

LA VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. BOX 2591, SARASOTA, FL. 34230

WWW.GCICS.ORG

May 2020



President's Message:

This is a special message to you, the members of the Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society (GCICS). I have made the decision that the time has come for me to step down from the Presidency of our wonderful organization. It has been my honor to serve as your President for close to four years. I have enjoyed watching our membership grow and look forward to spending more time with all of you. I will step down effective May 31, 2020.

I want to personally thank members of my Board who have dedicated hours and hours to making our organization what it is today. I value their friendship, I salute their dedication to the organization, and I commend them for the work they have done over the past few years. We have made a great team. And I want to thank each of YOU for being active participants in the Society; for being generous donors to our Scholarship Fund; and for being such great "lovers" of Italian culture, Italian language, and Italian food. Haven't we had a terrific time enjoying one another's company whether at Happy Hours, at fine lectures, at Annual Meetings, at St. Joseph's celebrations, and at our Bocce Sundays and at Bocce picnics.

I plan to stay on the Board in a "senior advisor" capacity. Past presidents enjoy that role. Bill Korp and I will continue to challenge the Board to pursue creative events in the years ahead. In consulting with our Secretary who is knowledgeable about our bylaws, we will be electing my successor soon. The GCICS Bylaws state: *"The officers of GCICS shall be elected by the Board of Directors from among its members, at the October regular meeting of the Board, or, in the case of vacancies, as soon thereafter as convenient."*

In closing, may I encourage you to continue to stay safe at this time of uncertainty. Follow the state and Federal guidelines, stay at home, and if going out, wear a mask and practice social distancing, keeping six feet apart. We will get through this together. And we will emerge wiser and with a greater appreciation of our fellow men and women.

My very best,
Sheryl King Lazzarotti
GCICS President

The Giving Challenge: 4/28 at Noon to 4/29 at Noon

Dear GCICS Members,

The Board greatly appreciates all that you have done to support our Scholarship Fund in past years. Now we are in the mist of this virus which calls for us to support one another. At the same time, we have a unique opportunity presented by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County (CFSC). GCICS is one of many Giving Partners under the CFSC. Thus, we are able to participate in **The Giving Challenge** wherein your scholarship donations will be matched dollar per dollar from \$25 up to \$100. What follows are the instructions for donating through The Giving Challenge. The GCICS Board is extremely appreciative of all who can assist our 2021 Scholarship Fund.

When you donate to the GCICS Scholarship Fund through The Giving Challenge website (see below) April 28th - 29th (noon to noon) you have an opportunity to double your impact! **All gifts are to be made by credit card. If you are a couple, and both names are on the same card, you may make two donations with that card. Otherwise, use different cards. The Patterson Foundation will match new contributions dollar for dollar, for amounts between \$25 and \$100.**

Mark your calendars for April 28th - 29th and visit <https://www.givingpartnerchallenge.org/organizations/gulf-coast-italian-culture-society-inc> to make a difference!

If you have questions, please call Jerry Hall, GCICS Board Member, at 941-724-6815.

**Thank You,
The GCICS Board of Directors**



2020
GIVING CHALLENGE
Be The One

Presented by the
Community Foundation of Sarasota County

SAVE THE DATE!

Noon to Noon, April 28-29

Take Part in the 2020 Giving Challenge!

www.GivingPartnerChallenge.org



GCICS

GCICS, 2019-2020: A LOOK BACK

Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

I thought it would be fun to look back at our program year and share some highlights as well as information about the Society. All of you were not able to attend all events and that is understandable. So, when you have a moment as you relax at home, sit back and read about our terrific year.

PROGRAMS (9)

10/27/19: As always, we kicked off the program year with our **Italian Cultural Heritage Month Welcome Back Luncheon** which Mary Lou Ferrari arranged. Members (69) dined at Mattison's 41. Thanks to George Arfield, we had a fascinating as well as emotional program: Paola Tate, member and our language classes instructor, shared her early life in Italy as she and her family were fleeing from the Germans in WWII.

11/3/19: Our annual **Welcome Back Bocce Picnic** brought together 25 members as they dined, played hardily and bought 50/50 raffle tickets that raised \$75. Thank you, Tom, for organizing this picnic each year.

