

the Stand

south side news

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Syracuse, NY

SEPTEMBER 2014 Issue 36 FREE

TEEN SALVATION

Parenting Center gives young moms a home to raise their children

From Where We Stand
Summer project lets 8 families get behind the camera

photo walk

Fifth annual tour of South Side captures people and places

Corcoran
principal
Meet Jennifer King as she starts her new role

MUSICIANS PROMOTE ARTS



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COMMUNITY STANDARDS.

This summer, The Stand offered a new storytelling series — From Where We Stand — in which South Side and West Side residents shared their families' summer stories through photos. The idea was simple: put real people behind the camera and let them tell their own stories.

Participants were provided with professional Nikon cameras thanks to a grant from The Gifford Foundation. We also paired each with a professional mentor to work with over the summer. The goal was to capture special moments.

We invite you to view all the participants' visual stories on the project's website at FromWhereWeStand.net — and to visit an exhibit of the participants' photos currently on display through mid-October at the Link Gallery at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse downtown. In addition, we invite you to a reception Sept. 11 at the Warehouse. See Page 16 for details about the evening event.

Many thanks to The Gifford Foundation, Near Westside Initiative, Newhouse School, WCNY, The Allyn Foundation, the South Side Innovation Center and Stephen Mahan with the Link Gallery for making the storytelling series possible.

The project was even featured on WCNY's public affairs show "Insight" and covered by Syracuse Media Group on Syracuse.com. If you missed the TV episode, you can view it online at wcnyc.org/television/insight/ under the episode airing Aug. 1, and for more on the participants and mentors in the project, turn to Page 14.

Also in this issue, we preview photos from our Fifth annual Photo Walk held July 26. This was a special year for this event as it was also featured on the national arts television show "Artifex," which aired Aug. 8. To view this, visit wcnyc.org/television/artifex/. Stories in the coming pages spotlight a soon-to-be teen mom living at the Salvation Army's Parenting Center, an interview with Corcoran High School's new principal and musicians attending the first Syracuse JAMS cookout.

Ashley Kang



> The Stand board member and music columnist Reggie Seigler discusses his music column — A Friendly Five — during a past Behind the Scenes of The Stand workshop. The Stand director, Ashley Kang, listens. | File Photo

JOIN OUR BOARD

The Stand currently has an opening for a community member to join our Board of Directors.

Board members meet every other month for two hours on a Saturday morning. Members discuss story suggestions, events, advertising opportunities and workshop offerings.

The board is searching for someone ready to become an active member, to suggest ideas and represent others in the South Side community. An ideal candidate also would have advertising experience and would help boost the project's ad revenue.

If interested, contact The Stand's director by calling (315) 882-1054 or emailing ashley@mysouthsidestand.com.

A MUSICIAN COOKOUT

Syracuse JAMS hosts first summer get-together for musicians, families

By | Reggie Seigler
A *Friendly Five* columnist

Central New York artists turn a 'potluck' idea into a full-day outing to socialize, promote arts

Food plus live music equals fun.

On July 19, Syracuse's Joined Artists, Musicians & Singers, known as JAMS, hosted its first cookout. Dubbed the "Musicians' Cookout 2K14," the event was held at Clark Reservation State Park in Jamesville, with roughly 200 JAMS members and other arts supporters.

JAMS is a loosely knit organization consisting mainly of musicians, whose members have come together for a common good — promoting and encouraging one another. Their intent is to keep the fire burning, mainly in the area of live music, but in other art forms as well.

Donna Alford of the Donna Alford JaSSBand came up with the idea of having the cookout and inviting musicians she knew for a "potluck" dinner at the park.

"I wanted all the musicians to get together and just have fun," she said.

Her idea caught on very quickly among the JAMS' membership. JAMS immediately started holding regular weekly meetings and began chipping in money to make the event happen. Theardis Martino, a longtime music aficionado, provided his space at Matawon Development Training Center on South Salina Street for the meetings.

The cookout turned out to be a success and the food plentiful. The musicians and their families brought in desserts, ice and extra beverages, while Kevin and Desiree Henry and their family prepared the main course of assorted barbequed meats with all the fixings.

The scene was also crawling, as you might suspect, with musicians. There were guitarists, bassists, percussionists and harpists — if there was an instrument that you could name, someone was there who could play it.

Ben Terry sensed that there would be a lot of musicians. He knew they would all be itching to jam, too, so he came up with an idea so everyone could perform.

The idea was to host a series of what he called



> Wayne Thompson, left, with Ozell Cooper, spent time together enjoying the Syracuse JAMS first cookout. | Photo provided

"Raffle Jams Sessions." The way it worked was: All the musicians who wanted to play had to put their names into a jar upon arrival. The jars were labeled by instruments, such as bass, drums and keyboards.

