

# INSIGHTS

A MERCY WORKS NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2023

## *What's Inside*

pg 3 Volunteer Spotlight  
—Larry Goodman

pg 7 Thank You & Campaign Update

pg 9 Upcoming Events



# Safety, Stability and Structure Lead to Great Growth Long Term

BY NATI TORRENCE, MERCYWORKS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The streams of progress and momentum from 2022 flowed right into 2023 as we launched the new year with personal development programs and STEAM enrichment. Our staff and volunteers engaged and encouraged nurturing relationships with the students as they tackled the projects at hand. The first quarter of 2023 we reached 72 young people giving us a 12 percent increase from this time last year. Eighty-one percent of the youth served this quarter come from the Syracuse City School District; a partnership that continues to move forward.

We witnessed growth in the lives of our young people not just in the knowledge they gained, but the relationships we built with each youth. This is one of the most important components of our programming. Time and time again educators, mentors, and youth program facilitators everywhere encounter behaviors and responses from young people indicative of the struggle that they live on a daily basis. Add to that the dynamics of the households and school and one can understand why our young people are without hope and vision. Through relationships we are able to instill vision which ultimately changes their outlook on life because vision changes everything.

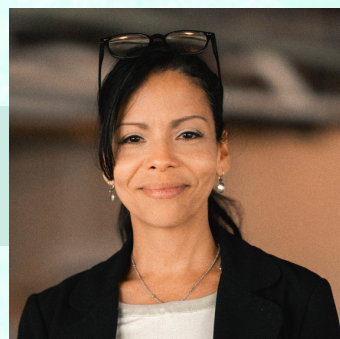
From the moment students walk through the doors of the Vision Center they are embraced in an environment that is welcoming. In this space they can debrief their day, express and process emotions before jumping into our programs. Our staff and volunteers understand the power of relationship and endeavor to engage students in ways that validate and encourage.

This has been a game changer not just for many of the students that participate in programs at the Vision Center but for our facilitators and volunteers. Our volunteers understand the bigger picture and enjoy their time with us because they too are touched by the relationships they build. We are meeting very real needs that go beyond the technical and the traditional. And we endeavor to encounter the community right where they are and are committed to their personal development and growth.

We continue to experience steady growth as our circles of connection with students, families, volunteers, mentors, facilitators and supporters continue to deepen. Whether it was our iCAN Robotics, Coding, Digital Music, Photography or our Vision Velocity program for young men, students feel accepted and supported and as a result respond positively to the vision based training we provided. In addition, students build healthy relationships with other students in a safe and nurturing environment.

