

# ELMS 6th Grade Students Present A Hero's Journey: *The Heroes of Our Community*

## Community Heroes



Student Editors: Ella Foresti & Lola Morin



## *A Hero's Journey*

As a part of our sixth grade students' expedition titled "The Heroes of our Community", students have intensely investigated the meaning behind the following guiding questions:

How do we define a community?  
How are communities interdependent?

In Language Arts, students explored the habits of good readers and writers that was driven by heroes in communities, specifically heroes present in our local community and more closely through the lens of what makes a community. We explored the guiding question of "What defines a community?" and "How are communities interdependent?" through our ELMS community, the local Syracuse community, and within the community of "Seedfolks." We are currently looking through the lens of "Heroes of a Literary World" to explore identity, using the literary novel "The Lightning Thief", to explore how Percy is a hero in his literary world as he partakes on his hero's journey. When reading the *The Hero's Journey*, students learned that there are basic stages that every hero on a quest goes through that results in them becoming a changed person. As a culminating experience, ELMS sixth grade students have connected their literary heroes' character traits and the stages every hero endures to those heroes in our Syracuse community. Students went into our Syracuse community to interview local heroes and analyze the community member as a hero on a journey. Students worked independently and then in groups to collaboratively write an essay that captures their hero's experience on their journey. The portraits taken of our heroes are taken by students and staff alike.

Three ELMS claps to the heroes of our community and also to the sixth grade students who continue on their own hero's journey!

*Meet the heroes of our community...*

## *Ben Walsh, Mayor of Syracuse*



Mayor Ben Walsh is a hero to our Syracuse community. He was born and raised in Syracuse and was surrounded by positive role models that have shaped who he is today as a person and as the mayor of our city.

When asked about the positive influences that led him to his role as mayor of Syracuse, Mayor Walsh credits his family and their tradition of public service. His aunt was a judge and she inspired him to become somebody who stops violence and protects the people in our community. Mayor Walsh also credits his mother as a positive influence in his life. She was an educator at Fowler High School for 18 years and she inspired him to help people in need. Lastly, his grandfather was mayor in the 1960s while his father a member of Congress.

Mayor Walsh experienced failures that helped him grow. In school, his grades were bad but this became motivation for him to learn from his mistakes—therefore, embracing a growth mindset and seeing the value interdependence. This mindset has allowed the mayor to succeed in public office. He realized that he can't do everything himself. He stated that, "We need the community to help us do our job. Our 'Adopt-a-Block' program, which encourages businesses to adopt a block to clean, shows how we rely on community members to help take care of neighborhoods. They rely on me to start programs."

Mayor Walsh has many responsibilities in his role as mayor, but by valuing the power he has to create positive change, giving people a chance to be safe from violence, creating programs to help the community and its members, he continues to improve our city's potential.

Three ELMS claps to our Mayor, Ben Walsh!

~ Isaiah Aguirre

## *Kristen, Corporation Counsel*



Kristen Smith is a hero to the Syracuse community. As city attorney, Mrs. Smith plays an important role because she provides legal advice and represents the Mayor, City Departments, and Common Council in all legal matters. She defends and manages the city's legal affairs and she also reviews and signs contracts.

There were positive and negative experiences that influenced Mrs. Smith on this hero's journey to become a lawyer and a city attorney. Mrs. Smith states that her teachers encouraged her not to give up when she was discouraged and to always try your best. Another positive influence on her journey that helped her to become a hero of the community was how she embraced a growth mindset. She states that she was able to learn from her mistakes early in her career and today and has grown from them.

Mrs. Smith is a hero to our community in her role as city attorney because everyone in the city of Syracuse relies on her to give legal advice to community members and organizations, while she relies on the court system and the judge to do their jobs and hear her out. As city attorney, she has taken an active role in the economic development of our city. One example of this has been her role in the City of Syracuse purchasing a little over 17,000 city streetlights from National Grid. This deal allows Syracuse to convert the lights into energy efficient lights which will save the city \$3 million a year on costs on energy and maintenance. Another benefit of this deal is that there will also be new smart streetlights that will connect the Syracuse community to a smart grid. This will allow public WiFi and can help community members to monitor traffic, weather, and so many other possibilities in the future.

Kristen Smith, our city attorney, is a hero to the Syracuse community for the work she does today and its impact in the future.

