

## 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT



*Board and staff at a joint meeting in Hudson, NY on June 7, 2019.*

## Freedom Commons WELCOMES RESIDENTS; BOARD ADDS 8 MEMBERS

DEAR SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS:

These are exciting times for CCA and the participants we serve. Construction of Freedom Commons, our pioneering housing venture with the Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA), is complete. The first residents are now moving in. (See story on back cover.) Freedom Commons provides affordable housing for low-income families, together with both temporary and permanent apartments for men and women who have been released from incarceration. Residents benefit from an array of supportive services from CCA both on- and off-site, including case management and, for those in the temporary units, assistance in finding permanent housing. The model for this venture is the Fortune Society's acclaimed Castle and Castle Gardens in New York City. Bill Simmons, SHA Executive Director and CCA board member, said that he does not know of another instance in the country where a community-based organization and a public housing authority have partnered to create apartments for the formerly incarcerated. Safe and affordable housing is one of the most

critical needs for people coming out of prison, yet most public housing authorities employ onerous criteria that result in barring access by people with records. This development will be part of the Syracuse renaissance and will inspire other communities nationwide.

Also this year, we significantly expanded our Board of Directors, electing eight new members—distinguished professionals from both upstate and New York City, who are committed to helping CCA fulfill its mission and realize its future plans. (See story on p. 5.)

In the policy arena, we have continued to focus on full implementation of the “Raise the Age” legislation. This legislation, passed in 2017, raised the age of criminal responsibility in New York State to 18 but has a complex implementation plan that calls out for close monitoring. Our staff, in coordination with other agencies, is conducting a vigorous initiative to engage and train citizens statewide to act as courtroom monitors.

*Continues on page 4*

# Youth Services Expand

## \$2.5M PROGRAM FOR YOUTH AT HORIZON JUVENILE FACILITY

CCA is expanding its involvement with youth from New York City's most challenged communities, extending services into secure detention facilities and public housing.

In May, New York City awarded CCA a \$2.5 million contract for work inside the Horizon Juvenile Facility in the Bronx. Laurel Rinaldi, Director of Youth Services, called the contract a vote of confidence in the agency's past work with youth who have been involved with the criminal justice system.

Rinaldi said, "We've built our credibility in the past four years working with youth in secure detention facilities. We employ staff who are 'credible messengers' who reflect and understand the background and perspectives of these youth. We've created opportunities for youth to succeed by building a network of partner agencies interested in employing and mentoring youth who have been in conflict with the law."

The agency has also increased its involvement with youth in NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing. In summer 2019, it operated Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP) at both Ingersoll Houses in downtown Brooklyn and Boulevard Houses in East New York, involving a total of 251 youth.

Rham Robinson, Director of Youth and Community Engagement, said the Summer Youth Employment Program succeeded because of the close relationships he and his staff have developed in Brooklyn communities. "We've run a mentoring program for Ingersoll youth for over two years now," he said. "In East New York, we have a long history and great relationships with other community organizations. We can go directly into the housing facilities and set up information centers where youth can access summer employment opportunities. The youth trust us because we're known and are very present to them."

Other recent additions to Youth Services programs include: the expansion of BRIDGE, an innovative project that works with young adults returning home from Rikers and connects them with internships and employment upon their release; Breaking Chains, a peer mentoring and peer leadership program, designed and created by two BRIDGE graduates; and continued expansion of Pathways, a paid work readiness initiative in fields such as filmmaking, fashion, culinary arts, and personal training. The longstanding Youth Advocacy Project (YAP) works with youth mandated or referred by the courts and criminal justice agencies.

The Sexuality Health Education initiative is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—SAMHSA and the New York State Department of Health. Trained Peer Leaders provide structured educational sessions that improve youths' knowledge and sexual health.

In addition to community and school sites, Peer Leaders now go into secure detention centers. Olivia Jackson-Lewis, Senior Sexuality Health Educator, said, "The administrator at Crossroads, a secure youth detention center in Brooklyn, was very excited to have Leah Richberg, the Project Director, and me speak to the young men there. We feel very welcome. The kids want to learn from us. We're friendly faces who are not teachers or their moms, but are knowledgeable. We're not telling them who to be or how to be. We're giving reliable information."