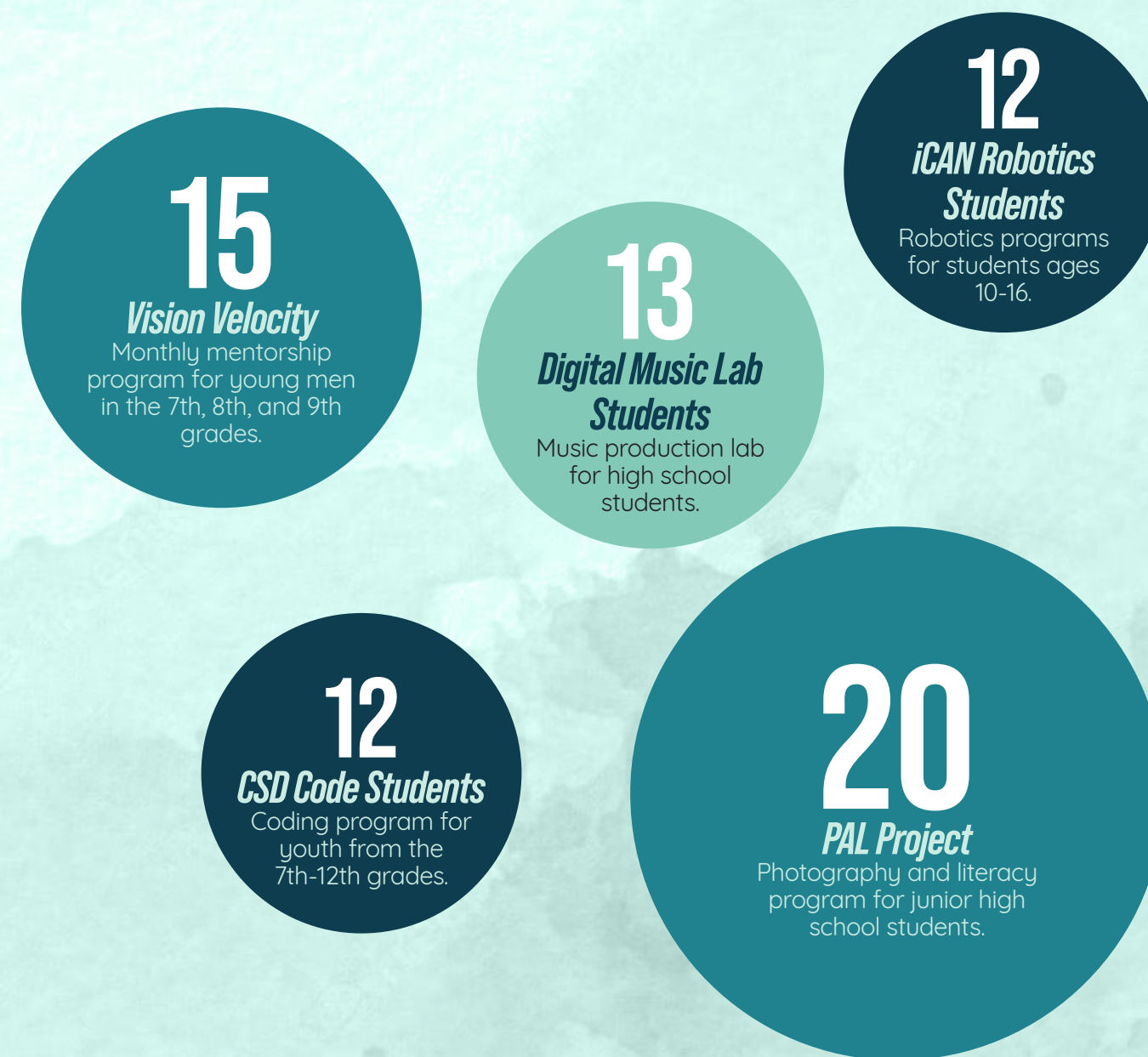
We have already accomplished so much, but we are just getting started. We invite you to connect with us and discover ways to join our mission to change lives for the better! Together we can cultivate an environment that refreshes others. And who knows, in the process of refreshing others, you yourself might be refreshed. We are thankful to the individuals that co-labor with us to inspire vision, create opportunity, cultivate purpose to transform lives!

**NATI TORRENCE**  
MercyWorks Program Director



# Impact by the NUMBERS

Our partnerships with the Syracuse City School District, local agencies, local leadership and worksite partners bolster our efforts to effect change at a local level with vision-based programs. In just the first quarter of 2023, we have reached 72 young people.



15

**Vision Velocity**

Monthly mentorship program for young men in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades.

13

**Digital Music Lab Students**

Music production lab for high school students.

12

**iCAN Robotics Students**

Robotics programs for students ages 10-16.

12

**CSD Code Students**

Coding program for youth from the 7th-12th grades.

20

**PAL Project**

Photography and literacy program for junior high school students.

# Volunteer Spotlight:

# Larry Goodman



He's been an indispensable member of the Mercy Works team and we're excited to introduce him to you—meet Larry Goodman. Larry started partnering with Mercy Works over 6 years ago, volunteering his time after hours from his day job as an Academic Coach/Tutor at Onondaga Community College. Over the years he transitioned careers to a Software Developer Apprentice and, lucky for us, he continues to bring his experience and expertise to mentor the young people in our STEM programs.

Most recently, Larry facilitated iCAN Robotics, a robotics program to expose young inventors ages 10-16 to the intricate and detailed world of STEM. You can learn more about iCAN Robotics and the graduates of the latest program in our blog post linked here. Larry says, "I found it rewarding to see the students' excitement as they completed various challenges throughout the term."

