

Neurodiversity Fair

Booklet

SEEING DIFFERENTLY



Understanding Deeply



**SYRACUSE
CITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

**May 9, 2026
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Nottingham HS**

11:00 AM Opening

Auditorium Open at 10:45

Jackson Melendez, Student at Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central

Mayor Sharon Owens



“We all are on the earth for a purpose. My purpose is to serve people with integrity. It means looking into the eyes of an individual and not imposing my expectations, but meeting them where they are and speaking life into the possibilities of who they can be.”

-Sharron Owens

Denise Jackson, SCSD Parent

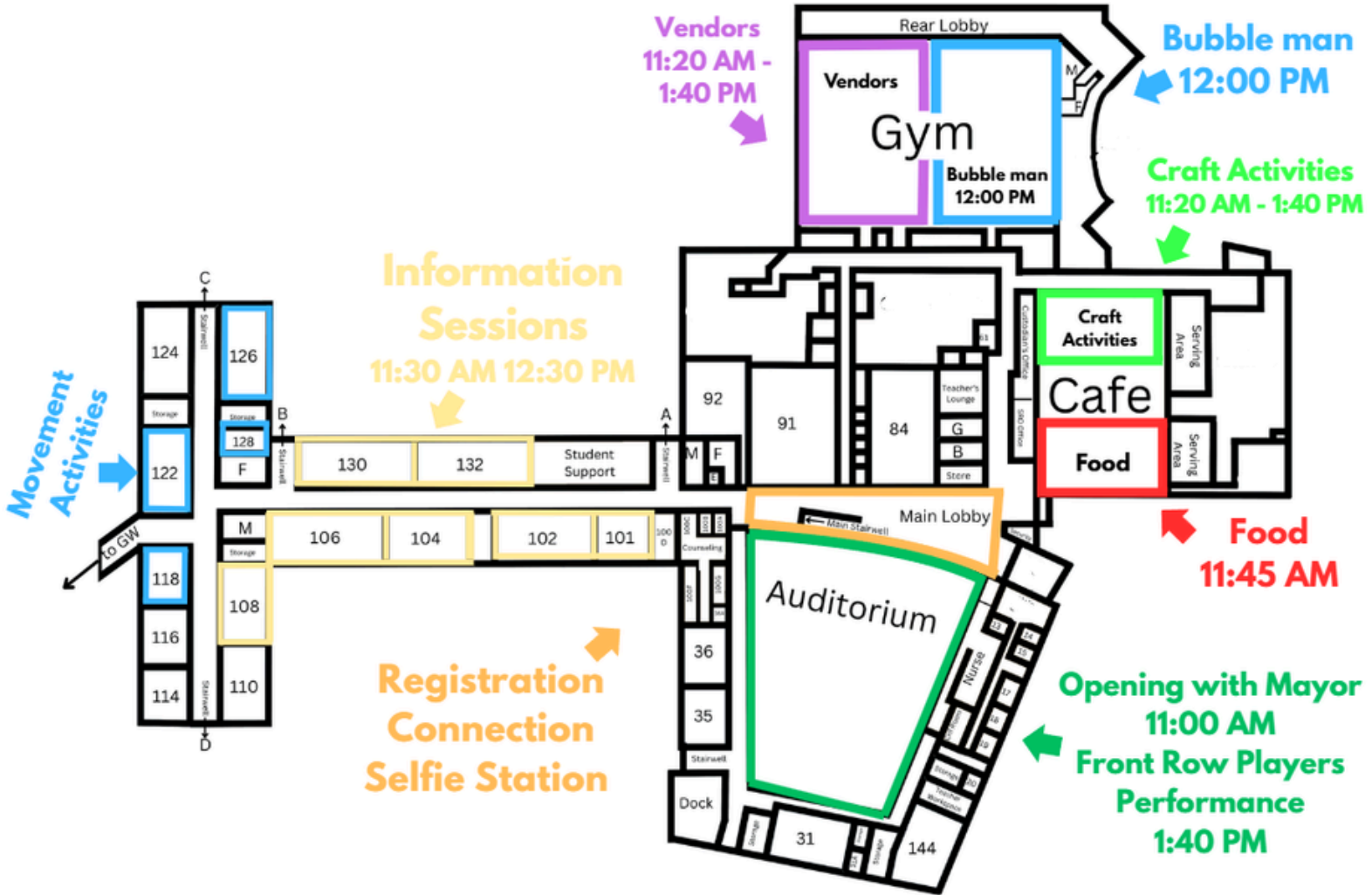
Cornell University Neuroscientists

Set the tone for us all to . . .