11/16/19: We had a great turnout (32-dinner/36-opera) for the **Dinner/Sarasota Youth Opera**. Linda Mercurio made the opera arrangement, Ellen Roderick, The Bijou Café arrangements, and Sheryl Lazzarotti collected the checks (a real team effort). Folks enjoyed 'Brundibar'. We will hold this event again in Fall 2020.

12/15/19: Our **Christmas/Holiday Dinner/Scholarship Fundraiser** is always a beautiful evening. Warm thanks to our newest hosts: Noel, Eileen and Carolyn Chiantella who welcomed us to their spacious North Venice home. Pam Parodi took the reservations while Ellen Roderick handled the arrangements with our hosts. We raised \$1,380 with 46 members in attendance.

1/10/20: Our **Annual Meeting/Lunch/Town Hall/Cultural Lecture** drew 72 members. Ellen Roderick and her committee planned a very busy afternoon that included a lecture on Galileo by Dr. Jim McGuire whom George Arfield befriended last year. We renewed 4 Board members' 3-year terms (Linda Ahern, Mary Lou Ferrari, Mary Rinaldi, and Ellen Roderick) and elected 2 new Board members (Jerry Hall, Judy Herman).

1/31/20: We held our 2nd **Italian Film Matinee** with 45 attendees thanks to George Arfield and Dr. Scott Perry. Members enjoyed "A Special Day" with Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni followed by a Q&A with Dr. Perry.

2/8/20: I do believe we set an attendance record for our **Bocce Invitational V** at the Cascades. Thank you, Linda Ahern and Tom Hurban, for 'recruiting' 61 players and cheerleaders for this fun event as well as for organizing the yummy foods and the skilled GCICS teams.

2/25/20: Shrove Tuesday brought our 3rd annual **Mardi Gras/Carnevale Dinner/Scholarship Fundraiser** held at Penny Thomas's home. Thank you, Penny and committee, as well as all GCICS members who either donated bottles of wine or secured restaurant gift cards under Linda Mercurio's direction. We raised \$1,380 from 46 members' entrance fees and another \$860 from the wine/restaurant gift card raffle.

3/15/20: As COVID-19 was closing in, Mary Rinaldi was accepting reservations (60) for our annual **St. Joseph's Feast Day Celebration Luncheon** at Café Baci. Thank you, Mary, for tracking the decreasing numbers that, in the end, brought 27 members together. We knew then that this would be our last event of the season.

LACENA GATHERINGS (2)



10/15/19: The first LaCena of the season took place at **LaVioletta**—fine dining although GCICS demand exceeded seats available. Twenty members enjoyed the evening thanks to George Arfield.

3/9/20: The second LaCena of the season was a "repeat" from 2019 but with a visible FULL MOON. We had 39 members and guests socializing on the **Marina Jack II Dinner Cruise**. Thank you, George Arfield & Penny Thomas, for handling arrangements.

CANCELLATIONS (3)

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we had to cancel 3 major events:

3/27/20: Penny Thomas and her committee had worked very hard to plan "**19 Crimes Wine Tasting & Basket Raffle**". We assure you that the baskets are safe in the committee members' homes, they are bountiful, and we will have bidding rights during 2020-2021.

4/5/20: Julie Bondarenko and her committee selected six GCICS Scholarship recipients and we were prepared to honor them and their families at our annual **Scholarship Festa**. We assure you that we will plan a special event in the future to honor our recipients.

4/20/20: George Arfield invited Dr. Davide Tanasi to make a return visit for the "**Cultural Lecture: Art & Cuisine of Greek Sicily**". Dr. Tanasi assures George he will be with us later in the year.

RECURRING ACTIVITIES (3)

***MONDAY HAPPY HOURS:** Thank you, Linda Mercurio, Jerry Hall and Penny Thomas, for coordinating these HHs. Attendance peaked at 40 to 50 members/guests right before the virus hit. Happy Hours will return!

***WEDNESDAY ITALIAN LANGUAGE CLASSES:** Thank you Paola Tate, and George Arfield, for hosting/teaching and managing this activity. The classes will resume when it is safe.

***SUNDAY BOCCE:** Thank you, Jerry Hall & Tom Hurban, for taking care of the court and to everyone who comes out to play. We will play again!

