

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. BOX 2591, SARASOTA, FL 34230

WWW.GCICS

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Mary Rinaldi, Editor



President's Message

Julie Bondarenko

The positive vibes that filled the air when I arrived at Stoneybrook Golf and Country Club to MC our 2022 Scholarship Celebration were soon contagious. Smiles were plentiful and it felt like old times only better. More than likely, these positive feelings were because we understood how important this occasion is to our organization. We all know what we have been through; what we endured. Cautiously we contain our optimism; nothing should interfere with this day. Nor did it. The weather was perfect, as was the luncheon prepared for us at Stoneybrook; a very heartfelt thank you goes to Kathleen Strand, Stoneybrook's Special Events Manager.

I felt new inspiration from our committee. Their enthusiasm gave way for our committee to work harmoniously. Additionally, two new committee members, Sandra Russell and Mike DiMichele brought their prior work experience as educators. They enhanced our ability to select our six recipients. We were in total agreement in the final analysis and the six students were selected. We

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were all happy! Lucille Samartin and Mary Lou Ferrari are experienced committee members while Linda Ahern and I have both served as committee members and chairpersons. Let us not forget our committee member, Ellen Roderick, who played a significant role in helping to organize this event, working closely with

Stoneybrook to make sure all was as it should be, and it was.

More importantly than the beautiful weather, the comfortable venue, the successful collaboration by all were the unique high school seniors we honored on this special day. These young people are the cream of the crop, and for the first time, I felt a strong connection to all of them. Getting to know the moms, dads, sisters, brothers, and a grandparent was an honor for me, as well as an honor for all in attendance. We enjoyed the company of these extraordinary individuals who will go on to the next phrase of their lives.

And for whatever reason that played out that day, it just seemed more special, more important than I have experienced in the past.

Considering all that is happening in our world, I am feeling nostalgic for a carefree attitude. Instead, I am realizing, as I mentioned in my opening welcome, how important it is to understand how our values impact all that we are. When I asked these scholars during our interview who was the one person they feel supported and helped them attain their success, the answer was always the same - a parent or grandparent! I then realized that values and good moral judgement are passed down from generation to generation as they were to each of our honored awardees. That was the reason they fulfilled their potential and will continue to do so. Our future is in their hands, and we will bear witness to their accomplishments!

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I would say this day proved successful. Thank you to all who helped and a huge thank you to the entire GCICS membership for your donations throughout the year. You are the reason we were able to give six scholarships at \$1,500 to each of our 2022 recipients. Several photos of the event are included. One photo is of Rian Hanson who was chosen to read her essay, “Fiorello LaGuardia: An Italian American Icon” printed in this newsletter. Do log on to our website to view more photos of the scholars, their family, and members. Thank you for allowing me to share my memories of our Scholarship Celebration for 2022.

Please do not miss our next cultural lecture delivered by Dr. Josh Goodman on May 2nd at the Gulf Gate Library. If you have not signed up, it is not too late. Look for Ellen’s announcement with details of this event. Kudos to George Arfield for the recent La Cena at Gabbiano’s. It could not have been more enjoyable. Look for his report. Thank you to all who make our Newsletter possible. Special thanks to our Board for their dedication to GCICS. One final note. . . I would like to let Linda Ahern know that she continues to be in our thoughts and prayers. We anxiously await her return to Florida. Special prayers for Mary Rinaldi who has suffered through an accident that has been not only painful but a very arduous healing process. Feel well soon.



CULTURAL LECTURE

SUBJECT: *"A Bit of the Old World in the New: Mediterranean Revival Architecture in Sarasota County"*

This event is free to GCICS members. Guests are welcome. GCICS is delighted to announce that for our next cultural lecture Dr. Josh Goodman, the newly appointed Manager of the Sarasota History Center (part of Sarasota County's public library system), will address GCICS on Monday, May 2nd, on the considerable Italianate and Spanish influence on the history and development of our region's formation and buildings.

This is an exceptional opportunity to meet the newly appointed head of historical resources and learn about often hidden or overlooked details that have shaped our region and its development.

A head count is needed to secure adequate seating, so please RSVP as soon as possible to GCICS Secretary Ellen Roderick: itrain@erols.com Please provide the name(s) of all attendees in your party.

WHAT: *"A Bit of the Old World in the New: Mediterranean Revival Architecture in Sarasota County"*

WHO: Dr. Josh Goodman, Manager, Sarasota County History Center

WHEN: Monday, May 2nd, 2:00 - 4:00 pm EDT (Note: Following the lecture, our regular Monday Happy Hour will take place at 5 pm at a nearby restaurant. A separate RSVP will be required for it. The HH will be announced on April 28.)

WHERE: Room "A", ground floor of the Sarasota Library Gulf Gate Branch (7112 Curtiss Avenue, just south of Gulf Gate Ave.).

PARKING: Free, on both sides of building and in the unpaved lot across from main entrance.

DETAILS: See below.

