

2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT



A Breakthrough Year



David Condliffe, Esq.
Executive Director



Daniel Arshack, Esq.
Board President

DEAR SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS,
CCA is breaking ground this year in more ways than one.

As we write, “Freedom Commons” is rising on Burt Avenue in Syracuse. This pioneering joint venture with the Syracuse Housing Authority will provide 57 units of affordable housing for low-income families, including housing for people re-entering the community after serving a sentence. The combination of housing and services for people re-entering society was developed by the Fortune Society, whose Castle Gardens project in New York City has won wide acclaim. Fortune is providing technical assistance on Freedom Commons. We anticipate that the Syracuse Housing Authority’s visionary partnership with us will point the way for other public housing authorities to partner with nonprofits to serve the

thousands of people who come out of prison every year.

Our work has been recognized this year by a number of other public agencies.

- A new grant from the U.S. Department of Labor will enable our Syracuse office to connect people coming out of prison with training for jobs in industries that are hiring, such as construction and food services.
- Our New York City office has broken through formidable barriers to provide educational and recreational programs to youth in detention at Rikers Island and Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

- Our Recovery Centers in both Rochester and Syracuse have moved into new spaces with expanded hours and programming, providing wraparound services to people coming out of prison and trying to maintain healthy lifestyles. New York State’s Office of Substance Abuse and Alcoholism Services (OASAS) funded the expansions and new initiatives.
- We have been awarded a grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) for our adult treatment program in Brooklyn, New York, focusing on serving individuals who have both mental health and substance abuse diagnoses. The grant will strengthen our capacity in that area.

Finally, in spring 2017, the New York State legislature responded to a well-coordinated citizen campaign by raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18. New York along with North Carolina had long been outliers in continuing to impose adult sentences on juveniles. CCA’s Justice Strategies division fought long and hard for this change, alongside other leading social justice agencies. We are continuing to work to assure the law is fully implemented, in particular exercising vigilance that the new law’s vagueness does not open the door to further abuse.

At a time when all social justice initiatives are in jeopardy, we depend on the understanding of people like you for support. Please help us keep up the fight.

Sincerely,

David Condliffe, Esq.
Executive Director

Daniel Arshack, Esq.
Board President

Visionary

“Freedom Commons” Rises in Syracuse

Culminating years of planning and partnership-building, a new national model for people coming out of prison is now emerging on a formerly empty lot on Burt Avenue in Syracuse. The low-rise, 57-unit residence building is owned and was made possible by a 50/50 partnership between CCA and Syracuse Housing Authority. Called “Freedom Commons,” it is the first known instance in the nation in which a public housing authority has partnered with a nonprofit to assist people re-entering society after serving prison terms.

Freedom Commons represents a major breakthrough in providing housing for people coming out of prison. Across the country, public housing authorities forbid access to applicants with criminal records. Furthermore, many re-entry organizations have little help to offer constituents who are seeking housing. This program will make CCA one of the few organizations that can provide this critical service.

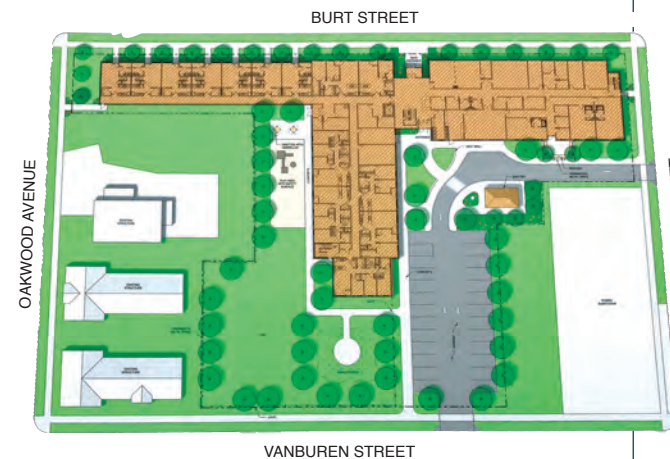
The new building will offer affordable housing for low-income families together with both temporary and permanent apartments for men and women who have been released from prison. The idea of combining affordable housing for low-income residents with supportive housing for people returning from prison was inspired by the Fortune Society in New York City. Its Castle Gardens residence on Riverside Drive and West 140th Street has won wide acclaim and spurred interest in replication in other cities in New York State. Fortune Society has provided technical assistance to CCA on the Castle Gardens project, with support from the office of Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The cooperation of the Syracuse Housing Authority was a critical element in CCA’s ability to take on the replication. “We are tremendously appreciative of all our partners in this effort,” said David Condliffe, Executive Director. “Adequate and affordable housing is one of the great challenges that face people attempting to re-enter the community. We hope that Freedom Commons will lead the way for other public housing authorities to follow the example set by Syracuse.”