~ Gloria Poe & Judah Rose

## *Maureen, Bank of America*



Maureen is the vice president of the Bank of America. She is a well-known face in the Syracuse banking community with 37 years of experience.

Maureen was unsure of her career path when she took a job at a bank. It was her coworkers and customers that positively influenced and challenged her as she moved around to many banks in different positions. Her coworkers supported her by leading by example, always expecting her to do her best, setting goals for herself, and to learn from her mistakes. Over time, Maureen realized that she enjoyed working with customers most and seeing them happy and satisfied. She states that by knowing her customers' needs and responsibilities, they rely on her to keep them informed.

Maureen has many responsibilities in her position at the bank that support the community. Not only does she handle mortgages, loans, saving accounts, safe deposits, but she also states how much she's grown by giving back to the community by volunteering at local events. These experiences have allowed her to grow not only as a banker but as a person. Maureen is a hero to our community for her positive impact on the community.

~ Ja'bri Blunt, Ameila Capozzolo, Adeline English,  
Symarra Howard, and George Pagan

## *Ariana, Cafe Kubal*



One of the heroes in the community is Ariana and she is the manager of Café Kubal in downtown Syracuse, near the public library.

Ariana enjoys running the business aspects and creating a comfortable atmosphere for people to meet and talk. She creates a comfortable place for people to relax and work. She creates menus that are not only affordable, but taste good, are healthy, and make a profit. The environment in the café is unique and inviting.

Failures in the kitchen have helped Ariana grow in her role at this community cafe. Sometimes when trying new recipes, they don't always turn out how she had hoped-- maybe she "burns" the cookies. Not everyone likes the same thing and sometimes we need to adjust to temperatures and how long it's in the oven for. "Everyone makes mistakes and you learn and grow from them," she says. Ariana's goal is to create a comforting business atmosphere and great customer service.

Ariana gives back gifts of joy, happiness, and kindness through providing the community with great customer service, tasty food at an affordable price, and a café that provides an inviting atmosphere for the community.

~ Taylee Allen, Nguyen Bui, Madison Coaxum,  
Rihanna Graham, Ny'Kere Simmons Young

*Judge Julie Cecile, Family Court Judge*



Family court Judge Julie Cecile is a hero to our community. She is the Onondaga County Family Court judge that works with troubled kids and families in need of support and guidance.

The most influential experience that led my hero to her current role as a family court judge was from her childhood. Judge Cecile's family adopted and took in numerous foster children during her childhood. She saw, firsthand, how children suffered when their homes were troubled. She didn't want any other child to end up like them, living on the street with no food, water, or a place to live and call home. These experiences inspired her on her journey to becoming a lawyer and now as a judge.

Judge Cecile has experienced failures too. One example was when three to four troubled kids came to court and right after they left court, they were shot and killed. That hurt her deeply and now she analyzes every single thing she does so that cannot happen again. She collaborates with community members to make sure they have the supports needed to help the kids.

Judge Julie Cecile is a hero to our Syracuse community. Children and families rely on her to be fair, collaborate with people and organizations to make sure supports are in place to help, and to give kids a second chance to straighten up their lives.

~ Ricardo Ibanez, Myles Baxter, and John Hughes II

*Joshua, NYS Unified Court Officer*



Another hero of our community is Josh the NYS Unified Court Officer.

Officer Josh stated his life experiences and basic training prepared him to become an officer. He dreamed of being an officer since he was a little kid, and was supported by his friends and family in the process. He worked hard, learning defensive tactic at the academy that prepared him for this job.

As a court officer, Officer Josh states, "The community is relying on us to keep them safe and they need our help." With the responsibility of keeping the community safe, Officer Josh's mindset of "They need our help!"

Officer Josh acknowledges he has a lot of responsibilities to keep our community safe. One difficult aspect of his job is when he has to arrest people when they are breaking the law. He believes that he needs to set a good example for the little kids in the community!

Officer Josh feels blessed to be a court officer in our community. He is a hero to our community for his presence in the community and the skills he has to keep community members safe.

~ Mohammad Alnamrouti and Montana Pullins



## Bethany, Downtown Historian/Committee



Bethany is a news reporter. A Downtown news reporter. "Well, what's the job of a news reporter you ask?" The job of a downtown news reporter is to interact with groups of people and help build up new businesses in downtown. This is how she did it.

