



Voices & Visions



FALL 2020

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From the Executive Director

Dear Family & Advocates,

This past year has been a time like no other in our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to produce uncertainty, stress, and trauma in our communities. By now, we have all been impacted by this virus, which has been devastating for so many. Despite the challenges we are all facing every day, this is also a time that is bringing out the best in many people—from the direct support professionals and first responders fighting on the front-lines, to the essential workers providing the critical services we all depend on. We must commit to never forgetting their selflessness and the courage they have shown during this time.

The pandemic has not only affected the health of our community, but it has also placed tremendous strain on the fiscal operations for almost every voluntary provider in New York.

Many providers, due to suspended programs or poor attendance, were forced to downsize their workforce to remain viable and maintain a high level of quality in their programs. I am pleased to share that we have been able to retain our workforce and ensure the people we support are greeted with familiar faces throughout our programs.

However, we must now confront the reality of navigating a system fraught with impending funding cuts. These untimely funding cuts will impact all voluntary providers, but more so smaller providers, like us. Along with grassroots fundraising, providers need the voices of our communities to advocate for the people we love and support. Collectively, we must use our voices, put pen to paper, fingers to keyboards, and speak out in strong support of our network of voluntary providers.

Despite all the new challenges we face on the horizon – in addition to those we would face on an ordinary pre-COVID-era day – we will remain laser-focused on fulfilling our crucial mission each and every day. I am proud of the resilience we've shown thus far, and of our ability to overcome the unknown, but I am also keenly aware much work remains to be done before we find ourselves on the other side of these unprecedented times.

As we near the end of 2020, a most difficult year, I remain inspired by the people we support and their ability to make me smile each day.

Sincerely,

Alex DiMaio,
Executive Director



SCFU Halloween & Spooky Haunted House



Not even COVID-19 could stop SCFU's very own Queen of Halloween (and Compliance Officer), Dina Hardy, from creating a

spook-tacular Haunted House experience for the residents of Special Citizens.

From scary displays and decorations, to a buffet of Halloween candy and treats, SCFU staff, under



Dina's ghoulish direction, put on a Halloween celebration like no other. A big thank you to Dina, and all the SCFU staff, who helped to make this Halloween one to remember.

The Halloween celebrations continued over the weekend at all of our residential locations.





Congrats to our 2020 Special Citizens Annual Award Honorees

2020 DSP of the Year Award Recipients

1st row pictured L-R: *Nicole Carvalho*, Asst. Residence Mgr; *Steven Nieves*, Sr. Day Services Counselor; *Regina Anderson*, DSP;
2nd row pictured L-R: *Simone Sampson*, DSP; *Nancy Alvarenga*, Asst. Residential Mgr.; *Victor Sanchez*, Medical DSP



Please join us in congratulating our 2020 Annual Employee Awards honorees!

We're so proud to recognize the exceptional efforts of this year's award recipients; and even prouder to have them on our team, especially in these extremely challenging times.

Pictured below L-R: Valray Smith, Medical DSP (2020 Lee Pelegrino Award); *Carl James*, Residence Manager (2020 Emmons Hiller Award); *Tracey Louzell*, Electronic Health Record Specialist (2020 Executive Director Award)



2020 Annual Fundraising Event: We're Going Virtual!



Last fall, our annual fundraising event took the form of an art gallery show in Hell's Kitchen's Jadeite Gallery. The evening showcased the art of SCFU resident artists, brought together families, advocates and supporters, as well as raised crucial funds to strengthen the mission of Special Citizens and all the important work we do.

This year, due to COVID-19, we're taking the event online, and will hold a virtual art gallery auction. Running from **November 19th through December 6th**, supporters will have the chance to bid on art and other donated items, just in time for the holidays!

Stay tuned for more details to come.

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THANK YOU to our initial event sponsors!

Interview With SCFU Resident Artist: Laura Albright



SCFU Artist: *Laura Albright*
Hometown: *(The) Bronx*
Sign: *Aquarius*
Interests & Hobbies: *Miniature Cabbage Patch Dolls; Dancing; Cooking; Taking trips that lead to the water; Travel Training with my peers; WBLS, FM radio (home of R&B); and Church*

(Interview conducted by Rozi McAllister)

Q: Laura do you remember when you first started painting? Were you a child, a teenager?

A: No, but I have been painting many, many years.

Q: How often do you paint?

A: Several times a week.

Q: I notice that you paint equally well whether it's landscapes revealing nature, buildings or portraits, which do you prefer?

A: I like both ways (portrait or landscape), I don't have a preference.

Q: Most of your portraits are of women and girls, why is this?

A: I enjoy painting women and girls. I like to paint what I see, blonde and blue-eyed, or black and pretty. I painted a man once with brown skin, green hair wearing clothes from long ago (1775).

Q: What inspires you to paint the subjects that you do?

A: Well, I see photographs, first looking at the picture then sketching it onto canvas, then just painting, following the 'colors' that I see. I like to make things pretty.

Q: What medium do you prefer?

A: Graphite pencil for sketching onto canvas or 'art' paper. I paint with acrylics that are often watered down. I have used oils and pastels, but only now and then. I like colored pencils.

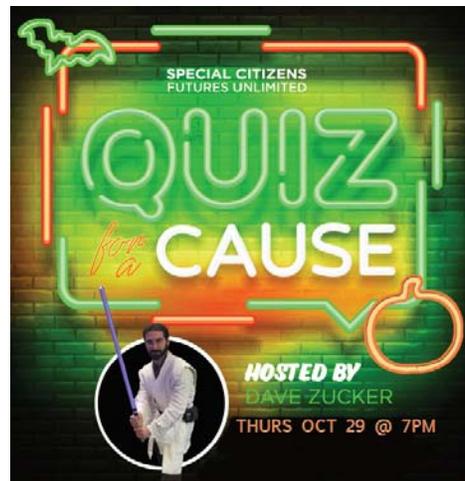
Q: Do you like to look at your peers work at program, what about those whose work hangs in museums?

A: I tell my friends at program when I like their paintings, or drawings and that I think it's nice. I like to travel train to museums and enjoy looking at art.

Q: Why do you paint?

A: It makes me comfortable.

QUIZ FOR A CAUSE!



On Thursday, October 29th in the lead up to Halloween, we hosted our second *Quiz for a Cause* virtual pub quiz event.

Host, Dave Zucker, provided SCFU supporters with another entertaining evening, full of spooky questions that tested our knowledge and helped to raise some money for all of Special Citizens' important work.

Thank you to all who joined the event and helped to make it a successful one.

To rush a critical donation in support of all of Special Citizens' important work, simply scan the QR code below w/ your cellphone camera



We miss seeing you all and can't wait until we can all reunite again. Until then, please stay safe and healthy and check our website and Facebook page for updates on our response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Have Questions?: Email us at: info@specialcitizens.org — Or, call us at 212-643-2663, ext.126

Want to Help?: You can make an instant donation to support all of our important work by scanning the QR code above with your cellphone camera, and rushing a donation to benefit the residents and program participants of Special Citizens.

Our Mailing Address: Special Citizens Futures Unlimited; 1775 Grand Concourse, Suite 802; Bronx, NY 10453