Later on, Ben pulled names from the jars as he needed musicians to fill certain positions on the bandstand. If a piano player were needed, he'd go to the piano jar. The person whose name was pulled would play during that session.

It was a brilliant idea.

"I really liked the raffle jams sessions because it gave me the chance to play with some cats that I hadn't played with before," said Terrance Robinson of the Jah Eyes and the Survivors.

The audience enjoyed it, too. People arranged their chairs and loungers along the tree line and grooved in the scene. Some even brought cards and board games to add to the fun.

JAMS didn't forget the children, either. Paul Lee of Soul Smooth and his mate, Sara Evans, provided a strolling magician.

This was truly an event for the whole family. Next year, we hope to double the attendance.

JAMS AT THE FAIR

Another Syracuse JAMS' activity already will have taken place by the time you read this. Three of JAMS' bands — the Jeff Houston Experience, Soft Spoken Band and UAD — were scheduled to perform on Labor Day at Chevy Court at The Great New York State Fair during the Syracuse JAMS Funk Fest 2K14. It was the first event of its kind for JAMS.

JOIN OR BOOK

JAMS is currently reaching out to network with other individuals and groups who share our common interest — a mission to keep live music and art alive in Central New York.

Other JAMS groups are

- The Goonies
- The Blacklites
- Trump Tight 315

To find out more about JAMS or to book a block of groups for a festival or large event, please contact Reggie Seigler at (315) 479-9620

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A NEW LEADER ON CAMPUS

Jennifer King succeeds Leo Cosgrove, moving up to principal at Corcoran High School



> Corcoran's new principal Jennifer King says her priority is to work with students and families to ensure that all students graduate. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo

By | Steve Davis
Founder of The Stand

After serving as vice-principal for six years, Jennifer King, 38, takes on a new role. She sat down with *The Stand* Aug. 5 for a conversation. This is an edited transcript.

SD: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

JK: I was raised here in Syracuse. My family moved here from Plattsburgh, N.Y., where my father was on the Air Force base. I attended Syracuse schools, graduated from Nottingham High School in 1993, then went on to Le Moyne College and got my master's from SUNY-Oswego. Then my certificate of advanced studies from Syracuse University, so I'm pretty home-grown. I got my start in education about 18 years ago. I was an elementary ed teacher. I taught first grade, and then most of my years were in second grade. So I did that for about nine years and then I was promoted to an administrative intern here at Corcoran seven years ago, which was a pretty cool experience because many of the students that I worked with at Elmwood Elementary were coming up the ranks. It was nice to come up and see familiar faces. After that year, I was appointed to vice-principal and had been doing that for six years and was recently appointed to principal July 1.

SD: Did you think you'd someday be a principal in a school in the city where you grew up?

JK: It was a surprise. When I was at Le Moyne, my major was in psychology. My minor was education. My first year at Le Moyne, I went back to Nottingham High School and I started working with kids who were part of the Liberty Partnership Program, and I really enjoyed working with students. That was something that was a surprise. I really just had a real exciting time working with the kids. What was really cool was when they would see me coming in, they would be really excited to report the happen-

ings of their lives, the good things that were going on, and I had an opportunity to tutor them. And so after my first year at Le Moyne, I knew that I wanted to go into education because I had such a positive experience with that. So throughout my time at Le Moyne, I would tutor for other programs such as Upward Bound. Once I graduated and got my first teaching job, I kind of saw myself as a long-term teacher. I thought that that was something I would do for my professional career until I retired. But then I had a close friend of mine start to encourage me to take a look on a grander scale to see how I would be able to work with students outside of the classroom. So I had taken the coursework and was pretty interested in that ... and then after being promoted to vice-principal, I kind of saw that as my life's work. Then this opportunity became available as the principal I was working with for six years had retired. And I thought, "I've been doing the vice-principal job for about six years, now it may be time to take on a bigger role." And so it wasn't what I thought I went to school to do, but I'm here now and I'm going to take every advantage of this opportunity to be able to serve the community of Corcoran.

SD: What's going to be the biggest difference for you as a principal versus vice-principal?

JK: I think about that often. As a vice-principal, you work with a particular department or you work with a particular group of teachers and students. For example for me, I was part of what we call the West Academy so I maybe worked with about 30 teachers and half of the students that we have. As a principal, I know my role is much more significant in that I'm going to have to work with all of our staff. I'm going to have to manage and work with an administrative team and I'm going to be responsible for each and every student that walks through the door. And I think that that is going to be a significant change, and you want to make sure as you're working with people that you are meeting their needs and you are providing support for your students and support for your staff, so the role is much more significant in the role as principal.

SD: If your students or colleagues were asked to give five adjectives to describe you, what do you think they might say?

