

# INSIGHTS

A MERCY WORKS NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2022/2023

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of Students Served

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# A Year of Rebuilding & Reengagement

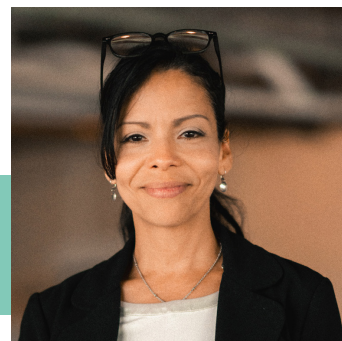
BY NATI TORRENCE, MERCYWORKS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

2022 was a year of rebuilding and reengagement! Our efforts connected us to local partners and community leaders to re-engage up close and personal. Our collective efforts yielded transformative enrichment and development in the lives of 251 young people in Syracuse. We experienced great wins that have positively impacted our future leaders, including:

- The facilitation of a trades camp in partnership with National Grid, Dunbar Association, MercyWorks & Terra Science Tradescamp during the Hello Summer Youth Camp.
- Collaboration with Willow Street Foundation resulting in sponsorship of Synergy Service Growth team prizes, and sponsorship of the Synergy Auction.
- Pilot Photography & Literacy (PAL) project in partnership with Syracuse University and National Geographic photojournalists.
- Partnership with the Syracuse Housing Authority to bring programming to youth that need it most.

Looking forward to 2023, we will continue to nurture relationships and invite our Syracuse family of leaders, professionals, and caring friends to ensure that our programs meet the needs of our rising local youth. We will also continue to collaborate and partner with neighboring organizations and agencies to create mutually beneficial opportunities where students can thrive. Thank you for your support and generosity!

Sincerely,



**NATI TORRENCE**  
Director of Programming

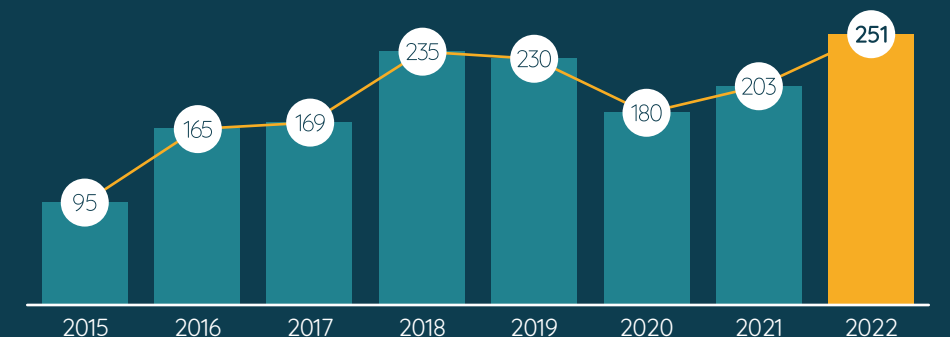
# Impact by the NUMBERS

Our partnerships with local agencies, local leadership and worksite partners bolster our efforts to effect change at a local level with vision-based programs. In 2022, we have impacted 251 young people through direct programs and partnerships.