Youth involved in CCA who only a short time ago believed they had no road to success are now racking up achievements. Donte, a Pathways participant, is employed as an art handler's assistant at ESP Gallery in Chelsea. BRIDGE participants Penelope and Vincente completed Drive Change, a sought-after restaurant training program, and are now working at the upscale TriBeCa Grill in lower Manhattan. Damien, one of the founders of Breaking Chains, is also now in the Drive Change program. Joshua, a participant in both BRIDGE and Pathways, is working part-time as a groundskeeper and prep cook at Whit's End Restaurant in Rockaway Beach. Daiquen, a Pathways and BRIDGE participant, is repairing and cleaning boats at Marina 59 in Rockaway.

Rinaldi said, "The challenge for many youth in our programs is the pull of gang activity in the neighborhoods where they live. We have to work on multiple fronts to offer a meaningful alternative. We address their immediate social and economic needs. We show them sustainable career paths. We provide steady, ongoing mentoring and coaching from people who care about them so they set goals and achieve them."



*Alton Cumbo, Lead Mentor, front left, with young people in the mentoring program.*

# Taste of Success

## RECENTLY RELEASED, TRAINING TO BE COOKS

Working as a line cook is the first step for many individuals seeking entry into the restaurant industry. The line cook must be expert at the job: skilled, knowledgeable, and able to turn out quality work under high pressure.

Now participants in CCA's Second Chance Initiative (SCI) who were recently released from incarceration are getting an opportunity to train for this demanding profession. They were able to secure places in a rigorous paid training program, thanks to a three-way collaboration among CCA; CNY Works, the one-stop employment service agency that is funding their wages; and With Love, Onondaga Community College's popular restaurant, located on North Salina Street.

SCI is a three-year initiative, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, that began in 2017. The focus of the program is to help men and women recently released from incarceration to secure jobs that pay living wages. Mike Pasquale, Director of Reintegration Services, and Ron Boxx, Associate Director, oversee the project.

Pasquale said, "Getting and keeping a job that pays a living wage is the major challenge for people getting out of prison. Our mandate for this project is to enroll 188 adults and place 60% of them in training or jobs in sectors that are expanding, have career ladders with a clear path to advancement, and are 'justice-friendly,' meaning they are open to employing people with criminal records who want to improve their lives."

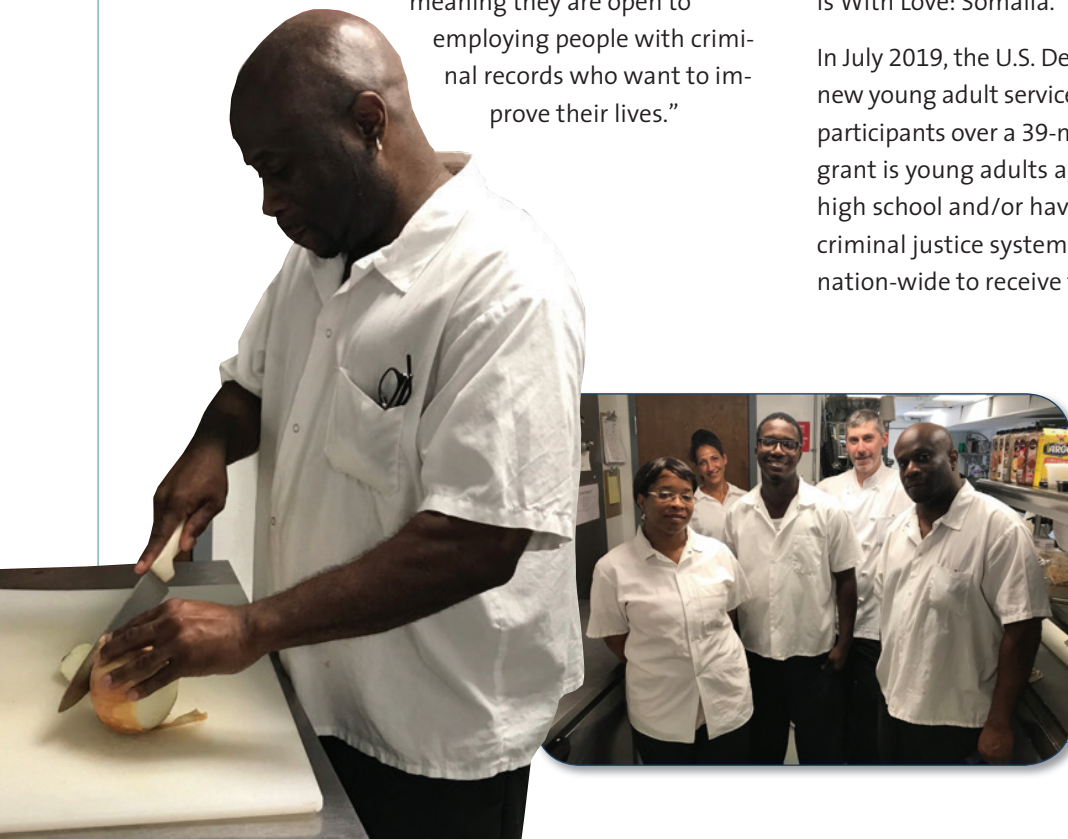
Boxx commented, "Line cook training is a great opportunity in a growing industry. Central New York added nearly 2,000 jobs in the leisure and hospitality industries in the twelve-month period ending July 2019. The median annual pay for cooks in our area is now \$25,600."

