Checking out the latest in city living

Buffalo Living Tour highlights new lives for old urban spaces. | PAGE C1

THE BUFFALO NEWS SUNDAY

What it means to be Kelly tough

Being strong for somebody else is what it's all about, Erin Kelly says. | *Page B1*

BUFFALONEWS.COM • JUNE 22, 2014 • WNY EDITION

In limbo in Batavia, bomber seeks home

Rashed, who put device on plane in '82, now free

By Phil Fairbanks
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Long before 9-11, and even a few years before Lockerbie, America got a glimpse into the tragic reality of airplanes as tools of international terrorism.

It was August 1982 and a bomb planted by a Palestinian terrorist exploded aboard a Pan Am flight bound for Honolulu, killing a 16-year-old Japanese boy and injuring more than a dozen others.

Mohammed Rashed waits to be deported.

The man who planted it, a member of the 15th of May group, a pro-Palestinian organization, was eventually caught, convicted and sent to jail, first in Greece and then here.

More than three decades later, Mohammed Rashed is free from prison and facing deportation.

He is, by some accounts, a man without a country willing to take him, a man who for now is forced to call Western New York home.

Now 64, Rashed is in custody at the Batavia Detention Center.

"He just wants to go somewhere and be left alone, and leave everyone else alone," said A.J. Kramer, the federal public defender who represents Rashed.

Rashed's arrival here is the latest chapter in a story that began as one of the world's first aviation-related terrorist plots.

Investigators say it was Rashed who placed the bomb on the plane that day in

See **Terrorist** on Page A2

Worries mount over dying bees

Area keepers concerned by winter's toll on hives

By T.J. Pignataro
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

At the end of the day at Awald Farms, the busiest workers head for home – by the thousands.

The honeybees wait their turn to enter the colony's hive on the southern end of the 75 acres of strawberry, blueberry, raspberry and blackberry fields in North Collins.

All day long they have flown to hundreds of flowering plants gathering and carrying nectar – and spreading pollen – just as bees have done at Awald Farms for 100 years.

But now Jamie Awald and other farmers worry about the future of these bees under constant threat from mites, chemicals and loss of habitat.