SEE DIFFERENTLY AND UNDERSTAND DEEPLY



Map



11:45 AM Lunch, Cafeteria

Food Choices



Sandwiches come with bagged items including chips and a separate bottle of water

- Portabella Mushrooms
- Roast Beef
- Ham
- Turkey



- **Chicken tender and mac and cheese** combo



Vegan Meal

12:00 PM Attraction, Gym

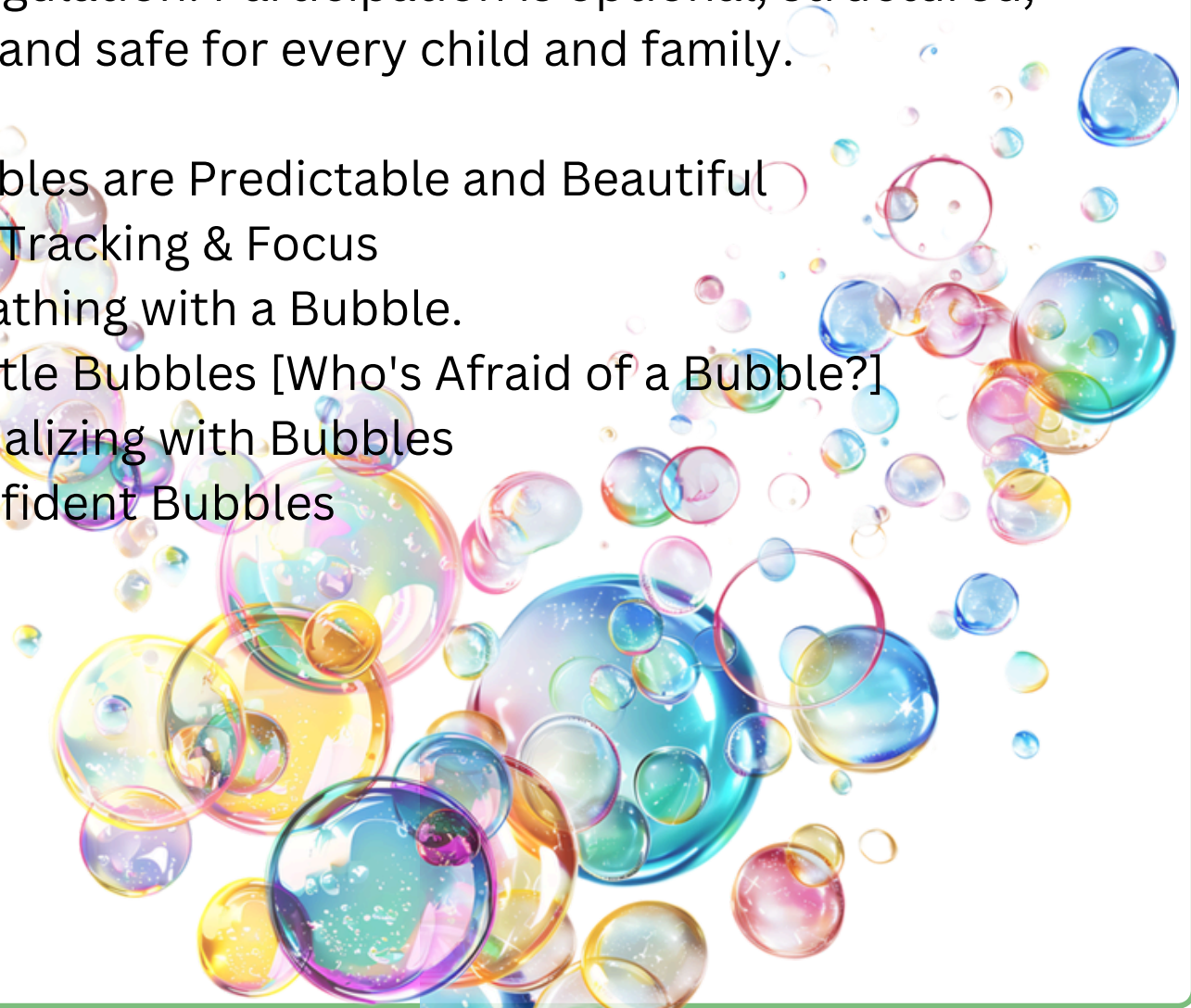
12:00 - 12:10 PM Presentation

12:10 PM - 1:00 PM Play

Calm & Colorful: A Sensory Bubble Experience Gym

Mega Bubble Man experience teaching calm breathing, focus, and confidence through gentle bubble play. Children learn cause and effect, slow movement, and self-regulation. Participation is optional, structured, quiet, and safe for every child and family.

1. Bubbles are Predictable and Beautiful
2. Eye Tracking & Focus
3. Breathing with a Bubble.
4. Gentle Bubbles [Who's Afraid of a Bubble?]
5. Socializing with Bubbles
6. Confident Bubbles



12:30 Attraction, Room #108



See Differently, Understand Deeply Restorative Circle

Meredith Needham, Senior Restorative Practices Consultant

Rich Richardson, Director of Restorative Discipline

Room #108

The partnership between Peaceful Schools and SCSD Office of Student Support Services supports Restorative Justice Practices embedded in the Code of Conduct, Character and Support and integral to SCSD's Strategic Plan.

Experience and participate in a community building circle with Peaceful Schools, The Office of Student Support Services and SCSD students. This circle will align with community building circles occurring throughout the district and provides opportunity to build relationships while strengthening our neurodivergent community.

“Restorative circles create space for families and students to be heard, understood, and strengthened together.”

Info Sessions

Information Sessions