The line cook training program is a 10-week pilot. It began in July 2019 with three weeks of classroom training, followed by six weeks of on-the-job training at the With Love restaurant, and a final week of job search activities, including interviews with hospitality industry employers.

Tumekeyi Dowdell, who enrolled in SCI in April 2019, is currently a line cook trainee. A mother of three, she is working on regaining full custody of her children following her recent release from state prison. Dowdell said, "I like working with my hands and I'm excited to build a career cooking. I enjoy working at the restaurant."

With Love is owned and operated by Onondaga Community College, a part of the State University of New York. Designed as a training ground for students in the food and hospitality industries, the restaurant has become a trendsetting gathering spot with glowing reviews in many food and local publications. The restaurant has an ever-changing name to reflect the different cuisine it features each six months, paying homage to the diverse immigrant communities of Syracuse. The current name is With Love: Somalia.

In July 2019, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded CCA a new young adult services grant to serve an additional 188 participants over a 39-month period. The focus of the new grant is young adults ages 18-24 who did not complete high school and/or have been involved in the juvenile or criminal justice systems. CCA is one of only 13 agencies nation-wide to receive this highly competitive award.



*Far left: Norman Freeman, participant in the Second Chance project, cuts a perfect slice.*

*Joe Bilecki, Executive Chef of the With Love restaurant, second from right, with trainees Penny Lehr, Tumekeyi Dowdell, Tyishaun Moore, Norman Freeman.*

## FREEDOM COMMONS WELCOMES RESIDENTS; BOARD ADDS EIGHT MEMBERS FROM PAGE 1

In New York City, we have steadily expanded our work on behalf of youth who are court-involved or live in communities where youth tend to do poorly. In May, our success in working with youth in secure facilities was recognized by a \$2.5 million grant from the City to work with youth in the Horizon Juvenile Center in the Bronx. Our pioneering Bridge program continues to work with young adults on Rikers Island both before and after release. This summer we operated Summer Youth Employment programs at two different New York City Housing Authority developments. At Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn, we continue to pioneer new after-school activities, now including expert sexual health education.

The Second Chance Initiative in Syracuse, now in its second year, is supported by the U.S. Department of Labor. It is committed to enrolling 188 individuals recently released from prison in a program leading to paid jobs or job training in growing sectors of the economy with good wages. In spring 2019, USDOL awarded CCA a second contract for enrollment of an additional 188 individuals, in this case younger adults ages 18-25.

We have had notable success in stemming the school-to-prison pipeline through our Student Advocate and Transitional Coaching program, which has contributed to dramatic reductions in short- and long-term suspensions in Syracuse public schools. Five years ago, the New York Attorney General cited the Syracuse public school system for the overuse of discipline for students of color or with disabilities. As part of a district-wide

effort, CCA worked with the school system to develop programs that empower parents to work with school staff to ensure a fair discipline process. Over these five years, CCA has helped drive down short- and long-term suspensions by over 75% and 50% respectively.

Our Crossroads community-based drug treatment program for adults in Brooklyn continues its successful use of gender-specific services to help men and women on the recovery road from substance use. Our “CUSE” and “CORE” Recovery and Outreach Centers in Syracuse and Rochester were both updated and expanded last year, with support from New York State Office of Substance Abuse and Alcoholism Services (OASAS).

One of our most effective and long-term programs is Client Specific Planning (CSP), which works each year on criminal cases across the state. The goal is to reduce or eliminate jail/prison time. Our staff conduct in-depth investigations, working closely with criminal defense attorneys, to achieve better outcomes by taking into account the life history of the person coming before the Court and by presenting an alternative plan that solves problems and activates the person’s strengths. One defense attorney commented, “The people at CCA are responsive, professional, and passionate. They are a beacon of light for many clients in their darkest of times.”

