VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

1811 Englewood Rd., #317, Englewood, FL 34223 WWW.GCICS.ORG November 2026

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor







Fellow GCICS Members,

By the time you read this message, GCICS will have honored Rick Piccolo, GCICS 2026 Italian American of the Year, for his contributions to Sarasota, specifically SRQ. What an honor! In November, we will honor Maestro De Renzi. The Maestro has stepped down as Sarasota Opera's Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. If you have not registered for this event, please do so.

Patty and I are looking forward to the Meatball Showcase and Wine Tasting at Hammock Preserves. It should be a fun event.

Regarding our newly instituted Small Group Activities (SGA), most interest has been in the Coffee Klatch and the Italian Book Club. Interest has been limited in two other activities, Knitting and Italian Recipes. I encourage you to contact Laura Heald, SGA Chair, to join any of these groups.

I am distressed that a large number of couples (13) and singles (17) have not renewed. The deadline is **Oct 31, 2026**. If you choose not to renew, please email or text Ellen Roderick so we can better understand why you are not renewing. That way we may be able to help prevent future membership losses.

Lastly, Patty has provided us with some special thoughts about Thanksgiving,
"Thanksgiving is a special time to reflect on the many blessings in our lives. It is a season to appreciate family, friends, good health, cherished memories, and the kindness of others. But gratitude should not be limited to one season. Throughout the year, we have many opportunities to be thankful for life's simple pleasures, the friendships we share, and the people who make a difference in our lives. Even during challenging times, we can often find something to be thankful for. As we celebrate Thanksgiving, let us remember that gratitude is not just a feeling, but a way of life. May we hold the spirit of Thanksgiving in our hearts throughout the year, extending kindness and never taking life's blessings for granted."

Phil Miner
President and Social Chair

GCICS MEATBALL SHOWCASE & WINE TASTING



Your Board of Directors is pleased to invite you to a fun event on **Nov 14** at the Hammock Preserve. Tom Hurban and his committee have worked hard to plan a new and creative event for all of us.

Here is Tom's message:
"The time has come to get serious about meatballs. We had featured an article about meatballs in last month's Il Voce in hopes of inspiring you. If you have not read it, PLEASE do so now! At our recent committee meeting we decided to veer from our traditional gatherings and not ask for all the various foods we normally ask participants to bring, and FOCUS ON MEATBALLS! Please try to make a variation of meatballs, even if it is new for you. We all love desserts, so that is the alternative. The event is meant to be fun and informal, so we welcome casual dress and if you have something that speaks Italian, wear it! We may be asking those who have a heritage story to share it with us or perhaps anything about your wine source. I will be at the luncheon on the 24th to answer questions."

Here are the details:
Event: GCICS Meatball Showcase & Wine Tasting
Date/Time: Saturday, Nov 14, 2026, 5:00 – 8:00 pm
Location: Hammock Preserve (on Honore between Sarasota Pkwy & Bay St roundabouts)
# of Seats: 70: Open to members & guests

WHAT TO BRING:

*MEATBALLS or DESSERT
***Attendees are encouraged to MAKE and bring their favorite meatball dish to showcase.
Meatballs should be of a smaller appetizer size and come in a sauce (gravy). Traditional meatballs are encouraged, but creative entries are most welcomed, such as turkey, chicken, seafood, vegetarian, etc. Guests will sample & vote for their favorites.
***Attendees not making meatballs: please bring a dessert.

*WINE TASTING
***Those of Italian heritage bring a wine from your heritage region, with a little explanation about it. Others should bring their favorite Italian wine. These will be out on display for a self-tasting. Depending upon how much wine you may individually desire, you may want to have another bottle at your table.

***We will not be providing beverages so if you are not drinking wine bring the beverages you would like to drink, although coffee will be provided.

IMPORTANT: E-mail or call Pam Arfield to let her know what food you are bringing (pamarfield3@gmail.com) or 917-923-3795.

Cost: $12 (non-refundable) [Pay either online or mail check-instructions below.]

Registration: Use GCICS website to register/pay (instructions at end of email). Ellen Roderick sees the online registrations, so you do not need to contact her.

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. After mailing your check, email me (Ellen Roderick) to let me know you have mailed a check and provide name(s): (itrain@erols.com)

Deadline: **Online by Nov 7**; or in Josephine's mailbox by **Nov 7.**
Point of Contact: Tom Hurban, 908-507-3048 or dorisntom@gmail.com

STEPS FOR PAYING ONLINE

*Go to this GCICS address: **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 the following information: put the date (11/14/26) 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 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.

