

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

1811 Englewood Rd., #317, Englewood, FL 34223 WWW.GCICS.ORG October 2025

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor



President's Message,

Following my resignation, I want to sincerely thank each of you. After five and a half years, I cherish the memories of my service as GCICS President. As you may recall, my tenure commenced shortly after COVID-19 emerged as a global pandemic. During this period, we encountered challenges in navigating Board decisions which were difficult at the time.

Although our members had to make the best of the situation, especially when socializing and when in-person meetings were nearly impossible, the Board searched for solutions to continue its programs and events, even if it meant using alternative venues. Despite our limitations, we offered many techniques that were implemented to improve our

interaction with fellow members. We found Zoom to be a vital and effective way to host cultural events, happy hours, and Board meetings. There were times we disagreed over strategies, but what mattered most was building goodwill and ensuring that programs and events continued year after year.

Dear members, one might say that the olive branch was extended, and our hands reached out to grasp love and respect for one another. Special memories were created during that time. Do you recall the driveway get-togethers? You could drive through the neighborhood and see friends sitting in their driveways six feet apart. For us, Vin and I hosted these gatherings on our lanai. Our friends brought their own food and glasses, never stepping inside

our home. I reflect on those early years of my tenure not to relive a tough time for us, but to understand what we are truly about and to see the important opportunity we had to tackle the challenges around us. Our differing opinions ultimately did not impact each other's sincerity or the importance of expressing our love. Above all, the health of our organization has always been—and still remains—our top priority.

As I pass the gavel to our newly elected president, Phil Miner, on October 25, 2025 at our Welcome Back Luncheon, I am filled with gratitude for all of you. I have felt a strong and keen awareness of your kindness and the admiration you have shown toward me and GCICS. I have come to know you, our members, and I am confident that the Board has placed GCICS in good hands. Phil will establish a new regime, demonstrating his dedication with vigor and sincerity in his desire for an organization where members feel they matter most. You are familiar with Phil and the excellent work he has done as our Membership and Social Chair. It is Phil's wish to continue to organize our Happy Hours and La Cena dinners. He has done an extraordinary job, and we are happy with his decision to continue bringing much enjoyment to our members. Commencing November, I will be assuming the Membership Chair position. I hope to fill this position with the same dedication and importance that this chair requires.

Ellen has prepared a profile of Phil and Patty Miner. This profile will appear in the November newsletter. I urge everyone to support our newly elected president. It is a role that requires steadfast backing from all members. Phil will lead and manage this organization fairly. I implore you to continue supporting GCICS so that we may have grand success achieving our mission. Remember, without you, we would have no viable and thriving Society, and no way to give back to our community through our Scholarship & Grants Program.

There are many to thank, and my heart is saddened that I will not feel the adulation as I step down to let someone else take the reins. Let me demonstrate through my words how much this Board has helped me accomplish all that was necessary to fulfill our GCICS mission. First, I want to sincerely thank my partner, Vin DeNicolas, who has consistently supported me throughout my years of service and helped me fulfill my role as your president. I could not have achieved or enjoyed these moments without his love and support.

I thank Ellen Roderick, our Secretary, for her invaluable guidance which has enabled me to perform my duties to the best of my ability. Ellen has consistently shared her knowledgeable perspective in every situation that has arisen, always with the health of our organization in mind. Mary Rinaldi, our Newsletter Editor, has ensured that the newsletter was delivered and presented beautifully, even when

health issues might have suggested otherwise. Josephine Fontana, our Treasurer, responded promptly when asked and agreed to take on this critical role. Sandra Russell, our Scholarship Chair, has earned the gratitude of many hearts for the extraordinary job she has done in administering the Scholarship & Grants Program. Gordon Bloom, our Technology Chair, has overseen our website, its updates, and numerous other tasks. Camille Kramer, our Program Chair, has organized a series of outstanding events for our members. Phil Miner, our Membership & Social Chair, has brought so many members together through weekly HHs and monthly La Cena's. Tom Hurban, our Bocce Chair, has done an excellent job over the years by promoting bocce and creating numerous bocce events. I also wish to recognize Jerry Hall, our Language Instruction Chair, who passed away just a few weeks ago. We will surely miss him and his dedication to GCICS. Please see his tribute in our

November issue. A special remembrance is extended to Sheryl Lazzarotti, our former president, who passed away earlier this summer. Please see her tribute in this month's newsletter.