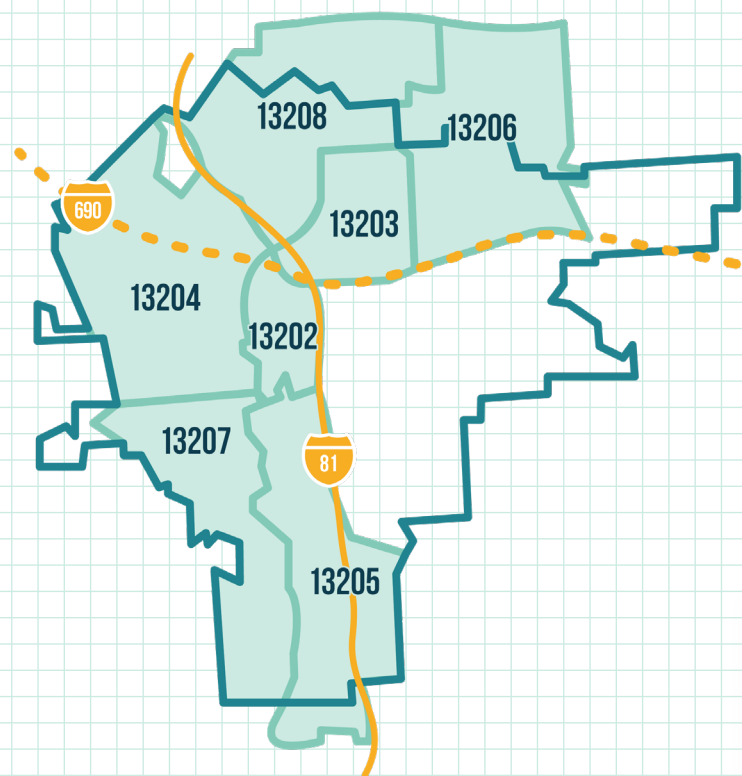
- 17** **Vision Velocity Students**  
Monthly mentorship program for young men in 7th - 9th grades.
- 19** **iCAN Robotics Students**  
Robotics design and engineering for students in 5th - 8th grades.
- 16** **CSD Code Students**  
Coding program for youth from the 7th-12th grades.
- 14** **Syracuse University Digital Music Lab Students**  
Music production lab for junior high and high school students.
- 10** **Syracuse University Photography & Literacy (PAL) Students**  
Photography and writing program for junior high and high school students.
- 48** **Synergy Interns**  
Paid summer internship for undergraduate college students.
- 37** **#FRESH Participants through Onondaga Earth Corps**  
Paid job readiness training for high school students.
- 68** **Hello Summer Camp Experience**  
A vision-based camp experience for youth ages 5-15
- 11** **Passport 2 Vision Participants**  
Weeklong experience that fosters positive self-image, vision and resiliency in high school girls.

*We're celebrating a record year for number of students impacted!*

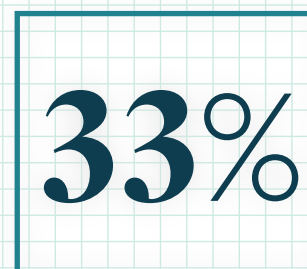
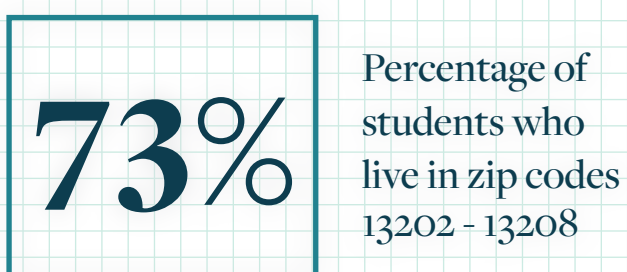
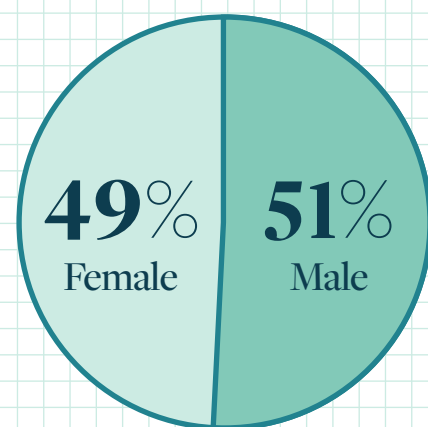
Number of students served from 2015-2022



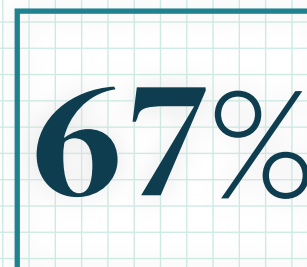
# Who We Are Reaching



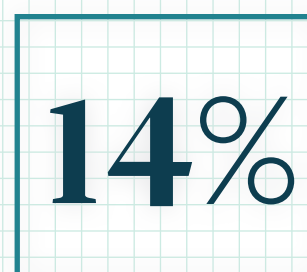
— SYRACUSE CITY LIMITS  
— ZIP CODE BOUNDARIES



Percentage of students served who attend Syracuse City School District (SCSD) (this percentage does not account for the 68 students that participate in Hello Summer)

