



The Society, Incorporated
Supporting the Arts

Florida Suncoast Chapter
June 17, 2022

The organizers of our chapter, Audrey Coleman and Brenda Gladden met with Margie Lee of the Chicago Chapter on January 3, 2003 to consider a chapter of The Society, Incorporated for the Sarasota-Manatee counties. An organizational meeting with eighteen interested ladies was held at J Ryan's Restaurant on April 16, 2003. At the next meeting on May 14, 2003, the group decided upon the name Florida Suncoast Friends for The Cultural Arts. Subsequent meetings included members from the Lakeland Chapter who served as our sponsor. Valuable information concerning the proper organizational procedure needed to establish an Interest Group was provided by Dr. Erslyn Foster of the Montgomery County Chapter.

The following officers were elected:

President	Audrey Coleman	Financial Secretary	Judith Wilcox
Vice-President	Brenda Gladden	Treasurer	Janice Fitzgerald
Recording Secretary	Clara Mims	Parliamentarian	Florence Jackson
Corresponding Secretary	Geneth Bell		

Members included: Carol Buchanan, Marilyn Davenport, Jerline Dixon, Vildred Fitzgerald, Arlene Greene, Carol Johnson, Barbara Mask, Margaret Miller, Jacqueline Ray, Sadie Robinson, Edwina Stanley, and Lois Watson.

On October 26, 2003, the Florida Suncoast Friends for The Cultural Arts presented a showcase of eighteen talented students from the Manatee/Sarasota area. The Florida Suncoast Chapter held its chartering Weekend and Gala, April 16-18, 2004. Following the chartering weekend, the chapter celebrated Memorial Day with an outing at the home of Lady Geneth and Gent Herman Bell.

The first activities of the newly chartered chapter included the presentation of a donation on December 18, 2004, to a Habitat for Humanity new homeowner, followed by our first New Year's Eve Gala in the Waterside Room at the Quay. One hundred eighty-seven guests attended the Gala, making it possible for us to present monetary awards to three high school seniors.

On February 6, 2006, the chapter inducted four new members, Margie Jaudon, Charlotte Scarbrough, Elizabeth Segars and Sylvia Watkins. In 2008, Clara Mims became our president and served two terms. February 24, 2010 was the date of new member induction for Brenda Belsito and Joyce Locklear. Edwina Stanley became president in 2012. Induction was held on March 28, 2012 for new members Shelia Baynes, Francine Brown and Francina Hollaway. In 2014, Clara Mims became our president. March 11, 2015 was the date of new member induction for Carolyn Anderson and Charmaine Downie. During the same year of 2015 Geraldine Gibbs transferred to our chapter from the Renaissance New York chapter.

From 2004 to 2009, the New Year's Eve Gala provided funds for our support of our young people in the arts, and in 2011 the Caribbean Soiree was the major Fundraiser. On April 10, 2014, the chapter celebrated its 10th Anniversary at the legendary Bird Key Yacht Club on Bird Key Drive Sarasota, Florida. The event was successful and charitable donations enabled us to award scholarships and grants to deserving gifted and talented youth in the arts.

On May 1, 2016, the West Coast Black Theater Troupe was the venue for our "Now and Then" Showcase of our Rising Stars. The same year on October 23, 2016, our major fundraising activity was a Jazz Brunch held at The Meadows Country Club in Sarasota.

We were delighted to sponsor Master Classes by harpist, Ann Pilot, a blown glass artist, Thurman Stanton, and Flautist Bruce Monroe. We presented four instruments to students, contributed to the purchase of a piano for the Tallevast Community Center, provided tickets for Theatre and Opera for cultural enrichment, financed lessons for voice, cello, saxophone, ballet and dance. We awarded computers, graphic art software and camera equipment and have made donations to Habitat for Humanity, the West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, Embracing our Differences Exhibits and showcased two hundred ninety three students. With the generous support of the community during our fifteen years of service, we have provided stipends and scholarships for the academic endeavors of our students.

Our chapter awards include First Place in Programming for the 2009 National Conference, Second Place in Programming in 2011 and selected for presentation at three national Conferences.

We have worked in partnership with Booker High School Marching Band, Pathways Christian Fellowship Center, Sarasota Fine Arts Society, Florida Studio Theater, Manatee Performing Arts Center, Sarasota/Bradenton Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe.