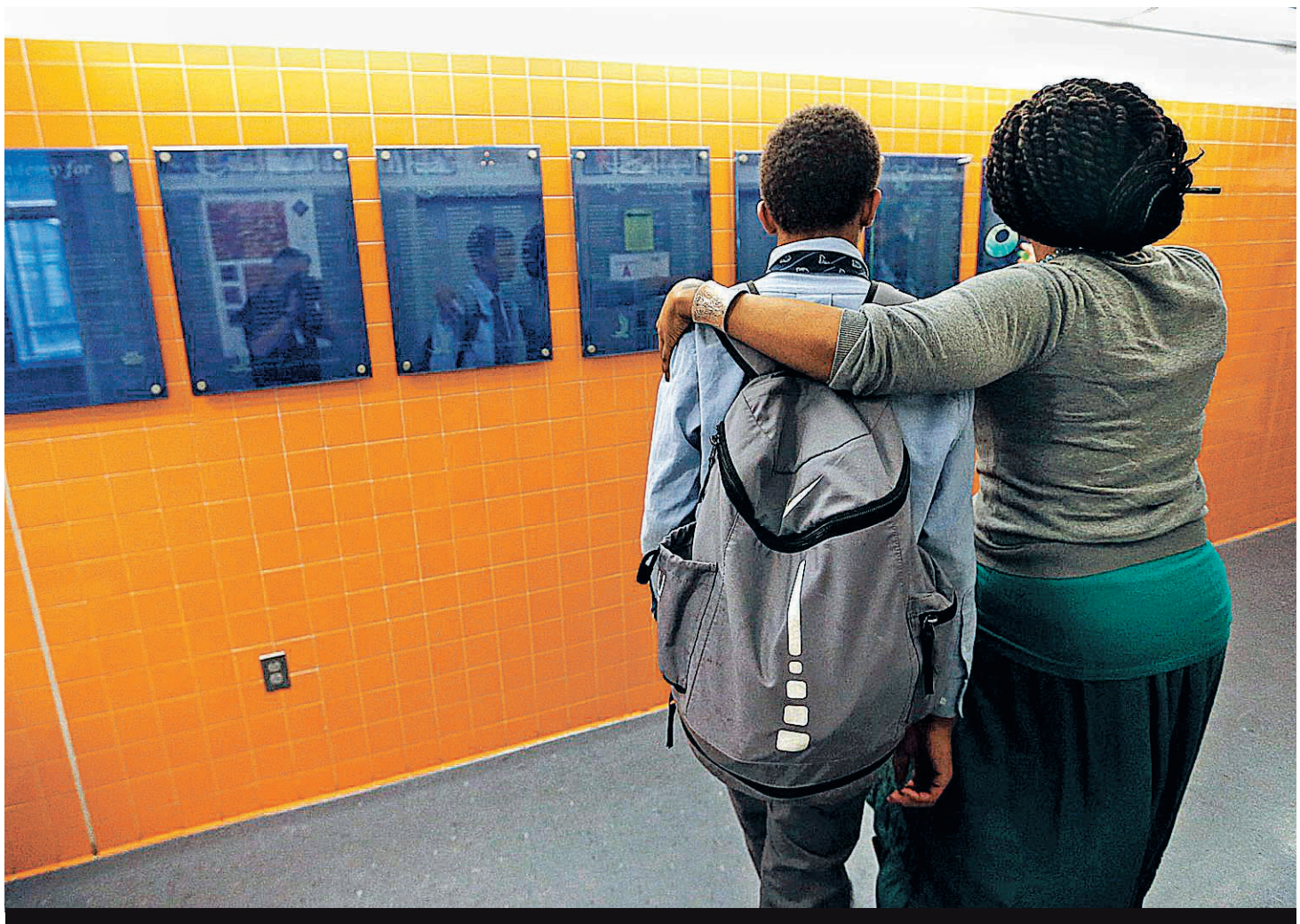
"The bottom line is if we don't have the bees on the farm, we have no berries – berries don't exist," Awald said.

With 23 percent of the nation's honeybees wiped out over the winter, farmers, beekeepers and scientists worry about the long-term sustainability of the insect

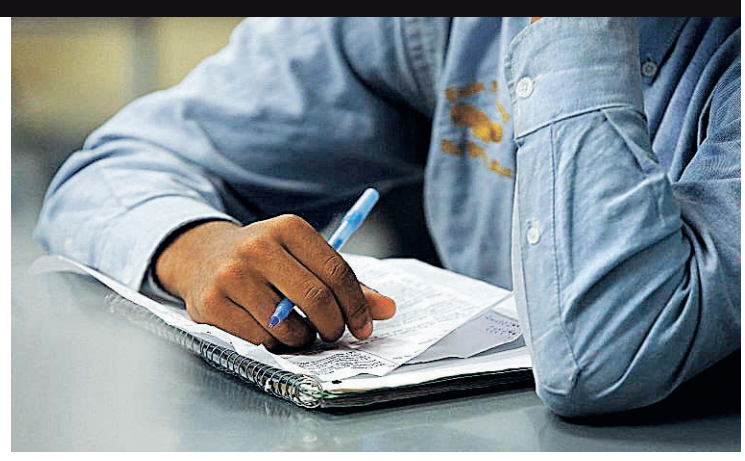
See **Bees** on Page A2

HOW TO FIX BUFFALO'S SCHOOLS

HOW ONE SCHOOL HELPS CITY KIDS SOAR



Eagle Academy in the Bronx combines rigorous academics, high expectations and a structured environment to help minority students succeed



Photos by Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

By Tiffany Lankes / NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Part of an occasional series