JK: What I hear most from students, and some of my peers, too, is that I'm fair. I also hear that I'm positive, that I can often find the good in a situation or the good in someone. I also hear that I'm compassionate, which is interesting because that can be used for good things but there can also be a connotation that may not bode well for me when you have to make those difficult decisions.

SD: That's three. How about just one more ...

JK: The one thing I hear more-so from colleagues than students is that I'm a team player. If I have an idea or if we're trying to work on something, I do try and value the input of others as much as I can. I know that ultimately you do have to make a decision, but I try to have a shared approach with our staff. I hope those are qualities that will continue to bode well and make a difference in moving Corcoran forward. In the position of principal, you are always changing. So we'll see what happens.

SD: What do you see as the biggest difference between when you were a senior in high school in Syracuse and now?

JK: I want to start by saying that I see that the way education has come across the last 20 years, there is certainly more rigor and there is more [that] kids today have to be prepared for. Back when I was in high school, you could get a local diploma. Regents exams were offered — you could take them — but if you passed the classes and you got the credits that you needed in order to graduate, you could. Nowadays it is certainly different. There are gateway examinations that you have to pass in order to graduate. So I think the kids today are expected to be more prepared for the global society than they were back in the '90s when I went to school. Another difference that I see — and it's kind of relative to where you are, looking through the lens of a 17-year-old when I graduated from Nottingham as opposed to being a 38-year-old, 21 years later — I believe that the resources that we had back then in school are not as available now. You know, back then we had a lot more programs for a lot of kids that had a lot of different needs and now some of those programs have gone by the wayside, whether it's for budget reductions or whether there's just no need for them to exist anymore ... and I think now some of the issues and concerns students bring today are a lot more than I remember seeing. The one similarity that comes to mind when I think about being in school over 20 years ago is that teachers still show that they really care for kids. I had a wonderful experience at Nottingham with my teachers. I remember just about all of them, and the support they gave me. In fact, I just had a conversation in the last four months with my Spanish teacher. And I see a lot of that today, where we still have a lot of teachers who genuinely care for our students.

SD: So much you hear today is about suspensions, a no-confidence vote in the superintendent, tough exams that students have to take, sometimes I think it's a wonder that you come to work every day. But you are upbeat. From your perspective, what is it like coming to school every day. Each of those issues on its own seems overwhelming.

JK: It is. The one thing I will say is that several things keep me going every day. Despite the negative comments and all of that that's being reported, we have a group of wonderful students and we work with wonderful families, and we have a great community. Our teachers are also very supportive of our students. That keeps me coming in every day, and

despite the increased suspensions and the impact that has had on our community and our schools, we still have children that are coming to school every day in search of a good education and we have teachers who are right there to deliver. So although all those other things are happening, and they do serve as distractions and those are things that we definitely do have to take a look at and see what's going on, and find restorative practices, we still are doing good things here at Corcoran. We also have a number of families who are supporting us, and we still are getting positive feedback from our students, so you kind of accentuate the positive and work on things that are not going well.

SD: What about the low graduation rates? How do you address that on a day-to-day level, or can you?

JK: There's a range between 55 and 63-64 percent graduation rate over the last three to four years. Of course, ITC has higher numbers, but the other schools are kind of similar ... We are aware that our graduation rates have to increase, and we want them to. No one's proud at all, and for Corcoran for the last three years we have had some increases. We've been in the range between 60 to 64 percent over the last three to four years. We have made slow progress. We know we have our work cut out for us. Our school leadership team and our guidance counselors are always trying to figure out different ways we can keep kids in school. What happens over time is that number you start out with in the ninth grade, you lose kids every year, and the number you end up with by the senior year (is much lower). So we are trying to put things in place and reach out to kids about the importance of finishing what you started and also provide support to them and their families so that they are able to not only graduate but also be able to be prepared for post-secondary plans for college and career. That being said, we are really trying to put things in place where we can check and connect with all students, checking their attendance, checking their grades, addressing any other issues that they might have, so they feel supported and want to come to school. So we're trying to put some of those structure things in place so hopefully as years go on, we're not going to be losing kids. The one thing I am excited about under the leadership of Sharon (Contreras, the superintendent) is that the high schools have the school choice and we're all looking to develop career-tech educational programs. So I'm hoping with that model, we will be able not just to attract students but be able to keep them and have them participate in programming that they're interested in so that they are more likely to finish and also be prepared for college or whatever it is that their plans are. I'm very hopeful about this career-tech ed piece. I believe that as kids start to have choice, they will feel good about what they're doing and they'll be more apt to finish and move on to great things.

SD: I have to ask you the magic wand question. What's the first thing you would change right now, if you could?

JK: I would like to be able to have the resources that we need to be able to help all of our students. Students come to us with various needs.



