

Advocacy With Others

“Given a good cause to work for and a well organized, educated public opinion...no reform is impossible.” – Louisa Lee Schuyler

One of the first activities of SCAA’s founder, Louisa Lee Schuyler, was to create a phalanx of community volunteers to join her in her efforts to improve the living conditions of the poor, sick and mentally ill in New York State. Right after the end of the Civil War, there was much to be done to improve the lives of these populations who often suffered in deplorable institutions where there was little oversight and few standards of care.

“But why waste so much time over organization?” a friend asked Miss Schuyler. “Why not visit all the poorhouses in the state yourself, and then make a report to the Legislature?”

“Because,” she promptly answered, “this would then be the say-so of one woman; I wish it to be the say-so of a thousand men and women.”

While it seems cliché, there is strength in numbers when it comes to advocacy. While Miss Schuyler knew that in 1872, the growing complexity and interconnectedness our world means that solving today’s problems requires more involvement from a variety of community members.

Education and Organization are the keys to promoting the needs of children in the political arena.

Use your knowledge to educate your community. You can do this by [writing letters to the editor](#), participating in forums, speaking before service organizations and clubs, at church events and whenever you interact with others. Joining a children’s organization (such as New York CAN) or becoming a member of an organization affiliated with your profession or interest area can provide you with a wealth of information. A good place to look for organizations is the list of [New York CAN partners](#).

Take the time to educate your elected officials at every level of government. Don’t assume that they are familiar with your issues – they may not want to admit they don’t know something. Prepare for meetings with the understanding that this will be their first discussion about the topic. If they are familiar with the issue, you have reinforced your message. If they need a chance to learn, you will have the materials ready without putting them on the spot.

If you want to organize in your own community, there are resources available to assist you. For example, Voices for America’s Children has a section on their website about [community engagement](#) with many resources to help with organizing, strategy development, outreach and fundraising.

One of the ways you can organize people, is to help get out the vote.

The [New York State chapter](#) of the League of Women Voters participates in the national [SmartVote](#) effort, which includes links to all candidates for state and congressional offices in New York. The League of Women Voters also has a site called [Vote411.org](#). The [New York link](#) provides information on how and where to vote in New York.

The [New York State Office of Attorney General](#) and the [New York State Board of Elections](#) also have information about voter registration. The Board of Elections also has [an interactive tool](#) to help people find their state and federal representatives

However you get involved, your voice is needed to promote the needs of children in the political process. Today's children need the a dedicated group of citizens to give them a voice in the political process, just like the volunteers who helped improve the lives of the vulnerable populations in New York more than 100 years ago.