INVICTUS:
Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

The young men stand between the poles, feeling a pull in opposite directions. ¶ Street. Or scholar. ¶ The hardships they have already faced in their young lives enshroud them. ¶ At a young age, they learned to deal with gangs and violence at school and in their neighborhoods. They feel pressured by peers to emulate the image of black men portrayed in rap music and the media. Some never knew their fathers. Even as they try to forge a path for their future, a few already have their own children. ¶ All of these distractions make it difficult to do well in school. Some were already behind before they enrolled in a public school system largely ill-equipped to help them reach their full potential. ¶ "It's a whole different battle for us out there," said 18-year-old Tariq Molson, who dropped out of Buffalo's Bennett High School. ¶ He should have graduated this year. ¶ There are all too many people out there like Molson – hundreds, likely thousands, of young men struggling to find their way in a Buffalo school system that one study suggests graduates just one in every four black male students, one of the lowest rates in the country. ¶ It doesn't have to be this way. | SEE SCHOOLS ON PAGE A8

One out of every four black male students in the Buffalo Public Schools graduates.

Source: The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008 data.

In helping ninth-grader Monroe Tillman deal with a personal issue, Eagle Academy teacher Devine Williams, right at top, assures him she will do whatever it takes to make sure he makes it on the list of graduates displayed at the school. Elsewhere, students focus on learning.

BUFFALONEWS.COM/SCHOOLS

WEATHER
Mostly sunny, pleasant. High 79, low 57. Details on Page C10.

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Photos by Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

Eagle Academy uses rituals to establish a structure and routine that help its students succeed and that they may not find at home. "These little small things make a difference," said David Banks of the Eagle Academy Foundation.

Denise Browne, parent coordinator at the academy, holds up a photo of herself and her son Eugene Murray at graduation last year. Parents and mentors reinforce the school's message.

College counseling director Kareem Donaldson, right, discusses the transition from high school to college with Roshane Gray, left, and Zimba Hamm, center.

Principal Jonathan Foy explains the "house team" system and tally case in the main hallway at Eagle Academy: Students are assigned to one of four houses, and they contribute or subtract points to their group's final outcome.

RITUALS AND ROUTINE BUILD STRUCTURE INTO THE DAY

SCHOOLS • from A1

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed."

Eagle Academy Principal Jonathan Foy stands among his pupils at the Bronx school as they recite the Victorian-era poem written by William Ernest Henley.

The poet reportedly wrote "Invictus" during a hospital stay recovering from a leg amputation. The piece is about life and death, courage and survival, perseverance in the face of challenge.

The sentiments just as easily apply to life growing up in the inner city.

The young men, dressed neatly in shirts and ties, belt out the lines to a rhythm more apropos of a drum line than a poetry reading.

This is how they start each morning at the Eagle Academy for Young Men in the Bronx, the flagship of a network of schools dedicated to educating at-risk boys, virtually all of whom are young men of color.

The school was founded in 2004 by 100 Black Men of America, an international organization with a Buffalo chapter that aims to improve education and economic opportunities for men of color. Leaders of the group were alarmed by statistics that show black and Hispanic men graduate from high school in far fewer numbers than their peers of other races and genders.

Nationwide, 52 percent of young black men graduate from high school, reports the Schott Foundation for Public Education, compared with 78 percent of their white, male peers. New York has the lowest high school graduation rate for black men in the country, with just 37 percent of young black men earning a diploma, compared with 78 percent of their white, male classmates, Schott reports.

In Buffalo, the foundation reports, just 25 percent of young black men finished high school in 2008, the year the organization ranked it in the bottom 10 in the country.

So 100 Black Men designed a school to meet the needs of young black and Hispanic men growing up in the inner city. The school's program centers on rigorous academics, a structured environment, high expectations and support for challenges they might be dealing with at home and in the community, such as gangs, drugs and street violence.

Eagle Academy student Alton Jackson, 15, swaps his sneakers for dress shoes as classmate Robert Figueroa, 16, left, waits for him to complete the daily ritual as a passer-by walks past them along the street in the Bronx.

About 80 percent of students at Eagle Academy in the Bronx qualify for free or reduced price lunch, the educational system's measure of poverty. About 62 percent of the school's students are black and 35 percent are Hispanic.

Although its demographics are similar to the Buffalo Public Schools, Eagle Academy gets strikingly different results. Since it opened, it has consistently posted graduation rates for black male students of about 70 percent and higher.

And that starts with the simplest things, like the morning meeting.

