



VOICES & VISIONS

Winter Edition

Special Citizens Futures Unlimited Newsletter

December 2025



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Message from the CEO



Dear SCFU Community,

As we bid farewell to 2025, we find ourselves reflecting on the work we have done, the relationships we have created & strengthened, and the goals we have achieved together. Yet, as we look back on all that has been accomplished, I want to encourage each of us to look a little deeper and notice the achievements we may have overlooked along the way.

One example of acknowledging such achievements struck me when I was thinking about the many meetings I have with our SCFU team throughout the year. They always begin with an agenda filled with actionable items requiring planning and attention, often focusing on budgeting and forecasting, enforcing policies, implementing new state and federal regulations, strengthening our skillsets, and identifying areas in need of improvement, among a host of other pertinent topics and issues.

This year, however, something meaningful evolved in those meetings beyond the usual agenda items that focus exclusively on problem solving and addressing ongoing issues, and we began a new tradition in 2025 to include intentional time in each meeting to acknowledge our successes, no matter how big or small they may be. Recently, during a meeting with our Director of Residential Services, we reviewed deadlines and staff development initiatives as usual, but we also paused to recognize goals achieved in different supported persons' staff action plans.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO (CONT)

This included highlighting positive medical follow-ups, engagement in therapeutic activities, and productive community participation. These moments of progress, often quiet & simple, can sometimes be overlooked as just routine, but they are proof that each day we come to work, we are moving forward.

It is easy to sometimes feel as though we are pacing the same path of routine day in and day out, or even walking in place. To the people we support, however, that is far from the truth. That's because their independence is strengthening, their goals are being met, and our mission is being carried out, and not just stated. Sometimes we need to stop and recognize that. It is important that we continue to build the social capital of the people we support, but it is equally important to remind ourselves that we are making a positive difference, and to set some time aside to mark those moments of triumph.



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As Special Citizens comes upon its half-century mark, I see a bright and promising future for us as an always growing and evolving organization. Our development plans are on track to come to fruition in the first quarter of 2026. We are expanding our reach across Westchester and remain firmly committed to our strategic goals through 2030. This past year was truly a great one for Special Citizens, marked with so many different accomplishments. And, looking ahead to 2026, I foresee so many more goals & successes for us to achieve, as well as of course, many more lives to be made brighter and stronger.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us, and my sincerest wishes to you and your families for a happy & healthy New Year.

SCFU RESIDENTS ATTEND MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE



In what has become an annual tradition, SCFU's Director of Day Services, Katrina Potter, led a contingent of Special Citizens Residents (along with Comm-Hab staff member, Dulce Reyes) to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Despite the chilly temperature, everyone had a great time, keeping each other warm with their shared excitement and holiday cheer that's impossible to not catch at this iconic NYC event.



RECAP: 7TH ANNUAL ARTFUL AUTUMN FOR AUTISM ACCEPTANCE



On Thursday, October 23rd we held our 7th annual *Artful Autumn for Autism Acceptance* fundraising event at St. Michael's Church in Manhattan's Upper West Side. The event was originally to be held at Goddard Riverside's Bernie Wohl Center, but due to unforeseen emergency repairs that needed to be done there, a last minute venue change had to be made. And, with the determined help of Goddard Riverside's staff, we were able to coordinate with their partners at St. Michael's Church to use their recital hall space just a few blocks north from the original venue, saving us from having to cancel or move the event to another day.

Every year this gallery exhibition and silent auction event is a joy-filled and inspiring night, all to raise critical funds to benefit the men, women, and children we support. This year's event rose the occasion once more, bringing together Special Citizens families, friends, SCFU staff, residents & program participants, along with our agency supporters, donors, and of course, our generous event sponsors, which this year included:

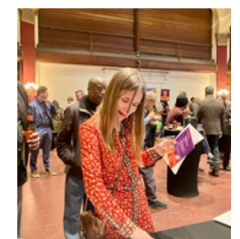
Special Citizens Distinguished Partner Sponsors: *Community Care Rx; Gallagher, and JetBlue*
Artful Autumn Community Supporters: *CBRE; Grassi Advisors & Accountants; Lamb Insurance; and USI Insurance*

Friends of Special Citizens: *Eifert, French & Ketchum; Focused Wealth Management; John Murphy & Associates; Maison Pickle; Tarallucci e Vino; and Vanguard Wine Bar*

Thank you to everyone who came out and supported this year's event!



Thank You to All Our Sponsors & Donors





2025 SCFU EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS LUNCHEON



To honor this year's *Employee of the Year Awards* recipients a special luncheon was held at Zuppa, our neighboring Italian restaurant just up the street from our main office in Yonkers. This year's honorees included: **DSP Professionals of the Year**: Sasha Hanchard; Samoya Wright; Gloria Soto; and Hailyn Gonzalez; **Emmons Hiller Award**: Kairon McFarlane; **Lee Pellegrino Award**: Meshel Ashayagori; and **CEO Award**: Natasha Smalls. Congratulations once again to all our 2025 Employee of the Year award recipients!

SPECIAL CITIZENS STAFF RECOGNIZED AT 5TH ANNUAL CCRX DSP AWARDS

We are so proud of Special Citizens' own Sasha Hanchard for being honored at this year's CCRx DSP Awards.

Sasha was recognized for her exemplary work and dedication with our Community Habilitation program and for the vital role she's played in facilitating and guiding the successful transition for one of our longtime residents into a new ISS setting.

Sasha's compassion, professionalism, and commitment is a shining example of what lies at the core of our mission, and what drives and inspires all of us here at Special Citizens each day and in every aspect of this truly purposeful and life-affirming work.

Please join us in extending a much and well deserved congratulations to Sasha!



SPECIAL CITIZENS FALL EVENTS RECAP: HALLOWEEN & DAY-HAB THANKSGIVING LUNCHEONS

Two of the most anticipated events every fall at Special Citizens Day Programs in both the Bronx and Elmsford are Halloween and the annual Thanksgiving luncheon held in the days leading up to actual Thanksgiving Day. The best part about these two occasions is how both staff and day program attendees get equally excited for these two days that are filled with joy, laughter, community, and of course, great food! Check out some moments from this year's Halloween and Thanksgiving celebrations below.

Halloween 2025:



Thanksgiving Luncheons 2025:



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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