**August 2022 Newsletter**

***This month, SILO’S newsletter has decided to highlight Rapid Transition Housing Specialist, Taciana Cheriel, to get to know our staff better. I personally want to thank Taciana for sharing some of her personal life story with us.*
Interview by Judy Wieber**
 

**Q:  Have you always lived on Long Island?**
A: Born and raised in Haiti, came to America 14 years ago, and Huntington has been my hometown since.

**Q: What was it like growing up in Haiti?**
A:  Growing up in Haiti was fun. Haiti has an incredible climate which made it easier for me to play all year long. I felt loved, even by people that I didn’t know, it’s like we were one big happy family. One always looks after the other. If I am the person I am today, it’s all because of my grandmother who took great care of me, although she never wanted me to leave the house. One of the advantages I had in Haiti was the opportunity to always have my family around.

**Q:  How did you come to work in housing?**
A:  My friend Marianne worked for SILO in the past and referred me for a job here. She later resigned and I was hired for the position.

**Q:   How did you get to know Marianne?**
A: Marianne and I met at Huntington Church of God, a church I use to attend since I came to the United States. We were in choir together and became close friends. Marianne is also my niece’s Godmother which now makes us family.

**Q:  Haiti and the United States, I would imagine are quite different in culture.  What are some Haitian traditions, customs, foods that you are fond of??**
A: January 1st is Haitian Independence Day, and, on that day, we make a special dish called “Soup Joumou” squash soup.
We celebrate Halloween in November and, Halloween’s special dish is called “tchaka”, a mixture of black beans, corn, meat, vegetables put together to create a delicious gourmet plate.
This is just to name a few of our main dishes; but we do have a lot more.
There is always something to celebrate in Haiti even when there is nothing to celebrate.

**Q:  I took some French in college and found it very hard to learn. How was it to learn English.**
**A:** It was not hard to learn English because the school I attended back home made Spanish and English mandatory. I don’t know much Spanish because I was always more interested in learning English. I learned English since I was living in Haiti.

**Q:  Do you still have family in Haiti?  What are some things you miss?**
**A:** Yes, my mother and my two sisters are still in Haiti. I miss the beach, the natural foods, our weekly Sunday Dinners, really the whole Haitian Culture.  Mostly I miss my mother and my two sisters.

**Q:  Are there some new American customs that you have come to appreciate?**
**A:** Compared to Haiti, we used to have family dinner every Sunday. It was mandatory, my grandmother would be very unhappy if you miss Sunday dinner. When I came to the United States, things were totally different. I grew to like Thanksgiving because that’s when the whole family can finally come together for a good time. Monday through Friday are workdays, Saturdays are days to clean, do market, do laundry and Sundays are for church and family dinner.

**Q.:  What are some things, or people that may have inspired you to go into this line of work?**
**A:**  My goal is to always help others.

**Q:  You mentioned always wanting to help others as your motivation.  When I heard this, it reflected your compassion and understanding you have for people in need.  It made me think of how Haiti’s culture being religious and spiritual. How would you describe the people of Haiti?**
**A:** Catholic is very common in Haiti. I am Christian, that’s all I know since I was a little girl. Yes, the people of Haiti are very religious, regardless of their religious beliefs.

After interviewing Taciana, I learned that “Soup Joumou” has a very important significance to the Haitian people.  It represents victory and freedom of slaves over the French, in 1804.  The revolution was the first successful victory of its kind. “Soup Joumou” was a dish primarily made and served by slaves. Slaves were never permitted to eat this delicious and savory meal.  When the revolution was won,” Soup Joumou” became a victorious and celebratory delight. This meal is eaten whenever and as often as one would like to eat it but is traditionally eaten on January 1st. A great way to bring in the new year.

I also learned that Halloween is much different in Haiti then here in the United States.  There Haitians go to the cemetery and bring food, celebrating the life of their loved ones that have passed.

[***This is the recipe for “Tchaka”***](https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/cuisine/recipe-tchaka-soup-haiti/)
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Caribbean National Weekly website

[***This is the recipe for “Soup Joumou”***](https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1021716-soup-joumou)
<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1021716-soup-joumou>
[Cooking/ NY Times website:](https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1021716-soup-joumou)
Recipe from [Cindy Similien](https://cooking.nytimes.com/search?q=Cindy+Similien&action=click&module=byline&region=recipe%20page) Adapted by [Priya Krishna](https://cooking.nytimes.com/ourcooks/priya-krishna/my-recipes?action=click&module=byline&region=recipe%20page)

An Interview with SILO's Own, Marilyn Tucci

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPqsr_FSd-g&feature=youtu.be>

**SILO's 2022 ADA Celebration
Article by Judy Wieber**

Were you there?  I hope you were.SILO threw an outstanding ADA celebration. Covid kept us from celebrating the 30th anniversary, but it did not stop us from celebrating the 32nd.  Despite the heat, reaching over 90 degrees Fahrenheit, approximately 150 participants sat under the big tent and listened to our county legislators and guest speakers, enjoying lunch sponsored by Jersey Mike’s, Holiday Inn - Long Island, SILO, and other community contributors.  A petting zoo, firetruck from Medford Fire Department, and games were provided for the kids, and LI Sound Professional Entertainment helped to set a festive mood.