11:20 AM - 1:40 PM CNI, Information and Activities

Ask a Neuroscientist
Community Neuroscience Initiative, CNI
Room # 101

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM -Session 1

Better Behavior, Backed by Science
Coach Kiara Belen
Room # 106

11:30 AM – 12:00 AM Session 1
12:30 PM – 1:00 PM -Session 2

11:30 AM – 12:00 AM -Session 1
12:30 PM – 1:00 PM -Session 2

OPWDD
Nicole Nucci and
David Kudgus
Room # 130

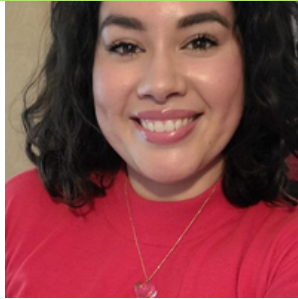
David's Refuge
Stronger Together: Combating
Caregiver Burnout Through
Support and Community
Room # 132

Parent to Parent
Preventing Parent Burnout
Room # 104

Inclusive U
Transition after High School
Room # 102

11:20 AM - 1:40 PM

Information/Activities Room #101



Ask a Neuroscientist!

Marlen Gonzalez, PhD

Cornell Doctoral Students:

Senegal Mabry, Sara Carrillo, Nora Prior, Rickki Laser
Room #101

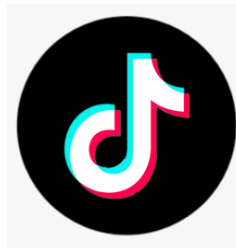
Participants will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities to learn more about why brains are so special and diverse. You may even get to hold a real brain! Neuroscientists will be on hand with information sheets and a strong interest in YOUR questions. Ask a neuroscientist!

Community Neuroscience Initiative (CNI)

The CNI's mission is to democratize neuroscience by building sustained, reciprocal partnerships between researchers and communities – so that the people who live the contexts we study shape the science that affects their care.

11:30 AM Info Session

Room # 106



#Calmwithkiara

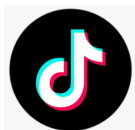
Better Behavior, Backed by Science

Virtual Session with Coach Kiara Belen

Room#106

Transform discipline through brain science: stop power struggles, build connection, and raise emotionally resilient kids. Learn how values and boundaries can create peace, respect, and cooperation.

