

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

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

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor



I suspect you are wondering when the heat will let up. So am I! After walking uphill in Italy on uneven cobblestone streets with temperatures soaring into the 100's, I personally am acclimated - NOT!

Enough levity. I thank Julie, Ellen, and Tom for arranging happy hours and obtaining gift cards at restaurants while Patty and I were in Europe and the British Isles. To date, eighteen gift cards have been donated.

Small group activities have been successful. Laura will submit details later in the newsletter. Mary Rinaldi has hosted the Italian Book Club. The chosen books are interesting, and the turnout has been encouraging. Mary will write more about this.

The GCICS Executive Board (EB) has established a new policy: For a GCICS EB member who dies while serving OR a past GCICS President who dies – a donation will be made in memory of that person to our Scholarship and Grants Account from our Operating Account. The Board has made its first donation under this new policy in memory of Jerry Hall who passed while serving on the EB. We wanted to recognize

Jerry's incredible dedication to GCICS through the years. We know that members continue to feel his absence for he truly made our Bocce program something special working with Tom. And we so depended on him for his technology skills early on. Jerry pitched in wherever folks needed help. That is what made him such a vital member of our GCICS community, a hardworking member of the GCICS EB, and a dear human being.

On October 24, we celebrate our Italian Cultural Heritage Month/Welcome Back Luncheon by awarding Rick Piccolo, retired President and CEO of SRQ. He has a fascinating story to tell. If you have not already, please register for the event. You will not be disappointed. Stoneybrook Golf and Country Club is offering an excellent buffet. Lastly, you may be aware that mosquito-borne diseases are surging in Florida. Be proactive and protect yourself with mosquito repellent. For more details, I refer you to the Florida Arbovirus Surveillance webpage.

That is all for now. Stay healthy and safe!
Phil
President and Social Chair



Your Board of Directors is excited to announce our ***GCICS Italian Cultural Heritage Month Welcome Back Luncheon*** on **Sat, Oct 24, 2026**, from 11:30-2:30 pm at Stoneybrook Golf & Country Club. Guests are welcome.

GCICS will honor **Frederick (Rick) Piccolo**, Retired President and Chief Executive Officer, Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ). The Society will declare him “GCICS 2026 Italian American of the Year” during the luncheon. Rick will deliver the keynote address prior to presentation of the honor. We hope that you will honor Rick with your presence. On Dec 1, 1995, Rick became President/CEO at SRQ, occupying that position for 30 years, retiring on June 30, 2025. His photo appears at the end of this email.

Here are the details:

Event: GCICS Italian Cultural Heritage Month Welcome Back Luncheon

Date/Time: Saturday, **Oct. 24, 2026**, 11:30 am-2:30 pm

Location: Stoneybrook Golf & Country Club, [8801 Stoneybrook Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34238](#)

Cost: \$37 all inclusive

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

Deadline: Online by **Oct 14**; or in Josephine’s mailbox by **Oct 14**.

Point of Contact: Ellen Roderick, [301-775-1344](tel:301-775-1344) (itrain@erols.com)

Program: GCICS 2026 Italian American of the Year Ceremony, with Rick Piccolo, Honoree & Keynoter.

Menu: Buffet including dessert, coffee & tea.

Cash Bar: \$7.00 House Wines, \$7.00 Mimosas; other cocktails will be available.

Raffles: Restaurant gift cards from generous managers at restaurants where we have held HHs. Bring checkbook or cash. More on that later.

Gate Entrance: More on that later.

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 “10/24/26” 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

REMINDER

It is time to **renew your GCICS membership**: Individual=\$50 & Couples/Family=\$90. We hope that you enjoyed participating in events and activities of personal value to you. The Board is always open to suggestions of new program ideas or how we might improve our service to you, our valuable supporters (164).

RENEWAL

*Pay online if possible; directions appear below.

*If paying by check, the GCICS Membership Renewal Form is on our website (www.gcics.org); click **Join/Renew GCICS**; scroll down and on the right, you will see a dark rectangle titled "Click for Paper Membership Form", complete the form, print it out, and send it with your check. If unable to print the form, put the information on a piece of paper and submit with your check. Mail to GCICS, [1811 Englewood Rd., #317, Englewood, FL 34223](#).

DONATIONS

Many members renewing their membership take the opportunity to make a tax-deductible donation to our Scholarship Program.

*If renewing online, simply add the donation to the dues cost.

*If renewing by check, you may include your donation in a single check (dues and donation), or you may write two checks: one for dues and one for donation.

Any donation is very much appreciated.

***Deadline: Oct 31, 2026.**

Do's & Don'ts – PLEASE. . .

1. Do not give your dues/scholarship donation to another member and ask him/her to include it in his/her check. This has created problems in the past.
2. Do not include your dues/scholarship donation in a check that includes payment for an event. This has created problems in the past.
3. Do not include dues/scholarship donation in same payment as registering for an event online. You make your dues payment in a separate part of our website.
4. Let me know if you decide NOT to renew so that I will no longer send reminders to you.