MEMBERSHIP

As our long-standing members know, we issue the "Membership Renewal Call" (dues collection) via email in late August. Our Fiscal Year (FY) begins on Oct 1, so we like to have new income on the books on or about Oct 1. We normally lose members during this process due to any number of reasons. Here is our most recent membership data: Grand Total: 163 (Singles: 55; Couples: 54)

Of those 163 members, **new members** who joined on or after October 1 are as follows [along with date joined and sponsor(s)]:

- *Cherrie Randall, (10/19) (Ellie Stoll)
- *Cari Vinci, (10/19) (George DiCostanzo & Carol Miranda)
- *Michelle Stevens, (10/19) (Barbara Rumpf)
- *Tom Vitro, (11/19) (Tom could not recall person's name)
- *Americo (Rick) Taddeo, (12/19) (Paola Tate)
- *Tolisa Ford, (1/20) (Joan Ferrante; 5 yrs. later, the Internet)
- *Jim & Mimi Lerario, (2/20) (Linda Mercurio)
- *Robert (Bob) & Janet Apfel, (2/20) (Ken & Janet Rush)
- *Pete & Pat Lento, (2/20) (George Arfield)
- *Bart & Lorraine Lombardi, (3/20) (Larry & Lucille Samartin)

DONATIONS

As you know, GCICS is a 501(c)(3) organization. GCICS Bylaws Article I, Section 1.02 reads:

The Corporation (GCICS) is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, scientific, cultural and public benefit purposes, so as to qualify as an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986....

GCICS Bylaws Article I, Section 1.02 (e) reads:

To award higher education scholarships to meritorious future leaders of Italian ancestry and provide financial support to local not for profit youth opera and dance programs; to endow study chairs at nonprofit educational institutions or otherwise support the development, implementation and evaluation of programs designed to advance the common interests of Italian-Americans.

In line with the above, GCICS is awarding 6 scholarships, each valued at \$2,000, to outstanding seniors of Italian ancestry in Manatee and Sarasota County high schools. Julie Bondarenko, GCICS Scholarship Chair, wrote an informative article about the selection process along with the names of the recipients which was in the April 2020 Newsletter.

Also, GCICS is awarding \$1,000 each to **Dance: The Next Generation (DNG)** and to the **Sarasota Youth Opera (SYO)**. The DNG program is part of the education component of The Sarasota Ballet. It provides the opportunity for those who are most at risk of dropping out of school to participate in a 10-year, full-scholarship program in dance. The SYO gives young people ages 8-18 an opportunity to experience opera firsthand through participation in after-school choruses, Sarasota Opera main stage productions, summer camps, and fully staged productions.

It is your generosity--whether through (a) donations in the fall when you renew your membership; (b) attendance at our fundraisers (e.g., Holiday Party, Carnevale); or (c) purchasing raffle tickets that we are able to award scholarships and make donations to DNG & SYO.

GCICS BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Your hard-working Board members are listed on the final page of this newsletter. We are united in serving you, our valued members. The Board meets monthly during the season. This past year we decided to hold our first meeting in August 2019. We then held meetings Oct '19 through March '20. Each meeting is two hours and open to all members (first Wed of the month, 2-4pm, Selby Library, 2nd fl). We welcomed two new Board members this year: Jerry Hall had already been active, keeping our website up to date and handling our Bocce court; Judy Herman had been informally attending meetings. Jerry's key assignment is the Website while Judy is serving as Assistant Secretary.

We need to recognize leadership in some other areas (in addition to those Board members mentioned in earlier sections of this report):

- *President: Sheryl has served as our Chair for four years now.
- *Treasurer: Penny Thomas spends hours managing our money.
- *Courtesy: Nancy Schubert sends cards to those who are ill on behalf of all members. She has everyone wearing badges now.
- *Newsletter: Mary Rinaldi prepares outstanding newsletters monthly.
- *Membership: Mary Lou Ferrari communicates greetings to our new members; she is also out recruiting new members on a constant basis.
- *Fundraising: Linda Ahern has focused on strategies for raising funds.
- *Advisor: Bill Korp has lent a steady hand to the Board, being our senior member of the Board and a Past President.

All of us work hard together to make GCICS operate effectively. Keep in mind that Mary Lou cannot do all the recruiting. We truly appreciate your bringing new members into our Society. Keep up the good work!