I would like to conclude with one more important note. I hope and pray that people of all nations look beyond blame and discontent. We need to be resilient and turn inward to be the helping hand that offers love and understanding. I pray for Ukraine, the homeland of my late husband's family. It hurts me, and for that matter all of us, to see so many people lost in a time of war and famine. These harsh actions have cost the world many souls, only creating unrest and more division.

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as GCICS President. Thank you for being the best people I know.

With love and appreciation,
Julie Bondarenko
President





SHERYL KING LAZZAROTTI
(May 28, 1944 - July 25, 2025)



Obituary: Written by Sheryl's Family
Photo: Take by Ellen Roderick, April 2014

GCICS Member, 2014-2024
GCICS Board Member, 2014-2020
GCICS Scholarship Chair, 2014-2016
GCICS President, 2016-2020

Sheryl King Lazzarotti of Lakewood Ranch, Fla., formerly of Pittstown and Montclair NJ ended her 6-year battle with Alzheimer's disease passing peacefully on Friday, July 25, 2025, at Alaris Health in Cedar Grove NJ with her loving family at her side. Born in Sterling, CO on May 28, 1944, Sheryl was the 3rd child of 3 children born to her parents Franklin and Opal (née Turpen) King. Her sister Marvel Browne and brother Clarence King predeceased her. Her husband Salvatore Lazzarotti predeceased her in 2014.

As a young girl Sheryl's family moved to Idaho Springs, CO where her parents opened a restaurant called King's Derby. Sheryl was very active in working at the restaurant throughout her childhood. After graduating from high school, Sheryl went on to receive her master's degree in Vocal Performance at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

After college graduation, Sheryl resided in New York City and traveled all over the United States as a soprano opera singer.

She also sang with Luciano Pavarotti at the Opera Company in Philadelphia.

While performing at the Sarasota Opera House, Sarasota, FL she met her husband, Salvatore Lazzarotti. Salvatore had three children with his previous wife who had passed away. Sheryl and Sal were married by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale at the Marble Collegiate Church in New York City in 1973 and resided with their children in Montclair, NJ. She quickly received her real estate license and worked for Burgdorf ERA in sales, in management, and finally as VP Director of Career Development.

Sheryl and Sal enjoyed singing together and they would perform at many of the events at the Italian American Heritage Club in Hunterdon County, NJ where they were members. They also performed many times at Odette's in New Hope, PA. Sheryl was Treasurer, Profit Seekers Investment Club; and President, Brideside Adult Day Center, Pittstown NJ.

After Sheryl's retirement she moved to Lakewood Ranch, Fla where she was an avid golfer and enjoyed playing with her many wonderful friends as a member of Legacy Golf Club. She was President of the Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society, covering both Sarasota and Manatee County from 2016-2020. Sheryl enjoyed spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren and her beloved Shih Tzu Barkley. Sheryl is survived by her loving children Peter Lazzarotti of Westfield, NJ, Laura Diess of Cedar Grove, NJ and her husband Brad and children Brandon (Corey), Carly, and Haley. A Memorial Service will take place in the Fall.

NOTE: Donations may be made in memory of Sheryl Lazzarotti to the GCICS Scholarship Fund: Address: GCICS, 1811 Englewood Road, 317, Englewood, FL 34223



A TRIBUTE: SHERYL KING LAZZAROTTI

Written by: Julie Bondarenko, GCICS President

I am saddened to share the news of Sheryl Lazzarotti's passing on July 25, 2025. Sheryl was a close friend to many of us in GCICS and served as President from 2016 to 2020. Her dedication to our organization will always be remembered.

Many of us have fond memories of Sheryl as we recall the many occasions when Sheryl graced us with her humor, but most memorable was her talent and gift of a beautiful voice. Sheryl sang at various venues throughout her career as an opera singer, including the Sarasota Opera House where she met her husband, Sal. I cannot think of any occasion where Sheryl did not sing her rendition of *Summertime* and one song that brought smiles to all of us, an Italian song taught to her by her mother-in-law. It had a great ending and even though we all had heard it sung by Sheryl many times, we anticipated the "boom boom" at the end. We all laughed and applauded Sheryl for this gift, her talent that she shared with all of us.

In my experience, many of us sat around the Board table and looked for her for

guidance. I had the frequent opportunity to play golf with her and always hoped that one day I might be a strong competitor for her. I knew Sheryl for many years before settling in FL as several of us did as well. We can all attest to Sheryl's steadfast commitment to excellence throughout her business career, her singing career, and her love and ability to be the best she could be—whether serving as GCICS President or in any other part of her life's journey.