STEPS FOR RENEWING GCICS MEMBERSHIP ONLINE

Note: You do not need a PayPal account to renew GCICS membership. PayPal will accept your credit card directly. You will receive a confirmation email.

*Go to GCICS website: www.gcics.org

*In upper right, **click on JOIN/RENEW GCICS**

*Scroll down to box on left entitled “Electronic Join/Renew”

*In first block (“Names”) type in one (single) or two (couple) names: Example: Ellen Roderick (single) or Gordon & Joyce Bloom (couple); if the couple’s names are different, include both full names: Example: Mary Rinaldi & Jack Norman.

[NOTE: Your address, phone, email may automatically populate (mine did); you may need to select the country with a drop-down menu if it did not populate.]

*Type address & select country in drop down menu.

*Type phone number (with area code).

*Type email.

*Check box if your address or phone number has changed.

*Type special interest(s) if you wish.

*Check Individual or Family block.

*Click on **blue box** to move to payment page.

*If you wish to make a scholarship donation, add the figure to the dues figure shown. Example: Single membership showed \$50 for me; if I wish to make a \$100 donation, then I change the figure to \$150.

*Click on “PayPal Checkout” (yellow box).

*Screen will move to a new page.

*Proceed to enter any required information to make the payment.

*I noticed in doing it just now (for my renewal), there is an added level of security. The screen showed my cell number, and the system texted me a security code that I had to insert. Once I did that, my credit cards came up and I chose the one I wanted to use. And I proceeded to select one, and the process was completed.

*Notification: You will receive an email from: service@paypal.com which shows the transaction and is your receipt.

Thank you for taking care of this in a timely manner. We have made the Membership Renewal Window 2.5 months (Aug 16-Oct 31). I believe that is sufficient time for deciding on renewing with our fine organization. Please call or email if you have questions.

Ellen Roderick

GCICS Secretary, 2011-Present

itrain@erols.com

[301-775-1344](tel:301-775-1344)

GCICS ITALIAN BOOK CLUB

By: Jack Norman



In May, GCICS launched its on-line Book Club with eight members who were sent a zoom link to access the monthly sessions. The first book read and discussed was "Loyalty" by Lisa Scottoline which was the focus of the club's June session. The book portrayed the hardships of the Italian farmers and agricultural laborers who worked the land and cared for the lemon groves under the supervision of the gabolotti only to find that their efforts were undermined by the bandits who attacked the caravans conveying the lemons. Such attacks promoted the inception of the Mafia as a defensive force against the bandits. The origins of the Mafia as an initially positive force for justice, rather than as a criminal organization were thus examined as the book was studied. In July, the book of the month was "Beneath a Scarlet Sky" by Mark Sullivan which portrayed the life of Pino Lella who helped guide Jews to safety across the mountains and into Switzerland despite personal risk and sacrifice. The novel also depicted the decline of Italy as the Nazis took control of cities such as Milan and fostered hate and hardship. In August, the club read and discussed "In the Garden of Papa Stantuzzu" by Tony Andrizone which focused on immigration to America and

the challenging story of one family whose members typified the immigrant experience. In September, the book "Eternal" by Lisa Scottoline was discussed. The book focused on the interactions of friends and family who were affected by the institution of the Race Laws and the growing influence of the Germans who occupied Italy. This historical novel is a bittersweet love story and a testament to courage amid the chaos of Italy at war. In future months, the book club will read and discuss "Christ in Concrete" by Pietro di Donato and the "Leopard" by Lampedusa. The book club offers a vibrant and exciting opportunity to discuss quality Italian literature while encouraging member participants to share their own experience and insights based on their own personal connections and family history. The point of the book club is not simply in the readings but in the rich discussions that are encouraged and facilitated. Guide questions are provided by book club chair, Mary Rinaldi, in order to focus discussion and trigger deeper analysis and reflection. Currently the book club has room for two more members. If you are interested, please reach out to Mary Rinaldi who will be glad to welcome you "aboard"!

The Great GCICS Meatball Showcase



We have been asking you to save November 14 for a meatball and wine event. We have rented the dining room at The Hammock Preserve Clubhouse from 5:00 - 8:00 PM for this event. The room can accommodate up to 70 guests. To cover expenses, the cost per person is \$12.00.

GCICS members are encouraged to MAKE and bring their favorite meatball recipe to showcase. Traditional meatballs are encouraged, but creative entries are most welcomed, such as turkey, chicken, seafood, vegetarian, etc. Your entry will be presented anonymously, and guests will vote for their favorites with ballots. Recognition awards will be presented for both traditional and most creative meatball categories. Not to worry, those not into making meatballs will be asked to bring other foods. NEEDED will be some salads, desserts, and pasta. The pasta should be a decent amount, accompanied by sauce, or if you prefer, you can call it gravy.

We will also showcase wines. We ask that those of Italian heritage bring a wine from their heritage region, with a little explanation from you 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 for yourself at your table.