The name “Freedom Commons” honors Syracuse’s history as an outspokenly abolitionist city during the time of slavery and its role in the Underground Railroad, helping former slaves to reach freedom.

Freedom Commons consists of a total of 57 residential units. These include three shelter units providing transitional housing; nine permanent supportive housing apartments for homeless individuals or families struggling with a criminal history; and 45 affordable apartments for low-income families.

CCA will provide residents with supportive services both on- and off-site. Case management services will be provided to recently released homeless individuals and homeless individuals with criminal records and special needs. Homeless individuals living in the shelter units will receive assistance in finding appropriate permanent housing. These services will be operated by CCA and funded by the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI).



Besides CCA and SHA, Norstar Development/ Norstar Building Corporation is the third developer and is acting as general contractor. Construction funding was provided by NYS Homes and Community Renewal and NYS OTDA Homeless Housing and Assistance Corporation. Key Bank Development Corporation provided the financing for tax credits that made the project affordable.

Freedom Commons is expected to be complete and ready to receive its first tenants in late 2018 or early 2019.

In progress! Above, site plan. Near and far right, construction. Below, a 3-D drawing projecting the finished building.



SECOND CHANCE INITIATIVE WILL COMBAT POVERTY IN SYRACUSE

A new grant from the U.S. Department of Labor will help connect Syracuse residents coming out of prison to training and jobs. Called the Second Chance Initiative, the project is funded by one of only 23 grants awarded to community-based organizations nationwide and was the only such grant in the State of New York. It will support CCA and partner organizations to provide training and job placement for 188 Syracuse adults who are struggling to enter or re-enter the work force after serving prison or jail terms.

The initiative takes aim at improving economic conditions in high-poverty areas of Syracuse. Mike Pasquale, Director of Reintegration Services, is excited about the potential of this project to create change.

“The rising rates of poverty in parts of Syracuse are alarming,” said Pasquale. “A 2015 study by the Century Foundation that was widely publicized here showed that 36.5% of Syracuse’s population has income below the poverty level.”

The study also showed that Syracuse had the highest rate of extreme poverty concentrated among African Americans and Latinos of any of the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas. CCA’s analysis of these high-poverty areas showed those areas also had high crime rates and were the areas where people located after returning home from prison.

Ron Boxx, project director of the new initiative, explained, “The Second Chance Initiative will focus on helping individuals coming out of prison receive training and find jobs in sectors that are expanding and have career ladders, such as construction, culinary/food service, and advanced manufacturing.” These industries are also considered “justice-friendly” because they extend opportunities to people with skills who have criminal records. *Continued on page 5*

Ron Boxx, Project Director (l.), with Mike Pasquale, Director of Reintegration Services



NYC

CONNECTING WITH YOUTH ON THE INSIDE

CCA's Youth Services Division has been building bridges into New York City's secure facilities. Programs are now offered for youth both at Rikers Island and Crossroads Juvenile Center, a secure facility in Brownsville, Brooklyn for youth under the age of 16.

In summer 2017, CCA introduced "Freedom School" at Crossroads, a model educational program developed by the Children's Defense Fund that has won national acclaim. More than 30 youth participated in the 6-week program from 8am to 3pm daily. They improved their literacy skills through a reading curriculum that included five books, with discussions and activities based on their reading.

In another breakthrough, CCA recently launched a Pathways Career Exploration Program for youth ages 16-21 at Rikers Island. A collaboration with Friends of Island Academy, this program seeks to help youth secure employment immediately following their release from Rikers. Youth take part in career-focused activities led by experienced mentors in such fields as art, music, and fashion design, and develop Employment Action Plans they can put in place as soon as they are released.

CCA has also continued to provide a daily SONYC (SCHOOL'S OUT NEW YORK CITY) program at the Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brownsville, Brooklyn, offering healthy recreational and educational activities, as well as programs for youth in the community at its office at 25 Chapel Street in downtown Brooklyn.



NYC youth complete a mural commissioned by a local business

Top: Harvesting sunflowers at Crossroads Juvenile Center



Michael Turk, After School Coordinator (Syracuse)

Left: Syracuse youth from the After School Alternatives Program



Syracuse

HELPING HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH SUCCEED

CCA's Violence Prevention and Peer Leadership Program works with Syracuse youth who are at risk of school suspension and dropping out to help them steer clear of the "school to prison pipeline." Program leaders help youth understand personal "triggers" that lead to violent behavior and how to control them, how to reduce their stress levels, how to communicate and work on teams, and, finally, how to teach others the skills they have learned. Youth in the After School Alternatives Program participate in athletic events, creative arts and expression, and enjoy holiday activities and outings.