Continued from Page 5

Some of them have more needs than others. Some of them have limited needs. But I think before you can teach kids you have to be able to reach kids. And I think that if we had resources in place, whether students are struggling academically, whether they're having a hard time getting to school, whether they're having some issues that may be impacting their behavior while they're in school, my main thing would be to be able to give them the resources to be able to address those needs because I truly believe that if those things are taken care of, and we can get them here, then we can do the rest. We can get them excited about being here and taking care of business while they are here.

SD: But is that something you can do at the principal level?

JK: There are things that would be out of my control to be able to meet all of those needs. We are limited, and there are a lot of community agencies that are working with schools to support us the best way that they can. But for our students who may have more severe needs, those are the ones that are tough and that's something that is hard to do at the principal level. But my magic wand would be to make sure kids have what they need, because if their needs are met, whether it's shelter ... all of those things, they will be more apt to come to school ready to learn and put forth the best effort.

SD: So this will be your first year as a principal. Can you tell us what you anticipate to be a typical day?

JK: In a typical day, you're greeting the students as they walk in, you're going into classrooms to see what instruction is like, you're interacting with the kids, you monitor lunches, you deal with the issues that may arise daily, if you have any concerns from a parent or if you have a parent who needs to come in and have a conversation with you, you deal with that as well, and



then you dismiss. Now within that day, it's busy. You may be faced with five to 10 things that have to be done right away. You may have a student who may need your attention. You may have a parent who comes in who just wants to talk and so all of those things you're dealing with at the same time.

SD: Start when, and end when?

JK: The actual school day starts at 7:50 and ends at 2:26. I'm usually in around 7:30, and it can end around 5 o'clock or sometimes we may have events that call for a longer day, such as meetings or some kind of athletic or musical event where you want to be able to go and support students.

SD: And then when you go home, it doesn't stop?

JK: It doesn't stop, but the one thing I'm really trying to work on is that work-life balance. I do have a 4-year-old son and he needs my time as well. There are things you can't finish in the course of a day. I learned, probably in the first couple of years of being an administrator, that as much as I want to make sure things are getting done, you really have to figure out how you're going to manage your time, and most importantly how you're going to prioritize tasks. You try to figure out how you're going to balance what you have to do in the course of the day, and your home life.

SD: When you're out and about, do people approach you when you're trying to live your private life?

JK: It does happen. There are times when you're out in the community when you may be having dinner, or doing a little shopping, or running errands to the bank or the drug store or such, and you do see families, but I have to be honest, most of my interactions with families are very positive, people coming up and talking about what's going on in schools. Occasionally you have the ones who want you to address a concern right then and there. So you know, my response is usually something simple, like "I'm sorry that that is something you're dealing with right now, but I'll be more than happy to look into that situation and get back to you." Usually those statements go a long way with our families, and as long as you're giving them an opportunity to be heard and then you follow through, those become a positive experience. If they have a complaint, I'll listen, and usually I'll try to be brief with my response and I'll follow up with a phone call after I check into their concern.

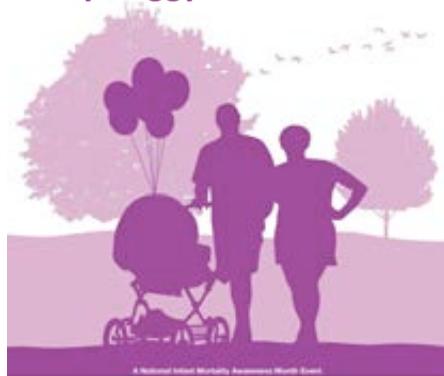
SD: Do you usually meet with parents personally, or someone else?

JK: Some parents prefer to speak to certain administrators. We have four vice-principals. If (the parent) is familiar with one of them, they'll request to talk to that person. Sometimes because the four of us are busy in the course of a day, we may have a number of things going on, and if that person is not available, one of us will be able to pick up and help the parent.

SD: What's been your favorite moment here?

JK: The times I have been able to sit down with students and connect.

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SD: Can you think of a specific time?

JK: Can I give you two? The one that comes to mind now is a student who just graduated in June 2014. Before she left, she came into my office and she gave me a big hug and she said “I want to thank you for being my mentor and helping me through a lot of things at Corcoran over the last four years.” And I was just so touched. I know a lot of times for students that there are adults that do make a difference, but it was really nice to hear. This student has done very well; in fact, she is going to start Newhouse (the communications school at Syracuse University) in the fall. And then a different note, there was another young lady who came to me to seek advice on a difficult situation. She was the type of student who usually will react first. And she came in here, told me, “You know what, I’ve thought about what you’ve said and I came to find you to help me figure this out before I get myself in trouble.” You hope that every time you sit down and have conversations with students that you can make a difference and they walk away listening to the things you have said. And they do listen to you. Now, maybe every time they don’t choose to engage in the things you talked about, but it’s almost like you’re that bird chirping on their shoulder when they find themselves in positions that are compromising.

