

INSIGHTS

A MERCY WORKS NEWSLETTER | FALL 2023



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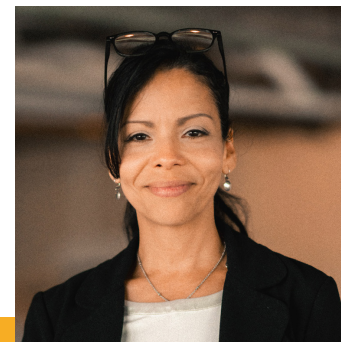
Helping Young People Heal & Thrive

BY NATIVIDAD TORRENCE, MERCYWORKS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

As the summer winds down and we take time to inventory the impact we've had to date we are so thankful for the young visionaries we had the opportunity to engage, feed and train. We graduated 44 college students from our Synergy paid summer internship. 70% of our Synergy scholars graduated from a Syracuse City School District high school and live within the radius that we want to impact. We also provided job readiness training through our #FRESH program in collaboration with Onondaga Earth Corps to 15 youth leaders and 16 youth working in beautification and cleanup projects within Syracuse. We partnered with Joe Horan of Building Men to give our Vision Velocity young men an unforgettable 'right of passage' experience at Orenda Springs this summer. And we closed out the summer with our Passport 2Vision program for junior high and high school girls.

Our Synergy students underwent rigorous pre professional training that included modules of self-discovery and vision based learning. It's no wonder that 29% of the students who participated in Synergy this summer were returning students. They know that what we do goes beyond soft and hard skills. We worked from the inside out with our college students endeavoring that they look at themselves and their community through the lens of vision rather than foresight and take intentional action through service to impact the trajectory of our community. But we didn't do it alone. Our community partners rallied around our students to bring transformative simulations and experiences to heighten personal development. As a result of these unique partnerships, our Power Friday training sessions were a huge success.

This fall we have a great lineup of programs including Vision Ventures for our young entrepreneurs; our Digital Music Lab for music production enthusiasts; and the PAL Project for youth interested in photography! Every program is infused with vision because we recognize that vision truly makes a difference in their future outlook! You can join us! We can't do what we do without YOU! Whether you contribute your time, talent or treasure, it all magnifies the value that we place on our young people and with that their self-esteem. It communicates love, value and lets them know they are not invisible. Please reach out to me anytime. Let's have a cup of coffee and discuss ways that you can contribute!



NATI TORRENCE
MercyWorks Program Director

We are so thankful for worksite partners that have been with us for quite some time and we are thankful for new organizations that understand what we are trying to accomplish and resonate with the vision and mission of Mercy Works. This summer we welcomed seven new organizations to the Synergy worksite family! These include Aspen Dental, Cooperative Federal, Fire Water Group, Hey Alec Productions, Jubilee Homes, Michael Sgro Leadership Consulting and Wildebeest Publishing. We invite you to learn more about the Synergy Internship and share with your network or consider becoming a partner worksite!

Our partner worksites understand that we are intentional when it comes to developing well-rounded young professionals while securing opportunities for underrepresented populations of young people within all industries. On the same token, the bar is set high for our Synergy students and they understand that they have to perform better than just good. They understand that they must strive for excellence. And though the bar is set high for our students, we also endeavor to provide them with all the tools they need to succeed long-term.

Each young professional arrives at our doors with a belief system and set of circumstances that we endeavor to help them process. Our partner worksites provided real-life work experiences and shadowing opportunities that catapult their drive during their upcoming academic year. Their future is bright and they will do great things because collaboratively we sowed seeds of vision and purpose into their lives.

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 our 2023 summer programming, we have reached 79 young people.

31

#FRESH

Paid job readiness training for high school students.

44

Synergy

Paid summer internship for college students.

4

Passport 2 Vision

Weeklong experience fostering positive self-esteem for high school girls

SYNERGY GRADUATION



2024 SYNERGY APPLICATION NOW OPEN!

The application for Synergy 2024 is now live on our website!