George Arfield, GCICS Social & Cultural Chair

A Bit of the Old World in the New: Mediterranean Revival Architecture in Sarasota County

Dr. Josh Goodman—Manager, Sarasota County History Center

Many of the oldest buildings in Sarasota County feature charming references to Italian and Spanish themes—stucco walls, archways, barrel-tile roofs, and elaborate ornamentation. But where did this fascination with the Old World come from, and how did it arrive in our area? There's more to it than just the venerable beauty of the buildings—this Mediterranean Revival style of architecture has a uniquely Floridian backstory. Sarasota County History Center Manager Dr. Josh Goodman will take us on an exploration of the history of Mediterranean Revival architecture and its role in building the Sarasota County we know today.

About the Speaker:

Dr. Josh Goodman is manager of the Sarasota County History Center, which holds an extensive collection of historical artifacts, archival records, and other resources documenting the history and culture of the entire county. Josh is a sixth-generation Floridian, educated at FSU in Tallahassee and Tulane University in New Orleans. Prior to taking the helm at the History Center, Josh spent six years as the Archives Historian at the State Archives of FL, and he has also worked for the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. He has authored a variety of articles on various aspects of Florida history, as well as a book on the history of Taylor County, FL. [RETURN TO Pg 1](#)

GCICS 2022 SCHOLARSHIP FESTA REVIEW

Article: Ellen Roderick

Photos: George Arfield & Julie Bondarenko

The GCICS Scholarship Committee welcomed 72 members and guests to our 2022 Scholarship Festa at Stoneybrook Golf & Country Club in Sarasota on a beautiful Saturday morning with temperatures in the low 70s. Fifty-seven members and fifteen guests (scholarship recipients and family members) enjoyed a delicious luncheon of salmon or chicken piccata with strawberry shortcake for dessert. We were present to witness the awarding of scholarships, \$1,500 each, to six talented and personable high school seniors with Italian ancestry:

Alexandria Cerini, Sarasota High School

Lucy Collins, Pine View School

Rian Hanson, Lakewood Ranch High School

Lexington Kahler, Lakewood Ranch High School

Daniele LaRosa, Sarasota High School

Gabriella Sgro, Southeast High School

We are grateful to our Scholarship Committee for the dedicated work they put into publicizing the scholarships, reading and rating the applications, interviewing the finalists, making the final selections, selecting the venue, making the arrangements for the luncheon, publicizing the event, taking the reservations, developing and producing the written program, and conducting the event. The committee was composed of Julie Bondarenko, Chair; Linda Ahern, Mike DiMicele, Mary Lou Ferrari, Ellen Roderick, Sandra Russell, and Lucille Samartin.

Our President and Scholarship Chair, Julie Bondarenko, opened with a grand welcome. Sandra Russell led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mike DiMicele delivered the blessing. Following lunch, Ellen Roderick led the introduction of the scholars and their families. Each student is required to compose an essay on a famous Italian American identified by the Scholarship Committee. Rian Hanson was asked to read her essay entitled "*Fiorella La Guardia: An Italian American Icon.*" The essay is reproduced in this newsletter. Following the reading, Julie awarded the scholarships to each student who shared his or her plans for college and career paths. Those career paths include the practice of law, medicine, international relations, and film making. Linda Mercurio and Ellen Roderick conducted the restaurant gift certificate raffle drawings. Thanks to the generosity of our attendees and the securing of the certificates by Linda, \$720 was raised for our Scholarship & Grants Fund. Julie provided closing remarks, thanking everyone for being a part of this Scholarship Awards Luncheon that truly reflects a core dimension of our Society's mission. [RETURN TO Pg 1](#)



The scholarship recipients standing behind President Julie Bondarenko and Secretary Dr. Ellen Roderick
From left to right: Alexandria Cerini, Daniele LaRosa, Lexington Kahler, Rian Hanson, Gabriella Sgro, and Lucy Collins



Scholarship Committee: Sandra Russell, President Julie Bondarenko, Mike DiMichele
Lucille Samartin, Secretary Dr. Ellen Roderick, and Membership Chair Mary Lou Ferrari



Scholarship recipient Rian Hanson reading her winning essay

Rian Hanson Essay

Fiorello LaGuardia: An Italian American Icon

One of the greatest politicians and attorneys in American history is Fiorello LaGuardia. The 99th mayor of New York City, he fought social injustice, becoming a hero for the rights of all. “The Little Flower” as he was nicknamed stood short in stature but big in heart. Completing his law degree while working as an interpreter for the US Bureau of Immigration at Ellis Island, he was an impressive linguist-fluent in 6 languages. LaGuardia’s first law practice focused on protecting immigrant workers in his native city. Representing those in need, often free of charge, he made numerous friends and amassed a reputation as a fighter of inequality. In 1933, La Guardia won the mayoral election and became the first Italian American mayor, a position he would hold for 12 years. His main goals upon taking office was to get the city back on track financially, end corruption, assist the unemployed, and advance the city’s infrastructure. He quickly completed many of his objectives because of his bipartisan approach. He created an invaluable ally in President Franklin D. Roosevelt which benefitted the city of New York. LaGuardia also supported and recognized members of the NYPD, cracking down on crime and fighting corruption by going after gangsters he felt were tarnishing the reputation of the Italian community. He was quoted as saying, “Let’s drive the bums out of town.”

