, Syracuse

More Info.: Visit syracusejuneteenth.org for a full schedule and additional events

JULY

Zoo to You

When: 2 p.m. Thursday, July 28

Where: Beauchamp Branch Library, 2111 S. Salina St.

More Info.: Contact the library at (315) 435-3395

AUGUST

10th annual

Youth Day Barbecue

When: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 20

Where: Corner of South Salina Street and Wood Avenue

More Info.: Must register. Download the registration form at <http://youthdaybarbecue.com/events.html> or contact Mary Nelson at NelsonM@upstate.edu or (315) 422-5690

DID YOU KNOW?

Drivers who violate the cell phone law will receive two driver penalty points and a fine of \$100.

Drivers under 21 years of age represent about 5 percent of the driving population, but 15 percent of the drivers involved in alcohol or drug-related fatalities.

Your license may be suspended if you don't file a report with the DMV within 10 days of an accident.

TAKING THE WHEEL

Branch's Driving School flourishes with a father-son management team

By | Brandi Kellam
Staff reporter

Opening the business to a larger community has helped the school grow over the years

When Deraux Branch looks up from his small 8-and-a-half by 6-inch book, he sees the pupils of about 26 eyes staring back at him. One would think that from the second floor of the triangular building on the corner of West Genesee Street, these eyes could be easily distracted. Surrounding them are the sounds of cars screeching, sirens blaring and music booming. The sweet aroma of honey barbecue from the restaurant across the street entices them.

But what Deraux says is louder and bolder than the distractions from the outside world. "Fifteen-thousand-dollars," he says. "That's the cost of getting a DWI."

LASTING THROUGH THE YEARS

Branch's Driving School was founded in 1963. Nearly 50 years later, it's a business that thrives in the midst of the city's economic ups and downs. It's also one of the few minority-owned family businesses from the original 15th Ward to survive urban renewal. "It's a milestone that most businesses try to achieve," said Deraux Branch, the president of the driving school. He left his banking job in Maryland in 1982 when his father, Andrew, became sick and could not maintain the business.

"He dropped everything in Maryland," said Della Bullock, recalling her brother stepping in as a reason the business has been around for many years. "My father started the business, and it was on decline. When my mother asked, as moms do ... sons do what moms say, and son came home," Deraux said.

As the school's founder, Andrew acknowledges that the family's success is due in part because it serves a larger community. "The main business in our community, black community so to speak, would be barber shops and beauty parlors, and those types of things, a couple of restaurants, that's what we had."

Night clubs, barber shops and beauty salons decorated streets that now house many of the tall buildings and parking lots of downtown Syracuse.

Andrew credits his mother for the inspiration to start the family business. "My first student was my mom, and I taught her how to drive," Andrew said. "That was very difficult, very challenging, but very good, because that's where I got my start from. That's where I learned how to do certain things — from her."

Branch's Driving School has done what many businesses have not. It has allowed the teacher to become

the student. A dream that started from a son teaching his mother to drive, has now enabled a son to step in and help his father.

Deraux admits the growth of the driving school has not come without sacrifice. He says he doesn't take an income from the business, explaining that a salary would be used to buy a new vehicle or hire a new full-time worker. He says by not taking a salary, he doesn't lay off people and yet he is still employed.

THE REAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

"I want to drive, and I want to use my friend's car. I go somewhere that's very convenient ... because next year, I want to be off campus," said 19-year-old driving student Chengye Hou.

Hou is from China and hopes taking classes at Branch's Driving School will help him get the green light to a New York state driver's license.

Hou is among more than 300,000 people who have turned to Branch's Driving School for the skills needed to pass the state's licensing exam.

"We have people call from Iraq and say make me an appointment. I'm coming for a five-hour class," Andrew said. "It's a big deal for me to see how this school has progressed over the years."

But nearly half-a-century of business and a laundry list of awards are not what he considers to be the business' most notable accomplishments.

"To actually overcome certain things that have happened in your life is an accomplishment," he said. "Being around not to spite anyone, but in spite of, that's what it's all about."



> Andrew, left, and Deraux Branch are a father-son team that runs Branch's Driving School. | Brandi Kellam, Staff Photo

TAKING CLASSES AT BRANCH'S

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\$425 for noncity residents

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Suite No. 2

Syracuse, N.Y. 13202

Phone numbers

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(315) 478-1963

ONLINE MARKETING

A local small business is benefiting from social media efforts

By | Mary Desmond
Urban Affairs reporter

Count It All Joy was able to grow from an at-home business into a full-fledged brand

Over the past year, Joyce Boahene, the founder of Count It All Joy, Inspirational Products, LLC, has embraced social media in every way.

