



2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT



A ribbon cutting celebrates newly expanded Recovery Centers in Syracuse and Rochester. David Condliffe, center, holds the scissors. Jackson Davis, Director of Recovery Services, is on his left. Steve Hanson, OASAS Associate Commissioner, who attended the openings in both cities, is second from right.

New Services Launched

IN SYRACUSE, ROCHESTER AND NYC

DEAR SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS:

On March 22, we celebrated enlarged, updated Recovery and Outreach Centers in Syracuse and Rochester with ribbon-cutting events in both cities. In Syracuse, Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens and Common Council President Helen Hudson joined our dedicated senior staff and peer leaders. In Rochester, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul led the festivities. While CCA's recovery communities in Syracuse and Rochester have long histories, these expansions, funded by the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, are welcomed and needed.

The renovated spaces offer computers, recreational facilities, large screen TV rooms, showers, and washer-dryers. These improvements support the development of strong, healthy peer communities and collaboration with partner agencies, which evidence has shown are important elements of successful recovery. New Facebook pages for both the Syracuse "CUSE" Center and the Rochester "CORE" Center are further strengthening connections among participants, partner agencies, and within communities.

The ambitious Freedom Commons project is set to open in Syracuse this winter. This unique collaboration with the Syracuse Housing Authority will provide housing for people with criminal records and for low-income families. It will include emergency and transitional housing, supportive housing, and affordable housing. It is the first replication of the Fortune Society's Castle/Castle Gardens project in New York City. To ensure the project's success, Fortune continues to provide invaluable technical assistance.

A new \$2.1 million grant over five years from US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will provide re-entry support for 50 mostly young adults per year who have been released from Onondaga Correctional Facility. For drug treatment, we have entered into a partnership with Crouse Chemical Dependency Treatment Services, a premier provider in the region.

In New York City, Crossroads, our licensed outpatient drug treatment program, completed its periodic licensing

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“I Love it Here”

YOUTH FIND A SAFE PLACE WITH ROOM TO GROW

Damien, 22, who was released from Rikers Island just 10 months ago with no place to go, has turned his life around. He has stable housing in a supportive community, a paid internship with a documentary film maker, participates in a running club and community service projects, and is close to earning his equivalency diploma. He attributes this success to his participation in CCA’s Bridge program, which he joined when he was still at Rikers.

The Bridge program is one aspect of a greatly broadened spectrum of youth programming at CCA in the past several years. Funded by the Mayor’s Office through a subcontract with Friends of Island Academy, the Bridge helps youth at Rikers ages 18–21 make successful transitions into schooling, jobs, and stable housing.

At Rikers, youth participate in a Career Exploration program, with regular meetings and assessments to determine their interests and aptitudes. After release, they meet weekly at CCA’s Brooklyn site to pursue the goals they identified in jail.

At a weekday meeting in Brooklyn on a hot August afternoon, four youth discussed their progress with staff Jesse Lyons and Sarah Gardner. One of the four, Cervantes, commented, “This program has helped me get clothes and prepare for job interviews. I’m learning how to communicate better. My confidence level has grown.”

Another, Jonathan, said, “I was at CCA three years ago, then I got locked up again. Here they try to make you stay out of trouble. That’s important because kids do bozo stuff.”

Sebastien talked specifically about his job search. “I’ve been looking for warehouse jobs on the internet. They pay \$15–\$19 an hour. I have a little experience so I’m hopeful I’ll get something.”

When Damien burst into the room, breathless after a subway delay, he captured attention with the story of “Wash and Be Seen,” his successful fundraising venture. In the spring, he had written a grant proposal to Brooklyn Community Foundation for a Youth Voices Award, asking for funds for a washer-dryer at CCA so youth could launder their own clothes.

He explained, “I thought if kids could have clean clothes for school or job interviews or court, it would help them with their confidence. I wrote the proposal in a day and was shocked when I got an email asking me to come for an interview. The interview was with a group of young people

Below: Damien, center, is surrounded by CCA staff at a celebration of his award-winning proposal to install a washer-dryer at CCA for use by youth in transition from jail or the streets. Right: Rham Robinson, long-time youth advocate, heads up a new mentoring program.



who asked me questions. Then they told me they were giving me a grant of \$3000 for the washer-dryer. I’d only asked for \$2000!”

