

# INSIGHTS

December 2019

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*mercyworks*



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## A Leader's Perspective

Dear Friends,

What I know for sure is that without a vision - the ability to consider and plan the future with imagination and wisdom - people wander through life directionless and without meaningful growth. Brooklyn Bowens experienced this firsthand. There was a time when Brooklyn struggled to find her purpose. Her self-discovery came from attending vision-based classes at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center. It was then that she found her passion in creating jewelry out of fabrics as a result of researching options for a business plan in our entrepreneurial class. Within two years, Brooklyn graduated from seven of our classes and launched her own local business. Her vision is that in 10 years, she will expand her business throughout the United States.

As we reflect on this past year, on our commitment to our students like Brooklyn, we are amazed at our impact and how many in our community are touched by our support. In 2019, we:

- Graduated 230 young people from our Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Entrepreneurship programs.
- Renovated a vacant 3,000 square foot space into an innovative Mac lab, equipped with 21st century learning resources, new Apple computers for each student, and access to knowledgeable teachers to prepare them for further careers.
- Expanded programs in CSD Code which instruct and inspire students to build their own websites, apps, games, and navigate various software applications.
- Hosted Tim Tebow at our 2nd annual Mercy Works Gala fundraiser with a record attendance of 670 partners and friends who helped us successfully meet our goal.
- Unveiled the architectural design for the complete renovation of the Clarence Jordan Vision Center which will include state-of-the art technology dedicated to innovation, education and personal transformation.

Moving into 2020, we will launch new program updates and additions to instill even greater vision in the lives of our young people. We are thrilled about our partnership with Syracuse University that will catapult us into the Arts through a Digital Music Production class, integrating theory with students' particular styles and interests to compose music.

We must not forget, that Clarence's final dream and expressed wish was to see the Vision Center building fully restored for the intellectual advancement of our young people, and to powerfully impact our community and economy. We are so blessed to have such wonderful friends like you who share our passion to help those who are unable to help themselves to experience character growth and increased competence through pursuing an authentic vision for their lives. Stand with us and consider being a dream maker by giving a tax-deductible gift that will make 2020 our best year ever!

Gratefully,

John Carter  
President, Mercy Works, Inc.



## Reflecting on the Dream Builders Gala

by Joelle Harleston

Together with our sponsors we were able to raise \$247,000 dollars! Thank you. We launched the complete architectural designs for the Clarence Jordan Vision Center. You make it possible to continue, enhance and expand to serve. We are so grateful for your loyalty and support. Plans for the spring and summer programs are under way and we are going to need your support now more than ever.

### The next phase of the Clarence Jordan Vision Center renovations will create a surge of innovation and imagination for the Southside:

- The outside of the building will be transformed by reopening blocked-in windows and adding pedestrian scale elements to engage people at street level.
- The rooftop will feature a beautiful new green roof where sustainability and wellness concepts can be explored.
- The parking area will be expanded to accommodate students, visitors, and staff by removing the adjacent structure.
- The existing courtyard will be enhanced through the addition of a media mesh-lined material on the second floor windows allowing us to broadcast light sculptures, images, and videos to the surrounding communities. The courtyard will function as a gathering for staff, students, and community families and will provide connections through a café.
- An auditorium with seating capacity for over 200 will be built for presentations, exchanging ideas and vision-based programs designed to inspire.
- A creative space upstairs will be outfitted with equipment like 3d printers, sound studios, and wood and metal working equipment. This will be a collaborative space for students to conceptualize, develop, and test their ideas with their peers.

The renovated spaces are designed to spark imagination to give students the tools they need to achieve their vision. Please know, every dollar given to MercyWorks, Inc. is critical to supporting youth in developing a vision for their life. In the coming days, weeks and months consider the magnitude of this undertaking and how you can best partner with us in this transformation. Syracuse and its future is depending on you. Thank you for being here with us now and ever more. Your partnership is invaluable!



Kyaw Klay, Clarence Jordan Visionary Award Recipient

## A Purposeful Life

by Benjamin-Ariel Charles

I remember when I met Kyaw Klay. It was a hot summer afternoon, the sun was beating down, and I had been out in the courtyard taking headshots for Synergy interns to use for their LinkedIn profiles. In that summer heat, he was a refreshing break. He had a genuine smile on his face and introduced himself to me and was extremely thankful for the headshot. Since then, Klay became a constant positive presence in the Synergy internship program. He stood out because of his excellent work ethic and his ability to connect well with others. He connects with people on their level and shows extreme humility in listening to their needs and thoughts. So, when I was asked to write a story highlighting an intern of Synergy, I immediately thought of him. He describes himself as someone who was an extreme introvert before

coming on as an intern for Synergy. However, Klay recalls, "After Synergy, I realized that I am not alone. I've learned a lot from everyone at Synergy. This made me more confident in myself, and I began to talk more and socialize with others more." When I asked about one of his achievements he's most proud of he replied, "I [was] honored to be given the Clarence Jordan Visionary Award [at the gala]. I wish I had gotten the chance to say it belongs to my Synergy group members because I can argue that someone else in my group could've earned it." For him, the Clarence Jordan Visionary Award represents him overcoming his fears.

*"Mercy Works had opened my eyes & helped me find my purpose in life."*

Klay believes one of the most surprising things about the Vision Center is that it builds a level of self-confidence that helps develop individuals. He recalls a time during the program that he was surprised by the confidence of his peers and said, "I could never have done what they had done when I was a kid. [The Vision Center] has its way of developing young individuals to reach beyond their mindset."

