

Vol. 1

INSIGHTS

Spring 2020

CONTENT

The Power of a Pivot

MercyWorks Rapidly Adapts

New Approach for A
New Season Means New
Opportunities



mercyworks

The Power of a Pivot

There are moments in life when events beyond our control require us to set aside our carefully laid plans and personal ambitions in order to quickly move in a new direction. While these moments are disruptive and disorienting, they also create opportunities for us to make changes that can bring blessings we did not anticipate. These are moments when we get to develop our capacity to PIVOT.

To pivot is to quickly turn in place toward a new direction. Every great business, organization, leader, family and person will have to develop pivotability: the capacity to adapt and quickly change directions. Like a running back who realizes the play cannot be executed as planned, great people and organizations learn to quickly pivot to a new reality on the field. They learn to adapt and look for opportunities to make progress in a new direction. They shift their focus to where the ball is going.

When the news of a global shutdown began to become a reality in early March, our Mercy Works team was working hard on what appeared to be a highly productive year. Our regular vision-based programs such as Teen Tech and iCan Robotics were bustling, while our premiere summer program, Synergy, was on track for another record-breaking season. The pandemic hit everyone with an intensity that none of us could fully comprehend. It left all of us disoriented and facing frightening uncertainties.

As the shutdown began in our state, I began praying for the needy families in our community. As the saying goes, when it is cold outside, the poor are always colder. I had an impression to reach out to my friend, Syracuse City School District Superintendent Jaime Alicea, to offer the assistance of MercyWorks and our partner organization, Abundant Life, with any needs that might arise with the students of our city. Superintendent Alicea responded with a bold request: could we provide weekend food assistance to nearly 5,000 at-risk SCSD households that depend on the District to feed their children? Without knowing exactly how we would accomplish this, we said yes.

MercyWorks reached out to our generous partners and within 24 hours had received pledges for nearly \$80,000, and the Feed Syracuse initiative was born. A generous local businessman donated a warehouse facility and Abundant Life outreach team provided the nearly 70 volunteers necessary to unpack trucks and prepare 4,700 boxes of food. All of this occurred within a matter of 4 days while simultaneously following CDC guidelines for social distancing and PPE! By the end of the week, our teams delivered the boxes to 30 school locations throughout the city and it was distributed by SCSD employees to thousands of crisis-stricken families. We learned that we could pivot!

The partnership has been so successful that The Allyn Foundation and The Boenheim Foundation, along with our long-time partners, have stepped up to pledge more than \$312,000 in additional funding to provide weekend meals to city families through the end of May! Each Weekly distribution requires us to purchase between \$30,000-\$40,000 in food from the CNY Food Bank and other local distributors. We are so grateful to our partners who pivoted with us to assist the SCSD in feeding the children of Syracuse.

Meanwhile, our amazing team at Mercy Works pivoted as well. We moved our Spring programming online and we currently we have 15 students enrolled in our Teen Tech and Scratch Coding programs. We continued interviews online for Synergy summer internships and 51 students are ready to start once State and Federal reopening guidelines permit.

While it wasn't on our game plan to launch Feed Syracuse this year, our amazing team at MercyWorks was ready and eager to pivot. When our plans for progress were disrupted, we looked for an opening, repositioned our efforts, reallocated our resources, and pivoted in the direction of the opportunities God opened to us. It takes dedicated people, and visionary partners to find those opportunities in the midst of so much pain and disappointment. It takes people with compassion and vision so compelling that when crisis hits they find a way forward anyway. It takes people like you.

That's why mercy works. And that's why at 1221 S. Salina Street there's a place where mercy and vision meet to change the direction of human lives. Thanks for pivoting with us.

John R. Carter
President, Mercy Works Inc.



MercyWorks Rapidly Adapts and Rallies Community in Response to COVID-19

by Joelle Harleston and Mark Haywood

As an organization we are always inspiring vision, preparing and pointing our students to future success for themselves and our community. And while our mission and vision of long-term change remains, in light of the current Covid-19 situation, MercyWorks has responded in a major way to the immediate health and nutritional needs of young people throughout Syracuse.