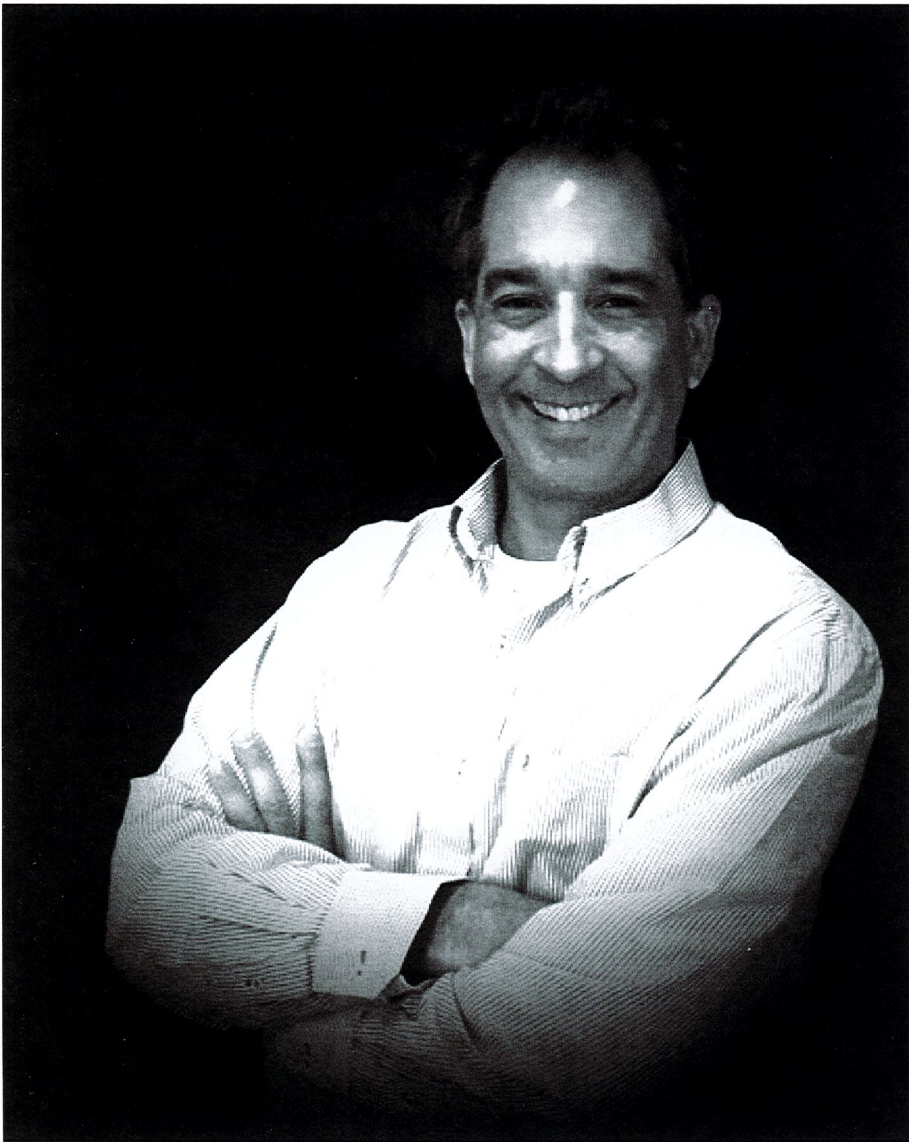
You may know there are many jobs out there. What made downtown's one and only, Miss Bethany, become the news reporter she is now? What really motivated her to become downtown's news reporter was her awesome college full of writing and communication. But there is more than one reason Bethany is who she is today. She sees new businesses in downtown as an opportunity to help the city. That is what inspired Bethany to get the job she was destined for. Well, she said it herself... "I help to bring new businesses to downtown," says Bethany. "And I love doing it. But I've got to say, my college was really the push I needed to become Bethany, the Downtown News Reporter. It really inspired me to help my city businesses and share them with the world."

But the successes aren't what taught Bethany to grow stronger and smarter as a news reporter, it was her failures. But, "Failures are when you get the answer wrong." Yes, yes, I know, but when you get the wrong answer you can learn from it. Some failures for Bethany, such as failed tests and social setbacks, pushed her higher in her career. Some specific slipups for Bethany that challenged her but built her back up were: 1. wrong answers and 2. unhappy clients. No one ever wants to get the answer wrong, but sometimes you can really learn more about the subject or yourself, how you think, when the answer is incorrect. For Miss Bethany, she learned from every single wrong choice she has made. But wrong answers are nothing compared to the social setbacks and unhappy clients. When her clients aren't satisfied with her help, Bethany learns that patience she has now. See, failures aren't that bad. Especially when learning how to be a news reporter. Or any other job.

