

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

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

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor



President's Message

Dear GCICS Members,

The Holiday Party at Mike and Patty DiMichele's beautiful home on December 14th was a rousing success! We had 49 attendees. The food and entertainment were excellent. I hope you all experienced a wonderful Christmas and Hanukkah.

As you may be aware, Small Group Activities will be in full gear very soon. These activities include cooking demonstrations, coffee klatches, Italian card games, Italian book club, and Italian dancing. In addition, a GCICS Italian cookbook is in the works. Non-Italian activities will include knitting and walking. I am working on incorporating Italian ancestry into our website.

These activities serve two purposes: first, to promote camaraderie within our organization and second, to attract prospective members to GCICS. I encourage you to join one or more

activities. Many of you have expressed interest. To those of you who have not responded, please do so.

Our membership continues to grow. The most common source of new members is by word of mouth. For that reason, I am appealing to each one of you to reach out to your friends and neighbors, telling them what a great organization we have. At our Annual Meeting on January 10th, GCICS information cards will be distributed for you to give to prospective members.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support.

I WISH EVERYONE A HAPPY, HEALTHY
AND SAFE NEW YEAR !! 🎉😊🥳

Phil Miner
GCICS President

Bocce Corner



NEW MEMBERS PLEASE READ ! Others too! Some history!

About 10 years ago our Society rebuilt an abandoned bocce court at what was then The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast grounds in Osprey. We continue to maintain it so they reserve its use for us each Sunday afternoon from 2-4.

One of our members was living at The Cascades, which had a VERY active bocce group and an Italian Club. For many years we had an afternoon of friendly competition with them followed by food, drink and merriment. Their Italian Club has since disbanded as did the challenge matches. We lost handily each year except for one year when the courts were wet and it threw them off. Last year, thanks to the hospitality of Society members Marianne and Phillip Gordon, we were able to substitute friendly intra club matches, followed by a potluck picnic at their community, The Hammock Preserve, on Honore Ave. You have been seeing this event listed in the “save the date”

notifications sent out by Ellen. I am asking as many of you as possible to set up a team of four to participate. The courts there are very different from those we “regulars” play on, meaning it’s fun for anyone. Newcomers are encouraged to participate. The whole idea is just to have fun.

So, SAVE THE DATE, Sat. Jan. 24, from 1-4. Bocce starts on time followed by the potluck picnic; detailed information will follow. Please join us at “our court” on a Sunday, 2-4, at 400 Palmetto Ave, Osprey, sort of behind the Osprey library on the bay, to familiarize yourself with the simple game of bocce. I can help setting up teams up until or at the annual meeting; after which Vincent DeNicolas will be in charge. His # is 941 402 1679, and his email is vindenicolas@gmail.com

TOM HURBAN, Bocci Chair
908 507 3048
dorisntom@gmail.com



IN MEMORIUM: CARL SCHUBERT

(Passed: December 1, 2025)

GCICS Member: 2015-2021



Obituary: Written by Family

Carl Schubert, the beloved husband, father, grandfather, artist, and teacher, passed away peacefully in his sleep on December 1, 2025, surrounded by the family he cherished. He was a man whose life was defined by his creativity, kindness, and his unwavering dedication to those he loved.

Born with an artist's eye and a teacher's heart, Carl spent his life sharing beauty with the world through his artwork, his classroom, and the countless lives he touched. His students often remembered him not only for his talent but for the way he encouraged them to see the world differently, to create boldly, and to believe in themselves.

Carl was a devoted family man, deeply proud of his children, Ryan and Carlie, and endlessly loving toward his four grandchildren, Tucker, Cooper, Kaylin, and

Taryn, who brought him immense joy. His partnership with his soulmate and wife, Nancy Schubert, was a testament to love, loyalty, and shared purpose.