Dressed in a crisp, sharp suit and an Eagle Academy tie, Principal Foy and other school leaders start each morning with a town hall meeting where they set the tone for the day and offer students a chance to talk about things they are dealing with in their personal lives.

Several hundred young men sit on benches in the cafeteria listening as Foy swiftly switches between giving accolades for good behavior and establishing a focus the young men will carry with them from the cafeteria to their classrooms and, hopefully, their neighborhoods.

"Good morning, brothers," Foy says to open the meeting.

The young men meekly mumble a reply as they make their way to their feet.

Not pleased with the response, he prompts them to begin again.

"Let's try that one more time. Good morning, brothers."

They will keep trying until they meet his expectation: To be firm, engaged and confident. Today they do so on the second try.

When the business of the morning is complete, he prompts the students to rise for their morning recitation.

"Let's get on our feet, brothers," Foy says. "Let's all stand. One, two, three. 'Invictus.'"

Each morning the young men recite the lines.

"I am the master of my fate,"
they chant. *"I am the captain*
of my soul."

Rituals like the town hall meeting are just as much a part of Eagle Academy's success as academics. Culture is critical, and these traditions establish a structure and routine most students crave but may find only at school.

"It's how we center the boys at the very beginning of the day," Eagle Academy Foundation President and CEO David C. Banks said. "These little small things make a difference."

Building a school culture begins well before students start their first year at Eagle Academy. Incoming students attend a summer program where teachers not only gauge their academic abilities for the coming year, but reinforce the school's high expectations.

Students are grouped into one of four houses – essentially teams – named for notable black and Hispanic leaders. The school doesn't shy away from more controversial figures that are significant in their students' culture: Che Guevara and Malcolm X have houses named for them, as do Roberto Clemente and Barack Obama.

Throughout the year students earn points for their house with accomplishments such as good attendance, doing their homework, community service, maintaining good grades and showing improvement. They can also lose points for bad behavior.

The system sets up students to work with and for each other – and to hold each other accountable.

"This really takes care of the boys' desire to belong," Foy said. "Almost like, to take from negative culture, a gang. Or more positive, a fraternity."

Each grade level has its own unique tie, which the boys must earn by completing the criteria to advance to the next grade level.

"It may seem like a subtle thing, but those kinds of things are important in setting a standard and letting them know it's not a game," Foy said. "It's a lot of tradition. It's a lot of rituals. Part of the academic success comes with a culture that's different from a regular school."

Photos of students working on classroom projects and attending special events cover the hallways alongside images of black leaders and posters advertising special opportunities, including a trip to Iceland. The Eagle Academy Foundation, which was created to support the schools, helps raise money to provide the young men with those opportunities.

"The walls should speak," Foy said. "The walls should tell a story of who you are."

Along the top row hang pictures of graduates. Their smiles beam from the wall, young black and Hispanic men donning graduation caps and gowns, proudly clutching their diplomas.

The students, looking neat in their navy blue pants, dress shirts and ties, sit in rows of desks covered with notebooks, worksheets and calculators. As the teacher tosses out questions during a lesson on exponents, the boys shoot up their hands to answer.

This ninth-grade algebra class at Eagle Academy could just as well have been in any of Buffalo's prestigious private high schools.

Here, the young men learn they have a choice that may not be as evident in the mass media, their homes or most other classrooms in urban school districts: Street. Or scholar.

For some in this advanced class, the pull between the two poles is already strong.

One young man who raises his hand to answer the teacher's question is already in trouble with the law. The school knows about the situation and is trying to guide him through the criminal justice system and in the right direction for his future.

He is engaged during this lesson, paying attention and readily offering answers to the teacher's questions.

Foy knows it may not take much to steal that focus.

"Part of it is knowing the stress on each of our students," Foy said. "We're hoping he'll eventually come over to our side. We've seen it.

"We've also seen kids go the other way."

Those stressors usually start in the surrounding neighborhoods of the Bronx, communities ridden with crime and violence that touch many of the students. The walk to school alone takes students down neglected streets marked by boarded-up windows, abandoned buildings and graffiti-covered storefronts.