Students can apply by visiting www.vcsyracuse.com/synergy-internship

If you are interested in hosting a Synergy intern next summer, please reach out to Program Director, Nati Torrence at ncabrera@mercy-works.org

44 Scholars Complete Leadership Development & Paid Internship Program

On Friday, August 4, Mercy Works held our 2023 Synergy Graduation at The CNY Biotech Accelerator in Syracuse, New York. After completing a 10-week paid internship experience targeted toward their field of study, 44 college students presented their final projects and crossed the stage to accept their certificates of completion.

Synergy offers young scholars the development, training, and exposure they need to succeed in their future careers. 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. Beyond the professional advantages, the internship provides a fantastic opportunity to connect with fellow interns, colleagues, and mentors hailing from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

We are immensely thankful to our worksite partners for believing in our mission and helping to nurture young professionals to succeed in their future careers. At Mercy Works, we are not just about providing pathways out of poverty. We are about providing on-ramps to purpose. We are meeting the very real needs of our city's youth by empowering their personal growth and development. Through programs like Synergy, we engage students in ways that validate, encourage, and prepare them for the Syracuse workforce.

2023 Synergy Graduate, Will Remillard, said, "Without hesitation, I wholeheartedly recommend the Synergy internship to everyone. It truly offers the best of both worlds by providing a legitimate, paid, real-life experience that significantly bolsters your future job search prospects. It pushes you out of your comfort zone, yet it also fosters a positive relationship between career and life, paving the way for your success."

SYNERGY VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT CHERYL PALMER

Our volunteers are the firepower behind our programming and Cheryl Palmer is instrumental to the success of Synergy. Cheryl has been volunteering for Mercy Works for five years, after a 38-year career as a physical therapist. She switched careers after 11 years at the School for the Deaf in Rome, NY when she received her Master's in Social Work and began working as a mental health counselor.

Cheryl brought her valuable experience to Mercy Works and began helping with the Synergy program. "I have been able to do things that I am passionate about and stretched to do things I had no idea I could do!"

Cheryl's hard work behind the scenes makes all the difference in setting our staff up for success every day. Not only is she selfless in dedicating her time, she also lives and breathes the mission. "I believe very strongly that our young people need to be guided and nurtured in unconditional love. Synergy is a program like no other that I know. I sing its praises every chance I get."

"There is one saying that fits so well in my circumstance and what I would say to others considering volunteering. 'God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.' Just stepping out in faith and going in obedience to where you are led changes everything."



Interested in joining Cheryl as a volunteer? Please visit www.vcsyracuse.com/volunteer or connect with Nati Torrence at ncabrera@mercy-works.org for more information about volunteer opportunities.

SYNERGY STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

ZAHARA ALMALIKI



Major: Biotechnology
School: SUNY ESF

Anticipated Graduation: 2024
Placement: Aspen Dental

What are your career goals?

I aspire to be a successful dentist in the near future. I would love to open my own clinic that I can run one day.

What major lesson have you learned through your internship experience?

My Synergy experience is by far a remarkable one. I've learned ten times more at this dental practice than I did throughout my 200 hours of office shadowing! That in itself speaks a lot. Instead of just watching from a corner, I can do hands-on activities such as suctioning, sterilizing instruments and rooms, restocking, and checking patients in.

Workplace Partner: Dr. Jose Alvarez, General Dentist and Owner, Aspen Dental

Zahara asks lots of questions and is very willing to help out. This is the field she's trying to get into so it definitely helps to gain some hands-on experience.



WILL REMILLARD



Major: Biology and Psychology
Double Major
School: Providence College

Anticipated Graduation: 2024
Placement: Upstate Medical
University–Center for Vision
Research

What are your career goals?

My plan is to attend medical school and pursue a career as a practicing physician. While I don't have a type of doctor in mind just yet, I'm eager to explore various medical disciplines and discover where my true passion lies.

What major lesson have you learned through your internship experience?