Coach Kiara is a mother and eldest of seven siblings. She earned her parenting certification from the Jai Institute for Parenting. A **globally** recognized leader in evidence-based parent education, rooted in neuroscience, emotional intelligence, and conscious communication. Her mission is to help families **shift from reactive patterns to mindful connection and cooperation**. Mindful Parenting integrates the latest research in developmental psychology and interpersonal neurobiology to help parents **raise emotionally healthy, resilient children**.



Instagram And
TikTok Clips

How to deal with tantrums!
5 Discipline DONT'S
This Tool Makes Discipline Much Easier
Accidentally Raising People Pleasers

11:30 AM & 12:30 PM Info Session Room #130



Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

Room #130

Nicole Nucci/Local School Transition Coordinator
David Kudgus/Local School Transition Coordinator

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is responsible for coordinating services for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, Prader-Willi syndrome and other neurological impairments. We provide services directly and through a network of approximately 450 nonprofit service providing agencies.

Our presentation provides an introduction to OPWDD, description of Front Door process and OPWDD supports and services, along with information on school transition.

11:30 AM & 12:30 PM Info Session

Room #132



Stronger Together: Combating Caregiver Burnout Through Support and Community

Room #132

Liz Conklin, Director of Respite

Learn the signs of caregiver burnout and why early action matters. Discover respite, wellness, and community support through David's Refuge—and how to apply. Caregivers don't have to walk alone.

JOIN US FOR THE 13TH ANNUAL



Taste
OF DAVID'S REFUGE

June 5, 2026
5:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Timber Banks
Baldwinsville, NY

11:30 AM & 12:30 PM Info Session

Room #102



Preparing for Transition after High School: What Parents Need to Know from Kindergarten and Beyond

Room #102

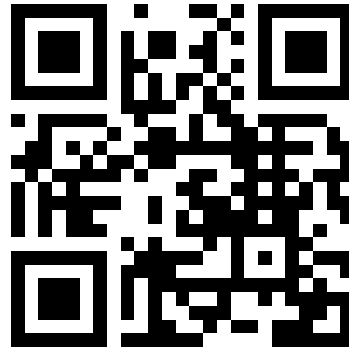
Rebekah Wallis, Shana Lewis, and Sara Petit-McClure

This presentation will give parents of students with disabilities tools and advocacy strategies to help prepare for what comes after high schools. This session is for all families (K-12th grade).



11:30 AM & 12:30 PM Info Session

Room #104



Preventing Parent Burnout

Veronika Mourgides (Regional Coordinator)
Room#104

Extraordinary parenting responsibilities create extraordinary pressures on parents. At the same time, parenting a child with special needs requires energy, focus, and enthusiasm to be effective in our role. The better off we are emotionally and physically, the better off our families will be. Discover positive ways to cope with and effectively manage stress through our workshop!

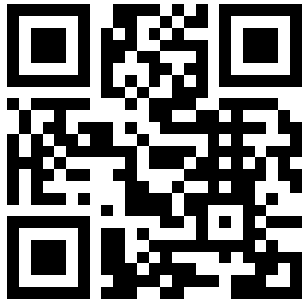
Parent to Parent of New York State, which began in 1994, is a statewide not for profit organization established to support and connect families of individuals with special needs. We have several offices located throughout New York State staffed by Regional Coordinators who are parents or close relatives of individuals with special needs. Parent to Parent of NYS is where families of individuals with special needs and the professionals who serve them can meet and share information. We are on the same journey and are here to help other families.

Vendors

11:20 AM - 1:40 PM

**“Understanding
community
resources is a
form of
advocacy for
children and
families.”**

Vendors



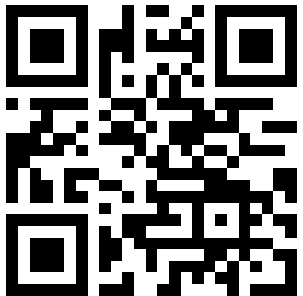
Access CNY

We are a not for profit organization that serves individuals of all ages with intellectual, developmental and/or mental health needs.



ACCESS

ACCESS is the engagement, assessment, planning and referral process for children and youth ages 0-21 in Onondaga County with emotional and behavioral challenges and their families.



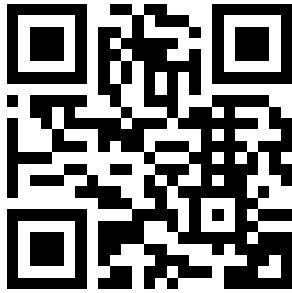
Angel Delivery Service Inc.

