

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

1811 Englewood Rd., #317, Englewood, FL 34223 WWW.GCICS.ORG June 2023

Mary Rinaldi, Editor



President's Message

How about those “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer, those days of soda and pretzels and beer”..... c’mon, you all know the tune. There is still quite a flurry of activity taking place and will continue through the summer. You may be aware that many members return north and elsewhere to be with family and friends as well as cooler, drier weather; an opportunity to escape the heat, rain, and humidity. I look forward to their return in the fall, but nonetheless, happy that many of you remain. I have heard it said: “To inspire ignites an energy that brings out our best selves.” Reflecting on this phase, we realize the enjoyment we all experienced this past year, sharing company with one another. I feel the vibe; it has motivated and inspired us to create more opportunities that will enhance our lives, a fruitful membership, and a shared camaraderie. What a year it has been! We met our financial goals and our scholarships commitments. Every year this is an important undertaking for GCICS and you stepped up to the plate. You made this a success story for

the Youth Opera, Youth Ballet, and six bright high school graduates of Italian heritage. The students were each awarded \$1,500 to put toward their college expenses. Sandy Russell did an amazing job as our Scholarship Chairperson and will take on this challenge again for 2024. The Scholarship Festa at Stoneybrook was the crowning ending to our most prestigious event of the year. Many thanks go out to Sandy and her committee! As I reminisce, my thoughts are of the many cultural events brought to GCICS members and guests thanks to our Cultural Chairperson, George Arfield. George is the man with the connections: his efforts to seek professors and others brought us interesting Italian history and archeology presentations. One of these events focused on Tropicana founder Anthony Rossi, an Italian immigrant. Melissa Morgan, Curator, Manatee County Agriculture Museum, titled her presentation “Father of Chilled Juice in Florida.” The lecture was delightful and informative. (See February Newsletter) Dr. Carrie Beneš, a

New College professor and proven expert in Italian history, enthralled us with her lecture titled “Keeping Up with The Florentines” (see April Newsletter). Professor Tanasi has graced us with several informative and interesting lectures in past years. He has become a favorite among us and is admired with great affection. You will come to know more about him at our upcoming “Welcome Back Luncheon” on Oct.14. Stay tuned as there is more in the works. Thank you, George! What keeps our members coming back for more? Yes, we enjoyed one another’s company, but it is how we have gone about it. Our Board is comprised of many talented members. We strive at every opportunity to hone in on those talents so that happy hours, La Cena dinners, cultural events, bocce, Italian language classes, St. Joseph’s, etc. are successful. It takes planning and arduous work to achieve fun and interesting experiences. Here are our Board members who have helped make this happen in addition to George and Sandy recognized above.

Ellen Roderick does an amazing job composing and sending announcements of our events as well as registration procedures. She serves as registrar for most events. As GCICS Secretary, she certainly exceeds her job description. Her skills are hard to replicate, her attention to detail is par excellence. She and I have worked well together on several committees, and I look forward to a continued alliance. Thank you, Ellen, for your time and energy of which you have a never-ending abundance.

Tom Hurban and Jerry Hall are responsible for our weekly Bocce held at the Gulf Coast Foundation, Osprey, a beautiful setting on the gulf bay. We enjoy playing every Sunday 2-4 pm, while catching glimpses of boats going by, continuing throughout the year. All are

invited with no experience necessary. Look for Tom’s Bocce notices and our special Invitational Bocce event on 2/3/24 at the Cascades. Our Welcome Back Picnic at the North Jetty, Nokomis this October, is also a result of their efforts. See further information in the Save the Dates listing. We applaud you both!

Members keep coming back to almost every Happy Hour! Thank you, Linda Mercurio, for the excellent job you are doing arranging enjoyable happy hours every Monday at many sought- after restaurants. This has been an enormous success and, with Ellen’s and Jerry’s help sending notices and confirming reservations, it has become a smooth operation. These Board members are visible as they produce many of the fun experiences you have come to enjoy. However, we have Board members who work behind the scenes and are vital to our success.

Our new Treasurer, Josephine Fontana, works in partnership with our bookkeeper to monitor our funds and inform the Board of our financial status monthly.

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor, works with diligence, publishing 10 editions of our excellent newsletter. Mary has contributed much to this organization through the years. If you like our newsletter layout and appearance, you can thank Mary.

Gordon Bloom, Technology Chair, is responsible for our website and all information that is posted. He is an enormous help as we establish new website protocols. Many of us have had to learn new skills related to our websitesystem and we could not have accomplished this without Gordon.