This experience has significantly boosted my confidence, allowing me to develop applicable skills for my career while also becoming more adept at seeking help when needed—an area where I previously struggled. Moreover, this internship has taught me the importance of facing daunting tasks head-on, taking a deep breath, and investing a little extra time to achieve a high-quality outcome rather than settling for a hasty, subpar result.

Workplace Partner: Will Spencer, Assistant Professor, SUNY Upstate Medical University

By offering Will firsthand experience at the forefront of biomedical research, his Synergy internship in my lab will be invaluable toward his career goal of becoming a physician. **I would recommend Synergy because it matches interns to the workplace environment and fosters enthusiasm and maturity among young professionals.**



SYNERGY STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

SHARANLLELY "SHAY" ECHEVARRIA



Major: Surgical Technology
School: Onondaga Community
College

Anticipated Graduation: 2025
Placement: Inkululeko
College

What are your career goals?

My dream job is to have my own business and successfully live out my business. I want to open up my own bakery and be financially stable for my family.

What major lesson have you learned through your internship experience?

My experience has been incredible. One thing that I will take with me from this internship is you have to work for what you want! From all the speakers I learned so much about what's out there and I was able to expand my knowledge of different abilities and skills.

Workplace Partner: Jason Torreano, CEO, Inkululeko

Shay is one of the best interns we have ever had. She is reliable and consistent. She has taken on increasing responsibilities and has done this with aplomb. Shay will be successful in whatever she does as she's smart and extremely motivated. Synergy is fantastic and organized and mutually beneficial.



BRIAN HUYNH



Major: Applied Math-Economics,
Finance Track
School: Brown University

Anticipated Graduation: 2026
Placement: FireWater Group, LLC

What are your career goals?

I aspire to work in the field of finance, either managing investment portfolios or helping people develop retirement plans and/or personal finance skills in general. Ideally, I would prefer working in a biotechnology company where I know that the funds I raise are going into a good cause.

What major lesson have you learned through your internship experience?

By experiencing a variety of different specialties, I could fully comprehend how versatile a degree in finance truly is and what opportunities would open up to me. I would recommend Synergy to other students because the internship provided me with an outlet to apply the theories and concepts I learned in class to real-world scenarios.

Workplace Partner: Keyona Hargett, CEO/Business Consultant, FireWater Group, LLC

Brian's experience with my company revealed how he truly desires to show up in the world to make a difference and operate viable businesses. He learned that there are many ways to contribute to an organization and his community successfully. **I am hoping to help my colleagues and network prepare to apply for the Synergy program next summer.**



Program Spotlight:



#FRESH

This summer, 31 high school students completed #FRESH (First Real Entrepreneurship Starts Here). College students are not the only ones seeking substantial work experience and leadership training. #FRESH helps self-motivated high schoolers develop excellent work skills, fine-tune and build their resume, and develop great work etiquette.

Lead Facilitator for #FRESH, Walter Walker, grew up like every other kid in Syracuse, trying to avoid the pitfalls the city can have for you. **"I believe that's what called me to #FRESH—I was like most of our kids that signed up just looking for guidance and exposure to a better side of life."**

Walter leads #FRESH students through discussions of personal development, financial literacy, mental health awareness, career path choices, and how to navigate today's changing world. In the five years of #FRESH, the program has grown its size and curriculum to expose more and more young adults to new thoughts and ideas. Walter said, **"We talk, we laugh, we learn, and we challenge our current mindsets. #FRESH is a family."**

Learn more about #FRESH at www.vcsyracuse.com/fresh



1ST ANNUAL MERCY WORKS *Golf Tournament*



G.M. Crisalli & Associates, Inc.

Excellence from the Ground Up

Date:
Monday, September 25th 2023

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

Sponsorship information:

Explore corporate sponsorship opportunities at www.vcsyracuse.com/golf
You can also contact us directly (315) 371-5330 or jharleston@mercy-works.org

Thank you in advance for your support!

It's not too late to sign up for the 1st Annual Mercy Works Golf Tournament! The tournament will take place at Lakeshore Yacht and Country Club on September 25th, 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.