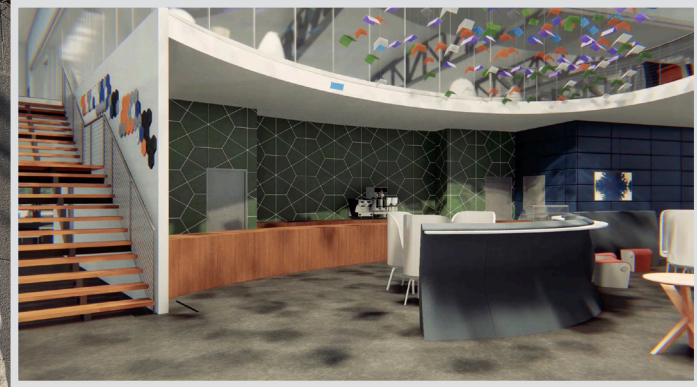


Percentage of college students served who attend local colleges (e.g., Onondaga Community College, LeMoyne, Syracuse University)



Percentage of students who returned to participate in other Mercy Works programs

# Building What Matters. Building for the Future.



## Together we can

At present, the CJVC requires structural improvements so that our important programs and services continue safely and without interruption. **The total estimate to complete structural improvements is \$350,000.**

Clarence's prayer was that one day the Vision Center would be complete so that the needs of the precious young people coming through our doors would be met full circle. What he did at the Vision Center for the young people was not work to him, it was a heart felt mission and ministry. Jan Jordan retold one story candidly that expressed the heart behind our mission, "One time a young lady shared an emotional story about her experience with homelessness. Clarence was so moved that he got up and shared with the entire group about his personal journey out of

homeless. I remember how he told the young lady, "I know how you feel; I know what you are going through. See I was homeless once too, but God was always with me". It is with that same heart that the Founder, Pastor John Carter, and all staff members' have prioritized the completion of the building named after him. As owner and operator of this 48,000 sq. ft building located in the 'Gateway Corridor' of the southside of Syracuse, MercyWorks has been providing vision-based programming through the vehicles of technology, entrepreneurship, summer paid internships and personal development workshops since 2005. The completion of this building will expand service growth within our students by creating a

beacon of imagination and innovation for our community.

We affirm Clarence Jordan's life's work and commitment to this work and stand in solidarity with the city of Syracuse as STEAM education is prioritized by carrying on his legacy by naming the building "The Clarence Jordan Vision Center".

**To that end, we aspire to inspire vision, create opportunity, and cultivate purpose to transform the lives of young people by providing 11 different programs that serve over 400 students yearly.**

Simply put, we are reaching more people than ever while creating innovative solutions to alleviate the unmet social and educational needs

of underserved youth and families. For the CJVC, it means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes, and through social capital accomplished by addressing the needs of our blighted building. A growing body of research has found educational facilities and impact on both teacher and student outcomes. With respect to teachers, school facilities affect teacher recruitment, retention, commitment, and effort. With respect to students, school facilities affect health, behavior, engagement, learning, and growth in achievement.

When we think about the quality of education our children are getting, we think about teachers, curriculum material, methods of assessment, and other academic factors. We hardly give thought to the aesthetic of the facade or the cleanliness of the premises that your child spends

most of the day in. Our facility can be thought of as an office for adults. Did you know that over 25,000 sq. ft. of our building has not yet been completed? Educational researchers conclude that without adequate facilities and resources, it is extremely difficult for staff and teachers to serve large numbers of children with complex needs.

Vision-based learning gives our students a hope for the future. In the second quarter of 2022 we have received reports that conclude elementary students attending programming at the CJVC average an increase of grade point increases by 10.53 points in reading skills, and 85% of our students state an increase in knowledge in the following areas: entrepreneurship, Microsoft suites, as well as web & application development. The completion of the facility will allow us to expand our footprint in

## MILESTONE 1

### Complete Structural Improvements

Address structural damage causing flooding, plumbing issues, and daily wear.

.....\$140,000

## MILESTONE 2

### Demolish Abandoned Building

Demolish abandoned building to reduce blight and reduce health and safety risks.

.....\$110,000

## MILESTONE 3

### Complete Interior Improvements

Expand capacity within the current building to serve more students and generate income to support programs.

.....\$100,000

*continued on page 7*

continued from page 6

economic development locally for the older youth by working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference.