Throughout his internship program, he learned Mercy Works, Inc "is a great organization that empowers young adults to find their purpose in life and help them reach their goal." When asked, "With so many great organizations to support, why should others choose to support Mercy Works?" He answered earnestly, "Others should choose to support Mercy Works because it teaches young adults to learn about themselves and mature much more quickly. Mercy Works had opened my eyes and helped me find my purpose in life".



Klay believes that people should know that the Clarence Jordan Vision Center empowers individuals to define their life's vision and enable them to leverage opportunities. When asked how the program has changed him, Klay said that "it changed me in many ways. One way this changed me is that now I can connect with others. Being able to socialize with people is an advantage every individual should learn how to do." He wanted those who would consider joining Synergy to know that they should take this opportunity and become a Synergy Intern-- "Trust me, you will not regret it. After going through the program, my life has changed. I became more mature and learned about the many things that school cannot teach".

*"The Vision Center has its way of developing young individuals to reach beyond their mindset."*

"For example, Chief Bobby Maldonado was my mentor during the program, and he has taught me a lot about my future, what's going to happen, and what I [will] need to do. To this day, Chief Maldonado and I [keep] in touch." Klay firmly hopes that in the future, he will graduate from college with a master's degree, join the police force, and work his way up to become a chief of police. He believes that you learn more about how to shape your future when you have a vision. Klay continues to support the mission of our organization because "it helped [him] shape [his] future and [his] goals. [He] wants all young individuals who are planning on attending college to know about [the program], and that the Clarence Jordan Vision Center has the ability to help shape their future as well."



Natividad Torrence, Programming Director

## Paving the Way for a Better Tomorrow

**by Natividad Torrence**

In 2019, we were able to reach 230 students through our programming at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center and begin building curriculum for new programs: Vision Velocity and Digital Music Production. We served 59 young entrepreneurs, 58 inspiring programmers, 27 empowered young girls, 24 future engineers, 48 equipped college interns, and 14 job-ready high schoolers. Now, we look back at 2019 with great gratitude for the students, new staff members that brought tremendous expertise, and volunteers that joined our efforts to build a relationship with our students. We are so thankful for our community partners who gave their supply and the foundations that ensured we were well resourced to meet our objectives. Together, our message to young people is clear: you matter, we believe in you, and we are here for you. In January 2020, we will open our doors with a new schedule of programs and programming additions: CSD Code, Vision Velocity, and Digital Music Production. Please check our website or contact our office for information on these new programs.



## What Our Students Think about the New CSD Code Class in the Mac Lab

### Interviews by Alexis Charles



#### Khalil Cox (age 11, 6th grade)

**What's one thing you have learned from the CSD class?** Khalil: I have learned how to code on code.org and on how to create apps and a little bit on how to create a Log-in system.

**What do you like most about the CSD class?** Khalil: Mostly I like coding, [especially] when you go into the text coding.

**How do you think this class will help you in the future?** Khalil: In the future, since I want to code stuff and make robots, I will need to know coding languages in order to make apps and code robots. I am trying to make something like the Battle Bots.

**What made you get into coding and robotics?** Khalil: At first, I was very interested in legos, then my mom signed me up for Bricks 4 Kidz and that's where I first learned about coding.

**If you could code one thing with what you have learned what would it be?** Khalil: I would create an app because an app can help in delivering and ordering stuff. I want to create something like Amazon, something that involves technology, coding, and entrepreneurship.

**How did you hear about the class?** Khalil: Well, my mom was looking up classes for coding because she said she wasn't about to pay all that money for Bricks 4 Kidz so she looked for another class to get me into. Now I have taken 2 iCan robotics classes, 1 scratch coding class, and this will be my 4th class [here at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center].



#### Michael Fragola (age 14, 9th grade)

**What's one thing you have learned from the CSD class?** Michael: No matter how hard individual code or projects gets, as long as you ask for help and look it over and have a positive attitude the entire time it will go according to plan.

**What do you like most about the CSD class?** Michael: I like that it's very free in the room. It's fun and free. If I wanted to get up in the room and start dancing, depending on the situation in the room, everyone would join in.

**How do you think this class will help you in the future?** Michael: Since I'm taking engineering classes at ITC, I think it will help in case I decide to program a game that might go with a piece of machinery or program a game or an app that might be coded onto a piece of equipment.

**If you could code one thing with what you have learned what would it be?** Michael: I would most likely want to make an app because I have seen in the other programs at the Vision Center. So many kids make apps that are actually good games. They aren't just some cheap game that cost \$3, but are actually really good games that I have played before.



At the Clarence Jordan Vision Center, we do more than provide STEM and personal and professional development programs for young people; we celebrate their accomplishments, encourage them when they fail, celebrate their birthdays and do life with the community we love!

*"I want to take a minute and thank the family that I've come to adopt from the Clarence Jordan Vision Center. My kids are welcomed, loved, and truly cared for every time they walk through the doors. I am blessed to have been given the opportunity to have my kids partake in what the organization has to offer and it truly warms my heart knowing that my kids' success means just as much to everyone there as it does to me. I cannot wait to see what doors have been opened for them and to watch them journey along their paths in life, but I know that their time at the Clarence Jordan Vision Center is going to play a very intricate role in their future successes because it's already begun to sprinkle the seeds in their present life. From having them brainstorm ideas of entrepreneurship to dissecting and attempting to create technological wonders from building blocks, this organization has given rise to my kids' love of learning and quenched their thirst for creativity. I am truly thankful for the blessing. Thank you."*

*Shawnda Hathaway, Parent of the Fragolas*

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We are so grateful for faithful givers like you who believe in what we are doing for the young people and families of Syracuse. We would not be where we are today without our sponsors. Thank you for allowing us to continue our work in the community.

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