If you have some thoughts to share or wish to become involved, please contact me at 908-507-3048 or dorisntom@gmail.com. You will be hearing more about this as we get closer. GCICS Secretary Ellen Roderick will formally announce this event, and you will be given specific directions on reserving your space and paying for it. Ellen will keep me apprised of the registrations. Hope you can make it!

Thank you,
Tom Hurban, Chair

NATIONAL MEATBALL DAY

It is the Italian American tradition on Sunday to have gravy, rich with sausage, braciola, ribs and meatballs. March 9 is National Meatball Day, an unofficial but widely embraced occasion devoted to one of the most beloved staples of the Italian American table.

For many families, the only real preparation required is deciding which recipe to use. In most households, that decision has already been made. The preferred recipe belongs to Nonna and as everyone knows, Nonna's meatballs are the finest ever created. It is one of life's most reliable constants. Ask anyone and they will confirm that their grandmother's version remains the gold standard.

The origin of the meatball itself is difficult to pinpoint. Variations have existed across many cultures for centuries, with some of the earliest known recipes appearing in the Roman cookbook Apicius, dating to the 4th century AD. These early preparations were versatile, incorporating not only beef and pork but also poultry, fish and other ingredients. Across Europe today, countless regional interpretations exist, yet in the United States the meatball has become inseparable from Italian American cuisine.

Travel through Italy and you will quickly discover that the familiar American pairing of spaghetti and meatballs is largely absent. In Italy, meatballs, polpette in Italian, are typically served on their own or as part of a second course. They are also considerably smaller than their American counterparts, which can range from large to impressively oversized. The combination of spaghetti and meatballs developed in the US during the great wave of Italian immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many new arrivals, having known scarcity in their homeland,

found meat more affordable in America and incorporated it more generously into family meals. Meatballs made from economical cuts of beef and pork became a practical way to place a hearty dish on the table.

The sauce that accompanies them carries its own history. Marinara, originating in Naples, derives from the word **marinara**, "in the style of mariners". Sailors and fishermen prepared simple tomato-based sauces with garlic and olive oil using ingredients that traveled well at sea. For immigrants in America, canned tomatoes available at local grocers made similar sauces accessible and affordable. In parts of central Italy, a comparable preparation is humorously known as sugo finto or "fake sauce," a reminder of how recipes adapt and evolve.

By the early 20th century, spaghetti had become one of the most readily available pastas in the US and in many Italian American homes a generous pot of sauce with meatballs and assorted meats became known simply as "macaroni and gravy." Though rooted in the cooking of southern Italy, particularly Campania, the dish developed into something distinctly Italian American, shaped by availability, prosperity and the desire to gather family around the table.

Whether served with pasta, in a sandwich or on their own, meatballs remain a symbol of continuity and celebration. The best way to observe National Meatball Day is also the simplest: Prepare a batch using a cherished family recipe, invite others to the table and continue a tradition that has been passed from one generation to the next.

Italian Tribune
March 5, 2026



The following eateries have donated gift cards to GCICS to auction off at our events.

Giuseppe's Ristorante & Pizzeria: one \$50 gift card

Asaro's of Venice Pizzeria Ristorante: one \$50 gift card

MYMAMMA: one \$50 gift card

P. F. Chang's: two \$25 gift cards

Napule Restaurant: one \$50 gift card

Cassariano Italian Eatery (Venice): one \$100 gift card

Aji Ceviche Bar: one \$50 gift card

D'Corato Ristorante: one \$50 gift card

Bodrum Restaurant: two \$50 gift cards

Deep Lagoon Seafood and Oyster House – Osprey: two \$25 gift cards

MADE in Italy: two \$25 gift cards.

Café Epicure: one \$50 gift card

Bruchetta: two \$50 gift cards

Café Amici: one \$50 gift card

Abby's: one \$50 gift card

Dolce Italia: one \$50 gift card.

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Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020
Julie Bondarenko	2020-2025

Trivia: Did you know?

by Mary Rinaldi

Meatball Facts

- 1) Ancient Beginnings: The earliest recorded meatball recipes likely originated in ancient Persia as *kofta*, where chopped meat was spiced and shaped.
- 2) Spaghetti Connection: Spaghetti with meatballs is widely considered an Italian dish, but it was actually created and popularized in the United States by Italian immigrants in the early 1900s.



- 3) Largest Meatball: A record-breaking meatball weighed 1,707 pounds and 8 ounces, cooked in 2017 in Hilton Head, South Carolina.
- 4) IKEA Popularity: IKEA sells over one billion of their iconic meatballs globally every year.
- 5) Every Culture Has a Meatball
You may be most familiar with the Italian American version of the dish, but there are also:

Swedish *köttbullar*, Spanish *albondigas*, Dutch *bitterballen*, Greek *keftedes*, South African *skilpedjies*, and from India through the Middle East, *kofta*. These are just a few examples of the widespread popularity of meatballs, which are often made with lamb, pork and other meats.

Source:

[Google.com/search?q=facts+about+meatballs](https://www.google.com/search?q=facts+about+meatballs)