Friends, while The Clarence Jordan Vision Center provides innovative solutions to alleviate the unmet social and educational needs of underserved youth and families. Let us never forget that we are dealing with human beings; each one unique and with a special story to share that helped others grow and learn. The completion of this project will allow us to finally address multi-faceted technology and programming issues:

### Interior Improvements (Rehabilitation and Expansion)

The current structure that facilitates eleven programs has damage inside the facility prohibiting growth of programs or use of space for both programming and income generating purposes. The current structure that facilitates eleven programs has damage inside the facility due to foundational issues, plumbing, and wear and tear. This proposal seeks to address structural deficiencies including the crack in the foundation on the right side of our current facilities. This crack is caused by our building being located on sludge ground. Overtime this has caused plumbing issues. In order to address the plumbing issues tear down of the adjacent building is mandatory.

### Technology Upgrade

The pandemic has exacerbated a longstanding digital divide that disproportionately affects low-income households and black, Indigenous, and people of color communities. Pew reports only 57% of households earning below \$30,000 annually have broadband at home. The digital divide is a



problem of availability, affordability, and digital literacy. As new needs arose the digital divide presented two main characteristics defining the gap for our students: access to high-speed internet and access to reliable devices. Many of our students who struggled from this digital divide faced both during programming in our facility. Our students came to our facility for reliable internet connection, and access to Digital spaces for our youth. Our youth reported the digital space is predominantly out of reach for them because they can't afford costly tools like lab-tops and software. Our students come to our facilities relying on our public computers or tools in the digital worlds. Programs created in collaboration with Syracuse University like web application, digital music labs, coding, etc illustrate the CJVC's commitment to move forward in efforts to close the digital divide. This partnership yielded an increase in students participation and an additional 4 programs to the curricula.

### Blighted Building Demolition

Our facility is located on sludge ground, and all of the wear and tear over the years has caused foundation issues that have damaged our bathroom facilities prohibiting growth of programs. The crack in the foundation also prohibits program expansion as well as use of space for both programming and income generating purposes.

### Exterior Improvements

The exterior facade will be transformed by reopening blocked in adding pedestrian scale elements engaging people at street level. The parking master plan is based on providing adequate parking located on the side and back of our existing building. The size increase is based on the programming expansion which equates to expanding staff, volunteers, and students. Parking spaces will need to be available in order to suit the needs of the increased students, staff, and volunteers. As parking demands

increase, our lot capacity needs to expand. With the removal of the adjacent structure the parking will be expanded to accommodate visitors, students, and staff. There is a tree growing in our parking lot that can be removed. Once removed that space will be re-graveled, paved, and re-stripped.

Addressing the issues of our blighted building will expand our workforce development and local internship and hiring program as we continue to partner with our local community partners. Our community partnerships afford us the opportunity to collaborate with local business leaders to bring in hands on training and workshops on important topics that help to mold our participants into balanced, contributing, successful citizens. Regardless of race, socio-economic background or any other challenges they may face: we are dealing with human beings. Each one unique and with a special story to share. Each one carries a solution this world needs. You can

help provide children with a strong education foundation and empower them to change a generation by supporting our efforts to address our blighted building.

**Now, more than ever,  
it is time to commit to  
meeting this moment.  
As you prayerfully consider  
the impact you could have  
on the lives of the children  
and families we serve.  
Ask yourself what part you  
can play in defining this  
opportunity? Then, listen to  
your heart as you consider  
how you should respond  
to the real needs of our  
children and their families.  
Hear how, together, we can  
lift children to move beyond  
their limitations and really  
achieve something more  
in life.**



# LEAVE A LASTING

# Legacy

MercyWorks continues its commitment to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment that encourages learning through action, inquiry and exploration around the theme of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. As a result of your support and collaboration with local leading agencies, we continue to make an impact on the Central New York community.

While so much has been accomplished this year, our work is not finished. We need your financial support to keep our programs going strong. We invite you to make a year-end financial contribution. Your gift will be used to deliver the highest possible quality of service to our young people and their families. Whether you become a one-time or ongoing contributor, know that your support counts.