Ellen Roderick
GCICS Secretary
On Behalf of
Tom Hurban, Event Chair

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL NOTICE RELATED TO MEATBALL SHOWCASE

On 10/11/26, Ellen Roderick announced the GCICS Meatball Showcase & Wine Tasting (see above). If you are NOT making meatballs, and instead bringing a dessert, Pam Arfield has provided a list of suggested desserts which she is coordinating (see listing below).

Bottom Line: Call or email Pam Arfield with the following information:
*Name: and Yes, I am bringing meatballs and tell her what type of meatballs.
*Name: and No, I am not bringing meatballs but here is my 1st and 2nd choice for a dessert I would like to bring; and Pam will get back to you on the dessert.

*Pam's email and phone are: pamarfield3@gmail.com or 917-923-3795.

SUGGESTED DESSERTS FOR THE MEATBALL SHOWCASE AND WINE TASTING

Please Email **Pamarfield3@gmail.com** with your 1st and 2nd choice. She will confirm your choice.

Novelty Desserts:
Assorted Italian Pastries
Cannoli's
Assorted Brownie Trays
Assorted Fruit Tarts
Tiramisu
Baklava
Flan
Bread Pudding
Banana or Chocolate Mouse Puddings
Assorted Petit Fours Classic
Assorted Macarons

Pies & Crisps:
Fruit Pies
Berry Crisps
Apple Crisps
Fruit Crisps

CAKES:
Mini Cupcakes
Reg. Cupcakes
Cheesecake
Ricotta Cheesecake
Strawberry Short Cake

Specialty:
Your favorite Italian dessert not listed.

REVIEW OF Piano Concert With Live Painting
September 17, 2026
Program Chair
Julie Bondarenko



Outstanding! I loved this event, as did everyone who attended. It featured unique performances by noted artist Midge Johnson and her husband, acclaimed concert pianist Alan Wasserman. We sat at bistro tables and enjoyed wine, appetizers, and other refreshments. We watched and listened with great enthusiasm and awe.

As Alan played his favorite Italian folk music, including works by Andrea Bocelli, Italian opera and well-known pop songs by artists like Dean Martin and many others, his love of music came alive on his grand piano. He further enhanced the experience by explaining each piece he chose and why.

If that weren't enough, imagine Midge painting to his music, feeling the magic she describes, each painting unique, taking shape from the melody and rhythm. It was even more entertaining when they shared anecdotes with each other and the audience. Alan's love for his music and years of dedication to it, and, foremost, to Midge, were obvious to all of us.

Midge describes her art as abstract impressionist mixed media. It was a true opportunity to explore her gallery, understand her work more fully, and appreciate its beauty. I took in how each unique painting spoke to me, wondered whether it held abstract thoughts for the viewer or revealed possibilities like beautiful flowers, birds, or bamboo, and noted how its unique style complements any home interior. I knew I had found an art gallery I would return to often. Midge is an accomplished and award-winning artist. She teaches classes at her Osprey gallery, and I definitely look forward to sitting in her classroom, learning some of her techniques, and enjoying the time and company with her and others.

She exhibits at Mara Studio in Sarasota and at her gallery in Osprey. Her paintings are held in private collections across the US, Puerto Rico, and the UK.

I am happy to share that several of her artworks have found their way into our members' homes. Her work is truly beautiful, suits modern style, and has a distinctive quality that complements any home interior.

Members who attended this event were surprised and truly amazed by how Midge and Alan put this unique event together for our enjoyment. They have agreed to offer it again for our members. Please watch for another "Save the Date" in the future.

Special thanks to program committee members Beth Rose, Philip, and Marianne Gordon for helping with check-in, providing a special bottle of wine, and their enthusiasm.









As of: 10/19/26

***11/4/26 (Wed): Dinner Honoring Maestro Victor DeRenzi:** Café Epicure; 6:00-830 pm; $54; members & guests welcome; Program: Honoring Maestro Victor DeRenzi, retired Artistic Director & Principal Conductor, Sarasota Opera; announced 9/27/26 & 10/16/26; deadline for registering: Oct 26. POC: Ellen Roderick.

***11/14/26 (Sat): Welcome Back Wine Tasting & Meatball Showcase:** Hammock Preserve, 5:00-8:00 pm; $12; members & guests welcome; announced 10/11/26; deadline for registering: Nov 7. POC: Tom Hurban; call Pam Arfield to let her know what food you are bringing.

