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Somerville's silver screen triumphs at annual board meeting

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Somerville Community Access Television (SCAT) chose to hold its annual board meeting in the form of an extravaganza, with special guests, awards, and an all-you-can eat buffet. Hosting their top shows, such as Nesley "Bongoman" Lambert and Somerville's own Politico Joe Lynch, who competed for Best Hot Set Show, the board celebrated another year of dynamic new programming, and fostering new talent.

The night was highlighted by speeches from three visiting figures, State Representative Denise Provost, State Senator Pat Jehlen, and Massachusetts Cultural Council President Anita Walker. All three remarked about the sterling reputation SCAT held as a community station. Provost held SCAT's model as a paradigm for the new era of "citizen journalism" while Jehlen exclaimed her pride in a station that continued to embrace a diverse and delving representation of their community.

SCAT's ceremony highlighted the diverse and powerful creative impetus behind much of the programming, from Achyut Adhikay on Intro talk to Hips on Fire with Seemore Johnson and Christina Pujol. "Our Mayor has always said Somerville has the most artists per capita aside from New York City, so right there you are getting a demographic of a creative population of our city," said producer and board member Stephen DiCarlo.

Following a brief financial report from board Treasurer Mimi Graney, President of the Board of Directors Rich Schieferdecker presented the awards for the evening. Joe Lynch defeated Bongoman and Jovenes Latinoes for Best Hot Seat Program, Mary Ann Dalton won Best Informational with "Active Aging," Bill Trudell won Best Entertainment Program with "½ Hour With..." and Karen Aqua's animation class won for Best Short Feature with "Animal, Vegetable, Mystical." Melitta King was also given The Best Volunteer Award for her work in "The Production."

One category characteristic of SCAT's community involvement was SCAT's Youth Programming award, in which Anthony Cimena and Samantha Joseph of Books of Hope lost to first-time documentarian student Anthony Soto's film "In Tune With Rasta." Soto, who participated in the SCAT afterschool Next Generation Producers was able to realize his exploration of Rastafarian identity. "They were there to help me process my whole message, because I had a lot to say and it took me a little while to develop it," said Soto. On his victory, Soto said he was "shocked" but pleased with his progress working with SCAT. "I like doing it, giving my own opinion about what is going on, and putting my whole heart behind it."

It was this ambiance of community activism which fueled many words SCAT members including Schieferdecker who spoke of the ability of cable access television in raising the level of political discourse among and influence of the average "global" citizen as a means of social enlightenment. "It's SCAT's mission to foster involvement in the Somerville community by their increasing media literacy, enabling a more active citizenry."

"It's a city that has its opinions," DiCarlo laconically quipped

SCAT's financial condition remains stable despite the persistence of the recession and its impact on grants. Schieferdecker credits Executive Director Wendy Blom's skill in "conservatively shepherding resources" as well as the support of Mayor Curtatone and the city in negotiating with cable companies.

One guest, Soul Brown, who runs the youth writing program Books of Hope from the Mystic River housing project was pleased in her program's involvement with SCAT and spoke of the tool SCAT possessed helping shape Somerville for the better with relevant programming. "It's really important to have community vehicles like SCAT and Books of Hope to help people break through isolation, and to recognize that their opinions do matter and that there are places where they can be encouraged to express themselves."