With all of that said, there is still one more question, "What does Bethany give back to the downtown community?" Well, Bethany will always help downtowns smaller businesses grow bigger, she will always help her client's businesses stand out more. Finally, Bethany is a connector. So, there you go. A report on... Bethany, Downtown News Reporter, connector of people and builder of businesses.

~ Kahlin Hopkins, Toe Meh, Tachianny Oliver, Leigh Semmens, Nazariah Smith, DeNygah Snow, Jamaya Williams, Reagan Winchell

## Joe, Blue Rock Energy



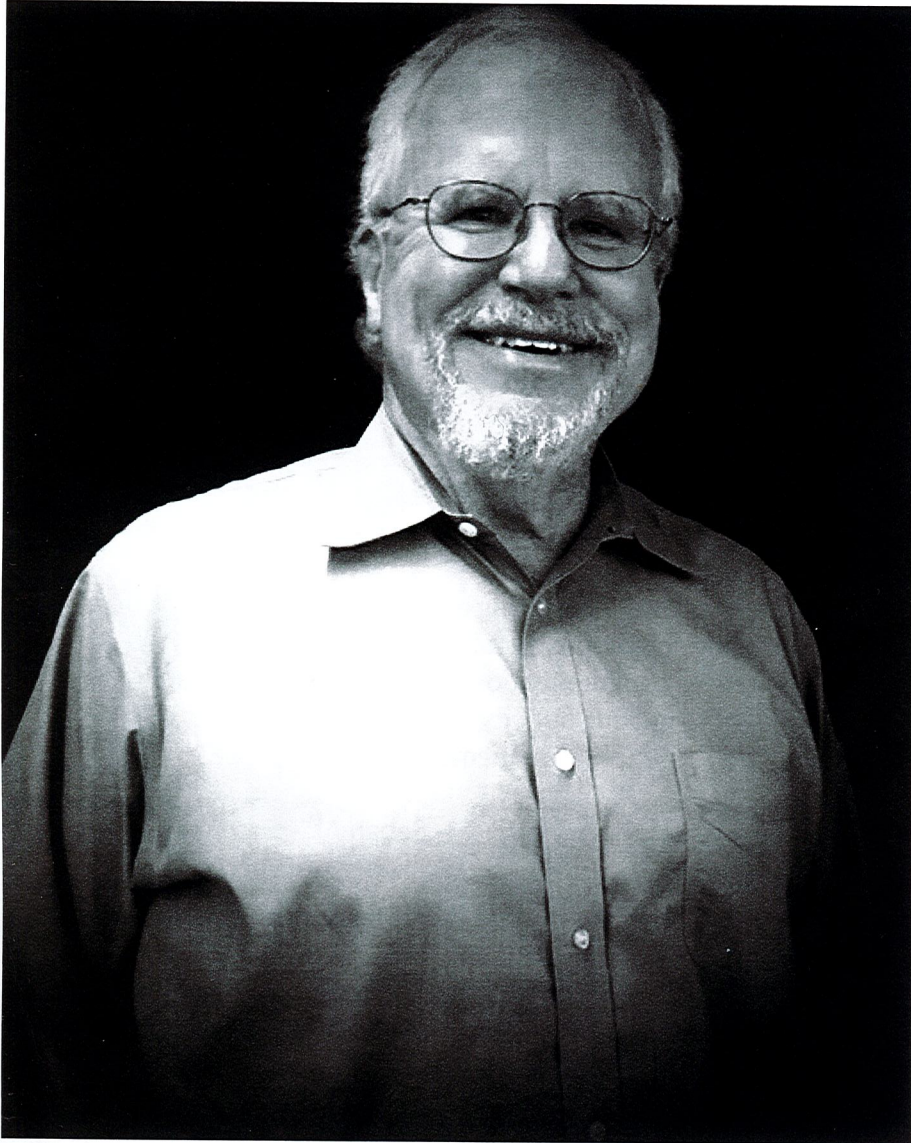
Joe is a hero to our community. He is a community member that is invested in truly giving back to Syracuse. Joe's involvement in charities have benefitted him in his current role overseeing Customer Service at Blue Rock Energy.