From left, Avery Logan, 16, Anthony Lebron, 16, and Berkley Sessions, 17, catch some fresh air outside Eagle Academy in their uniforms, which students wear each day. Each grade level has its own unique tie.

"There are good parts and bad parts of the Bronx," said Zimba Hamm, a junior who wants to attend the University at Buffalo. "We grew up in this environment. The areas I come from are not that good. I wouldn't go out at 11 or 12 at night."

Eagle Academy opened its first school in the Bronx as a traditional high school to serve ninth- through twelfth-graders.

But leaders quickly realized they needed to start their work earlier. Its schools now start in the sixth grade, an age when boys may already be battling negative influences.

To try to help students find the right path, Eagle Academy matches each student with a mentor who meets with them on a regular basis.

The staff includes many men of color who serve as positive role models.

Banks, who is now director of the Eagle Academy Foundation, has a rapport with the students. During one recent visit, he stops to reprimand three boys for running in the hallways.

"Hey, hey, hey," he cautions the group.

The boys not only heed his warning, but offer up a cheerful "Hey, Mr. Banks" to greet him.

"Our mantra for 100 Black Men is 'They will be what they see,'" Banks said. "If all they see are hustlers on the street, it should be no surprise which road they go down."

Older students are also mentors through a program called Eagles at Flight that allows them to guide their younger classmates on field trips to places such as the Statue of Liberty and art museums.

Students also have the option to stay longer at school to work on academics and participate in extracurricular activities, including culinary and chess clubs as well as sports such as lacrosse.

More time at school also means less time on the streets.

Parents and mentors help reinforce the Eagle Academy's college-going message, which is evident in Kareem Donaldson's classroom where juniors and seniors spend part of their week learning about the college admissions process and getting help with their applications. Juniors and seniors have time built into their schedules for half of the school year to work with Donaldson and other volunteers.

Donaldson's room is covered with college pennants, everything from local New York City schools to Ivy League institutions. He invites some of these colleges to give seminars and coordinates field trips to various campuses, which for some students offers a first chance to travel outside of their neighborhoods.

"It keeps you going," said Roshane Gray, a senior who plans to attend SUNY Buffalo State. "It gives you a reason to stay in school and stay off the streets."

The questions posted on the screen prompt the students to contemplate their heritage. Students in this eighth-grade humanities class spent the year studying topics such as the slave trade, the Harlem Renaissance and race and culture in this country. They read the works of black scholars and leaders including Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington.

Now, they will decide whether they agree or disagree with them.

What should be the place of the Negro ("Black and Brown people") in White America?

What were the strengths and weaknesses of each scholar's plan for improving the Negro?

What philosophy would be more acceptable to White America then? White America now?

The questions that guide the discussion are edgy, but they force the students to think about their identity, culture and place in society – historically and now. Some educators argue that seeing this reflection of themselves and their history in the classroom will better engage them in learning.