We offer support and gifts to bereaved and grieving children.

“Children don’t grow up alone; they grow up in communities.”



Vendors



Arc of Onondaga

Arc of Onondaga provides services to people with intellectual & developmental disabilities, with a wide array of opportunities including residential, day, employment & recreation programs & services.



ARISE Inc.

ARISE, Inc is an Independent living center providing a variety of advocacy, education, recreation, employment, community habilitation, and more!!!



CNY Adaptive Sports

We provide adaptive equipment and team sports opportunities for people with mobility issues.

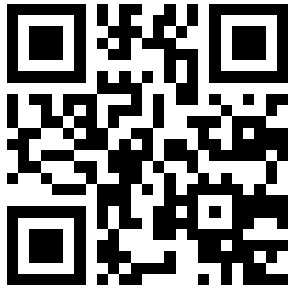


David's Refuge

Our goal is to support parents/guardians caring for a child with special needs, a disability, or a life-threatening medical condition and help prevent burnout.

“Every child’s success is tied to the supports available around them—inside and outside of school.”

Vendors



Fidelis Health Care

Here for Your Health. Fidelis Care offers quality, affordable health coverage for people of all ages and at all stages of life.



Foodbank of Central New York

The Food Bank provides SNAP assistance, information and pantry resources.



Front Row Players

We are a musical theater program for adults of all abilities.

“Strong communities create the conditions where children can thrive.”

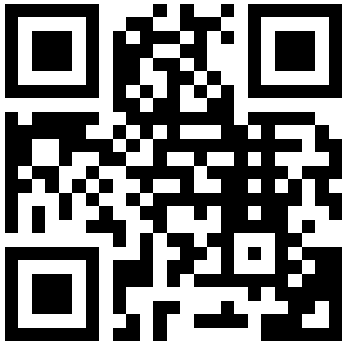


Vendors



Life Plan

Our Care Managers work to assist people with IDD at home, at school, and in the community. We have an entire support department dedicated to helping families through the OPWDD eligibility process.



Museum of Science and Technology

The Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology (MOST) is a hands-on science and technology museum located in historic Armory Square in downtown Syracuse.



Mid-State FACE Center

Our mission is to support and empower educational organizations (EOs), families, and communities to improve equity, access, opportunities, and outcomes for students with disabilities.

“Families are not alone in this journey.”

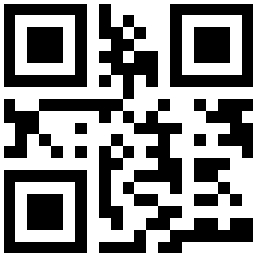


Vendors



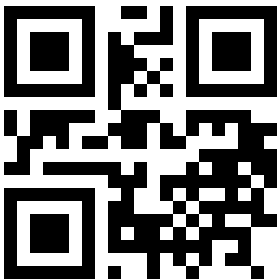
OnCare Healthy Transitions

We work with youth and young adults, who reside in Onondaga county ages 16-25 years old who have a mental health diagnosis or symptoms. We assist y/ya with getting connected to Mental Health supports.



Onondaga County Public Libraries

The Onondaga County Public Libraries mission is to prepare our community for a bright future by creating opportunities, empowering people, and inspiring ideas.



Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, OPWDD

The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)



Parent to Parent of NYS

Parent to Parent of New York State builds a supportive network of families to reduce isolation and empower those who care for people with developmental disabilities and/or complex medical needs.

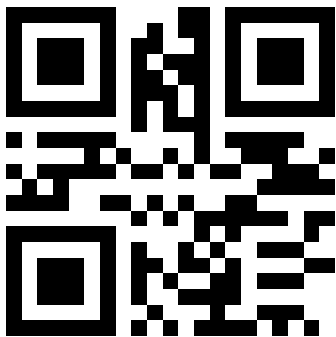
“Equity means providing each student with the supports they need—not the same supports for everyone.”

Vendors



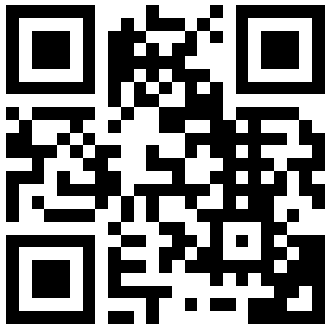
Royal Razor

The Hair Hut is happy to assist our community with free haircuts and hair styling services for those in need.