Larry knows that in our increasingly digital world, exposing kids to robotics from a young age helps

them to develop vital cognitive skills to be successful in their future careers. He says, "A lot of well-paying jobs and lucrative entrepreneurship opportunities are in industries involving the STEM fields, including Robotics and Coding. I think it is very important to introduce these concepts to our youth at an early age so they can see if they are interested in the fields and start developing the fundamental skills." We couldn't agree more, and we've seen first-hand the direct impact Larry has made by exposing our students to new technologies through robot building.

# Program Spotlight: iCan Robotics



Robotics for kids is mostly about the joy of creating something new, but the positive learning outcomes make iCAN Robotics, along with all other programs at Mercy Works, valuable education to provide to our young leaders. We encourage you to join us in seeing the excitement on our kids faces when they learn a new essential skill.

As the modern workforce increasingly turns toward STEM careers, Mercy Works created the iCAN Robotics program to expose young inventors, ages 10-16, to the intricate and detailed world of STEM through educational robotics. By building and programming robots, students are able to develop vital cognitive skills and see the impact technology plays on society and future career opportunities. We are very proud of the hard work and dedication our latest class of students put into learning the different functions of robots using the Lego Mindstorm software.

It's not just our students who walk away fulfilled from our programs—Larry feels that volunteering is a greatly rewarding experience. He remarks, "What better way to give back to the community and pour into our youth than by spending time and developing relationships with them?" Only by the generosity of Larry, and our entire team of Mercy Works volunteers, are we able to continue providing vital vision-based training and mentorship to the kids of our community.

We believe that investing in our youth is non-negotiable. While monetary investment is important, it is the investment of your time that is invaluable to us. If you have time to give back, please consider volunteering for one of our many programs designed to empower the young people of Syracuse. Make a difference in your community and become a Mercy Works volunteer today.



## Interested in becoming a volunteer?

Please visit [www.vcsyracuse.com/volunteer](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/volunteer) or connect with **Nati Torrence**, MercyWorks Program Director at [ncabrera@mercy-works.org](mailto:ncabrera@mercy-works.org) for more information about volunteer opportunities.

# Upcoming Program: PASSPORT 2 VISION

AUGUST 21 – AUGUST 26

## Empowerment for Young Women Ages 14-18

Passport 2 Vision is a weeklong life-changing experience for Junior High and High School girls that fosters positive self-image, vision and focus for them to develop a strategy to realize their dreams. Designed as a personal journey and group experience with an intimate feel, the program addresses topics that are relevant to young women during a time when they need it most.

Don't miss the opportunity to share this impactful program with the young women in your life. For more information, visit [www.vcsyracuse.com/passport-2-vision](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/passport-2-vision)



INTRODUCING THE

# 1ST ANNUAL MERCY WORKS

## Golf Tournament



**G.M. Crisalli & Associates, Inc.**

Excellence from the Ground Up

**Date:**  
Monday, June 12th 2023

**Location:**  
Lakeshore Yacht and Country Club  
6777 Lakeshore Rd  
Cicero, NY 13039

**Sponsorship information:**  
Explore corporate sponsorship opportunities at [www.vcsyracuse.com/golf](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/golf)  
You can also contact us directly (315) 371-5330 or [jharleston@mercy-works.org](mailto:jharleston@mercy-works.org)

**Thank you in advance for your support!**

We are excited to announce our 1st Annual Mercy Works Golf Tournament! The tournament will take place at Lakeshore Yacht and Country Club on June 12th, 2023. Join us on Lakeshore's private 18-Hole Championship Golf Course nestled on 150 picturesque acres on the south shore of Oneida Lake. We are honored that leading the charge for this event is Gary Crisalli of G.M. Crisalli & Associates, Inc.

Our first ever golf tournament will benefit essential Mercy Works programs that advance STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) programs and vision-based programs for Syracuse city children and youth ages 8-21. We're not just about providing pathways out of poverty—we're about providing on-ramps to purpose.

**Psst! Not a big fan of golf? That's okay!** You can still have fun supporting our cause. Join us for dinner the night of the event or make a general donation online. No matter which way you choose to participate, you'll have the opportunity to provide a brighter future for Syracuse city children and youth.