Over 32 raffle baskets were raffled off. Some of the bigger prizes included a bicycle donated by Suffolk Pro Cycles, A paddle board experience, a beautiful recliner from Furniture Bizarre, a 1-hour horse experience for up to 4 people was donated by Pal-O-Mine Equestrian, a scratch off gift basket as well as; a fifty - fifty was held.

We heard from Legislator Nick Caracappa, Legislator James Mazzarella, Assemblyman Joe DeStefano,  Legislative Aide to Leg. Bridget Fleming, Michael Anthony Iasilli, Legislative Aide to Leg. Kevin McCaffrey, Sheriff Errol D. Toulon, John Corrado- President of Suffolk Transportation, Legislator Dominick Thorne, Geri DePersio-SILO Board Secretary, and Frank Perino of Innersight, among others. All addresses were translated by two American Sign Language Interpreters.

A few highlights: Suffolk County Paratransit will no longer be placing shields on the buses, and in fact, will be removing them from the 2100 -bus series.  Frank Perino asked that we sign a petition to rid our communities of nursing homes, and the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office provided identification cards to those Suffolk County residents who wanted one.

CEO, Joseph Delgado, graciously accepted a Proclamation from 4th District Legislator Nick Caracappa, as well as; certificates of merit and appreciation from the town, county, and state, recognizing the contributions SILO has made to the community.

However, what makes Mr. Delgado most proud is the genuine reliance all municipalities have for SILO, to uphold the independent living movement.

***SILO Testimonials***

*Back in 2019, I had the privilege to complete a 320 hour fieldwork experience at Suffolk Independent Living Organization (SILO). Throughout this experience, I got to meet and work with many individuals who have left a significant impact on me both professionally and personally. I remember feeling so nervous about this experience, but from day one, my supervisors and colleagues made me feel right at home and part of the SILO team. In addition to helping me develop the skills and knowledge necessary for my work as a human services professional, they have also empowered me as a person with a disability and challenged me to reach beyond my potential. Each week, I got to spend a lot of time learning from the most successful advocates I know, including Marilyn Tucci and Justin Ainsworth, who have taught me far more about advocacy and leadership within the community more than any course instructor or textbook ever will. Moreover, they taught me how to take pride in my disability and the work I was doing as a young professional, as I got to learn from them about the history of the Independent Living Movement and the ADA. My younger self had his doubts and questions about his future with a visual impairment, but because of this organization and the incredible individuals I got to meet, I continue to thrive as a change agent for both myself and my fellow members of the community. Thank you SILO for molding me into who I am today and for the work you continue to do."
- Tom R*

*I first came to Silo in November of 2019 for a Transportation meeting. I was referred to Silo by a friend, who was an intern at the time. The purpose of attending the meeting was to speak about issues relating to SCAT. I never imagined that it would ever amount to what it has. After
the meeting, I was told that Marilyn Tucci liked what I had to say, and wanted to meet me. I didn't think I had said anything that impactful, but attended two more meetings until Covid impacted them.
After that initial attendance, our relationship and my relationship with Silo began to expand. Since that time, I have gotten involved with Marilyn's support group, joined ADAPT, attended many legislative meetings both in person and virtually advocating for improved transportation, gone out with a group for the blind on many occasions
to restaurants, become more active in the community by joining activities, become a better advocate for myself and others than I ever dreamed possible, and, of course, it led to becoming employed as a peer advocate for the Open Doors program. I truly love the opportunity that that affords me. Not only am I able to do what I love and help others, but I can say that I am truly employed, and loving every day
of it!
I will forever be grateful for Marilyn. Because I know her, and everyone else who I have met at Silo, I have become a better person. No longer do I settle for what I am comfortable with. I try new experiences that I never believed I wanted to do. It was because of Marilyn that I went out for breakfast by myself one morning. I never imagined going to a restaurant by myself, not because I thought I couldn't do it, but because I never thought I'd be comfortable with
the idea of eating alone in a restaurant. That day changed all of that for me. I now have no hesitation to do anything of the sort again! When people tell me that doing that sounds silly, I tell them, "what's silly to you is not to me!"
In summary, Silo has opened doors for me that were previously closed by my own choice, and allowed me to see that there is a world out there besides being in my comfort zone. Without Silo, and without Marilyn, I'd still be in a room with no path to success."
-Brandon H*