In addition to helping youth at Rikers, CCA’s long-standing Youth Advocacy Project (YAP) continues to serve young people who are referred for alternatives to incarceration. All CCA youth have access to the new Pathways Internship program, a paid work readiness initiative in fields such as filmmaking, fashion, culinary arts, and personal training, matched to youths’ strengths and interests.

Next Steps, a mentoring program, is another welcome addition. Headed by Rham Robinson, the program employs mentors who work one-on-one with youth at Ingersoll Houses, a NYCHA facility in downtown Brooklyn. Robinson, a long-time staff member with a strong sense of mission for youth work, has the discretion to pair mentors with CCA youth who can benefit from the program.

Robinson said, “I keep the introductions to the mentors low-key, so youth don’t get up-tight. I say, ‘Here is so-and-so,’ and let them take it from there. The adult mentor can take a gift card to take a kid out to eat or on an outing. We also use an evidence-based program, Interactive Journaling, that helps us track progress.”

Laurel Rinaldi, Director of Youth Development, has been a tireless advocate for expanded youth programming, including mentoring. She said, “The mentors have made all the difference. We see youth who would have dropped out in the past come into the office just to see their mentors.”

Cervantez summed up the feelings of many youth in a few words. “I love it here,” he said.

After Prison,

A NEW PROGRAM LEADS TO JOBS WITH GOOD PAY

People with criminal justice histories, no matter how determined to turn their lives around, face severe challenges in finding jobs to support themselves and their families. In an effort to make a dent in the problem, CCA is now one of just 31 agencies in the nation operating a “Reentry Project” with a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. CCA calls its project the “Second Chance Initiative” or SCI.

As of August 31, 2018, less than a year after the program began, 73 participants were enrolled, 34 had obtained employment, and 29 were enrolled in training.

Kimberly Kirkpatrick, 26, is thrilled with her job as the only woman on a construction site, earning double what she took home when she was waiting on tables. She said, “I ended up in the county jail because of my addiction. From there I went to Shock Incarceration, a military-style boot camp. It was the worst thing that ever happened to me but also the best. I came out wanting to be a functioning member of society. My work ethic was instilled.

“I’m a short-haired gay woman and didn’t know what to expect at the construction site. I had heard that men would be abusive. But the men are hardworking and diligent. When one started talking s—t to me, another put a stop to it. I look at my paychecks and I feel on top of the world.”

Mike Pasquale, Director of Reintegration Services, explained, “The goal of SCI is to provide an array of supports for men and women recently released from prison to obtain jobs and vocational training in sectors where workers are in demand and earn good wages.” Ron Boxx, who has served as Project Director since the start of the program, added: “Participants are assigned to case managers who work with them each step of the way to employment. They get expert help with their resumes, job interview preparation, and job searches. We support them to qualify and apply for vocational training programs and for jobs that pay more than minimum wage.”

Josue Martinez, 36, has spent a third of his life in prison and was dubious about his job prospects when he was released in January. “At CCA, I learned how to present my experience on my resume without hiding the fact

that I was incarcerated. I had a lot of jobs in my 12 years in prison and I was advised to include all of them. Now I have a regular job at a foundry and am working on a certificate in welding.”

Formerly incarcerated people often face employment challenges above and beyond their prison records. Kevin Green was 57 in January when he was released from prison

after an 11-year sentence. Currently working as a flagger for the Department of Transportation, he lives with and cares for his 80-year-old mother. He gave special credit to the teacher of his job readiness course, Tamara Taylor, saying, “She enforced discipline and I appreciated that. I got my job by utilizing the skills I learned in that course.”

James Warren, 47, had open heart surgery immediately after his release from prison. A lifelong emphysema sufferer, his health issues made it impossible for him to return to his former work at construction sites. He is now enrolled in a BOCES program in medical billing and coding that he expects will lead to a job with pay equivalent to what he earned when he was young and healthy.