"Raise the Age" SIGNED INTO LAW, with Exceptions

In April 2017, the New York State Legislature finally passed legislation to raise the age (RTA) of criminal responsibility in New York State to 18. CCA played a key role in organizing support for this long-overdue change, in particular by mobilizing constituencies in upstate New York.

While the RTA legislation is a step in the right direction, much work remains for our state to fully recognize the special circumstances of adolescents. For example, the new legislation provides exceptions that are vaguely defined as "extraordinary circumstances" and could continue the inappropriate treatment of young adolescents. The legislation also continues the harsh Juvenile Offender law and does not adequately allow for the sealing of juvenile records. Passage of 'Raise the Age' legislation does not end our work. Rather, it is an important achievement that requires strong advocacy to ensure effective implementation.

Through the continued support of the Tow Foundation, CCA will implement a communication and education strategy on behalf of adolescents in the criminal justice system. It will support and train local constituents, particularly in upstate communities, to monitor and document how the law is implemented, to communicate with citizens about areas of concern, to identify trends, and to continue to advocate for further reform.

In another hard-fought victory, SUNY (State University of New York) decided in fall 2016 to "ban the box" asking about criminal histories on applications to all its institutions. Many private colleges, however, continue to ask about criminal histories, deterring qualified applicants who need and deserve access to higher education. CCA will continue its advocacy efforts to pass "Ban the Box" legislation that will end the use of criminal history screening for employment, volunteer enrollment, and college admissions nationwide.

Marissa Saunders is co-leading the work of the Justice Strategies division during a leadership transition. She said, "CCA believes our policy priorities and stances must continue to be informed by the people and communities we serve. Our approach respects the struggles and challenges of people we encounter through our direct service work."

Saunders added, "Through my work with young people transitioning back into school after an absence, I've become aware that girls are being trafficked into sexual abuse and ultimately to prison. I want to elevate efforts to focus on that area of advocacy because of my on-the-ground knowledge of this pressing issue."



Marissa Saunders, Justice Strategies Associate and Transition Coaching Project Director

SECOND CHANCE INITIATIVE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The initiative commits to enrolling a total of 188 individuals over a period of 20 months, beginning October 2017. They will be at least 25 years old, living in Syracuse, and within 180 days of their prison release date. At least 60 percent of them will be placed in employment.

Pasquale anticipates no difficulty meeting the enrollment targets. CCA's Syracuse office is the only locally based organization that focuses exclusively on individuals involved in the criminal justice system. It receives many walk-ins daily but currently lacks the resources to serve all those seeking help. The Second Chance Initiative is a significant expansion that will provide core employment services to those who cannot otherwise obtain them.

Second Chance will draw on the full array of services available at CCA, including the Reentry Clinic, the Recovery Center, and housing in Freedom Commons, when it opens in 2018-19. CNY Works, the local One-Stop that offers employment services for all job-seekers, will partner with CCA in the project, and will partially dedicate a staff person to working with participants. Other job training partners are SUNY Educational Opportunity Center, Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, and Onondaga Community College Workforce Development Program.

2016 Donors & Funders

CCA is grateful to all its private and public supporters. Your belief in the work we do is vital to the struggle for reintegrative justice.

Government

U.S.

Department of Education
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs
DHHS/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Department of Labor

NEW YORK STATE

Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS)
Department of Education
Department of Health
Division of Criminal Justice Services
Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS)
Office of Court Administration
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CITY/COUNTY

City of New York
City of Syracuse
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Foundations, Corporations & Organizations

OVER \$100,000

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Betsy Gotbaum Joins Board

Betsy Gotbaum, an independent fundraising consultant who served as Public Advocate for the City of New York from 2002-2010, has been elected to the Board of CCA.

Besides her service as Public Advocate, an elective office, Gotbaum worked as advisor to three mayors and served as a financial executive and president of the New York Historical Society.

She built a reputation for using nontraditional methods to turn troubled institutions into success stories. In the late 1970s, she led the New York Police Foundation. In 1990, as the city's first female Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, she identified new sources of revenue to close a budget gap and established the City Parks Foundation.

In June 1994, she became president of The New York Historical Society, which was suffering from financial troubles. When she left the institution in 2000, it had a \$33 million endowment.