Jerry Hall, Language Chair, works with Paola Tate to conduct free Italian language classes via Zoom. The classes are open to all members and present an opportunity to learn

or brush up on one's Italian. See our website for information or contact Jerry.

As for my leadership role as President, I strive to make decisions that are in our members' best interest considering not only their health, as was a concern during these previous three years, but also to work in cooperation with our Board to produce successful events. Sometimes, decisions are difficult, but working together in harmony, and desiring every event to be successful, we do what it takes to accomplish our goals. Through the years, I have worked on and been responsible for many committees. My involvement has enhanced my affection for GCICS. I believe I speak for the entire Board that it is an honor to serve an organization that contributes to our community and that serves our members in the best ways possible.

Our Holiday Party/Fundraiser at the DiMichele home, and our Carnevale/Fundraiser at the Linda Ahern/Richard Potts home were exceptionally successful. Please look for information about these two major events in the coming "Save the Dates." Pam Arfield, Food Coordinator, added an essential element to the success of these dinner parties. She strived for balance and made sure we had just the right amounts in all food categories.

It was a tremendous success, and her efforts are applauded.

Linda Ahern has resigned from the Board. She is moving back to Naperville IL to be close to family. Linda will return to FL from time to time. However, because of infrequent returns and no set schedule, she felt it would be in everyone's interest to step down from the Board. We know Linda to be a dedicated and "get the job done" kind of person. We are grateful for her service to GCICS. We are sad to see her leave and wish her well.

Josephine Fontana was recently elected Treasurer. I appreciate her accepting this office and look forward to collaborating with her.

Penny Thomas, GCICS Treasurer for 5 years, and more recently our Courtesy Chair, has also resigned from the Board. We are most appreciative of her dedication since Feb 2018, sharing her talents and opening her home for events. She has contributed much to our Society and was an asset to our Board. We look forward to seeing her at future events and wish her well.

I wish all of you a peaceful and happy summer. I leave you with this quote from Mahatma Gandhi, "Relationships are based on four principles: respect, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation."

Julie Bondarenko

SEARCHING FOR ITALY: TOURING & DINING

Article & Photos: Ellen Roderick

Again, this year, Robert Gaglio conducted six terrific classes through Sarasota's Adult & Community Enrichment (ACE) Program at the Suncoast Technical Institute (STI) in Sarasota (Procter & Beneva). Robert's classes focused on: Venice (2/2), Piedmont (2/16), Umbria (3/9), Magna Graecia (3/23), Tuscany (3/30), and Siena/Palio (4/6). At least 18 of your fellow GCICS colleagues attended one or more of the classes. Couples included Julie Bondarenko & Vin DeNicolas, George DiCostanzo & Carol Miranda, Phil & Mary Maresco, and Phil & Patty Miner. Singles included Joe Colella, Joan Del Giudice, Josephine Fontana, Judy Herman, Eileen Lisook, Roberto Mei, Rose Perante, Diana Quincy, Ellen Roderick, and Penny Thomas.

Not only did we learn more about Italy, but we also had a delicious lunch and fun visiting with one another during the 2-hour sessions. Four of the six classes were based on the CNN Stanley Tucci "Searching for Italy" series. The remaining two, *Magna Graecia* and *Siena/Palio*, were created by Robert using some footage from BBC broadcasts. The luncheon courses were served throughout the 2 hours under the creative preparation of Chef Bruno Wu, a personal chef and caterer who works across four counties (Sarasota, Manatee, Pinellas, and Hillsborough). The dishes that he prepared reflected the foods of the region we were learning about. What surprised me the most was the cuisine Chef Bruno prepared for the *Magna Graecia* class – every course was Greek, ranging from the Spanakopita to Baklava, and all in between! Another fabulous feature of the classes was the music. We had our own personal opera singer entertaining us as we dined. Joy Leitner, a soprano who sings with the Choral Artists of Sarasota, selected arias as well as Italian folk songs that were reflective of the region being featured.

This article is accompanied by a few photos. During each class, Robert asked for volunteers to demonstrate selected cooking techniques. Along with a partner, Eileen Lisook made the delicious baklava we all took home with us. There were at least 12 layers of phyllo dough. Carol Miranda assisted in the making of chocolate-covered biscotti (Robert's recipe and the best). By the way, Robert did not have almonds, so the cooks used pecans – try them, you'll like them. And Roberto Mei assisted in making homemade pasta. I have also included a photo of our three superb "instructors": Chef Bruno, Soprano Joy, and Lecturer Robert. Yours truly attended all six sessions and thoroughly enjoyed every one of them. It was grand to "tour" Italy, "dine" Italian accompanied by beautiful singing, and "socialize" with my GCICS colleagues. Thanks Robert, Chef Bruno, and Joy for such a rewarding experience.