Joe's life experiences have led him to his current role at Blue Rock. He began in the kitchen business and became involved in community events and gave back charitable donations to countless organizations. One example is the new food service center at the Rescue Mission. He helped to raise 12 million dollars to build a family room to serve families and children meals. Another positive experience that supported his growth is his involvement in Joseph House, a home for young mothers with young children to escape violence or homelessness. With his involvement, lighting for this home was donated along with its installation.

What Joe finds most rewarding about his role at Blue Rock Energy is sponsoring community families with gifts and food as a way to give back to his community. Joe is a hero to our community for his commitment to making our city a better place for all its community members.

~ Sebah Alakoub, Jahmi Brumfield,  
William Kurtz, and Abdullah Merza

## *Phil, Blue Rock Energy*



Phil VanHorne, CEO of Blue Rock Energy, is a hero of our community. Blue Rock Energy is an energy services company that provides energy solutions to the community and prides themselves on the community "having a choice to save."

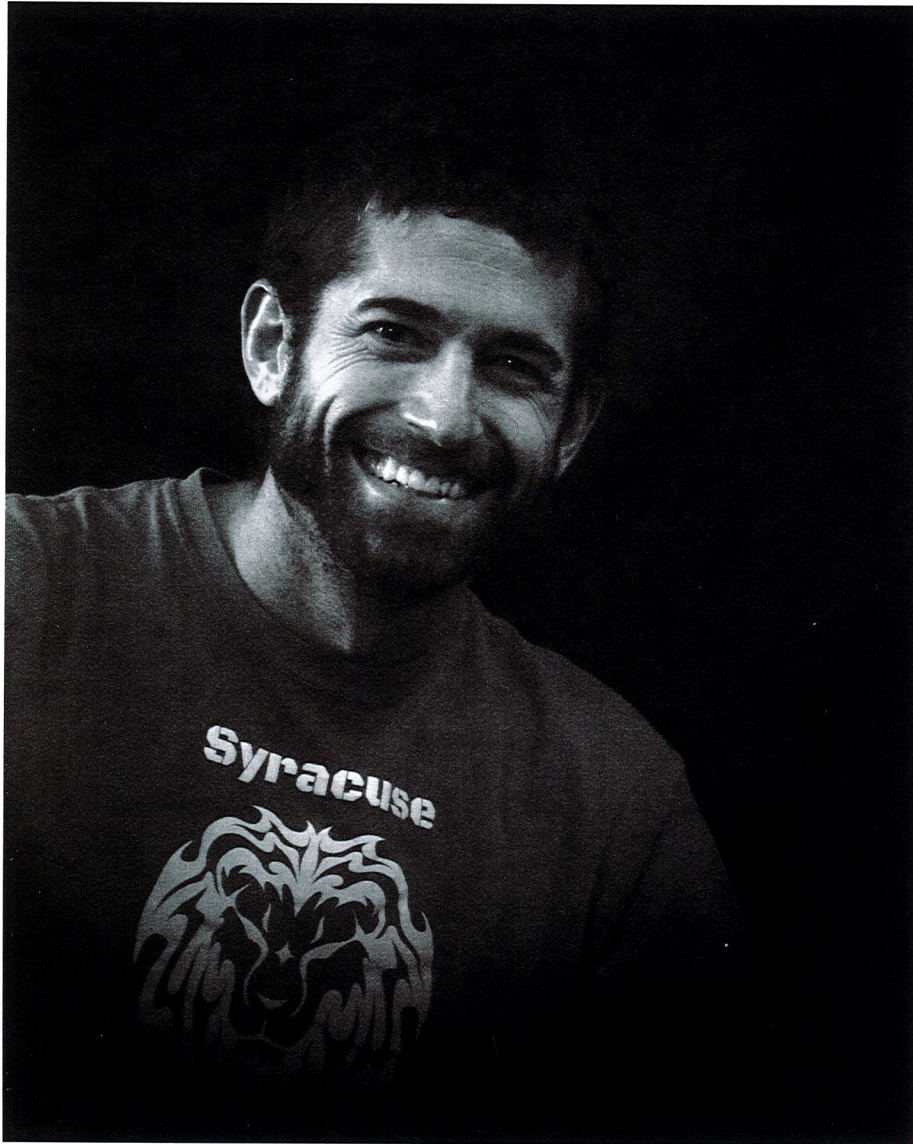
Phil had many positive influences that led him to his current role as CEO. His dad was an electrician and owned his own business appliance company. As a child, participating in sports and band taught him strong dedication and practice skills. In college, he was in the engineering program and first became interested in energy. Lastly, his 20 years with National Grid gave him experience in a workplace that prepared him for this job.