In late March as businesses abruptly closed, the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) shut its doors except to provide bagged breakfast and lunches three days per week at nearly 30 schools and community centers across the city. Parents of many students expressed gratitude for the weekday meals but discussed how difficult it was to get groceries for their children on weekends given the lack of neighborhood grocery stores, supply shortages and household financial challenges. Leadership from SCSD relayed this challenge to the pastors at Abundant Life Christian Center and president of MercyWorks, and the organizations immediately jumped into action.

MercyWorks, in concert with Abundant Life staff and volunteers, worked tirelessly to source food, find funding, and rally the community to pack and distribute groceries each week to more than 3,000 families, equaling more than 10,000 individuals served. A total of 28 SCSD distribution centers are working collaboratively to ensure families have groceries every weekend. To date, more than 21,000 boxes have been distributed and we plan to continue this effort throughout the month of May. Each box contains a protein, starches, vegetables, and fruit that will last a family of four, approximately two days.

In addition to the boxed grocery partnership with the Syracuse City School District, MercyWorks and Abundant Life also have partnered with the Food Bank of CNY to launch "Pop-up Fresh Food Pantries" throughout May. Beginning May 5, fresh produce, eggs, bread, dairy and chicken will be given out at churches and community centers four days a week in some of the neediest areas of our city.

"MercyWorks donors, generous families, local businesses and foundations have given more than \$312,000 to date..."

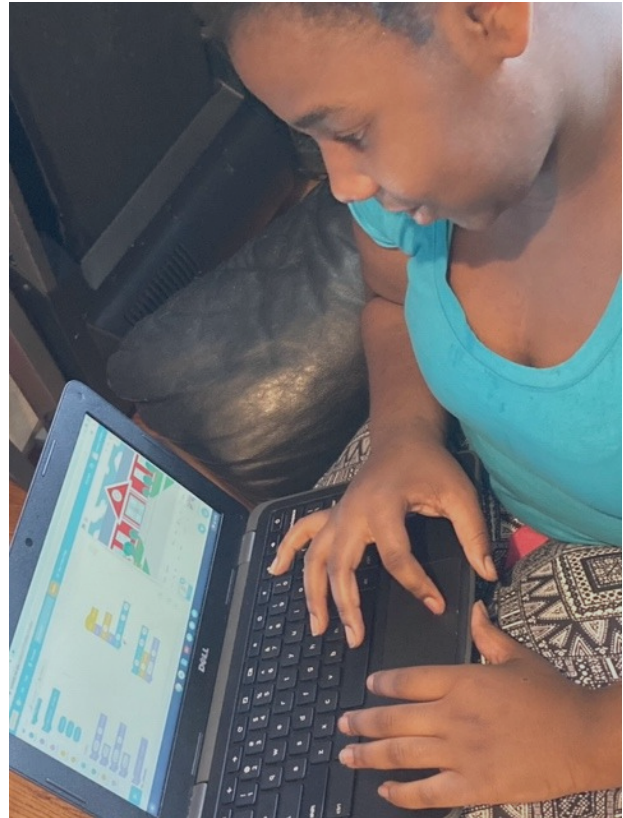
The community support, including finances, donated produce, services and volunteer labor, has been incredible. MercyWorks donors, generous families, local businesses and foundations have given more than \$312,000 to date so that SCSD students and families have adequate nutrition during this difficult time. While we look forward to again focusing our energies on vision and skill development programming, your donations have made it possible for our team to rapidly adapt to the immediate and changing needs of our students. Thank you. This is truly an amazing work of mercy that would not be possible without your donations and support.