"I do a Twitter every day. My blog I update on a weekly or monthly basis, usually with an inspirational message," Boahene said.

She also logs onto Facebook several times a week. For Boahene, keeping up her Web presence is not just a social activity; it's business. Count it All Joy sells faith-based poetry books, journals and gifts created by Boahene.

Count It All Joy, together with a growing number of small businesses, is using social media to market goods and services and communicate with customers.

Rick Hutley, the vice president of Global Innovations Internet Business Solutions Group, says a working knowledge of social media is relevant to any business.

"It is imperative to all businesses of all sizes in all industries," Hutley said.

Hutley said businesses can take steps to create a more effective Web presence. They should build a site that reflects what the company offers and the customers it's trying to attract. Hutley says when business has a working website, owners and employees should participate on social networking sites and blogs.

"Be active on other people's streams. When someone tweets about something related to your product, reply and then link to your website," Hutley said. "If you aren't active in networks, search engines don't find you."

Bob Herz, the director of the South Side Innovation Center — a project of Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management that seeks to "incubate" new business ventures by providing office space, training resources and services — said small businesses can best utilize the Internet by learning to accept credit over the Web, using Facebook, other social media and email. He also says developing an efficient website is necessary.

"The website must be done right and have the right kinds of bells and whistles to drive traffic to it and make it stop on a Google or Bing search," Herz said.

Some business experts, like Hutley and Herz, offer specific techniques that make social media marketing successful. Others say the concept has not been researched enough to determine the best way to go about it.

"The area is so new. I'm not sure anyone could tell you definitively the right way to use a social network," said Linda Cushman, a retail management professor at Whitman.



> Joyce Boahene holds a baby basket she created under her Count It All Joy brand. | Mary Desmond, Staff Photo

The uncharted waters of social media have not stopped business owners, like Boahene, from getting their feet wet.

Boahene, a full-time nurse at Crouse Hospital, began writing poetry books and inspirational journals in 1985. From 1985 to 2008, she sold her work out of her home. She said word of mouth was her only form of advertisement.

In 2008, E-book Time Book Publishing Company published 10 of Boahene's books and prayer journals. As retailers like Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble began selling Boahene's work, she and her two daughters, Afua and Adwoa, decided it was time to turn the business into a serious venture.

"We wanted it to become a real genuine business," Boahene said. The three women presented SU with a business plan based on transforming Boahene's ideas into a brand. The brand, Count It All Joy, would sell Boahene's merchandise that reflected themes found in her books. The women moved to the South Side Innovation Center, where they are today. Soon after, Boahene decided to develop her company as an Internet-based venture.

"It was suggested that it was one way to go. Everything is through the Web now unless you have a storefront," Boahene said.

Boahene said focusing on the Web business allowed her to develop her brand concept and plan for new products. Along with books and journals, her website offers a line of "baby baskets" inspired by the story of baby Moses' trip down the Nile from the biblical book Exodus.

Hutley said every business must tailor its use of social media to its goals, company profile and customers.

"We live in a technological age," Hutley said. "Electronic is the means to reach people today, wherever they happen to live, whatever age group they happen to be."

GROWING BUSINESS

Businesses of all sizes have been warming up to **social media** in the recent past. Small businesses in particular are booming from the Web exposure.

In February 2010, the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business reported that use of social media by small businesses had increased from 12 percent to 24 percent in 2009.

In July 2009, Altimeter Group, an emerging technologies research firm, reported that companies **"deeply engaged"** in social media grew by 18 percent, while companies that were **"least engaged"** dropped by 6 percent.

Count It All Joy has also seen an increase in business since increasing its online presence. Its website, <http://www.count-it-joy.com>, has received more than **700 views** since its creation in 2009.

Joyce Boahene, the business' founder, also advertises her products on Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as a personal blog.

Facebook: Count It All Joy

Twitter: @ciaj2010

CRAFTING PROJECTS

Second- and third-graders put what they have learned into action through after-school, hand-sewing classes offered by the Say Yes to Education program.