EMBRACING OUR 2020 SCHOLARSHIP YEAR: PART 5

Julie Bondarenko, GCICS Scholarship Chair



Welcome! I thought I would have the opportunity to say “Welcome” at our Scholarship Festa Brunch on April 5th, honoring our 2020 awardees. However, it was not to be. On that note, I am hopeful we are all heeding the guidance of “sheltering in place” that will ultimately reduce the number of COVID-19 cases we would have suffered otherwise. I hope all of you have maintained good health during this crisis.

I want to introduce our esteemed scholarship recipients. It is always a wonderful experience to meet our applicants in person, get to know them on a more personal basis and put a face with the applicant we read about on paper. This is my 2nd year as Chairperson and my 4th involved in the program. Each year, I gain a deeper understanding of this process and can appreciate more fully all that these students have achieved by their hard work. It is our work and the dedication of our members as well as our Scholarship Committee that allow this to happen. The students work hard and are focused on the goal which is to be accepted into the college/university of their choice. One of GCICS’s missions is to help recipients of Italian ancestry with their financial obligations as they begin their university life. Hopefully this award of \$2,000 will assist them in this endeavor.



Please meet our recipients and read about their schools, anticipated college majors and some of their interests and achievements.

- Hannah Ford - Sarasota Military Academy
Major: Sports Marketing/Statistics
Statewide Chair for the Youth Advocacy Board -
Ducks Unlimited Advocacy for Wildlife Conservation
- Robert Imperiale - Venice HS
Major: Statistics/Environmental Studies
Renaissance Award 2019 and Sarasota Food Club
Dual Enrollment, State College of Florida
- Graham Lewis - Southeast HS
Major: Genetics/Microbiology
Eagle Scout - International Baccalaureate Program
- Isabella Sanchez - Manatee HS
Major: Molecular/Cellular Biology
President, Science National Honor Society
Lt. Governor, Key Club
- Daniel Staas - Venice HS
Major: Biophysics/Mathematics
President, Math Honor Society
Creator of Math Tutoring for Elementary School Children
Accomplished Pianist and Guitarist
- Nina Volpe - Pine View School
Major: History, Architecture/Anthropology
Science and Math National Honor Societies
Officer/Historian, Model United Nations
10 Varsity Letters

OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

President

Sheryl Lazzarotti

slazzarotti@gmail.com

Vice President

Linda Mercurio

Lindascot5770@gmail.com

Secretary

Ellen Roderick, PhD

itrain@erols.com

Assistant Secretary

Judy Herman

taxmadam@msn.com

Treasurer

Penny Thomas

dafyddpen@AOL.com

Bocce

Tom Hurban, DDS

dorisntom@gmail.com

Courtesy

Nancy Schubert

Sunshine.gcics@gmail.com

Membership

Mary Lou Ferrari

MLFFLYME@yahoo.com

Fundraising

Linda Ahern

lindalahern@aol.com

Newsletter Editor

Mary Faith Rinaldi

maryfaithrinaldi@gmail.com

Scholarship

Julie Bondarenko

juliebondy@yahoo.com

Social and Cultural

George Arfield

arfield@yahoo.com

Website Coordinator

Jerry Hall

CZHalls@verizon.net

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

William Korp

wrkorp@comcast.net

Pam Parodi

Chez.parodi@verizon.net

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



The Board has been unable to hold its 2020-2021 Program Planning Meeting. However, as we study the calendar and consider our programs of previous years, we would ask that you save the following dates in hopes that we can eventually confirm all events listed below. The list will grow as life returns to "normal".

***Sun, 10/25/20: Italian Cultural Heritage Month Welcome Back Luncheon** - if you have speaker suggestions, let us know.

Sat, 11/14/20: Dinner/Sarasota Youth Opera: *The Hobbit; a dinner will be planned for before the youth opera. This event is CONFIRMED.

***Sun, 12/13/20: Christmas/Holiday Dinner/Scholarship Fundraiser**: If you would like to HOST, let us know.

***Fri, 1/8/21: Annual Meeting/Lunch/Town Hall/Program.**

***Sat, 2/13/21: GCICS Bocce Invitational VI @ The Cascades**: This event is CONFIRMED.