SD: Earlier, I asked about good moments you’ve had. What about the lows?

JK: The lowest times for me since I’ve been at Corcoran is when we experience the loss of students. Unfortunately, it is something that we have had to deal with, when we lose students to various things, some sickness, some violence. And then you’re trying to corral the community together and you have students who are all out of sorts and you have staff members who are composed but you know they are hurting, you have to figure out what you can offer with the crisis teams ... those are probably the lowest times I’ve experienced in education.

SD: I think something like 80% of Corcoran is minority. Does that have any special meaning for you or significance for you?

JK: We do have almost an 80 percent population of students of color. Unfortunately, some of our students have received a bad reputation, a negative reputation, in that they are so far behind, the achievement gap is unable to be closed, and I want to prove the naysayers wrong. And I want to do that for all kids, but I know for some of our students ... I know they are excited to see someone who looks like them in this position and I want to show them you can do anything you want to as long as you work hard and put your mind to it. I’m hoping I can serve as a model for all students ... I want our students to be able to accomplish everything we set out for them and I don’t want them to ever feel like being a student of color would be a barrier for them.



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University College’s HEOP project and its activities are supported, in whole or in part, by a grant from the New York State Education Department.

South Side Photo Walk



| ARDNA HARVEY



| ARDNA HARVEY

Gorgeous weather welcomed photographers to The Stand's fifth annual Photo Walk, held July 26. Our walk was a daylong adventure on foot where participants documented life on the South Side.

The event opened with a photo lesson taught by Nick Lisi, who worked at the Syracuse Post-Standard for 26 years and now teaches photography and media for the Syracuse City School District. He volunteered his time to provide pointers and guidance throughout the day.

The walk welcomed 10 photographers of various skill levels and took participants down South Salina Street, along West Beard Avenue, into Kirk Park and back to the South Side Innovation Center. There everyone met to share their images.



| KARALINE ROTHWELL



| BRENDA MUHAMMAD



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| LAUREN CAVALLI



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| LAUREN CAVALLI



| NICK LISI



A Teen's Salvation

> Myah Lynell Baker, who is 17 and expecting a baby in mid-September, has lived at the Salvation Army's Transitional Apartments and Parenting Center since April. "It's hard being 17 and on your own," she says. | Jessica Suarez, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang
The Stand director

Expectant teen mom finds a new home and life at the Salvation Army's Parenting Center

The distinct black-and-white sonogram is displayed proudly on door 223 on the second floor of the Salvation Army's Transitional Apartments and Parenting Center, where soon-to-be-teen mom Myah Lynell Baker now lives.

Having arrived here at 17 when she was four months pregnant, Baker cannot imagine raising her daughter, due in mid-September, anywhere else.

Inside her space, one of 24 efficiency apartments, another sonogram image hangs on the refrigerator, and more recent sonograms of her daughter are kept tucked away in a drawer. The modest room holds a bed, space for a crib, desk, galley kitchen and private bathroom with a shower and tub adjacent to the entrance. Slightly larger than a dorm room, each unit is furnished and provides Wi-Fi, but the girls tend to congregate in room 208 — the Wi-Fi hotspot.

"We're always in there," Baker said with a laugh. "She gets good Wi-Fi. I'm not gonna lie — it's wonderful."

Having Wi-Fi is just one small perk that the Parenting Center provides residents, who previously were homeless, bouncing from couch to couch, some with a child in tow. Now at the center, each resident has a private and permanent apartment.

THE ARRIVAL

At six weeks pregnant and homeless, Baker was directed to the Parenting Center by Ed Schoeneck, a case manager at the Salvation Army who works with runaway and homeless youth.

"When I hear a teen who is homeless is pregnant, the Parenting Center is the first place that comes to mind," Schoeneck said. "It is a great program with affordable rent that public assistance works directly with."

Baker went to Schoeneck as a self-referral, meaning she made the initial outreach. After a few meetings with Schoeneck, who says he simply provided information about resources, Baker independently secured

public assistance.

“There were many times I was not in contact with her,” said Schoeneck, who said she was bouncing from house to house of her friends and had no cellphone.

“I give her a lot of credit,” he added, “because she took the reins and took care of securing a spot at the center and getting signed up for PA (public assistance) all on her own.”

BECOMING HOMELESS

The oldest of seven, Baker says she has been raising children since she was 8 years old. She describes her day-to-day life before living at the center as unstable, her family unsupportive and her outlook uncertain.

She gives the following account. At age 12, Baker was sent back to her mother by her grandmother, who had mainly raised her. But shortly after Baker moved back, an acquaintance of her mother made advances toward Baker and she ran away, moving in with her father. At 14, she left there to stay with her boyfriend in his mother’s basement. By 15, she became pregnant with her first child.