The past four years have been a period both of transition and of dynamic growth for CCA. Although dollars are not the only measure or

even the most important, our annual operating budget has gone from \$7 million to over \$10 million annually during this period. We have not only expanded programs and service numbers—we have also, with strong support from the Gifford Foundation, strengthened organizational capacity, including finance, grants management, communications, Board development, and strategic planning.

We are grateful for the trust and support of friends and donors who have made these achievements possible and look forward to continuing this journey with you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Condliffe".

David Condliffe, Esq.  
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Arshack".

Dan Arshack, Esq., Board President

# Eight New Members

## ELECTED TO THE BOARD

CCA is most pleased to have elected eight new individuals with a wealth of experience to its Board of Directors. They represent a wide range of backgrounds in law, medicine, adolescent psychiatry, real estate, and finance.

- **Steve Case**, Syracuse, NY, founder and partner of Acropolis Development
- **Seymour W. James, Jr., Esq.**, NYC, former Attorney-In-Chief at Legal Aid Society of New York City and a long-time leader in the New York State and City legal communities
- **Martin J. Mack, Esq.**, Cortland, NY, former Executive Deputy Attorney General for NYS Attorneys General Eliot Spitzer, Eric Schneiderman, and Barbara Underwood, and former Deputy Secretary to Governor David Paterson
- **Jennifer Richardson**, Albany, NY, Senior VP at Patrick B. Jenkins & Associates, former Deputy Director of NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio's State Legislative Affairs Office
- **David M. Schraver, Esq.**, Rochester, NY, Nixon Peabody (of counsel), a specialist in complex commercial disputes, former President of the NYS and Monroe County Bar Associations
- **David Schwartz**, NYC, co-founder and principal of Slate Property Group
- **Shaun E. Smith, JD**, NYC, Senior VP and Chief Human Resources Officer for New York-Presbyterian Regional Hospital Network
- **Alan Charlie Wittenberg, MD**, NYC, Senior Supervising Psychiatrist at NYU/Bellevue Hospital Center, specializing in service to justice-involved youth

Dan Arshack, Esq., Board President, said that the expansion represented a real transformation.

*"As a maturing organization, now approaching its 40th year, the Board recognized the need to broaden its membership beyond the initial group who had served CCA with distinction since it was founded. We wanted the Board to embody the range of the professional expertise needed to forward the organization's work. We also needed to have stronger ties to the diverse communities served by CCA, and deepen its financial resources."*

As envisioned in the agency's current capacity-building plan, funded by the Gifford Foundation's ADVANS initiative, CCA will continue to expand the influence and resources of the Board, while maintaining its rich diversity.

## School Programs Attract Syracuse Youth & Families

CCA's Advantage After School Program at Fowler High School/Public Services Learning Academy is designed especially for students at risk of dropping out of school for academic, family, or other reasons. It is the only on-site after-school program for high school students in the Syracuse City School District.

CCA also assists students in Syracuse public schools who face Superintendent's Disciplinary Hearings or have become disengaged from school because of long-term suspension, juvenile detention or placement, or incarceration. A staff of Student Advocates/ Transition Coaches, led by Kimber Gunn, has had success engaging parents in the hearings, reducing the numbers of students who are suspended, and transitioning disengaged youth back to mainstream school. United Way funds one of the Transition Coach positions to assist the return to school and normalcy by girls who are involved or are at risk of involvement in the human trafficking industry.

A Violence Prevention initiative offers three or four training events annually that teach youth how to prevent violent situations and how to stay safe if they do occur. The popular program is at capacity and has a waiting list.



*Students in a dance workshop, part of the after-school program at Fowler High School/Public Service Learning Academy.*

*Joined at the Mike: Consultant Michael Gaut (aka Mic da Poet) helps the young brother of an After School Program participant make himself heard.*

## “Raise the Age”...Now What?

### CCA SEEKS FULL IMPLEMENTATION

In 2017, after a prolonged legislative battle, New York State passed a law raising the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18. This legislation, known as “Raise the Age” or RTA, should bring the State into conformance with most of the rest of the nation, limiting the treatment of youth under the age of 18 as adults in the criminal justice system. Implementation, however, is complex, and marked by potential pitfalls. CCA is playing a major part in a statewide movement to assure full, fair and just implementation.