New Approach for A New Season Means New Opportunities

by **Natividad Torrence**

Amidst the current crisis with COVID-19 and its effect on life as we once knew it, we are optimistic that brighter days are indeed ahead of us. And while it won't be business again as usual, we will embrace the new normal with gratitude and a different frame of mind. Despite the change, we have been able to stay close to our students and keep them engaged by taking our platform for training, development and vision online! On April 20, we began our online training on Scratch Coding and our Teen Tech Entrepreneurship programs. Utilizing Google Classroom and YouTube, our team was able to produce short YouTube instructional videos providing engaging instruction and assignments to complete. Once the students viewed the videos, they were then able to log into Google Classroom, sign in and complete assignments. Our lead instructor was then able to take attendance, view and grade

student assignments through Google Classroom. This platform also has a live chat center where students can post comments or ask questions on their projects.

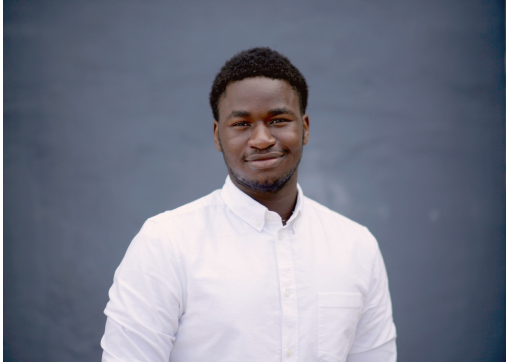


Brooklyn Bowens, Scratch Coding Student

Just for fun we also had a "Best Online Class Photo" competition. The challenge was for each student to submit pictures of themselves while completing their online assignments at home. The students were excited to take on the challenge and submitted their pictures for the competition. Our students used their creativity and capturing and embracing their vision as future coders and entrepreneurs. While it was difficult to select a winner, we finally narrowed down our selection to one. Our winner for the "Best Online Class Photo" competition was 12-year-old, Brooklyn Bowens. Brooklyn is a student at Syracuse Academy of Science and is completing our Scratch Coding program online. While Brooklyn is our official winner, all students that submitted pictures will receive a special gift! We congratulate Brooklyn on winning the "Best Online Class Photo" competition.

Synergy Leadership Training Making Employability Possible

by **Natividad Torrence**



Dadiri Haji, Synergy 2019

Dadiri Haji, an Engineering and Management major at Clarkson University, was informed about our Synergy internship through a guidance counselor and a few of his friends who had participated in the program. He was placed in the Upstate Capital Program for his internship and was assigned to design and construction projects at Upstate.



Zachary Mayo, Synergy 2018

Zachary Mayo, who had participated in Synergy in 2018 and applied again for 2020, is an Electrical Engineering major at SUNY Buffalo. His goal was to put all his efforts into his professional development in hopes of establishing a career in engineering. While we were not able to place Zach in an engineering internship, he put his best effort into his placement with Building Men and spent the summer working with young boys in middle school.

Since 2018, C&S Companies has run a special professional development workshop with our Synergy students. Each summer, they come back with workshops that engage and inspire Synergy students of all majors, to do their best. With every visit we highlighted engineering and architecture majors helping to make the connection between opportunities at C&S Companies and potentially great matches for their organization. This summer we are excited to share that both Dadiri Haji and Zachariah Mayo were offered positions as interns at C&S Companies in their respective fields; Construction Management and Electrical Engineering.

"We are delighted to add Dadiri and Zach to our Internship Program this summer! These two students went through the Synergy Leadership Program and that makes them ready for the workplace. The incredible soft-skills and mindset these students gain from the program fills the gap between student and employee, making that transition seamless."

Terry Hopkins, Administrative Principal, C&S Companies

The workforce development that students receive through Synergy is bridging the gap between rising talent and the organizations looking to add new creatives to their teams. Every summer the program receives 50+ students placing them in internship experiences while providing development and training within the four pillars of the program: Professional Development & Leadership Training, Health & Wellness, Financial Stewardship and Service Growth. Combined, these pillars yield well rounded young adults with a great vision for their future and the future of Syracuse!

Board Member Highlight



About Me.

My name is Addison Spears, I'm the Communications Director at Abundant Life and Adjunct Professor at Syracuse University. I'm also the Co-Founder of Team Building Company and Podcast called MeshTeams.