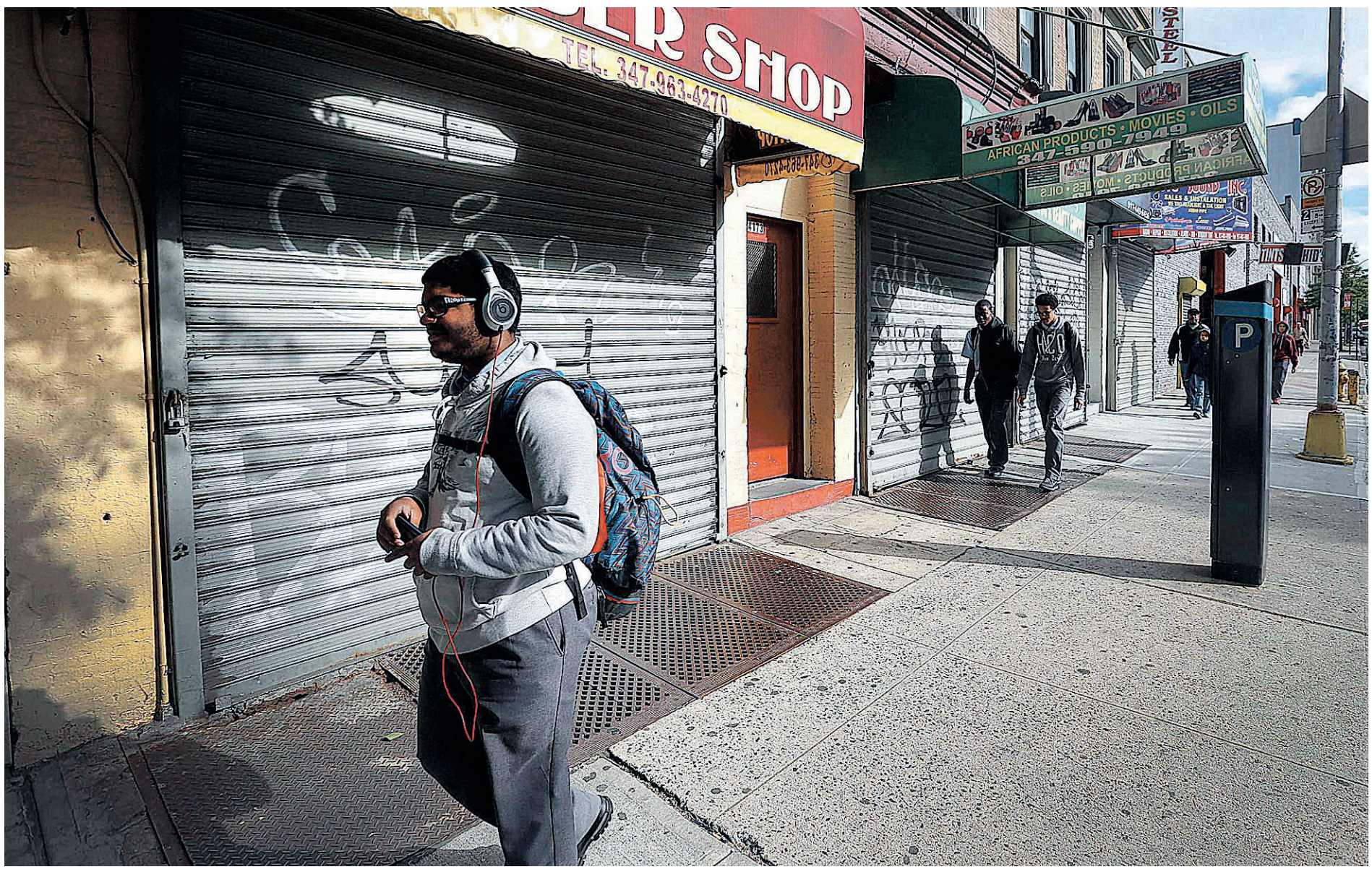
A group of six boys sit in a circle in the center of the room preparing to make their case. The rest of the class sits in another circle around the perimeter to observe and evaluate how well they make their argument.

The first student critiques Booker T.

See **Schools** on Page A10

HOW TO FIX BUFFALO'S SCHOOLS

"Our mantra for 100 Black Men is, 'They will be what they see.' If all they see are hustlers on the street, it should be no surprise which road they go down."
Eagle Academy Foundation President and CEO David C. Banks



Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

Eagle Academy organizers deliberately placed the school in a tough neighborhood, using incarceration data to find the population most in need.

BLACK MALES WHO DON'T GRADUATE FACE TRIPLE THE RISK OF PRISON

SCHOOLS • from A9

Washington, who was among the last generation of black leaders born into slavery. Washington discouraged blacks from fighting to end segregation, urging instead the creation of create long-term educational and economic opportunities.

"People said that he would please the white people, and it would please them, too," the student said. "The only thing wrong with his argument was he said it is too much race pride that leads to segregation."

The conversation shifts to a debate on what it means to "cast down your buckets" and whether that philosophy advanced or hindered civil rights for African-Americans. The phrase, from Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" speech, reflected his belief that blacks should make the most of what they had and not agitate for civil rights.

The next student goes on to criticize Garvey, the author who promoted the return of African-Americans to Africa.