Two of our students, Amaris Holliman and Jatavian Peterson were awarded national scholarships in the amount of \$2,000.00 each at the National Conference held in Detroit, April 2019. President, Lady Jacqueline Ray accepted the awards in their absence. Most importantly, three scholarships were awarded, and our chapter received two of the three scholarships.

Sadly, over the past seventeen years eight of our devoted members passed away: Our co-organizer Brenda Gladden also Carol Buchanan, Jerline Dixon, Carol Johnson, Sadie Robinson, Sylvia Watkins and Judith Wilcox; and five of our devoted Gents: Charles Greene, William Fitzgerald, Robert Johnson, Joseph Segars and Carroll Buchanan. Since May 31, 2019, our co-organizer and first President, Lady Audrey Coleman and Arlene Greene have passed. We were also saddened by the death of Gent George Mask. Lady Sadie Robinson transitioned in 2021 after last a long illness.

On May 2018, Jacqueline Ray became our President. During this time, we have continued to grow as a chapter. On March 31, 2019, we hosted our 15th anniversary celebration at the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club. The Rising Stars Mini Showcase was the highlight of the Anniversary Celebration. Rising Stars who performed included a special appearance by Alisa White, Jatavian Peterson, Alitash Tafesse, Sammy Waite and Zionna Williams. Our successful fund-raising efforts generated enough revenue to sustain us for several years. It allows us to provide stipends, awards and scholarships to our local deserving students. We continue to expand our reach into the community in search of new talent. We are forever grateful to the Bradenton/Sarasota communities as we pursue our goal of "Supporting the Dreamers of Today to Become Stars of Tomorrow". A Holiday Ice Cream Social was held at the Betty J. Johnson Library in Sarasota. Rising Stars Performers included Jatavian Peterson, Alitash Tafesse and Zionna Williams.

Our Chapter was awarded second place in the National Arts Competition, "What BLACK LIVES MATTER Means to Me!" in September 2020. Zionna Williams played "Rise Up" by Aundra Day on her saxophone for 2nd place. Jatavian Peterson won Honorable Mention for his soulful rendition "A Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke.

On June 6, 2020, we inducted four new members, Rosenda Calloway, Jeanette Planes, Quincy Tharps and Lorraine Williams. This occasion marked our first Virtual New Members Induction Ceremony.

Two new members were inducted on June 27, 2021. They are Theresa Ann Brown and Wanda G. Mills. They were inducted virtually as part of our 2nd Annual Virtual New Members Induction Ceremony. We are grateful for all of our new members and all of their contributions to the Chapter.

The National 2021 Emerging Artist Scholarship Competition was held in September 2021, Zionna Williams placed 2nd among the national youths who competed. She was awarded a \$1,500 prize. Jatavian Peterson was awarded Honorable Mention for his soulful rendition of Amy Winehouse's "Our Day Will Come."

On October 16, 2021, the Chapter sponsored its 2021-2022 Rising Stars Virtual Showcase, "Now and Then." hosted by our community partner, Nate Jacobs, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe's Founder and Artistic Director. Rising Stars from "Then", the previous Rising Stars Showcase were Merlot, Chanara Taylor, Tyrese Taylor and Topaz von Wood. "Now" Rising Stars were 1st place winner, Mia Bussell, and ties for 2nd and 3d place winners were Alitash Tafesse and Sammy Waite. Stipends were awarded to all participants including Tay Marquise, Chrishawn Clemmons, Merlot, Chanara Taylor, Tyrese Taylor, Zionna Williams and Topaz von Wood.

All Chapter officers, as well as many Chapter members attended the 1st National Conference held virtually on April 8 through 11, 2022. National Conference was hosted by the Atlanta, GA Chapter.

The installation of officers for 2022 - 2024 was held on May 26, 2022. Elected officers are President, Lady Joyce P. Locklear, Vice President, Lady Marilyn Davenport, Recording Secretary, Lady Jeanette Planes, Corresponding Secretary, Lady Charmaine Downie, Financial Secretary, Lady Quincy Tharps, and Treasurer, Lady Francina Hollaway.

On June 4, 2022, we inducted four New Member Candidates, Irene Oakley Johnson, Jennifer D. Lewis, Erica Y. Sheppard and Sheryl Y. Williams. This will be our first in person Induction Ceremony in over two years. Induction Ceremony will be held at the Capital Grille located at the Mall at University Town Center followed by a luncheon with a champagne toast.