Baker says she was happy, despite often being beaten by the boyfriend she initially viewed as her “savior.”

And from the first baby’s father, Baker contracted gonorrhea and chlamydia, she says. Both went untreated and led to inflammatory pelvic disease.

The baby’s father knew he was infected, but kept this from Baker. She discovered it when she overheard a phone conversation. “The other girl would argue with him and said, ‘that’s why it’s burning.’ So I asked him about it, and he told me ‘that’s what she says to me all the time, but then she later says she’s just playing.’”

But Baker says she told him, “That’s not something you play about.”

Baker then visited The STD Center located in the



> Baker lost her first child, a son she named Dav’ion Jahmel, in her third trimester. She keeps a box with all the items provided by the hospital when he was stillborn. | Jessica Suarez, Staff Photo

basement of the John H. Mulroy Civic Center downtown on Montgomery Street and got tested. She was told she had contracted sexually transmitted diseases and had them for a long time, despite showing no symptoms.

“Doctors told me while I was pregnant with my son that he wasn’t going to make it and that I needed to be on bed rest,” Baker said.

Shortly after becoming pregnant, she moved back in with her father, who now was living in Oswego. There she says she was kept isolated and says her father took advantage of her delicate state. “For example, he would make me late for the bus, so I would then have to walk to school ... just little things, putting added stress on my body,” Baker said.

In her third trimester while at school, Baker left class to go to the bathroom and discovered her son’s umbilical cord hanging out. She was rushed to the hospital, where

Continued on Page 12



> Baker spends any remaining money each month on clothes and infant items for the baby she will name Mari-onna Lynell Baker. In her family, every female has ‘nell’ in the middle name after her grandmother, Bridget Dynell. So Baker is carrying on the tradition. “My daughter isn’t even here yet, and I already have clothes for when she’s four years old.” | Jessica Suarez, Staff Photo

THE STD CENTER

The STD Center provides **free** and **confidential** STD testing and treatment. You do not need your parents’ permission to be seen or treated.

What to expect:

- Appointments are not needed but may be limited, so it’s best to come early to ensure you will be seen.
- Paperwork is quick and easy. You will be called by a number throughout your visit to ensure confidentiality.
- Exams are fast, and if you test positive for an STD, you may receive medication before you leave. Other test results may take up to a week. The STD Center tests for syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV and other diseases/infections.
- Confidential HIV testing is available using a blood draw. If needed, staff will provide assistance with partner notification, referral services and patient counseling.

Where: Room 80 of the Civic Center, 421 Montgomery St.

Phone: (315) 435-3236

Hours:

- Monday: 9 to 10:30 a.m. and 1 to 3 p.m.
- Tuesday: 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- Thursday: 1 to 3 p.m.
- Friday: 9 to 10:30 a.m.

ON THE SIDE

MAKE A DONATION

Baby food, formula, diapers and other infant items, such as clothing for newborns to size 3T, are welcome. You may also donate teen girls' clothes, kitchen essentials, such as pots and pans, and gift certificates or personal care items.

How to donate: Contact the Parenting Center's program director, Sheila Cooper, at (315) 479-1176 or drop off items at the center's main entrance, 667 S. Salina St.

CENTER'S RULES

1. Attend parenting/living skills classes
2. School attendance OR enrollment follow through
3. Curfew and sign in/out
4. Case management compliance and goal planning
5. Respect for other residents and staff; this includes appropriate clothing and no profanity
6. Compliance with quiet hours (9 p.m. to 9 a.m.)
7. Rent or payment agreement up to date
8. Supervision of child
9. Room inspection compliance
10. Follow all program rules and cooperate with staff requests



> Each apartment is fully furnished and has a galley kitchen, bathroom, air conditioning and Wi-Fi. | Jessica Suarez, Staff Photo

Continued from Page 11

she learned he had been dead for two weeks.

When she arrived at the hospital, doctors induced her and she delivered a stillborn baby Sept. 12, 2012. She named him Dav'ion Jahmel. After two days at the hospital completely alone, she returned to her father's home, where she says family members reveled in the end of the pregnancy.

Later during a visit to the STD clinic, Baker says she was told that due to the damage from losing the fetus and the inflammatory pelvic disease, it was unlikely she would ever conceive again.

"So I thought my chances were never," she says as she wipes away tears thinking back to her stillborn son.