Southwest Community Center

Mainstream is one of several programs housed at the Southwest Community Center. It is an after-school program for school aged individuals with developmental disabilities.



WOOT 2.0

WOOT 2.0 Inc. uplifts minority mothers of children with autism through connection, resources, & healing-centered experiences that build community and lasting support.

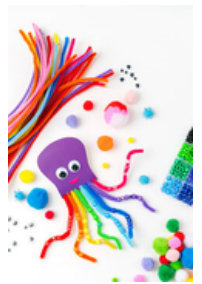
“A diagnosis can be a key; but it’s not the story.”

Reflection: Am I seeing the whole human, or reducing someone to a label or checklist?



Activity Sessions

11:20 AM - 1:40 PM



“Masking is exhausting; and being real matters.”

Reflection: Do my expectations make it safe for others to be authentic, or do they reward compliance over well-being?

Enjoy Sensory Stories from 11:20 AM - 1:40 PM Room # 118



**SYRACUSE
CITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT**



Sensory Stories

Emily Zeno

Room # 118

All SCSD Libraries have created sensory-friendly areas with a variety of tools for students to use. In this session, participants will engage in a sensory-friendly story time using these tools. We will also explore the importance of neurodiverse voices in stories.

SCSD Libraries strive to provide an accessible environment where everyone feels seen and celebrated. We work with SCSD staff, students, and community members to help foster a love of reading by creating diverse collections and programming that serve the needs of all within our school communities.

11:20 AM - 1:40 PM

Activity Sessions in the Cafeteria



Seeing Differently Drawing



Pipe Cleaner Creations



Slime Making



Kaleidoscope Making



Bracelet Making

“Activity sessions are not just about participation, they are about connection, communication, and community.”

11:20 AM - 1:40 PM

Activities/Service



Silent Disco
Room #124



Karate
Room # 122



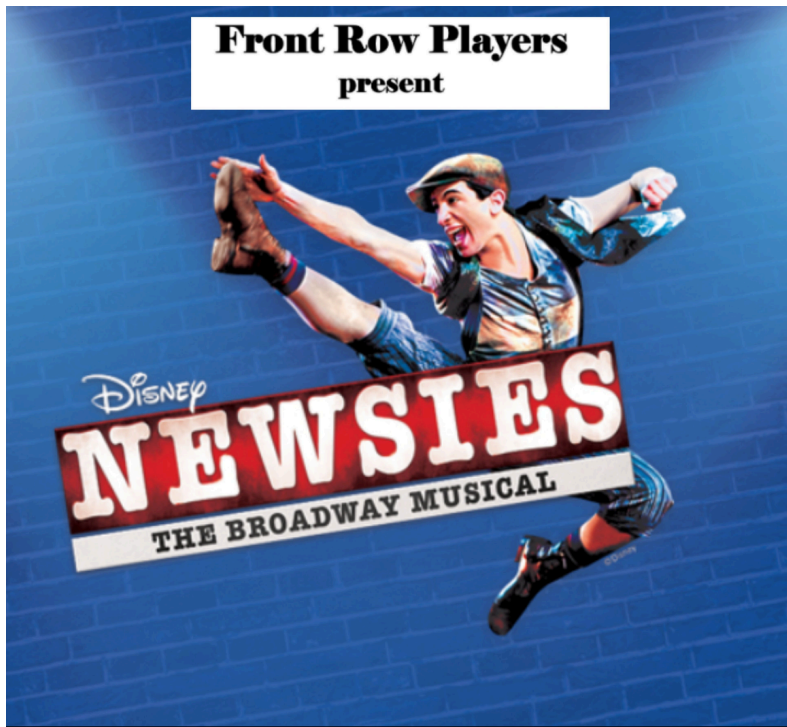
Royal Razor
Free Hair Cuts
Room #126

“Listening to understand comes first.”

Reflection: Am I listening to defend my position; or to truly understand the person in front of me?

