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Message from the CEO



Dear SCFU Community,

Summer 2026 is drawing to a close, and it certainly provided us with no shortage of opportunities to witness the power of teamwork; not only within the confines of Special Citizens, but throughout our communities as well as around the world.

In the first half of June, New York City celebrated a long-awaited milestone as our Knicks captured their first NBA Championship since 1973. Then, before the confetti was even cleared from all the celebrations, it was time to kick off the World Cup tournament with New York and New Jersey as the host for what is arguably the largest and most watched sporting event on the globe.

With respect to both the Knicks' and Spain's victorious runs, both teams were not built around a single superstar. Instead, each team's tremendous accomplishment in securing a world championship was achieved through trust, sacrifice, and an unbreakable commitment to one another, which are always among the top qualities that define historically great teams.

Throughout the NBA playoffs, our residents and staff alike were united through the shared love of the Knicks as well as our shared hope that they'd be victorious (and they were!). And then, while allegiances for World Cup teams ran the gamut at SCFU, the unity and shared humanity of the tournament traversed all geographical boundaries and fandom divisions, as every team competed for the same trophy, reminding us of just how much more we share in common than anything that may divide us. The spectacle of sport has a unique way of bringing people together, celebrating different cultures and their people, while reinforcing the common and unbreakable bond of humanity.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO (CONT)

In addition to the unity inspired by the exciting sporting events of the season, this summer also brought meaningful opportunities for celebration and reflection in other realms of life. In the month of June, we came together around Pride Month and Juneteenth celebrations, while July marked Disability Pride Month. All of these occasions offer us the opportunity to honor the contributions and accomplishments of people stemming from all backgrounds and abilities. These observances remind us that inclusion isn't just something we celebrate during designated months or dates, it's a value and standard that we strive to demonstrate and live up to each and every day.

It is my belief that the same spirit of connectivity, common purpose, and humanity that is inspired and ignited by sporting events as well as through the various occasions we mark on the calendar is also very much alive throughout Special Citizens. It is an undeniable spirit that I see brought to life in the updates I receive from our programs, or through direct observations during meetings, site visits, or just walking through the halls of our offices or day programs. Whether it's multiple homes coming together for community events, day program participants enjoying new experiences, or different departments collaborating to solve challenges, it's on full display here at Special Citizens every day of the year.

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Adding to the excitement of this summer are our Annual Employee of the Year Awards. Every summer we begin seeking nominations for deserving SCFU employees, and it is without a doubt one of my favorite parts of the year to sit down and read all the peer nominations we receive. The nominations are consistently thoughtful, sincere, and inspiring. They remind me – and all of us – that the work being done across our organization is noticed and appreciated by colleagues who see it firsthand. And, the most difficult part is not finding deserving candidates, it's trying to narrow down the long list of employees deserving of recognition. And, as I also do every year, I so very much look forward to announcing this year's award recipients at the end of the August.

There is a great deal happening throughout our organization as we continue working toward our many goals, and amidst it all, we are also preparing and in the process of celebrating Special Citizens' 50th Anniversary, culminating with our annual fundraising event marking this very auspicious occasion at Zuppa Restaurant & Lounge on Thursday, October 22nd. It will be a memorable opportunity to reflect back on five decades of dedicated service to local families, as well as to celebrate the thousands of lives that have been impacted by our work, and of course to recognize the remarkable people who embody our mission, all while looking steadily ahead to the future with optimism and steadfast purpose.

None of what Special Citizens has accomplished over the past fifty years can be attributed to a single person. That's because this work demands that it be the result of the many dedicated employees, families, advocates, volunteers, board members, donors, supporters, and community partners all working together with the shared common purpose of putting the people we support first and above all else.

Thank you for everything you do each and every day to support and propel forward this incredibly important work. I hope you enjoy a very happy and safe rest of the summer, and I also hope you will be able to join us in October to celebrate 50 years of Special Citizens and everyone and everything that helped to make it all possible.

SPECIAL CITIZENS CELEBRATES 50 YEARS!



August 10, 2026 marked 50 years since Special Citizens Futures Unlimited was incorporated as a service provider in Westchester, The Bronx, and the greater NYC area.

In honor of this incredible milestone, we will be holding our annual fundraising event at Zuppa Restaurant & Lounge here in Yonkers on Thursday, October 22nd from 5:30 - 8:30PM. To get your tickets, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/SCFU50TH>

You won't want to miss what will be a truly memorable evening celebrating all that we have accomplished over the last five decades. The evening's festivities will include an overflowing menu of passed hors d'oeuvres, appetizers, gourmet entree dishes, as well as an open bar. There will also be live music, special presentations, as well as raffles & giveaways that will include JetBlue travel passes to anywhere they fly around the globe.

We can't wait to celebrate our 50th anniversary with you this fall! And, a very big thank you to our growing list of event sponsors including: Focused Wealth Management; Community Care Rx; Gallagher Insurance; CBRE; BDO; Webster Bank; JetBlue; Enterprise Fleet Management; Lamb Insurance Services; USI; and John Murphy & Associates.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: LORI ELSON ASSUMES NEW LEADERSHIP ROLE



Special Citizens is thrilled to announce that last month, Lori Elson (previously, Director of Community Support Services) was promoted to the role of Director of Entitlements & Admissions, and will now oversee the admissions process and coordination of entitlement activities necessary to support timely and successful placements into our residential programs as well as ongoing authorizations.

Lori has been a dedicated and invaluable part of the Special Citizens family since 2011, when she joined the agency as a Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC). Since then she has also held the positions of MSC Supervisor as well as her previous role as Director of Community Support Services. Prior to joining SCFU, Lori was a residential social worker for YAI.

When asked what drove her to work in the field of human services and what inspires her most about working in this industry, she replied that "I knew I wanted to work in this field since I was a child. I was always drawn to helping individuals with special needs." She added, "I was so bothered by the way people were treated differently and segregated from the 'normal' kids. I wanted to change that."

Originally from Eastchester, NY, Lori currently calls Mt. Kisco home. When she's not making the world a better place while at work, Lori enjoys spending time with her family & partner, working out, gardening, loving her kitties and new pup, Ivy, as well as attending Broadway shows, watching basketball, and also football as a "long-suffering Jets fan." Please join us in congratulating Lori on her promotion and wishing her continued success in this new crucial role for the agency.



SCFU RESIDENTS & DAY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS VISIT RYE PLAYLAND & MEDIEVAL TIMES



Of the many outings and trips taken over the course of the summer, two of the most exciting excursions were arguably our field trips to Rye Playland (Rye, NY) and Medieval Times (Lyndhurst, NJ). To say that every year residents and day program attendees look forward to these two trips with an abundance of excitement and enthusiasm would be a profound understatement.

SCFU ATTENDS 'PROM' & BRONX DAY SERVICES HOLDS SUMMER CONCERT



Every June for the last few years, SCFU residents and day program participants have attended the Prom event put on by RSC Westchester at House of Sports in Westchester. And later in the season our Bronx Day Services put on a summer concert. Above are some photographs capturing the excitement and joy of each event!

MORE CAPTURED MOMENTS, SCENES, & THEMES OF THE SEASON

Below, check out some great moments captured by SCFU staff from recent holiday celebrations, day program activities, as well as from different educational and recreational excursions!



Have Questions? Email us at info@specialcitizens.org - or call us at 212-643-2663, ext. 706

Want to Help? scan the QR code below, to rush a donation in support of all our vital work.

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