Two weeks after her father moved back to Syracuse in January 2013, she sneaked out the window and



> From left to right, Center Director Sheila Cooper confers with case manager Linda Schofield about current resident concerns while Intake Coordinator Sarah Roche reviews paperwork in front of her computer. The three meet with every potential resident in a final interview before the applicant can become a tenant of the center. | Jessica Suarez, Staff Photo

spent the next year and a half bouncing between friends' houses until she found herself pregnant again — this time by another man. She says before they became intimate, both visited the clinic and got tested. Each one was negative, and because she did not think she could ever become pregnant, they did not use protection.

Once she learned she was pregnant, the father distanced himself and is no longer in the picture.

"I'm in it alone," Baker said, "but I'd rather be alone than unhappy."

However, Baker isn't really alone. Now she has the support of the staff and other residents at the center.

THE PARENTING CENTER

Here, teen girls gain independence, stability and support. Baker said the staff members arrive each day with smiles on their faces, help residents with anything they need — physically and emotionally — and listen without judgment.

The center employs five full-time staff members: a director, a case manager, intake coordinator and two full-time resident managers.

An additional 20 part-time workers are employed, ensuring the center is staffed 24 hours a day. Funding for the program is primarily through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, along with New York State Supportive Housing Program, the United Way, Emergency Shelter Grant and rent paid by residents.

Residing at the Parenting Center provides much more than a mailing address. Residents receive and are required to participate in independent living skills training, house meetings, health consultations and parenting and childbirth classes.

Girls must also follow the detailed list of rules, regularly meet with case manager Linda Schofield, continue with their education and follow through with job training programs.

“You don’t get to live here and do nothing,” Baker said. “They make you work towards being something, and being here ... it makes you feel like you’ve accomplished something.”

The Parenting Center’s program director, Sheila Cooper, says to be eligible, girls must be homeless, be between the ages of 16 and 21, have no more than two children and have the ability to pay rent.

Rent is \$230 a month for a single resident, \$268 a month for a tenant with one child and \$309 a month for a tenant with two children. Rent is directly paid to the center for residents on public assistance who also typically receive \$526 a month in cash benefits for a single woman with one child and \$367 in food stamps.

“We are the only program like this where (the teens) can earn an income on their own through public assistance, being only 16, because we are considered a supportive, supervised environment,” Cooper said. “Otherwise, you have to be 18 to get your own PA (public assistance) case.”

FOLLOWING THE RULES

To be accepted at the center, potential residents must pass three interviews, says Sarah Roche, parent case aid and intake coordinator. The intention is to determine not only that the residents are a good fit for the center, but also that the Parenting Center is a good fit for them.

“This is a voluntary program,” Roche said. “We have a zero tolerance policy for violating rules. Attending parenting classes, following the curfew and attending school — these are nonnegotiable.”

But when girls follow the rules and participate in the provided classes, special perks are provided, such as free laundry and meals.

“You’re rewarded for everything you do,” Baker said. “As long as you do it.”

Roche’s main job is leading such classes and ensuring girls understand the rules. She sets up three initial appointments with potential residents.

The first is an intake meeting to get to know the girl and verify her homelessness. Confirmation can come in the form of a letter from someone stating that the girl’s current dwelling is temporary and that she will be evicted within 14 days.

In the second appointment, Roche meticulously goes through the rules, line by line.

In the third meeting, a group interview by all the full-time staff is conducted.

“These are teenagers. During a rules meeting, they are rolling their eyes and thinking they want to be anywhere but here,” Roche said.

“Some girls even say, ‘I’m 18, and you can’t make me follow curfew,’ but becoming a resident here is a choice, and the 11:30 p.m. curfew is in place for the safety of the residents and their child(ren).”

FROM CHAOS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Case manager Schofield helps residents maneuver the transition from not knowing where they will sleep each night to the structure of the center.

“When you’ve been couch surfing and coming and going around as you please, then settling down into a living situation where there are rules can be really hard,” Schofield said. “Many have not come from households where calm and order were modeled; they come from great chaos.”

Schofield’s main objective is to help the girls work toward self-sufficiency.

“Our case management is holistic,” Schofield explains, emphasizing how the staff members ensure every facet of the girls’ lives gets evaluated. “If the lady has a mental disorder, then we set up a plan that includes mental health services ... or someone may have custody issues and need legal support.”

It is mandatory that residents work on their education. Schofield says within one month of admission to the center, girls must be enrolled in a school program if they have not yet obtained their GED or equivalent.

Schofield, who is required to meet with the girls twice a month, helps girls with additional details, such as gaining independent living skills and securing child care.

“Also, if they are not pregnant but currently have a child, we strongly suggest that they set a goal for family planning and pregnancy prevention,” Schofield said.

“We know how hard it is to do all of this with one child; it’s exponentially more difficult with two.”

Schofield, who cried with Baker in her final intake interview, says Baker is the ideal type of resident the center seeks because she is teachable.

“These are the types of residents we love to have live here because they are the ones that are going to launch successfully,” she said. “They are going to leave better than when they came and will remember the little pieces of wisdom and apply them.”