Marissa Saunders, Justice Strategies Associate and Director of Community Engagement, is leading the effort to recruit volunteers to monitor implementation. Volunteers recruited by CCA are part of the statewide Raise the Age NY effort co-led by CCA, The Children’s Defense Fund and others.

The recruits are residents of upstate cities, including Syracuse and Rochester. They are members of families and communities who have experience with the challenges youth face in the criminal justice system. They participate in a two- or three-day training where they learn to use a detailed form to report how courts are handling youth.

The form facilitates the collection of data that will make it possible to determine how cases involving youth are handled across the state and specifically whether the new rules in RTA are being followed. Completed forms are sent to The Children’s Defense Fund for data collection and analysis.

David Condliffe continues to serve on the Governor’s Raise the Age Implementation Task Force, formed in April 2018 to evaluate state and local efforts to implement the law.



Volunteer court observers trained by CCA and UnChained in Syracuse.

## Justice Policy Matters:

### HOUSING, PAROLE, REINTEGRATION

“All Roads Lead to Home: Limiting Barriers to Housing for People with Criminal Justice Involvement,” was presented by David Condliffe at the New York State Supportive Housing Conference in June 2019. The presentation examined current trends in re-entry, the barriers to housing faced by individuals returning to society after a prison sentence, and innovative approaches, with a focus on CCA’s Freedom Commons, the first ever replication of the Fortune Society’s Castle and Castle Gardens. Condliffe was joined on the panel by JoAnne Page, CEO and President of Fortune Society. Bill Simmons, Syracuse Housing Authority Executive Director and a CCA Board member, was to be on the panel but was unable to attend due to an emergency.



In July 2019, Condliffe was named to the new 23-member NYS Bar Association Task Force on the Parole System. Seymour James, a newly appointed CCA Board Member, is co-chair of the task force. The task force will examine the state’s current system of parole with a view to ensuring due process and fairness for parolees.

Condliffe also continues to serve on the New York State Council on Community Re-entry and Reintegration. The Council was formed five years ago to identify and alleviate obstacles faced by individuals with criminal convictions. Since then, barriers have been eased or dismantled in regard to employment, housing, education, civil rights, clemency, and pardons. Current concerns of the Council include:

- Reducing the burden of fines and fees that are often added to sentences, leading to insupportable debt for people with little means to make a living, and
- Sealing of criminal records, an important protection for people re-entering the work force or applying for educational opportunities or job training.

*Above: Seymour James, CCA Board member, was named co-chair of the State Bar Association Task Force on the Parole System.*

## 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.

# 2018 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

### FEDERAL

Department of Education  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
DHHS/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Department of Labor

### NEW YORK STATE

Department of Corrections and Community Supervision  
Department of Education  
Department of Health  
Division of Criminal Justice Services  
Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative  
New York State Assembly  
Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services  
Office of Children and Family Services

### CITY/COUNTY

Monroe County  
New York City Council and Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice  
New York City Department of Corrections  
New York City Department of Probation  
New York City Department of Youth & Community Development  
Syracuse City School District  
Syracuse Housing Authority

## Foundations/Corporations/Organizations

### Over \$100,000

United Way of Central New York

### \$10,000-\$99,999

Brooklyn Community Foundation  
CNY Works  
Central New York Community Foundation  
The Fortune Society  
The Gifford Foundation  
Men's Warehouse  
The New York Bar Foundation  
Onondaga Cortland Madison BOCES  
The Tow Foundation

### Under \$9,999

Steven & May Cavin Leeman Foundation  
Norstar Development  
ROcovery Fitness  
Trust for the Meditation Process  
United Radio

## Individuals

### Over \$1,000

Daniel Arshack  
Benjamin & Susan Baxt  
David Condliffe  
Shelia Rule  
David & Nancy Schraver

### \$500-\$999

Leonard Campolieta  
Robert Catell  
Steven Corsello  
Michelle Henry  
Liz Jarit  
Richard Raysman

### \$250-\$499

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Ellen Condliffe Lagemann  
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Maureen J. Fischer  
Claudia Glaser  
& Carolina Cordero Dyer  
Eric & Judith Mower  
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Marsha Weissman

