



*The Society, Incorporated*  
*Supporting the Arts*  
*Florida Suncoast Chapter*



**GREETINGS FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT, FLORIDA SUNCOAST CHAPTER  
LADY JOYCE P. LOCKLEAR**

I bring you greetings from the Office of the President. On this momentous occasion of the launching of the Chapter's website, I want to extend my sincerest appreciation to the Technology Committee under the leadership of Ladies Brenda Belsito, Co Chair and Lorraine Williams, Co Chair, We are so very grateful for their dedicated efforts to make this mission possible. Special kudos to the life members and the current members who worked tirelessly to contribute to the success of our award winning chapter, beginning with Ladies Audrey Coleman and Brenda Gladden, Esq. who organized this chapter on April 17, 2004. Our National Founders, Ladies of vision and passion, Celeste W. Burton, Davetta Madison, Dorothy Patton, and Myrtle Road founded this organization in 1983. I proudly stand on their shoulders.

We have expanded our National organization to include 31 Chapters consisting of over 650 talented ladies located in 40 cities in 15 states. There are currently several interest groups exploring the possibility of establishing a chapter in their city. The Chapter's mission is to promote friendship and social exchange among members, to function as a resource for students in the arts and to promote education, civic and cultural experiences within the community. Our goal is to partner with schools, businesses and other organizations that serve youth to ensure that the arts become a vital element in the nurturing of their artistic development. We are so grateful to our community partners, Embracing Our Differences, Pathways Christian Leadership Center, The Links Incorporated, Bradenton/Sarasota (FL) Chapter and the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe for partnering with us and serving as a resource for the gifted and talented youth in our community. The gifted and talented youth according to their profiles may fit into one or more of the four (4) Creative Areas. Each member is responsible for identifying programs and activities appropriate for student recruitment, participation, training and performance in the following Creative Areas: Creative Area #1 - Literary Arts, Creative Area #2 - Visual Arts, Creative Area #3 - Performing Arts, and Creative Area #4 - Instrumental Arts

Let me take you on this memorable journey to recount the numerous awards and recognition that our Chapter has received in the achievement of the Chapter's mission and goals.

Our chapter was awarded First Place in Programming for the 2009 National Conference, Second Place in Programming in 2011 and selected for presentation at three national Conferences. Other significant National Awards and Recognition include: National Scholarship Award to Amaris Holliman and Jatavian Peterson in the amount of \$2,000.00 each at the National Conference held in Detroit, April 2019. Most importantly, three scholarships were awarded and our chapter received two of the three scholarships. Second place award 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. 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."

From 2004 to 2009, the New Year's Eve Gala provided funds for our support of young people in the arts, and in 2011 the Caribbean Soiree was the major fundraiser. We were delighted to sponsor Master Classes by harpist, Ann Pilot, blown glass artist, Thurman Stanton, and flautist, Bruce Monroe. We awarded stipends for students to attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City. The Chapter was very proud to assist a student to participate in the Summer Olympics in London. We have presented five instruments to students, contributed to the purchase of a piano for the Tallevast Community Center, made donations to Habitat for Humanity, the West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, Children First Head Start, Embracing our Differences Exhibits, Second Chance Last Opportunity Training Center and showcased two hundred eighty-five students.

The 10th Anniversary celebration at Bird Key Yacht Key was held on April 10, 2014, which featured past National President, Arlethia Spraggins as the Keynote speaker. Lady Audrey Coleman served as Chair and Lady Joyce P. Locklear was the Co-chair. 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. A Holiday Ice Cream Social was held at the Betty J. Johnson Library in Sarasota in December 2018. Rising Stars Performers were Jatavian Peterson, Alitash Tafesse and Zionna Williams.

On March 30, 2021, we celebrated our 15th Anniversary. Ladies Brenda Belsito and Carolyn Anderson were Chair and Co-chair of this event at the Lakewood Ranch Country Club where five of our Rising Stars showcased their talents. Included were performances by former Rising Star, Alyssa White who sang a special tribute to our Organizer Late Audrey Coleman. Soulful songs by Sammy Waite, Alitash Tafesse and Jatavian Peterson received resounding applause from the audience. The highlight of the evening was Zionna Williams' rendition of "Stand By Me". 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 tied for 2nd and 3rd 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

First and foremost the Membership Committee is where the recruitment of the members begin under the tutelage of the Sponsors for each new member. We are indebted to these Ladies who work tirelessly to keep our Chapter filled with talented, young Ladies who are dedicated to "Help Today's Youth Turn Their Creative Talents into Artistic Opportunities for Their Futures." We came full circle from the 19 Charter Members in 2004 to 18 members as of June 14, 2023. Nine members were inducted within the past three years. Proudly, we experienced a 47.3 % growth in our membership.

In closing, our Rising Stars are the sunshine in our life. Their creativity and willingness to share their talents with the community have enabled us to host talent-filled and entertaining Rising Stars Showcases. In recognition of the student's efforts, we have provided Awards and Scholarships totaling over \$95,000 to over 285 talented youth in our community. Thanks again to our members whose volunteer efforts have contributed significantly to the success of our award winning Chapter.

I leave you with this quote from Amanda Gorman:

**"There is always light,  
Only if we are brave enough to see it,  
There is always light,  
Only if we are brave enough to be it."**

In Friendship and Service,  
Lady Joyce P. Locklear  
President