Warren said, “SCI does a lot for us. They helped me get the ID and school records I needed for my application to the medical billing program. They were with me every step of the way. If you’re willing to do something, if you’re serious, they’re there to help.”



Kimberly Kirkpatrick is thrilled to be a woman earning good pay at a construction job



Kevin Green got a job with the Department of Transportation. James Warren is earning a certificate to become a medical biller and coder.



PARTICIPANTS FIND “THINKING FOR A CHANGE” TRANSFORMATIVE

On August 16, 2018, CCA Crossroads participants celebrated their successful completion of a three-month program called Thinking for a Change (T4C), and agreed that it had changed their lives for the better.

T4C is an evidence-based program created specifically for men and women involved in the criminal justice system, based on the findings of cognitive behavioral psychologists. It consists of 25 lessons taught by a trained facilitator to a group of participants who make a commitment to stay together in the program for its full duration.

Marianna Chrysiliou, one of the program facilitators, noted the seriousness of the group. “When we reached the 6th or 7th lesson, not all participants had been able to maintain consistent attendance. We discussed how to deal with that, since the program requires the participation of the full group for all 25 sessions. Everyone agreed to start the series of lessons again from the beginning so that all could get the benefit.”

The graduates honored their achievements with pizza, soft drinks, and glowing testimonials to what they had learned.

Bentley Kennedy, 29, said, “I learned to think actively about my decisions. I acquired social skills. I’d taken anger management training in the past, and it just made me more angry. This program got me to slow down and think. I consider the consequences of what I do now, before I do it.”

Shaquille, 25, said, “When you’re not working on yourself, you have a problem. This program is mind-opening. It motivated me to think about my future. I met others who were going through what I was going through and we helped each other.”



NEW SERVICES LAUNCHED FROM PAGE 1

review; it was one of a few programs to receive a full three-year license renewal. This pioneering program provides gender-specific services—critically important for women, most of whom have histories of abuse and trauma. For many, trauma-focused treatment in a maximally safe environment has been transformative. The program has also been strengthening mental health services, given the fact that many justice-involved individuals have never received a professionally-qualified mental health assessment or treatment.

Also in New York City, we are now serving youth newly released from incarceration through our “Bridge” program. Bridge is supported by a grant from the Jails to Jobs Initiative of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice. It helps youth stay free of the criminal justice system while pursuing personal educational and career goals. This program is just one of many youth initiatives through which we are creating better pathways for youth. Rather than go-nowhere training or dead-end jobs, we are seeking to truly listen to these youth, to engage their aspirations and to create paid internships in fields of interest to them, including film-production, fashion, media, music and many others.

In addition, a grant from the Gifford Foundation supported a six-month organizational self-assessment led by an experienced consultant. We now enter two years of capacity-building, also supported by Gifford, focused on grants management, web and social media, and Board development.

We are grateful to you, our public and private supporters, whose generosity has made these achievements possible and trust we will continue to earn your support and confidence.

David Condliffe, Esq.
Executive Director



Daniel Arshack, Esq.
Board President



Fighting for Youth Rights IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Since passage of New York State’s “Raise the Age” (RTA) legislation in the spring of 2017, CCA’s Justice Strategies team has been monitoring implementation of the law, building public awareness and supporting youth in transition. The new law raises the age of criminal responsibility in New York from 16 to 18, finally bringing New York in line with all other states.

In New York City, CCA has been encouraging acceleration of the planned closure of Rikers and safe transition from youth off Rikers Island to the Horizon Detention Facility in the Bronx. CCA staff are seeking to ensure that the transition will not expose youth to safety issues and emotional distress. To that end, they have been working closely with the Mayor’s Office and with multiple task forces. They are also working to enrich services youth will receive at Horizon and also at Crossroads in Brooklyn, where newly arrested youth are sent.

In Syracuse/Rochester, CCA is conducting an educational campaign across central and western New York to explain RTA and encourage public involvement. Marissa Saunders, Justice Strategies Associate, is leading the recruitment and training of a core group of “credible messengers,” who will provide information at public gatherings and build support for the law.