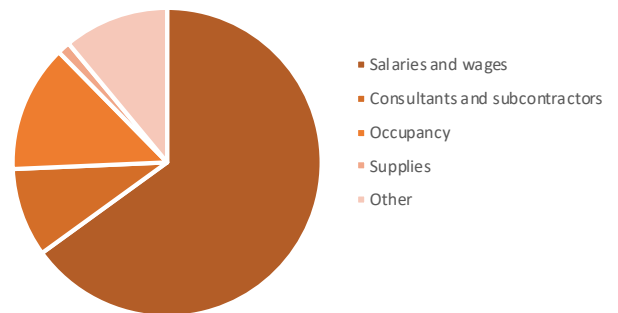
### \$100-\$249

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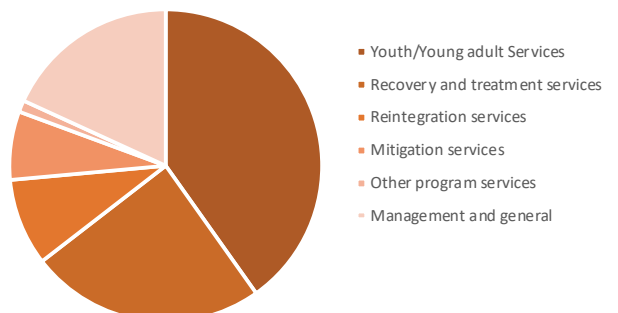
## Operating Revenues and Expenses

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2018	2017
Government grants and contracts	\$7,600,663	\$6,736,429
Contributions and other revenue	695,482	1,027,232
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$8,296,145</b>	<b>\$7,763,661</b>

EXPENSES	2018	2017
Salaries and wages	\$5,140,385	\$4,784,242
Consultants and subcontractors	734,527	607,640
Occupancy	1,053,807	951,390
Supplies	105,963	95,543
Other	871,297	1,035,232
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$7,905,979</b>	<b>\$7,474,047</b>



FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES	2018	2017
Youth/Young adult services	\$3,176,705	\$2,914,138
Recovery and treatment services	1,925,223	1,786,262
Reintegration services	712,817	518,043
Mitigation services	559,612	513,134
Other program services	95,405	332,388
Management and general	1,436,217	1,410,082
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$7,905,979</b>	<b>\$7,474,047</b>



# New Housing Unites Family After 10-Year Separation



Marissa Porter and Syeeb Howard with their three children (from l to r) Symarra, Norell and Symier at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse.

For Syeeb Howard and Marissa Porter, a decade of struggles with substance use and homelessness meant long periods of separation from their children. Now, thanks to help with recovery and supportive housing in the new Freedom Commons, they and their children will finally be able to live as a family.

Howard and Porter first came to CCA in 2010. The Reentry Clinic program helped Howard correct errors in his criminal history record. Porter completed a work readiness program. Unfortunately, they subsequently relapsed and saw their two young children placed in foster care with Howard's sister.

In August 2018, the couple had a third child, who was born addicted. Porter said, "I was at the end of my rope, struggling with depression. I didn't want to live." She and Howard resolved to take up the recovery journey again. They came to CCA's CUSE Recovery and Outreach Center in downtown

Syracuse. Howard joined the orientation team, completed a training program, and was hired by Liberty Resources as a Certified Recovery Peer Advocate. Porter was employed to work at the front desk.

On July 22, 2019, the couple appeared before Judge Michelle Bailey in Onondaga County Family Court. They requested the Court's approval to move into a two-bedroom unit in Freedom Commons permanent supportive housing. Their hope was that by appearing in court, they could overcome a dilemma: approval for an apartment with multiple bedrooms requires that parents have custody of their children, but custody will not be granted unless the parents have a suitable home.

Porter said, "Nicole Odom, case manager for supportive housing at Freedom Commons, and the CCA Reentry Clinic director took it upon themselves to come to court with us. Nicole played a big part in helping us.

When the judge heard about the case management and other services that would be available to us through CCA, she gave her approval."

Howard, in a telephone conversation, was clearly ecstatic at the news. He said, "When we move into Freedom Commons, we'll have the baby with us right away. Eventually we'll have all three children. We have unsupervised visits with the children now. We spend as much time with them as our work schedules permit. But soon we'll be together as a family. This only came about because of the supportive housing aspect of Freedom Commons."

Porter added, "The apartment we're moving into is completely furnished. It has two bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen, and closet space. There's a playground and a Boys and Girls Club across the street. I grew up in that neighborhood. It's changed so much for the better. I know Freedom Commons will be an asset to the whole neighborhood."



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