Front Row Players

Auditorium 1:40 PM



June 25th @ 7pm.
June 28th @ 2pm.
Temple Adath Yeshurun

**Front Row Players will perform and except from
the Broadway Musical**

NEWSIES

Our mission is to nurture and inspire dramatic performance in adults of all abilities, deliver high quality arts instruction in a supportive environment, and provide a venue for each actor to share their voice and passion with their community.

Musical theater creates community, empowers, changes perception and expands understanding. This is the reason Front Row Players exists.

Actors are taught to embrace a character, sing from the soul, and find joy in movement. We ask all that attend to listen with your heart, see with understanding, and experience with pride all the work and growth that has occurred.

DINOSAUR
★ **BAR-B-QUE** ★



Walmart 



TRILLIUM
Sport & Fitness



**Thank you
for your
support!**

**ALTO
CINCO**
FRESH AND HANDMADE SINCE 1976



LWC KARATE
COURTESY | RESPECT | WORLD-CLASS VALUES



SEE DIFFERENTLY

Understand Deeply

Free Raffle!

Prizes

Family Outings

- \$100 family dinner at Cheesecake Factory
- \$50 Gift Card from Alto Cinco
- \$30 Family Movie Night (2 chances to win)
- The Saltine Warrior (a SCSD family-owned pub)
 - 50\$ gift card
 - 25\$ gift card
 - 10\$ gift card
- Sweet on Chocolate

Family Activities

- Family Art Supply Basket from Adamo Studio
- APEX Entertainment

Student Opportunities

- Class Membership Randy Lawrence Karate
- A Membership for the MOST
- Sensory Basket

Board of Education.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Syracuse City School District hereby advises students, parents, employees and the general public that it is committed to providing equal access to all categories of employment, programs and educational opportunities, including career and technical education opportunities, regardless of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, Native American ancestry/ethnicity, creed or religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender identity or expression, disability or any other legally protected category under federal, state or local law.

Inquiries regarding the District's non-discrimination policies should be directed to:

Civil Rights Compliance Officer
Syracuse City School District
725 Harrison Street • Syracuse,
NY 13210
(315) 435-4131
Email:
CivilRightsCompliance@scsd.us

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VICE PRESIDENT:

Gwendolyn Raeford

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Ranette Releford

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Desire K. Ndagijimana

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Jennifer King-Reese, Executive Chief of Administration and Strategic Planning

Nalisa A. Clark, Acting Chief Human Resources Officer

Robert DiFlorio, Ed.D., Chief Operations Officer

Tara Jennings, Ed.D., Chief Information Officer

Laura Kelley, Ed.D., Chief of Student Support Services

Michael Puntschenko, Chief Financial Officer

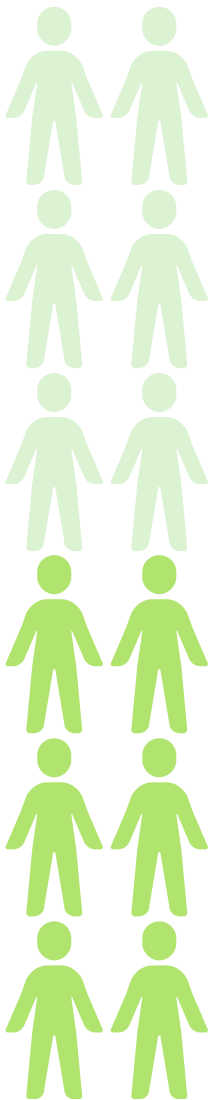
Monique Wright-Williams, Chief Engagement Officer

TBD, Chief Academic Officer

SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:

Irastina Reid, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education

Thank you to the Amazing Planning Committee!



- Jackie Adamo
- Jazmine Addison
- Kelly Buck
- Brian Buda
- Luberta Crouch
- Kimberly Dominick
- Karen Dotson
- Shavonna Fitzgerald
- Kimberly Haas-Mceneny
- Nikki Harrell
- Ashley Killenbec
- Ann Rodak
- Lisa Senf-Perez
- Katherine Teasdale-Edwards
- Rebekah Wallis
- Sarah Wolff
- Emily Zieno
- Patricia Zumbo

“As a team, we recognize that students with disabilities succeed when schools, families, and community resources work as one.”



Thank you, Volunteers!