> Arts and crafts teacher Ricky Parks, who grew up on the South Side, helps students at one of the after-school sewing classes. The classes are staffed by instructors from Peterson Sewing School, located on Euclid Avenue. | John C. Liau, Staff Photo



> Jakiera Mitchell, 8, plays with pipe cleaners at Elmwood Elementary School, one of two South Side elementary schools where the sewing classes are offered. | John C. Liau, Staff Photo

SEWING BASICS

Eight-week classes teach elementary school children how to sew



> From left, Jakiera Mitchell, 8, Bruce Stephens, 8, arts and crafts teacher Ricky Parks, and Quanmeir Burke, 7, work together at Elmwood Elementary School's weekly sewing class. | John C. Liau, Staff Photo

By | Jennifer Moncayo
Staff reporter

Students start with sewing basics and then go on to create projects such as pillows, handbags

Say Yes to Education recently started offering sewing classes to elementary school students on the South Side. Staffed by instructors from Peterson Sewing School, 920 Euclid Ave., the classes are for students at Elmwood Elementary and Roberts School. Students can enroll in a free, eight-week sewing class as part of their after-school program.

Due to the age of the students — second- and third-graders — sewing machines are not used at Elmwood, said Barbara Peterson, owner of Peterson Sewing School.

Ricky Parks, 27, a sewing/arts and crafts instructor at Elmwood, elaborated.

“In the beginning, we do nonsewing projects like making quilts, hats and scarves,” he said. “Then we get into the hand-sewing projects where we make pillows and handbags.”

At the start of the new eight-week session, students are learning the basics, Parks said.

“This week they practiced how to hand sew straight, using a plastic heart-shaped guide,” he said, as he helped

“I like the class because I sew with my grandma at home.”

—Gabriel Tarbell

a small group of students make necklaces and bracelets out of pipe cleaners on a Friday afternoon in March.

Students enjoy the classes for different reasons.

“I like the class because I sew with my grandma at home,” said 7-year-old Gabriel Tarbell, a second-grader at Elmwood.

“I never sewed before, and I wanted to learn about it,” said 8-year-old Jakiera Mitchell, a third-grader at Elmwood, while filling in her coloring book.

Parks, who grew up on the South Side, understands the importance of the after-school program. He hopes the students will learn leadership from the sewing class and see that their lives have many possibilities.

“A lot of them don’t have role models and father figures,” he said. “I can be that figure, that role model that they don’t have.”

STOP THE VIOLENCE

Common Council to apply for grant to fund anti-gang initiatives

By | Brett Fortnam
Urban Affairs reporter

Syracuse would hire coordinator, develop outreach programs to prevent gang violence

Syracuse wants to gang up on gang violence. In April, the Common Council voted to apply for a \$750,000 grant from the Justice Department to implement a program that develops anti-gang strategies.

Between Jan. 1 and mid-November 2010, Syracuse police received nearly 300 reports of "shots fired." About 30 percent of those reports were gang-related, said Capt. Rich Trudell of the Onondaga Crime Analysis Center.

Janet Burke, the city's director of research and co-author of the proposal approved by the council, said the city would use the Justice Department grant to create a three-prong program — hiring a coordinator to lead the anti-gang initiative, assessing gangs' presence in the city and funding outreach programs to gang members.

The coordinator would serve as the authority on gang activity in Syracuse and be in constant contact with Mayor Stephanie Miner's office and the Syracuse Police

Department to develop strategies to reduce gang activity. Trudell said hiring a coordinator "would bridge the gap between intervention, suppression and prevention." The grant would provide three years' salary for the position.

Tom Roshau, director of the Salvation Army's Youth and Juvenile Justice Services, said the gang assessment would help the city determine which gangs were prone to violence, which were particularly territorial and which were organized to traffic weapons or illegal drugs. He said Syracuse would not be eligible for other anti-gang grants until it completes an official gang assessment study.

City officials said the study would be conducted by the John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety, a nonprofit institute in Albany that researches crime at the county, state and federal levels.

The Salvation Army's outreach program goes to specific neighborhoods the Syracuse Police Department defines as "hot spots" of gang activities, Roshau said.

"We are looking to build relationships with the people who run those neighborhoods," Roshau said. "Anytime you come across somebody who had gotten out of a gang, they usually had help getting out of a gang."

FUNDING PROGRAMS

If Syracuse receives the **Justice Department grant**, it would help fund existing anti-gang initiatives, such as sending "gang teams" into neighborhoods to persuade youths to stay out of gangs and gang members to change their lifestyles.

"The one gang team we have right now ran out of money over a month ago," said Tom Roshau, director of the Salvation Army's Youth and Juvenile Justice Services. "If we don't win something soon, we can't keep these guys out there. It's really down to the survival of one gang team."



> The Salvation Army's outreach program works to eliminate gang activities and reaches out to gang members. | Brett Fortnam, Staff Photo

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eCUSE is a US Department of Labor ARRA Pathways Out of Poverty grant administered by CNY Works.



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