HOMELESS?

If you are a runaway, homeless youth or a family member of one, you can contact the Salvation Army to learn about options for a spot at a shelter or for temporary assistance.

Contact Sarah Schutt at
(315) 475-9744 ext. 106

BABY WISHES

Myah Lynell Baker has many hopes for her daughter, Marionna Lynell, who is due this month.

“I know how it feels to be put second. I am never going to put my baby second. My baby is going to come first before everything and everyone.”

Even as a teenager, Baker has words of wisdom for her unborn daughter.

“Never let anybody discourage you.”

“Even if it seems like there’s nobody there, there’s always somebody there.”

Baker often felt alone and isolated. She advises other teens who feel this way to reach out to guidance counselors at school or other resources because they are out there and ready to help.

“If you’re at your lowest point, you can’t get no lower; you can only go higher.”

“And to always believe in herself.”

Baker has learned to believe and value herself and is working to earn her GED and to eventually become a nurse.

SUMMER STORIES TOLD FROM WHERE WE STAND

This summer, instead of offering monthly workshops on journalism, The Stand tried something new.

We launched a summer-long project where each participant was provided with camera equipment and paired with a mentor. The idea was for participants to learn in a one-on-one environment.

What developed is a unique storytelling project titled "From Where We Stand."

We put real families behind the camera to tell their stories. And they did. Their stories range from capturing moments with a grandson to summer neighborhood events to graduations to a collection of images about graffiti art on the Near Westside.

While the project was largely visual in nature, writing was encouraged, too.

Each of the eight participants received a Nikon camera, two lenses, a tripod and a bag. Funding for this equipment was provided through a grant from The Gifford Foundation and support from the Near Westside Initiative. Additional funding was received from the Allyn Foundation for the website: FromWhereWeStand.net.

Read about participants and mentors here and stop by to view their work, which is on display through mid-October at the Link Gallery at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse, 350 W. Fayette St., from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Then meet them at an evening reception Sept. 11. Details are on Page 16.



> Project Coordinator Ashley Kang speaks during the first group meeting for the project, which got started June 5. Participants learned about their roles in the project and met their mentors for the first time. The meeting was held at the South Side Innovation Center. | Steve Davis, Staff Photo



Brenda Muhammad

> Muhammad loves to learn new things and to share what she learns with others. She strongly believes that everyone has a story to share and was grateful to have this opportunity to participate and share her story.



Mentor Marilu Lopez-Fretts



Ceikaiyia Cheeks

> Cheeks has worked to hone her video skills. Her mentor saw her potential but said if she wants to become a film director, she first needed to write and work from a script, which she did. She could not pick up her camera until that was done.



Mentor Bill Storm



Mentor Charles Curran, left, with Isaac and Karaline Rothwell

> The Rothwells felt it was important to highlight their community involvement on the Near Westside and capture important moments with their 2-year-old son, Quincy.



Eurain Scott

> Just before graduating from high school, Scott joined the project to document moving with his grandmother, preparing for college and interning with the Syracuse Media Group.



Mentor Nick DeRocha



Dale Harp



Mentor Bob Gates

> Harp spent the summer documenting the youth at the Faith Hope Community Center in an effort to understand and share why they stick with the program and succeed.



Ardena Harvey



Mentor Nick Lisi

> Harvey participated to share her experience of being a single mother and to record her son's transition from high school to college.



Martha Chavis-Bonner



Mentor Mike Greenlar

> A grandmother to 16, Chavis-Bonner wanted to participate to document family moments. She also said she is perfect for this project because not only does she take all the photos of her family, but she's also photogenic.



Tamara Reese



Mentor Allison Gates

> Reese sees many in the community — including her family members — working to make the South Side a better place, especially for the youth. Through her photos, she wanted to capture how much her family and community care.



SC SD WE'RE ALL IN. ARE YOU?

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FROM WHERE WE STAND EXHIBIT



View a collection of images from participants in The Stand's summer storytelling project

Guests can meet and hear from project participants and their mentors and enjoy appetizers and beverages.

The project's goal was to put real families behind the camera. Under the direction and guidance of professional mentors, the participants' photography skills rapidly improved, their confidence grew and, for many, a new hobby developed. During the event, guests will also step into the Warehouse auditorium to view short films produced by participants.

Turn to Page 14 for more about our participants and their mentors. »

WHEN »

6 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 11

WHERE »

The Link Gallery at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse, 350 West Fayette Street

COST »

Free and Open to the Public

PARTICIPANTS »

*Ardena Harvey
Dale Harp
Karaline and Isaac Rothwell
Eurain Scott
Ceikaiya Cheeks
Martha Chavis-Bonner
Tamara Reese
Brenda Muhammad*



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