# WE'RE DOING *more* WITH YOUR *support*

BY JOELLE HARLESTON  
MERCYWORKS DIRECTOR OF  
DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

*Dear Visionary,*

Over the years, we've found that there are generally two types of donors — those that donate once, and those that support our cause repeatedly. We're happy to have both, but it's the frequent donors that help make our income predictable and consistent, and we couldn't be more pleased that we have loyal donors who have decided to join that group. Thank you so much for your repeated contributions. We couldn't do what we do without you!

- |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ELIZABETH MORGENTHIEN | KEBA ROGERS           | JAMAL & DEBORAH BOGOR |
| BILL REICHARDT        | G.M. CRISALLI         | ALFRED KRAUSE         |
| SHARON CARUANA        | MARK PALEN            | FREDERICK MASELLA     |
| KURT & CAROL PADDOCK  | THOMAS & NTSOAKI CAPP | CHERYL PALMER         |

Every week we rely on our volunteers and staff to serve the young people in our community. Our kids keep coming back because of the relationships they build and the connections they have with our staff and our volunteers. The most recent winter storm left devastating effects on our building. The winter storm coupled with wear and tear caused long lasting damage to our facility. The damages represent a significant setback especially among our children who rely on the technology and resources our facility offers. But you can change that.

**At MercyWorks, we believe vision changes everything.** I'm writing to ask you to be a part of that mission. A monthly gift of any amount will sustain us. It takes just one minute to sign up to become a monthly donor and make a difference.

We work diligently to provide stability to our youth and young adults. Despite the challenges with our building, we still continue to help them find hope and stability in their everyday needs. We remain focused on the vision. When you partner with MercyWorks, you effect change in our community and ensure our success in the future. If you can partner with us as a community super hero- or- if you know of a company who would like to fund a part of this project, please connect with us.

I truly believe that as the scripture says in Philippians 1:6 "I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." Thank you for caring. Thank you for supporting the kids in the Syracuse community.

## *The Mercy Works Capital Campaign*

The total estimate for Phase 2 of the project is \$1.3M. The total estimate for complete building renovations and improvements is \$4M. To learn more about the Mercy Works at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center Capital Campaign, visit [vcsyracuse.com/capital-campaign](https://vcsyracuse.com/capital-campaign)

### STEP 1 Exterior Improvements

Address structural damage causing flooding and plumbing issues. Complete exterior projects.  
**Estimated cost: \$775,000**

### STEP 2 Demolish Blighted Building

Demolish abandoned building to reduce blight and reduce health and safety risks.  
**Estimated cost: \$339,250**

### STEP 3 Interior Improvements

Expand capacity within the current building to serve more students and generate income to fund programs.  
**Estimated cost: \$181,000**

Thanks to our community partners, contributed funds are already being funneled into critical projects to further our goal to sustain programming while building & renovating our space. We would like to thank the following community partners:



JIM AND JULI BOEHEIM  
FOUNDATION



CENTRAL NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



GREEN FAMILY FOUNDATION, INC.



DASNYS



*With gratitude,*

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



# Upcoming Programs & Events

ONGOING  
MONTHLY  
MEETING

## Vision Velocity Young Men Mentorship

Vision Velocity is a monthly mentorship program designed to engage young men with a vision approach to setting goals for their lives. The approach includes understanding that we all have a purpose and have been created to fulfill that purpose. Vision Velocity meets on the third Friday of every month and is available to young men in 7th through 10th grades.

Learn more at [www.vcsyracuse.com/vision-velocity](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/vision-velocity)

MAY 30 –  
AUG 4  
2023

## Synergy Internship & Leadership Development

Synergy is a 10-week leadership development and paid internship program for college students from the Syracuse area. This program is designed to cultivate strong professional skills and build an exceptional work ethic based upon four main pillars: professional development, financial literacy, service growth, and health & wellness.

Learn more at [www.vcsyracuse.com/synergy-internship](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/synergy-internship)

JUN 26 –  
AUG 10  
2023

## First Real Entrepreneurship Starts Here (#FRESH)

College students are not the only ones seeking substantial work experience and leadership training. Today, self-motivated high school students are also looking for opportunities to get real professional experience and mentorship. #FRESH helps high school students develop excellent work skills, fine tune and build their resume and develop great work etiquette.