LaGuardia was also an advocate for the less fortunate, believing, “Only a well-fed, well-housed, well- schooled people can enjoy the

blessings of liberty.” Throughout his three terms as mayor, he was able to modernize New York City’s infrastructure. Major works credited to his tenure include LaGuardia airport, his namesake, colleges including LaGuardia Community College, numerous parks, buildings, bridges, and tunnels.

Despite holding office during two of the most challenging times in our country’s history, the Great Depression and WWII, Major LaGuardia (as he preferred to be called) was beloved by so many and to this day often referenced in musicals, plays and films. A champion for Jewish, German, Irish and Italian Americans, he believed our country should be open to all. Fiorello LaGuardia supported many causes and went against the norm to stand up for what was just. A first-generation Italian American, he was instrumental in garnering political recognition for Italians by supporting their causes including attending rallies to promote fundraising. He also was determined to show that the sons of Italian immigrants in America were patriots who loved their country. Once a fighter pilot, he also represented Italian Americans not only in Congress but in the military. LaGuardia was in charge of training American pilots in Italy and working with the Italian industry to facilitate the production of needed war planes.

Fiorello LaGuardia was definitely an Italian American icon. A leader of Italian heritage in America, and he created a legacy of success and achievement.

Works Cited

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Bocce News



Most recent weekends have been taken up by events under the auspices of GCICS. On several occasions, the court was unavailable for use because The Conservation Foundation was having an event on their grounds. The general public is then precluded from coming there for any purposes. Attending a recent lecture which the Conservation Foundation sponsored, I was able to seek out the events chair and learned that there have been a few personnel changes. With follow up phone calls, I learned that their Wild About Nature day, which was rescheduled to this April because of COVID, and cancelled again at the last minute due to the forecast of nasty thunderstorms, will now be held in the Spring rather than the Fall . Strangely the new chairperson is already training a replacement as she takes on a different role! GCICS had seven volunteers who were committed to be there to teach bocce to the young people attending. That event usually draws over 1000 people. This decision does affect us because we had usually had our welcome back picnic the following day at the bocce

court. The Conservation Foundation graciously left tables and chairs for our use. Last Fall, we decided to hold our welcome back picnic at the North Jetty Park in Nokomis. Most felt that this venue worked very well and allowed us a bigger and more varied facility. The May GCICS Board meeting will concentrate on planning next year's events, so if you feel that the new location did serve us better please let a Board member know. Currently there is only one day in conflict which would disallow playing bocce, Sunday October 9th. Normal Sunday bocce will continue during summer months, weather permitting. I will not be here, so please contact Jerry Hall with any questions you may have.

Thank you,
Tom Hurban
Bocce Chair

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LA CENA SIESTA KEY EVENT SELLS OUT

Another sold-out La Cena fine dinner was held on Thursday, April 21 at the casually elegant Cafe Gabbiano in the heart of Siesta Key Village. Prefacing the successful event --the restaurant's dishes, environment and service received multiple compliments-- was a delightful Spring evening with moderate temperature and low humidity that combined to make a strong case for remaining outdoors. The restaurant's excellent cuisine won, however and the event proceeded indoors, in the restaurant's main dining room. The 30 members and one guest shared two parallel tables, laid out to maximize opportunities for conversation and circulating among friends.

The La Cena events are held periodically at smart restaurants that can handle up to 30 orders from their regular menu, as opposed to eateries that require three or four set menus for groups of a certain number. [RETURN TO Pg 1](#)



Dr. Jack Ferrante and Dr. Ellen Roderick



Diane Quincy and Joan Ferrante



Enza Amato MacDonald, Josephine Fontana, and Vince Amato



Sheryl Lazzarotti with Bob and Paola Tate



George and Pam Arfield with Alan Lederman and Carol Wilson

GIFT CERTIFICATES



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

Apollonia (Cooper Creek): 359-4816
Apollonia (Landings): 927-2270
Boatyard: 921-6200
Bricks Smoked Meats: 993-1435
British Open Pub: 492-9227
Café Gabbiano: 349-1423
Cassariano (Lakewood Ranch): 355-8615
Darrell's: 485-9900
Dockside Waterfront: 412-0700
El Toro Bravo: 924-0006
Flavios: 349-0995
JR Packinghouse: 371-9358
Made in Italy: 488-8282
Mama Onesti's/Scarpino: 756-8100
PF Changs: 296-6002
Pops: 488-3177
Public House: 822-0795
Rolf's: 966-2121
Seasons 52: 702-9652
Valentino's (Cooper Creek): 359-6400

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Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020



They Sacrificed their Tomorrows
for Our Todays

GCICS Restaurant Discount Program

The GCICS Board of Directors has decided to suspend the Restaurant Discount Program. With the present conditions faced by our local restauranteurs, we believe it is in everyone's best interest to not seek discounts at present.

Cooking Up A Storm

Below are Mary Lou Ferrari and Penny Thomas cooking at one of Robert Gaglio's cooking classes.

