



## 18th Annual Charity Sports Auction Statement on Vera House Partnership

Over the past few weeks, the Sport Management Club at Syracuse University has closely monitored recent events regarding Vera House, the beneficiary chosen last April for our upcoming 18th Annual Charity Sports Auction. After a report published by CNY Central in August, we were notified that Vera House employed a registered sex offender, Marcus Jackson, as a victim advocate from October 2020 until July 2022. The Sport Management Club, its members, and its faculty advisors denounce the hiring of Mr. Jackson.

While our trust in Vera House was undeniably shaken by this news, our club membership recognizes that the need to provide critical services to survivors remains urgent. Vera House is one of Central New York's most prominent resources for victims and survivors to turn to, serving hundreds in its shelters and receiving thousands of calls or messages on its 24-hour support hotline annually. For decades, Vera House and the Rape Crisis Center that came before it has supported those in impossible situations, and we believe that removing support from this critical organization will only harm those who need their services the most.

At the same time, we share the disappointment of survivors, former Vera House employees, and community members who are hurt and betrayed by this decision. We take this incident seriously and have conducted our own internal review.

After conversations with Vera House leadership, we understand that the appropriate measures are being taken by Vera House's Board of Directors. Vera House has [accepted the resignation of Co-Executive Director Randi Bregman](#), who is responsible for the hiring of Mr. Jackson. Vera House has pledged that individuals with sex offenses will not work in positions that have direct contact with the people they serve, as well as creating a governance committee and bringing in an outside HR consultant to review hiring practices.

As club members returned to campus, we engaged in conversations with Vera House, as well as faculty advisors and Syracuse University administration, regarding the best move forward. The club also hosted an open forum where club members openly voiced their feelings and concerns, and had the opportunity to ask club advisors and leadership what action the Sport Management Club should take.

After consideration, we have decided that continuing to direct our funds towards Vera House's services is the best way to support the victims and survivors. We feel confident that the changes implemented by Vera House will ensure this never happens again. Falk College has a longstanding relationship with Vera House and we are proud to have our event continue Falk's support of survivors of violence and abuse.

"The need for the services Vera House provides will not disappear, and while others might turn away, our organization is focused on supporting victims and survivors who need it the most," said Megan Sheehan, a Senior Sport Management Student and one of three Charity Auction Co-Chairs.

For the last 17 years, the students of the Sport Management Club have selflessly donated their time and effort towards the betterment of the local community through our Charity Sports Auction, contributing over \$612,000 to local nonprofit organizations. This past spring, the Sport Management Club membership voted on Vera House to be the 18th Annual Charity Sports Auction beneficiary with the goal of supporting victims of sexual assault and domestic violence to create a world free of violence and abuse. The Sport Management Club and its members are excited to move forward and continue our pursuit of this goal by partnering with Vera House and the vital services they provide for survivors across Central New York.