One setback that helped Phil grow was in 2003 when he created a business plan for his company, but it was wrong and was denied at first. Phil stated, "Working as a team helps to solve all problems." So, along with his team they revised the plan and their determination, teamwork, and growth mindset paid off!

The people in our Syracuse community should support this small business and use alternative energy such as solar panels. Phil does a lot of volunteer work at local shelters and promotes volunteerism within the community. Blue Rock help give back to the community and the community also helps Blue Rock by giving business and by paying their bills. This is our Blue Rock community hero.

~ Mayar Ahmad, Jeremiah Benjamin,  
Romario Campbell, and Neftaly OValle-Rodriguez

## Ryan, Ninja Barracks Gym



Ryan is the owner of the Ninja Barracks gym. The Ninja Barracks is a small American Ninja Warrior course. Ryan was inspired to open the Syracuse Ninja Barracks gym because he enjoys working out and he wanted to open a different type of gym that benefits both kids and adults. This would be a way to connect with all ages of the community, bringing the community together using his passion for fitness.

Ryan began testing the American Ninja Warrior obstacles which led to him building one in his backyard in the city of Syracuse—therefore his idea to build Ninja Barracks gym was born. He wanted to share his passion for fitness with the Syracuse community. He opened his backyard obstacle course to the public but it was quickly shut down by the city. While looking for space to continue his dream, he continued to train, traveled to competitions, and eventually getting permits to open his own business. Ryan finally opened his gym to the public in October of 2018.

Ryan's journey shows that he is dedicated, hardworking, and a hero of our community by his inspiring and educating others to get fit and active.

~ Frank Colasacco, Adam Kurtz,  
Kallin Mathis, and Cristian Norris

## *Greg, Pacific Health Club*



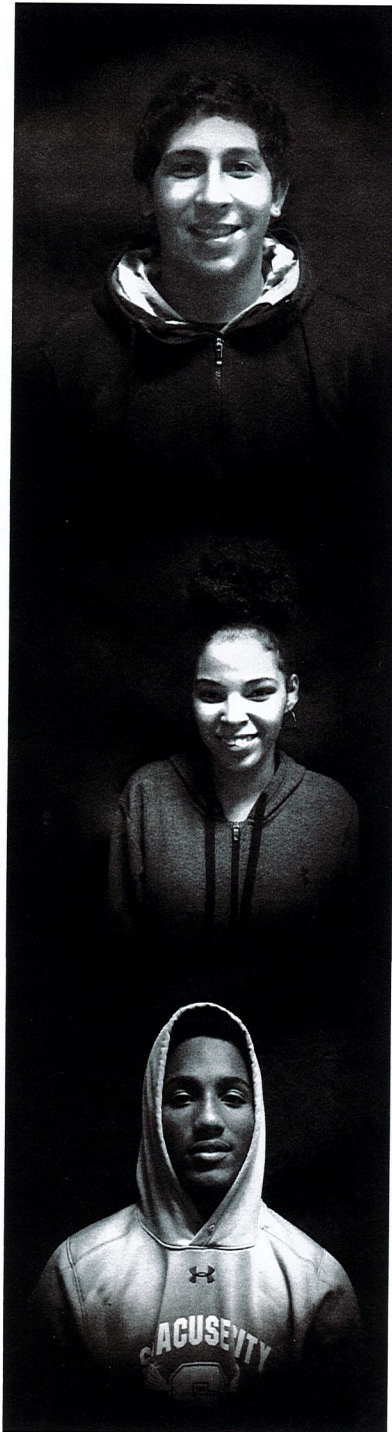
Greg at the Pacific Health Club is someone that influences the community to stay healthy through his position as a trainer.

The community relies on him to provide accurate health knowledge, while boosting their self-confidence. Greg's uncles enjoyed wrestling, and his brother and older sister positively influenced his path in choosing his career.

Greg embraces a growth mindset and has taken many risks throughout his year as a health influencer. It is important for a health influencer to embrace a growth mindset because the health influencer must be able to influence others to have an open mindset and be challenged enough to try new things.