Eileen Lisook with classmate making baklava



Roberto Mei making pasta



Carol Miranda making biscotti



Eileen Lisook making pasta



Chief Bruno, Soprano Joy Leitner, Instructor Robert Gaglio

SAVE THE DATES

(As of: 5/10/23)



*10/14/23 (Saturday): Italian Cultural Heritage Month Welcome Back Luncheon: Mattison's 41, 11:30-2:15 pm; honoring a 2023 GCICS Italian American of the Year.

*11/4/23 (Saturday): Sarasota Youth Opera Performance & Dinner; performance "The Little Sweep" @ 5:00 pm followed by dinner at Café Amici (Walking distance from Sarasota Opera House), ordering off the menu.

*11/12/23 (Sunday) Welcome Back Bocce Picnic @ North Jetty Park Pavilion, Nokomis, 12:30-4:30 pm; bring your own main course and a dish to share.

*12/10/23 (Sunday) Holiday/Christmas Party/Scholarship Fundraiser @ Patty and Mike DiMichele's home, Misty Creek, Sarasota, 5:30 pm. Potluck; Scholarship donation (\$40), BYOB.

*1/13/24 (Saturday) Annual Meeting/Luncheon/Town Hall/Program @ Peridia Golf and Country Club, Bradenton; N/C to members; Robert Gaglio, invited speaker; 11:30-2:30 pm.

*1/25/24 (Thursday) Cultural Lecture: Dr. Chrystine Keener, Renaissance and Baroque Historian, Ringling College of Art and Design; members and guests welcome; afternoon lecture (time and location to be announced).

*2/3/24 (Saturday): Bocce Invitational VIII @ Cascades, Sarasota; begins midday with practice, tournament, party, music, and dancing (fee).

*2/13/24 (Shrove Tuesday): Carnevale/Scholarship Fundraiser: no details yet.

*3/10/24 (Sunday): St. Joseph's Feast Day Luncheon; no details yet.

*4/13/24 (Saturday): Scholarship Festa Luncheon: no details yet.

NOTE: Cultural events (lectures, tours), La Cena's, and some additional "fun" events are being planned. Happy Hours (Mon), Bocce (Sun), and Italian Language Instruction (Wed) are ongoing.



MAY 4TH, 2023 “LA CENA,” FRAMEWORK FOR FELLOWSHIP

Article by George Arfield



A full sellout within minutes of its announcement underscored the popularity of the “La Cena” meetings, designed around fine dining to provide a pleasurable event to celebrate fellowship and cuisine.

The latest such event, held on the evening of Thursday, May 4, 2023, at “La Violetta” drew 22 participants. Members were seated around tables for five or six, free to choose from a full regular menu, and unhurried by closures or deadlines. The event was declared a success by attendees who delighted in the cuisine of northern Italy prepared by chef Emilio Ferrara and impeccably served by the staff managed by Emilio’s wife, Rosaria.

“La Cena” events are scheduled several times a year at Sarasota-area restaurants that are a cut above average and can serve 20 or more guests from the full regular menu —not from three or four pre-set menus. Not every eatery in the area is prepared to produce 20 different orders hitting the kitchen at the same time.

Another “La Cena” is in the making for the summer season. Watch your email Inbox for the announcement and don’t delay your reply. Unfortunately, 15 GCICS members were left on a waiting list for the “La Violetta” event which sold out within two hours of it being posted via email.



OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

President

Julie Bondarenko
juliebondy@yahoo.com

Vice President for Membership

Linda Mercurio
Lindascot5770@gmail.com

Secretary

Ellen Roderick, PhD
itrain@erols.com

Treasurer

Josephine Fontana
Fontana.Josephine@gmail.com

Bocce Chair

Tom Hurban, DDS
dorisntom@gmail.com

Scholarship Chair

Sandra Russell
russellsandra062@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Mary Faith Rinaldi
maryfaithrinaldi@gmail.com

Social and Cultural Chair

George Arfield
arfield@yahoo.com

Language Instruction Chair

Jerry Hall
CZHalls@verizon.net

Technology Chair

Gordon Bloom
Gordon.bloom@att.net

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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

Happy Birthday



An impromptu rendition of “Happy Birthday” broke out for longtime GCICS member George Muller who together with his wife Linda attended the May 16 Happy Hour organized by Linda Mercurio at “The Chateau,” in Sarasota.



Seen above: George (R), Tom Hurban (far L), Doris Hurban, partially hidden by George’s martini on the rocks and Ellie Stoll (back to camera), and Patty Miner in the background.