CCA will be closely monitoring implementation to ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds do, in fact, receive treatment by the criminal justice system that is appropriate to their status as youth who are still maturing. A major concern, for example, is the vague “exceptions” language in the legislation; CCA will be watching to see that that language is not abused. The Tow Foundation has continued to support our RTA advocacy work upstate.

CCA is part of a statewide RTA coalition that holds biweekly conference calls and gathers information to monitor the law’s implementation across counties. Strengthening CCA’s role in protecting youth, Executive Director David Condliffe has been named to the Governor’s Raise the Age Implementation Task Force. Condliffe said, “The law means that by October 2019, youth under the age of 18 will no longer be routinely prosecuted as adults. Yet it will take a coordinated and vigilant effort to make sure that youth don’t slip through legal loopholes and cracks in the system. CCA is playing an important role in that effort.”

Among other Justice Strategies initiatives, CCA has engaged a Syracuse University Law School intern to gather data on the sexual-abuse-to-prison pipeline for females 15–20. CCA has also been actively involved in the statewide push for reform of cash bail, speedy trial, and criminal discovery laws. Finally, the long battle to reduce barriers to college admission for people with criminal records has achieved a stunning milestone: administrators of the Common Application have finally agreed to drop the criminal history question from the form, which is used by over 800 colleges and universities nationwide.



BOARD WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



William Simmons (above left), Executive Director of Syracuse Housing Authority, and Steven Corsello (above right), a former product manager at Warner Brothers, were elected to the Board at the March 2018 and October 2017 meetings respectively.

Simmons is a leader of public housing in Syracuse with a mission to provide quality, safe, and affordable housing to those in need. A former Commissioner of Education, he earned his J.D. at Syracuse University and was admitted to practice law in New York State in 2006. He has been an invaluable partner to CCA in developing Freedom Commons, the pioneering residence in Syracuse that is setting a new standard by eliminating barriers to housing for people with criminal records.

Corsello has worked at the forefront of distributed streaming media and media tech in New York City and is now pursuing a master’s degree in architecture with a focus on spatial equity.

A CCA participant when he was 17, he brings a unique set of personal experiences to the agency, including a passion for criminal justice reform, community-based alternatives to incarceration, and re-integrative justice.

Freedom Commons Residence Nears Completion

Freedom Commons, the unique new 57-unit residence built as a collaboration between CCA, the Syracuse Housing Authority, and a private developer, is nearing completion and will begin receiving tenants in winter 2018-19. Modeled after Fortune Society's Castle/Castle Gardens residence in New York City, the project represents a major breakthrough for people coming out of prison. 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 will provide not only affordable housing but also case management and other supportive services, both on- and off-site.

\$2.1 Million Federal Grant Awarded for Comprehensive Substance Use Treatment

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded CCA a \$2.1 million, five-year "Offender Reentry Program" grant. The grant will increase the number of adults CCA can help re-enter the community successfully after incarceration at Onondaga County Correctional Facility. Enrollment is scheduled to begin in fall 2018. Substance use treatment will be provided by Crouse Chemical Dependency Treatment Services, which will expand its services and out-station a credentialed counselor at CCA. CCA's Reintegration Services team will connect participants to employment and to legal services at CCA and other agencies. Other benefits are the newly expanded Recovery and Outreach Center and the innovative housing project of Freedom Commons.



Construction photo of Freedom Commons in Syracuse, taken in mid-August 2018.

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.

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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.

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City Hall Answers Suit Drive Call



Ben Walsh, recently elected Mayor of Syracuse, brought star power to CCA's participation in the annual Men's Wearhouse Suit Drive by spearheading a suit collection drive among City Hall employees and convening a press conference. The suit drive is dedicated to helping men and women who are transitioning back into the workforce, including those with past criminal histories. This year's drive attained a record of 1,200 items of clothing donated. Shown above, Marvin Ramos, CCA Program Recruitment Coordinator, shakes hands with Mayor Ben Walsh as Ron Boxx, Project Director, directly behind the mayor, looks on.



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