We will miss Sheryl, and we send her family and friends our caring thoughts and prayers.

Warmest condolences to her family, friends, and all those whose lives Sheryl touched.

With greatest appreciation.
Julie Bondarenko, GCICS President
August 7, 2025

GCICS Italian Cultural Heritage Month

Welcome Back Luncheon

Oct 25, 2025, from 11:30-2:30

We are thrilled to announce that our guest speaker will be Dr. Gary Mormino, an American historian, author, Professor Emeritus of History, and past director of the Florida Studies Program at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. As an historian, Dr. Mormino became interested in Italian immigrant history, writing two award-winning books: *Immigrants on the Hill: Italians in St. Louis, Missouri*, and *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985*. The title of Dr. Mormino's presentation is "Italian Immigrants in Florida."

Here are the details:

Event: "GCICS Italian Cultural Heritage Month Welcome Back Luncheon"

Date/Time: Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025, 11:30 am-2:30 pm

Location: Stoneybrook Golf & Country Club, 8801 Stoneybrook Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34238
(Open Gate from 10:30 am-12 noon)

Cost: \$36 (all inclusive)

Registration: Please use GCICS website to register/pay (instructions appear at end of this email).

If Unable to Register Online: Mail check to Josephine Fontana, 8347 Canary Palm Ct., Sarasota, FL 34238; payable to GCICS; include each person's name.

Deadline: Online by Oct 15; or in Josephine's mailbox by Oct 15.

Point of Contact: Ellen Roderick, 301-775-1344 (<mailto:itrain@erols.com>
itrain@erols.com)

Program/Speaker: "Italian Immigrants in Florida" - Dr. Gary Mormino, Professor Emeritus of History, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg

Menu: Buffet including salads, potato gnocchi, pork sliders, blackened shrimp, grilled chicken, roast salmon, seasonal vegetables, dessert, soda, coffee, hot and iced tea.

Note: Gluten free items will be clearly marked on the buffet table.

Cash Bar: \$7 White & Red Wine, Mimosas

STEPS FOR PAYING ONLINE

*Go to this GCICS address: <<http://www.gcics.org/payment>>www.gcics.org/payment

*On 1st page, check "Member", enter first & last name, email address, phone #, and click on the blue block.

*On 2nd page, enter the total amount of your payment, then enter in the block directly below "10/25/25" and list the name(s) of the person(s) for whom you are paying. Please make sure you do this step.

*Click PayPal checkout and the next page will come up. Complete what is needed.

*Note: You do not need a PayPal account to pay for GCICS events. PayPal will accept your credit card directly. You will receive a confirmation email once you have completed the transaction.

Ellen Roderick
GCICS Secretary



11/13/2025: Cultural Lecture

Dear GCICS Members,

The GCICS Board is pleased to invite you to a cultural lecture on the Italian literary icon, **Dante Alighieri**, planned by our GCICS Program Committee.



Dante Alighieri, known simply as Dante (1265-1321), was an Italian poet, writer, and philosopher best known for his *Divine Comedy* (*La Divina Commedia*) completed shortly before his death. It is unquestionably one of the most important poems of the Middle Ages. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante describes his own travels through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven in an allegory representing the soul's journey toward God. Dante established the use of the vernacular, his native Italian, at a time when most literary works were in Latin.

DETAILS

LECTURE: "Lions and Tigers and Bears – Oh My! Dante's *Inferno* and the Yellow Brick Road to Salvation."

An introduction to Dante and the *Divine Comedy*, focusing on the poem's lessons on the journey to redemption and rebirth.

LECTURER: Dr. Mary Watt, Professor of Italian Studies, University of Florida (UF).

DATE/TIME: **Thursday November 13, 2025**; arrive by 1:45 pm; begins at 2:00 pm; approximately 75-90 minutes

LOCATION: Selby Public Library Auditorium (Ground Floor), 1331 First St., Sarasota, FL 34236

PARKING: Library lot (free, max. 2 hours); on the street; and nearby municipal parking garages, including Whole Foods City of Sarasota Parking at 100 Central Ave - Entrance on 2nd Street with 4-hour free public parking on the 2nd floor only.

ATTENDEES: Members (please wear badge) & Guests

COST: No Charge

RSVP: ASAP to avoid disappointment but no later than November 3, 2025, to Camille Kramer: camilleakramer@gmail.com You will receive a confirmation email.