As Public Advocate, Gotbaum reshaped the office into the primary place New Yorkers could take problems related to municipal reform in education, school construction, prevention of crime, and the fight against hunger.

Gotbaum was inspired to join CCA because, as she said in an interview, "People coming out of prison in New York State are not getting the help they should in re-entering society. This is an important issue and I hope, as part of CCA, I can do something positive."

FOUNDER MARSHA WEISSMAN HONORED AT JUNE 7 EVENT

A "Spring Fundraiser" celebrating CCA Founder Marsha Weissman, Ph.D., who led the agency for 35 years as Executive Director, was held on June 7 on the rooftop of Castle Gardens. In addition to CCA staff who paid tribute to Marsha's vision and dedication, guest speakers included: JoAnne Page of Fortune Society; Elizabeth Gaynes of the Osborne Association; Joel Copperman of CASES; and Vivian Nixon of the College and Community Fellowship.

Speakers highlighted Weissman's pioneering work in introducing service programs, analyzing policy, and achieving reform. Her 2014 book, "Prelude to Prison," has left an enduring mark on the field, alongside many published articles on which she was a solo or joint author.

Weissman has continued her involvement with CCA as a Senior Policy Fellow. Her comprehensive knowledge of both the agency and the field makes her contributions highly valuable. She is also teaching courses in her field at Syracuse University, where she earned her Ph.D. in sociology during her tenure as Executive Director of CCA.



Kelly Gonzalez Named Deputy Director, Succeeding Christine Abaté

On May 1, 2017, attorney Kelly Gonzalez became Deputy Director of CCA, with supervisory responsibilities over the Syracuse and Rochester offices. Gonzalez began her career at CCA four years ago as a Student Advocate and soon moved into program director roles. Before coming to CCA, she worked for the Legal Aid Society, then for Syracuse University's College of Law as a practitioner in residence, supervising student attorneys and providing legal aid. She holds a B.S. in Human Services Studies from Cornell and a J.D. Degree from Northeastern University. Gonzalez said she "aspires to learn from and champion our incredibly talented staff; to stay informed and inspired by our participants to be fearless, authentic advocates, true to our mission; to be creative in collaborating with mission partners; and to have fun."

Chosen after an extensive search, she succeeds Christine Abaté, who held the position since 1996. During her tenure, Abaté transformed the role, building a network of funder relationships and managing a complex array of grants, budgets, new projects, and administrative details. On April 28, her final day, staff held a festive celebration in her honor. Abaté reminisced about what she had learned about advocacy during her career, while members of the staff shared sometimes tearful accounts of the ways in which she had taught, mentored and supported them.



OUR MISSION

The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) is a leader in the field of community-based alternatives to incarceration. Our mission is to promote reintegrative justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration through advocacy, services and public policy development in pursuit of civil and human rights.

Gift of Wheels Makes a New Life Possible

Leon Bellamy Jr, now owns a car.
And therein lies a story.

Leon Bellamy, 34, the father of a 6-year-old daughter, has served time at the Onondaga County Correctional Facility. Before and after his release, he worked hard to put his life together. While at the correctional facility, he participated in several CCA programs. Afterward, he continued his involvement, attending LEADERS, a work readiness program, and joining a transitional jobs program. Eventually, Bellamy obtained a job at Byrne Dairy. He has maintained his employment for over a year.

While the new job was a great opportunity, transportation to and from work was challenging. Bellamy works nights, when buses are not running. For transportation, he had to rely on a car shared by family members. He wanted to pursue a degree in business at Onondaga Community College but could not fit that into his schedule without a car, and wasn't earning enough to be able to buy one in the foreseeable future.

The solution came when an employee at Darco Manufacturing, a local company, wanted to donate a high-mileage Nissan Versa to a worker who needed a car. He realized that a dependable car like his could make a difference. Darco reached out to CCA—which is well known to companies in the area—to identify a person who would benefit from such a donation.



Leon Bellamy, proud new owner of a Nissan Versa donated by a Darco Manufacturing employee

After Bellamy and CCA staff reviewed Bellamy's finances, they determined that he could manage the cost of registration, insurance, gas, and maintenance. Bellamy, CCA staff, and the donor then met at the DMV. Bellamy took the car for a test drive, got his tags and drove off, a happy new car owner.

Both the car and its new owner are doing fine. Still employed at Byrne Dairy, where he has a good work record, Bellamy is also now enrolled as a full-time student at OCC studying business. He said, "The car is great. It's helping me get to work and school. And I have something of my own."



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