***12/13/26 (Sun): Holiday/Christmas Party/Scholarship Fundraiser:** Patty & Mike DiMicele's home, Misty Creek, Sarasota, 5:00-8:30 pm; appetizers & desserts; BYOB; $40 scholarship donation; TBA

***1/9/27 (Sat): Annual Meeting/Luncheon/Town Hall/Program:** Peridia Golf & CC, Bradenton; N/C; members only; 11:30-2:30 pm; Speaker: Angel Colonneso, GCICS Member & Clerk of the Court & Comptroller, Manatee County; TBA.

***1/23/27 (Sat): Picnic & Bocce Invitational XI:** Hammock Preserve; 12:30 practice; 1:00-5:00 pm picnic; members & guests bring an entrée, appetizer, salad, or dessert to share; N/C; TBA.

2/4/27 (Thurs): Cultural Lecture: *Italian American Women and Their Impact on Immigration: Cindy Salomone, retired New York City educator; location: Selby Library Auditorium, Sarasota, 2:00-3:30 pm; N/C; members & guests welcome; TBA.

***2/9/27 (Tues): Carnevale & Fundraiser:** Carolann Garafola's home, Sarasota, 5:30-9:00 pm; appetizers & desserts; BYOB; $40 scholarship donation; TBA.

3/8/27 (Mon): Cultural Lecture: *The Holocaust and Italian Jews: Rabbi Barbara Aiello (zoomed from Calabria, Italy); location: Jacaranda Library, Venice; 2:00 pm (approx. 90 min); N/C; members & guests welcome; TBA.

***3/14/27 (Sun): St. Joseph's Celebration Luncheon:** Michael's on East Wine Cellar, 12 noon-3:00 pm; $61.50 all inclusive; TBA.

***4/17/27 (Sat): Scholarship Festa**: Stoneybrook Golf & CC; 11:30-2:30 pm; cost to be determined; TBA.

ONGOING:

**Bocce: most Sundays, 2-4; Tom Hurban, POC.

****La Cena's: monthly or thereabouts; Phil Miner, POC.

**HHs: Mondays, excluding Federal Holidays & La Cena weeks; Phil Miner, POC.

**Italian-Themed Book Club: 3rd Thursday, 1-2 pm; Mary Rinaldi, POC.

**Ladies Coffee Klatch: 4th Wednesday, 11:30 am; Laura Heald, POC.

Quotes About Italy



1. Venice is like eating an entire box of chocolates liqueurs in one go. (Truman Capote)

2. You may have the universe if I can have Italy. (Giuseppe Verdi)

3. The Creator made Italy by designs from Michelangelo. (Mark Twain)

4. I love places that have an incredible history. I love the Italian way of life. I love the food. I love the people. I love the attitudes of the Italians. (Sir Elton John)

5. In Italy life is a combination of love and pasta. (Federico Fellini-filmmaker)

6. Rome is not like another city. It is a majestic museum, a living room to tiptoe through. (Albert Sordi-Italian actor)

7. A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what is expected a man should see. (Samuel Johnson-18th century writer and poet)

8. We are all pilgrims who seek Italy. (Von Goethe-18th century writer)

9. On Venice – To build a city where it is impossible to build a city is madness in itself, but to build there one of the most elegant and grandest of cities in the madness of genius. (Alexander Herzen – 19th century writer)

10. Italy and the spring and first love all together should suffice to make the gloomiest person happy. (Bertrand Russell – 19th century philosopher)

Source
Italian Tribune, 2021

Thank You!

Dear Sandra Russen and the Scholarship Committee of the Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society, Inc,