With gratitude,



**JOELLE HARLESTON**  
Director of Development  
& Community Relations

## Make a One-Time Contribution

SUGGESTED AMOUNTS AND IMPACT	
<b>\$10,000</b>	covers the cost of <b>10 students</b> in a <b>STEAM program</b>
<b>\$5,000</b>	covers the cost of <b>5 students</b> in a <b>STEAM program</b>
<b>\$1,000</b>	covers the cost of <b>1 student</b> in a <b>STEAM program</b>

## Set Up Recurring Giving Online

SUGGESTED AMOUNTS AND IMPACT	
<b>\$100/month</b>	provides <b>program supplies</b> for <b>3 students</b>
<b>\$50/month</b>	covers <b>computer software</b> costs for <b>1 student</b>
<b>\$75/month</b>	feeds a <b>meal</b> to <b>3 students</b>

Contact Joelle Harleston, Director of Development and Community Relations at **(315) 371-5330** or [jharleston@mercy-works.org](mailto:jharleston@mercy-works.org)

# Ways to Support

1

## Give Online

Giving online is fast, secure and easy. Visit [www.vcsyracuse.com/donate](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/donate) and click the Donate button.

2

## Give by Check

Prefer to give by check? You can mail checks payable to: MercyWorks, Inc. at 1221 South Salina St. Syracuse, NY 13202.

3

## Through the United Way

If your employer participates in the United Way campaign, go to HR and fill out a form for the Donor. Option Program, designating MercyWorks, Inc. as the recipient.



4

## Smile.Amazon.Com

Make online purchases through [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) where 5% of your purchase will be donated to MercyWorks, Inc. when you designate your giving to our organization. Amazon.smile is the same as Amazon: Same products, same prices, and same service!



5

## Planned Giving

A planned gift is a lasting investment in Mercy Works at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center, advancing our mission and ensuring our ability to provide vision-based programs for the children and youth of Syracuse, New York. For more information about leaving a legacy through your estate, contact us for more information.

You may also require the following information:

Legal name: Mercy Works Inc.

Address: 1221 S. Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202

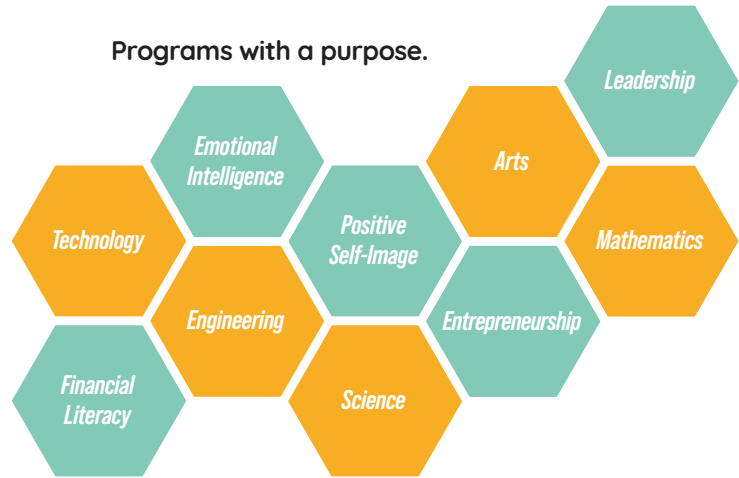
# Vision Changes Everything

## About Mercy Works

We empower young people with career-building opportunities through vision-based programs.

We provide STEAM enrichment and professional development programs for the young people of Syracuse. We're not just about providing pathways out of poverty. We're about providing on-ramps to a purpose.

## Programs with a purpose.



## Board Members

### JOHN CARTER

President of the Board  
Senior Pastor of Abundant Life

### LISA CARTER

Associate Pastor of Abundant Life

### GARY CRISALLI

GM Crisalli & Associates

### MARK HALL

M.S. Hall & Associates

### JACQUELINE COUDRIET, CPA

Treasurer

### ADDISON SPEARS, MBA

Secretary

### JOE ROSSI

VP, Park Strategies, LLC

### ED THOMPSON, ESQ.

Attorney General's Office

### KEVIN DUKE

Board Member

## Community Partners



**mercyworks**

Mercy Works is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that operates the Clarence Jordan Vision Center.

315.435.6934

1221 South Salina Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202

[www.vcsyracuse.com](http://www.vcsyracuse.com)