As a health influencer, Greg has a role in the health community in which he physically and mentally gives back. Greg gives back a boost of self-confidence and knowledge about health to the community.

~ Sa'Lena Boatwright, Nyla Hardy,  
Jaden Perry, and Trinity Porch



## *Joel, Yahira, and Albert*

Joel, Yahira, and Albert are students in the challenging, college-preparatory Automotive Technology program at The Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central (ITC). These students, or upcoming automotive technicians, are heroes to our community with the skillset they learn, the grit to partake in this highly-rigorous program, and the service they are entering to keep police cars, fire trucks, buses, and more to ensure they are running safely on community roads.

More than just a high school, ITC is a community that ensures that all students become lifelong, successful learners. Joel, Yahira, and Albert all state that the positive, growth mindset of their peers and teachers, along with the experiences they are provided, have all positively influenced them in their journey at ITC.

Joel, Yahira, and Albert state that they have experienced challenges and failures that have helped them grow. They said, "Failures happen but you have to pick yourself back up." This shows how they show perseverance in difficult times. These students note that out of the challenges they have experienced, they find the most rewarding aspect of their program is that they are career ready in high school. With ability to earn a CTE certification with successful completion of the Automotive Technology program, they realize the skills they earn now will benefit them in their futures. Joel, Yahira, and Albert all state that as the program becomes more challenging, they rely on each other to ensure their work is correct. It also helps knowing when they complete high school, they enter the work force with a degree and experience to earn money.

Joel, Yahira, and Albert are upcoming automotive technicians in the ITC program. They are heroes to our ELMS and Syracuse community for the positive experiences and role models they provide to not only our students, the grit they must have to partake in such a rigorous program, but also to the community for the skillset they learn and the service they provide now and in the future to keep all modes of transportation safe on community roads. Three ELMS claps to our heroes!

~ Lola Morin, Ella Foresti, and Mrs. Talev

## Ron, Syracuse Blue Print



Our hero of the community, Ron, is the manager of the Syracuse Blueprint Company. As manager, he sometimes does the jobs of other workers when they're not there and he works in the printing department as well.

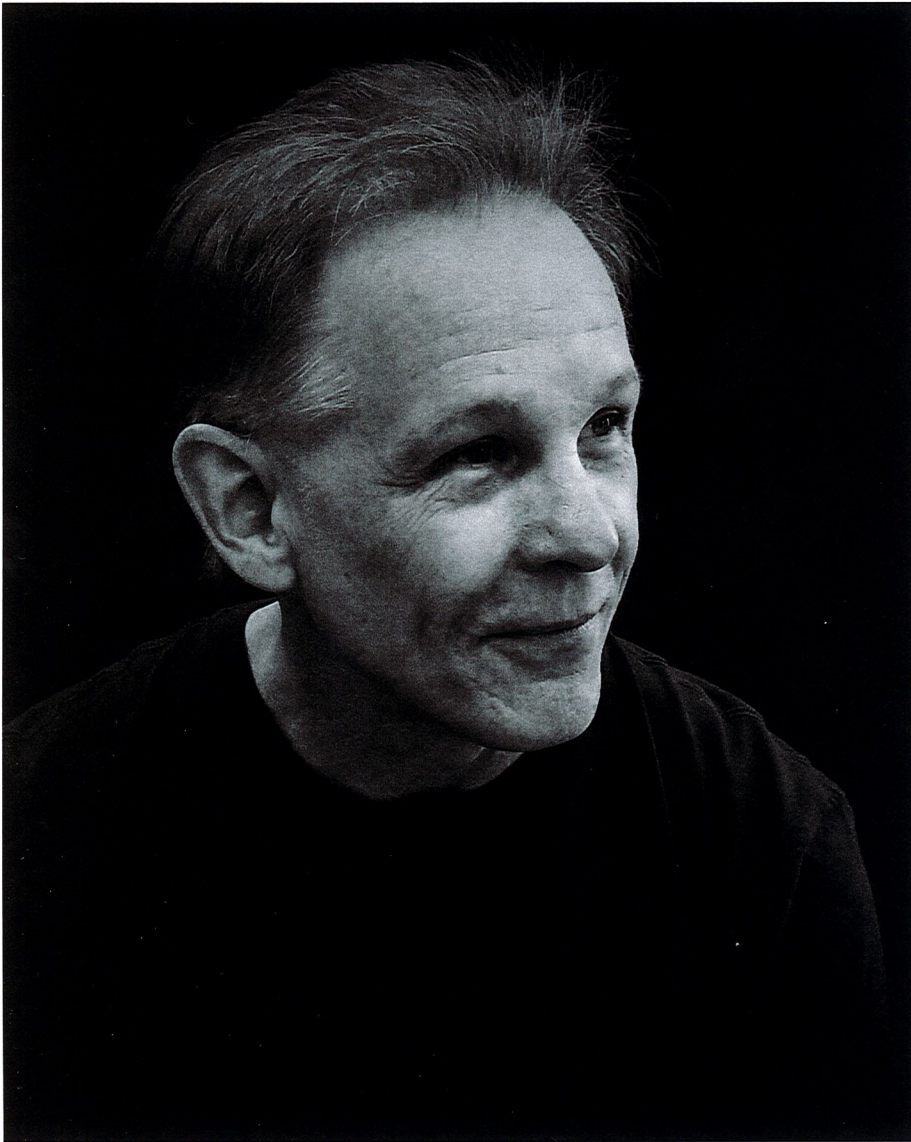
Some positive influences that lead Ron to his current role was, as a kid, Ron would see signs and billboards and imagine his designs on them. He thought, "It would be cool if thousands of people saw my art every day."