"He was telling people to do stuff that he would not," the student said, criticizing Garvey for staying in the United States and promoting his ideas.

"If you're going to start a movement, you have to be the epitome of what you believe and you want to see happen."

Beyond this place of wrath
and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

The cost of academic failure is high for young men of color – and their communities – with statistics showing that black and Hispanic men who do not finish high school fuel a pipeline to the unemployment office and prison.

The Brookings Institute reports that there is a nearly 70 percent chance a black man who drops out of high school will be imprisoned by his mid-30s. That is more than triple the risk for white men who don't finish high school.

Arlee Daniels Jr. sees this fallout in the streets of Buffalo, often in the early hours of the morning when he is called from his sleep to mediate a dispute at risk of becoming violent. Through his work with the Stop the Violence Coalition, he sees what happens when young men start to stumble down the wrong path.

And he tries to catch them before they head too far in the wrong direction.

Some of these young men end up in his classroom at the YMCA on William Street. This is where he spends three nights a week working with students who have dropped out of school to help them earn their GED certificate.

Daniels uses many of the same strategies found at Eagle Academy. When students enter the program, he reinforces his rules and routine, setting a tone that he will not accept the same behaviors – such as fighting and poor attendance – that caused many of his students to drop out of school in the first place.

Students also participate in a mentoring program, which allows Daniels to address the underlying issues that may inhibit their success.

"We want to make sure we address whatever it is that caused it to not work out the first time," Daniels said. "We don't want the same thing to happen here."

A number of his students far surpass the minimum requirements needed to earn their GED. Most go on to continue their education or enter the workforce.

Yet he knows this work is just triage for a much larger, problem. It does nothing to prevent the scores of young black men from dropping out in the first place.

Daniels said he once ran a similar mentoring program at Buffalo's East and Bennett high schools, catching at-risk students before they dropped out of the system. He and other male role models underwent training through a national program and then worked with some of the district's most at-risk students.

Daniels says the program yielded results but was cut because of budget problems. The district now offers other programs at those schools, but students still struggle.

Molson, the Bennett dropout, and the other young men in Daniels' class offer plenty of suggestions for how the Buffalo schools could do better. Smaller classes with more individual attention. Uniforms to eliminate fighting and posturing over clothing. More vocational programs and hands-on projects. Single-sex classes to eliminate distractions from young women.

The students in Daniels' class also acknowledge that their academic struggles start with distractions outside of the classroom. Popular culture that paints an image of black men as ballers, thugs or gangsters. Broken homes and absentee parents who gave them little guidance. The temptation to trade school for a life of drugs and violence that might be, at least for now, more lucrative.

Not knowing whether they will survive the journey from their neighborhood to school each morning.

See **Schools** on Page A11

Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

Eagle Academy opened in the Bronx in 2004 and has since expanded. Now a foundation, it has five schools in New York City and Newark, N.J.

Eagle Academy / *At a glance*

The Buffalo News is spotlighting Eagle Academy for Young Men in the Bronx after reviewing graduation data for schools in New York State as well as several urban districts elsewhere in the country. Eagle Academy consistently posts high graduation rates among schools that have a substantial minority population and that do not employ special admissions criteria.

Eagle Academy's population also is entirely male, highlighting approaches that improve black male student achievement, which has been a challenge for the Buffalo Public Schools.

The first Eagle Academy was opened by 100 Black Men of America in the Bronx in 2004, offering programs specifically targeted to at-risk, inner-city youth of color. The organization then created the Eagle Academy Foundation, which has since expanded and now has five schools in New York City and Newark, N.J. The foundation identified the neighborhoods that are the biggest "feeders" into the state prison system and opened schools there in a proactive attempt to put young men on the right path.

The Eagle Academy Foundation is now working on plans for an Eagle Institute, which will offer training to schools and districts interested in adopting its methods. – *T.L.*

Eagle Academy / *By the numbers*

90% Percent of Eagle Academy graduates who go on to four-year colleges and universities.

2% Suspension rate at Eagle Academy.

88% Attendance rate at Eagle Academy.

600 Number of students at Eagle Academy, Bronx campus.

Source: New York State Department of Education