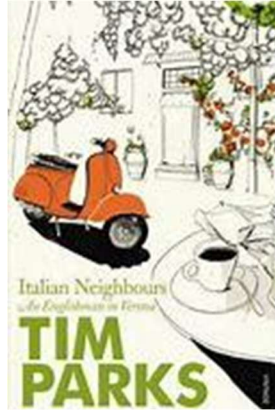
TO CANCEL: E-mail Camille Kramer (see email above)

LECTURER'S BIO:

Dr. Mary Watt, Professor of Italian Studies, University of Florida (UF), holds both a Ph.D. in Italian Studies and a J.D. from the University of Toronto. Her research specializes in medieval and early modern Italian literature and culture, with a particular emphasis on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. She has published over 50 journal articles, book chapters, and translations, and has contributed significantly to the academic community, having served as a review editor for *Speculum* and as a member of the advisory board for *Italian Quarterly*. Watt has twice been appointed as the Goggio Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto and was recently awarded the Slater Fellowship, which she will hold at Durham University, UK, in 2026. Her published works include *The Cross That Dante Bears: Pilgrimage, Crusade, and the Cruciform Church in the Divine Comedy*; *Dante, Columbus, and the Prophetic Tradition: Spiritual Imperialism in the Italian Imagination*; and *Dante's Golden Legend: Auto-hagiography in the Divine Comedy*.

Italian Bookshelf

By Leita Davis



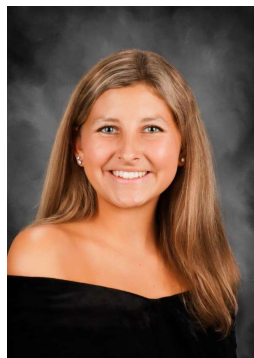
Kaldi Davis Vintage 2001

Italian Neighbors gives a delightful look at the folks in the village of Montecchio near Verona. If you've ever traveled in Italy, you'll recognize some of the characters who seem to embody the unique Italian personality. La strada delle zitelle (the street of old maids) is, of course, the hub of village news and source of all advice, especially when the author's wife, Rita, becomes pregnant. It's everybody's business. These childless women espouse the conviction that "...in a

Christian society women have responsibilities as great as those of men, and sometimes greater. Like motherhood."

The first warm days of spring bring a "distinctly erotic feeling" to people who take three bottles of wine on a picnic, stretching out under the first cherry blossom and simply watching as the more adventurous hikers push on."

Scholarship Winner Thank You



Dear Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society,
Thank you so much for selecting me as a
recipient for your scholarship this year.
I am so excited to continue to explore my
Italian heritage next year at the University
of Florida. Hopefully I will be able to use
your contribution to help me study abroad
in Italy! I appreciate all of your society's
support. Wishing you all the very best!
Thanks again,
Anabel TOCCO

OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

President

Julie Bondarenko
juliebondy@yahoo.com

Secretary

Ellen Roderick, PhD
itrain@erols.com

Treasurer

Josephine Fontana
Fontana.Josephine@gmail.com

Bocce Chair

Tom Hurban, DDS
doristom@gmail.com

Scholarship Chair

Sandra Russell
russellsandra062@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Mary Faith Rinaldi
maryfaithrinaldi@gmail.com

Technology Chair

Gordon Bloom
Gordon.bloom@att.net

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Retire66@gmail.com

Program Chair

Camille Kramer
carmilleakramer@gmail.com

Past Presidents

Joseph Raffaele, PhD	1988-1992
Gabriella Thurston	1993-2001
Patrick Corsentino	2001-2004
Arthur Castraberti	2004-2006
Marie Corsentino	2007
Mary Amabile Palmer	2008-2010
William Korp	2010-2014
Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020



The following restaurants have recently donated gift certificates. Thank you, Phil Miner, for all your hard work in obtaining all these gift cards. Remember, the monies obtained by raffling off these gift cards at our events helps to fund our scholarships.

Aji Ceviche
Amore Restaurant
Bella Vita
Brio Italian Grill
Café Venice Restaurant and Bar
Drift Kitchen & Bar at Lido Beach Resort (dinner for 4)
Evie's on the Bay (The Point Restaurant)
Fin & Tonic
Flavios's Restorante
Maestrale Restaurant and Pizzeria
Marcel DW Restaurant
Post Kitchen and Bar
Roessler's Restaurant
Sharkey's on the Pier
Valentino Restaurant
Vino Vino Restaurant