One failure that helped Ron grow was that he dropped out of high school his senior year. Determined to move beyond this challenge, Ron decided to go back and finish his schooling at age twenty-five. This challenge set him back from having his dream job for some time, but he overcame this challenge with grit and went on to graduate from college. Finally, he was able to get his dream job!

The community relies on this hero to get their print jobs done with high-quality printing and on time. This hero gives back to the community by occasionally giving back the cost of the prints for donation and giving Blue Print Shop jobs to the citizens of Syracuse.

~ Infynadei Canady, Toren Carnrite,  
Kameron Gadoua, Austin Snider, Madison Winchell

## *Paul, Syracuse Blue Print*



Our hero's name is Paul, and he is the press man at Syracuse Blue Print. In his role with the community, it is important that creates high-quality work for customers in a timely fashion.

Some positive influences that led him to his role were his family and his teachers who encouraged him. His failures helped him grow and Paul stated, "You must stick to it and move on when you make mistakes." Paul gives kindness and his strong work ethic back to the community. Without him, people would have to make their own prints and posters.

In closing, Paul is a press man and he is our hero because he gives back a strong work ethic through his service to our community.

~ Elise Forget, Desirea Graham,  
Sanai Gyder, and Daysean Jefferson



*Spencer Stultz, Folk-Art Center*



Spencer Stultz is a hero of our community who works at the Folk-Art Center as the Education Outreach Coordinator.

One positive influence in Spencer's life was her mother because she loves art and that inspired her to also do art. A negative experience that influenced Spencer was transferring to Syracuse University for school. This transfer was a short term setback for her since her experience studying political science and made her realize that this was not going to be a journey for happiness. Through this experience she realized her love for art.

As an artist, Spencer feels she honors the community by exhibiting their art in the Folk-Art Center. She gives the community the opportunity to appreciate the arts and to have an affordable experience to create art.

~ Yavian Fuentes, Jarihana Huddleston,  
LaNeiyah Rudolph, and Elizabeth Zimmerman

## *Steve, Subcat Studio*



Steve at Subcat Studios helps record, edit, and release, publish, and post music. Subcat Studios is a hero to our community because they provide artists a studio that has a team of professionals that bring your ideas to life.

Collaborating with people has been a highlight of Steve's experience at Subcat. He states that working with people allows you to learn from one another but it also builds trust. Steve explained that trusting his Subcat community opened doors for him, allowing him to achieve his goals.

Experiencing failure when Steve first started in this studio allowed him to grow personally and professionally. He made mistakes that musicians didn't like and he had to reflect on them to prevent it from happening again. This motivated him to always learn from his mistakes and research specific topics or ask coworkers, but it also allowed him to understand how to handle it professionally with artists and coworkers.

Subcat Studio is a hero to our community for its dedicated professionals, time, collaboration, and research to create a studio that gives artists a space to create high-quality products.

~ Josiah Caldwell, Ah'Maya Holloman,  
Nathan King Jr., Evan Wight, and Ja'Naii Williams