Your support matters *now more than ever*

By Joelle Harleston, MercyWorks Director of Development & Community Relations

Dear Visionary,

Mercy Works has accomplished so much this year, providing life-changing personal and professional development programs to Syracuse students.

We could not have impacted our students without the support of community partners and friends like you.

In 2023, we have been recognized for our impact on the workforce and economic development initiatives in the city of Syracuse. We have been awarded over \$750,000 in capital funding through vital city grants in order to provide a safe and secure facility for our ever-growing programs and in recognition of our impact on economic development initiatives intended to create or retain jobs; prevent, reduce or eliminate unemployment and underemployment; and increase business activity on the Southside of Syracuse.

Thank you to our long-standing community partners like Wegmans, National Grid, the John Ben Snow Foundation, Reisman Foundation, the Community Foundation, and the Greene Family Foundation for stepping up and supporting our urgent facility needs for programming to continue while simultaneously expanding our staff, facilities, and programming efforts.

But our work is not over. Thousands of students and their families *have been struggling to survive without education equity*, support, mentorship, resources, and the much-needed programs we provide. **Syracuse.com reported the city's child poverty rate is 47%, far higher than the state average of 19% and almost triple the National average of 17%.** This translates into more than 12,000 children in Syracuse living below the poverty line. Together we can change that.

We need your help now to reach each and every child that walks through our doors. *Making a donation is a way of reaching out a helping hand. By providing even a small donation, you can be part of an effort to provide program assistance, supply food and supplies, and help families rebuild their lives and our community.*

100% of your donation now will go back to programming and students of Mercy Works. Join us in meeting the very real needs of our city's youth by empowering their personal growth and development. Through our work together we can continue to provide vision-based programming and engage students in ways that validate, encourage, and prepare them for the Syracuse workforce.

Your support and generosity have been astonishing. Thank you for helping us provide access and equity to education for our students – we rely on donors to provide funding and structure to our programs while addressing systematic barriers to education.

Together we are better and there is more to be done in this city.

Take action today to help give the young people of our community a fair chance to accomplish their dreams.

Remember, thanks to our matching giving program, your gift will double until we reach \$50,000.

With gratitude,

Joelle Harleston,
Director of Development &
Community Relations



Upcoming Programs

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)

SEP 18 –
OCT 18
2023

BMB Vision Ventures

Formerly Teen Tech, BMB Vision Ventures presents an expanded version of Teen Tech that will meet twice a week for five 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 19 –
DEC 12
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 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 for more information about volunteer opportunities.

Ways to Support

1

Give Online

Visit 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

Mail a 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 or contact Joelle Harleston, Director of Development and Community Relations at (315) 371-5330 or jharleston@mercy-works.org

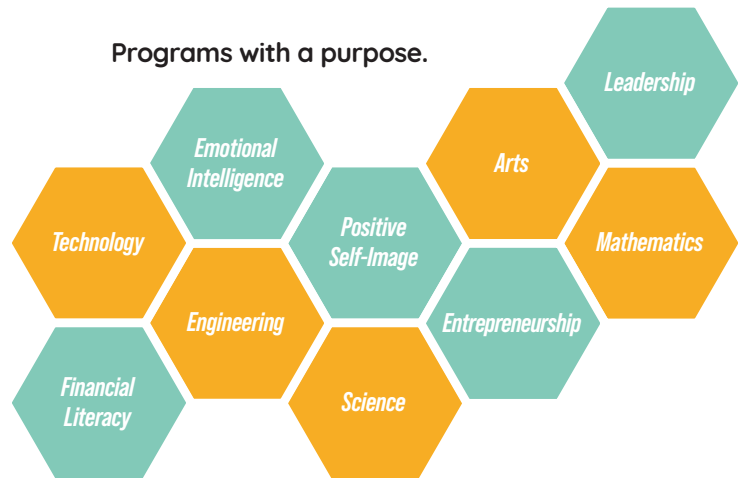
Vision Changes Everything

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.



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

315.435.6934

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