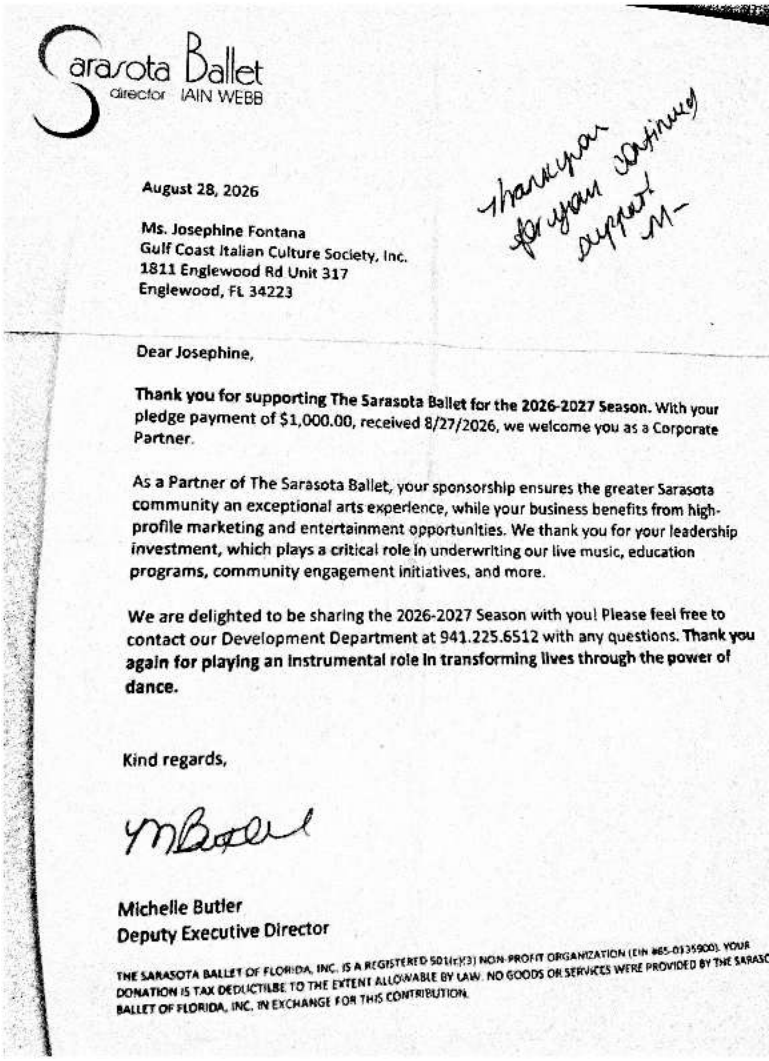
I am truly honored and very grateful to be selected as a recipient of your scholarship. Thank you so much for your generosity and for Supporting Students as we pursue our educational goals.

I especially enjoyed attending the scholarship luncheon and appreciated the time and effort you put into creating such a warm and welcoming event. It was meaningful getting to meet members of the committee and other recipients.

This fall, I will be attending the University of Tampa to study allied health on a pre-physician Assistant trace, and your Scholarship will help me tremendously as I begin this next chapter of my education.

I will be sure to update you all after my first semester of college.

Thank you again for your kindness.
Sincerely,
Sophia Mazza



Sarasota Ballet
director IAIN WEBB

August 28, 2026

Ms. Josephine Fontana
Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society, Inc.
1811 Englewood Rd Unit 317
Englewood, FL 34223

Thank you for your continued support M-

Dear Josephine,

Thank you for supporting The Sarasota Ballet for the 2026-2027 Season. With your pledge payment of $1,000.00, received 8/27/2026, we welcome you as a Corporate Partner.

As a Partner of The Sarasota Ballet, your sponsorship ensures the greater Sarasota community an exceptional arts experience, while your business benefits from high-profile marketing and entertainment opportunities. We thank you for your leadership investment, which plays a critical role in underwriting our live music, education programs, community engagement initiatives, and more.

We are delighted to be sharing the 2026-2027 Season with you! Please feel free to contact our Development Department at 941.225.6512 with any questions. Thank you again for playing an instrumental role in transforming lives through the power of dance.

Kind regards,

Michelle Butler
Deputy Executive Director

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Arthur Castraberti	2004-2006
Marie Corsentino	2007
Mary Amabile Palmer	2008-2010
William Korp	2010-2014
Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020
Julie Bondarenko	2020-2025

Trivia: Did you know?

by Mary Rinaldi
Thanksgiving Facts

Buffalo, New York, was the first city to host a Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving morning in 1896.

The first Thanksgiving celebration wasn't in November at all. In fact, some historians suggest it was held in mid-October, similar to the present-day Canadian Thanksgiving. It was President Lincoln who set the November date to coincide with the Pilgrims' landing on Plymouth Rock.

Only male turkeys make the well-known "gobble, gobble" sound that has come to be associated with the holiday. In fact, male turkeys are even known as "gobblers." Females make other noises, such as purring and cackling.

The first Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621 as a harvest festival. It included 50 Pilgrims, 90 Wampanoag Indians, and lasted three days. Historians believe that only five women were present.

Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the national bird.

The tradition of football on Thanksgiving began in 1876 with a game between Yale and Princeton. The first NFL games were played on Thanksgiving in 1920.

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade was originally called the "Macy's Christmas Parade" to kick off the holiday shopping season. Held in 1924, the first parade included monkeys, bears, camels, and elephants borrowed from the Central Park Zoo instead of the traditional character balloons we know today.

Source
Google.com/search?q=facts+Thanksgiving