Adamo, Jacqueline
Addison, Jazmine
Aguayo, Sophia
Aguayo, Isabella
Alexander,
Kuricheses
Alexander, Paris
Baggett, Tayla
Bixler, Christie
Boea, Angelique
Brazell, Amy
Broughton, Karen
Buck, Kelly
Buda, Brian
Buda, Tonya
Burden, Sophia
Carroll, Katherine
(Ranieri)
Carter-Lettsome, Tara
Casavant, Kevin
Charboneau, Jessica
Clarke, Ryan
Cook, Maureen
Crouch, Luberta
Cunningham, Teryn
Curtin, Katherine
DeJesus, Felicia

Dewan, Daneen
Dominick, Kimberly
Dotson, Karen
Dotson, Len
Fernandaz, Ivonne
Fitzgerald, Shavonna
Friedman, Eliana
Friedman, Sasha
Frink, Jacquelyn
Garn, Kathleen
Graham, Tawanna
Haas-Mceneny,
Kimberly
Harrell, Anne
Harrell, Nikki
Hayman Friedman,
Jeanne
Herrera, Fanny
Killenbec, Ashley
Kelly, Laura
Lettsome, Ella
Long, Jennifer
Long, Sarah
Major, Khaliah
McCray, Angela
McMinn, Paige
Medici, Andrea
Molina, Sonimar

Reid, Laila
Rodak, Ann
Rodak, Eliot
Rodak, Irina
Lindsay, Rogers
Pace, Cynthia
Senf-Perez,
Lisa
Smith, Kristen
Smith, Laurie
Teasdale -
Edwards,
Katherine
Thrall, Lori
Tarolli, Jen
Vergara, Silvia
Wallis, Rebekah
Warchal,
Allison
Warren, Renee
Watt, Danielle
Weatherby,
Kelly
Wolff, Sarah
Wyatt, Danae
Zalick, Kirsten
Zieno, Emily

**There are feelings neurodivergent people experience that English has no words for
- but other languages do.**

Komorebi 木漏れ日

Japanese [koh-moh-leh-bee]

The gentle, shifting light that filters through leaves, creating a soft sensory moment that feels grounding.

Pihentagyú

Hungarian [pih-hent-ah-dyoo]

A mind that works in imaginative, sideways ways, clever, playful, surprising in its connections.

Friluftsliv

Norwegian [free-loofts-leev]

A way of living that invites you outside every day, not to achieve anything, but to breathe and exist in nature.

Uitwaaien

Dutch [OOT-vwhy-ehn]

Stepping into the wind so it can clear your mind, loosen your thoughts, and reset your senses.

Waldeinsamkeit

German [valt-ain-zahm-kite]

The peaceful feeling of being alone among trees, held by their stillness and silence.

Gökotta

Swedish [yuh-KOT-tuh]

Waking early just to hear birdsong, letting the quiet of morning soften the day ahead.

Hiraeth

Welsh [HEER-eyeth]

A deep longing for a place or feeling of home that lives more in the heart than in geography.

Shinrin-yoku 森林浴

Japanese [sheen-rin-yoh-koo]

Immersing yourself in the quiet of the forest, letting the trees, air, and earth regulate your nervous system

Meraki

Greek [muh-RAH-kee]

Putting your whole self, your focus, your creativity, your way of being, into something you care about.

Iktsuarpok

Inuit [eek-soow-uh-pohk]

Putting your whole self, your focus, your creativity, your way of being, into something you care about.

Final Thoughts

From the Planning Committee

This work affirms a powerful truth: every brain, every child, and every family belongs. Rooted in fairness, dignity, and inclusion, it compels us to create compassionate, trauma-informed spaces where neurodiversity is celebrated as strength; not something to fix or hide. By prioritizing relationship over rush, listening before leading, and practice over theory, we aim to build bridges between home and school that honor lived experience and unlock possibility. Through attunement, understanding the “why” beneath behavior, and embracing individuality without judgment, we help to and desire for all children to feel safe, loved, heard, and understood; exactly as they are. Together, through community, advocacy, creativity, and grace, we have cultivated this space for meaningful learning as we all make efforts to. . .

**SEE DIFFERENTLY &
UNDERSTAND DEEPLY**

The above statement and quotes throughout this booklet are inspired by the Neurodiversity Fair Committee Members.