Three words that people might use to describe me?

Laidback, Geeky, and Hardworking. I'm a pretty laid back person, who truly believes that there is very little that can replace a strong work ethic. At the same time, mention Star Wars or Marvel and prepare to meet the geek.

Why do I support MercyWorks?

I was in one of the first Synergy cohorts at MercyWorks and the experience has truly changed my life. The exposure that I had through the program helped me realize the future I could have, and gave me the tools I needed to pursue it. I've been fortunate enough to have incredible professional and personal experiences because of MercyWorks, and I want to do whatever I can to give others the same opportunity.

What advice would you give to young professionals?

Be present in the moment. Your ability to respond to what's next is predicated on your ability to respond to what's happening in your life right now.

What does fun look like for you?

Without question, Video Games, currently going through the FFVII Remake. Cooking, I just made honey jalapeno cornbread, which would actually change your ways. Weight Lifting, as a #GirlDad I have a future boyfriend to intimidate and a daughter to walk down the aisle.

Our Staff

Natividad Torrence; Joelle Harleston; Veronica Giles; Gwen Battle; Alexis Charles

Our Board

John Carter ; Lisa L. Carter; Theresa M. Morgan; Mark S. Hall; Terry Bish; Addison Spears; Joe Rossi; Ed Thompson; Gary Crisalli; Kevin Duke; Jacqueline Coudriet

Donations

We take cars.

Don't need your car? We can help!

Give through your estate.

Remember us in your will and making a lasting impact.

Support card.

Fill out the enclosed card and send your donation in the envelope.

Website.

Go to vcsyracuse.com and click the [Donate](#) button.

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.

[Smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)

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



to all who have donated towards our COVID-19 relief efforts

**The COVID-19 Relief Fund of Syracuse Rhoda Sikes The Allyn Foundation
 The Reisman Foundation The Boeheim Foundation Wegmans
 Green Family Foundation Gary Bell CNY Community Foundation, Inc.
 Carl & Judy Wojcik The John Ben Snow Foundation National Grid
 Richard & Rita Macdonald Christina Braga Rachel Manzare
 Wendy Scintas Peter & Patricia Calabrese PAC Associates of Oswego, Inc.**

IN KIND

**Street Addiction Institute
 Syracuse City School District
 Service Tire Truck Center
 The Food Bank of CNY
 Laura Serway, Laci's Tapas Bar
 Robert Lieberman, RAV Properties
 Mayor Ben Walsh
 Enterprise
 Teen Challenge
 Rep. John Katko
 Good Life Foundation
 United Way
 The Dunbar Center
 USDA**



Our very own Gwen Battle, Receptionist at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center and "hands-on" supporter of all things programs, has taken on the charge to make masks for our Feed Syracuse volunteers.

GOLFLESS GOLF TOURNAMENT '20

LEVELS OF SPONSORSHIP

TOURNEY SPONSOR

\$6,000+
One Full Week
of One Student's Needs

HOLE-IN-ONE

\$4,500+
10-Week Stipend For
One Student

DOUBLE EAGLE

\$2,500+
Full Day
Orientation Sponsor

EAGLE

\$1,500+
Coaching & Networking
Intern Experiences

BIRDIE

\$1,000+
Workplace Partnership

PAR

\$600+
Intern Growth Needs

GREEN

\$400+
Power Friday Lunch & Learn

TEE

\$200+
Power Friday Supplies

What's the "Golfless Tournament?"

Quite simply, it's the opportunity for interested sponsors to support the MercyWorks Synergy Program. Since 2012, the Golfless Tournament is the primary fundraising effort for Synergy.

How to Play:

Step 1: Visit us at vcsyracuse.com/golfless to learn more or email jharleston@mercy-works.org

Step 2: Select a Sponsorship Level

Step 3: Pay online at vcsyracuse.com/golfless or mail checks to MercyWorks at 1221 South Salina St Syracuse, NY 13202

Step 4: Each sponsorship will be recognized on our social platforms!