Learn more at [www.vcsyracuse.com/fresh](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/fresh)

AUG 21 –  
AUG 26  
2023

## Passport to Vision

A weeklong life-changing experience for high school girls that fosters positive self-image, vision and focus for them to develop a strategy to realize their dreams. Designed as a personal journey and group experience with an intimate feel, the program addresses topics that are relevant to young women during a time when they need it most. The program engages young women ages 14-18 in safe and open conversation about topics that are relevant to this generation.

For more information, visit [www.vcsyracuse.com/passport-2-vision](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/passport-2-vision)

SEP 19 –  
DEC 5  
2023

## PAL Project

In partnership with Syracuse University, the Photography and Literacy (PAL) Project is a 12-week experience for junior high school students designed to take students through an inquiry-based educational photography & literacy journey, where students develop writing & visual skills through technical photography. The program meets every Tuesday from 4:00pm to 6:00pm.

Learn more at [www.vcsyracuse.com/pal-project](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/pal-project)

SEP 18 –  
NOV 17  
2023

## BMB Vision Ventures

Formerly Teen Tech, BMB Vision Ventures presents an expanded version of Teen Tech that will meet twice a week for 10 weeks from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. BMB Vision Ventures encourages students to take a philanthropic approach to entrepreneurship. Open to ages 10-16.

Learn more at [www.vcsyracuse.com/bmb-vision-ventures](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/bmb-vision-ventures)

SEP 21 –  
DEC 7  
2023

## Digital Music Lab

The Music Production Lab meets every Thursday, from 5:30pm to 7:30pm during two 12-week semesters. Students develop music composition and production skills. At the end of each semester, students present a finished product that includes their finished tracks and a brief abstract about the meanings that underlie their compositions.

For more information, visit [www.vcsyracuse.com/digitalmusiclab](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/digitalmusiclab)

If any of these programs resonate with you, consider volunteering. Please connect with Nati Torrence, MercyWorks Program Director at [ncabrera@mercy-works.org](mailto:ncabrera@mercy-works.org) for more information about volunteer opportunities.

# Ways to Support

1

## Give Online

Visit [www.vcsyracuse.com/donate](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/donate). You can make a one-time donation or set up monthly giving to support a specific program or all of our programs.

2

## Give by Check

Do you prefer sending a 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 your Human Resources Department and fill out a form for the donor. Option Program, designating MercyWorks, Inc. as the recipient.

4

## Estate Planning

You can't choose the legacy you receive. But you can choose the legacy you leave. We accept legacy gifts that include contributions from retirement plans, life insurance, real estate, securities or bequests.

Learn more about each of these giving opportunities by visiting [www.vcsyracuse.com/donate](http://www.vcsyracuse.com/donate) or contact Joelle Harleston, Director of Development and Community Relations at (315) 371-5330 or [jharleston@mercy-works.org](mailto:jharleston@mercy-works.org)



We're not just about providing pathways out of poverty.

We're about providing on-ramps to purpose.



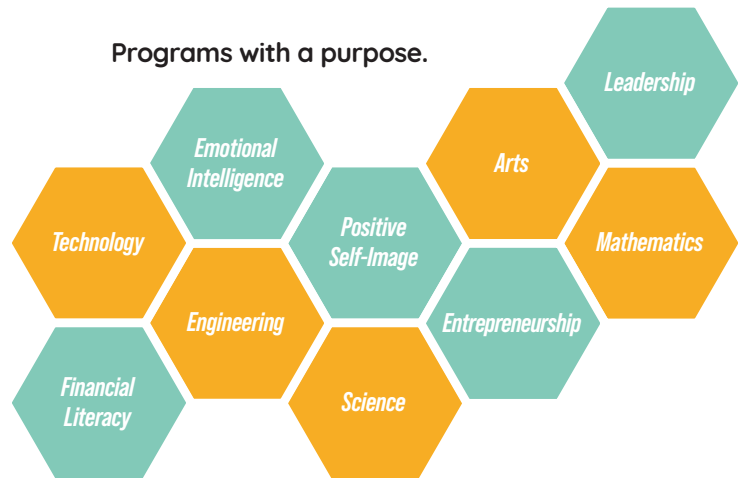
# Vision Changes Everything

## 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)