Carl's legacy lives on in the canvases he painted, the lessons he taught, and in the hearts of all who knew him. He will be remembered for his gentle spirit, his generosity, his sense of humor, and his boundless creativity. He will be profoundly missed and forever cherished. For those who would like to honor Carl by viewing and sharing his artwork, his family invites you to visit his online gallery: Carl W. Schubert - Artist - Facebook Group

"One of the best attributes of art is that it does not necessarily have to be representational to touch our hearts and make us think. Sometimes, we can catch a glimpse of the artist's soul when looking at the work." Carl W. Schubert



Frances(Francie) Hammond
December 30, 1952 – December 10, 2025
GCICS Member 2022 - 2025
Article by: Jack Norman, GCICS Member



Francie Hammond and Gianni Sessa

It is with profound sorrow that we mourn the passing of a brave soul and beloved GCICS member, Francie Hammond, who joined the angels on December 10, 2025. Francie devoted her life to helping young people grow and mature as an educator working for the Department of Defense at military bases around the world. Her last official posting was in Sicily where she met her loving husband, Gianni Sessa, who brought happiness and joy into her life. Francie and Gianni divided their time between Sicily and Florida and were often seen at GCICS happy hours where they shared good food, good company and memories of a well lived life. Sadly, Francie was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumor which she courageously fought with her emblematic grace and dignity but finally succumbed on December 10, 2025. She is survived by her grieving husband, Gianni, two loving sisters, one cherished brother, and many treasured nieces and nephews. Francie's passing diminished the world by a glowing bright light and she will be sorely missed for the goodwill and sheer joy she brought to all who knew her.



HOLIDAY/CHRISTMAS DINNER & FUNDRAISER RECAP

Article & Photos by Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

This year marked the 5th anniversary of Patty & Mike DiMicele generously opening their home for our annual GCICS Holiday Party. We are most appreciative of their incredible hospitality. Thank you, Julie Bondarenko, for serving as Board liaison to our hosts. Upon their arrival, members spotted new holiday decorations in their yard. Patty explained to me that their community, Misty Creek, decided to purchase new decorations, and Patty volunteered to assist in distributing the original ones. And in their yard by their garage a “family” of snowpersons greeted us as well as a mod-looking Christmas tree. Stepping inside, we felt holiday warmth as we enjoyed their beautiful decorations. I continue to wonder where they store these holiday objects! Although 57 people (56 members + 1 guest) registered, 49 were able to attend. We

celebrated and dined on the lanai (poolside) or in the spacious dining room or kitchen nook. As we did in 2024, we dined on “heavy” appetizers and desserts. The photos attest to the fantastic food we enjoyed. Thank you, Pam Arfield, for coordinating the menu items with our members. And there was a sampling of different wines brought by members. We had new entertainment this year, “Southern Kick.” Rick and Kate Humphrey played pop-rock favorites throughout the evening. We found the couple incredibly talented and personable. Thank you, Jolene Ruffo, for arranging the booking. We raised \$2,280 for our Scholarship & Grants Program. And finally, a great big THANK YOU to our 57 donors. You make a difference in the lives of some special high school seniors who will be selected for our 2026 scholarship awards.

Scrumptious Food



Joyful Individuals



Michele Takei, Ellen Roderick,
and Phil Miner



Merle and Mary Kay Sogge



Dana and Mary Dalton



Donna Carrillo and Valerie Wilson



Ellen Roderick and Jolene Ruffo



Sandra Russell and Lucille Samartin



Hiro and Michele Takei

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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
Julie Bondarenko	2020-2025

NATIONAL SPAGHETTI DAY



National Spaghetti Day on January 4th offers an opportunity to pick your sauce and add it to that long, thin cylindrical pasta of Italian and Sicilian origin. Usually made from semolina flour, this pasta has been a worldwide favorite for ages and loved by millions.

Celebrating National Spaghetti Day is an exciting experience for the whole family. You can enjoy it however you like, from cooking a tried-and-true family recipe to trying a new one. You can even have a pasta party and ask everyone to bring their favorite spaghetti dish. It's totally up to you!

Source: www.nationaldaycalendar.com/national-day/national-spaghetti-day-january-4

