

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

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

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor



St. Joseph's Day



St. Patrick's Day

President's Message

Greetings, fellow GCICS members!

On behalf of the entire Society, I extend a warm thanks to Phillip and Marianne Gordon for hosting the Bocce Picnic. Their community is the perfect setting for enjoying Bocce competition followed by relaxed dining in their spacious patio area. I also want to recognize Vin DeNicolas for managing the Bocce play and Julie Bondarendo for collaborating with attendees on the dishes brought. What a vast variety we dined on. We missed our Bocce Chair, Tom Hurban and his wife Doris. I am sure we will be having a 2027 gathering. The weather was spectacular and a fun time was had by all.

I want to thank Vince Amato and Josephine Fontana for recommending Cacio Italian Bistro, where 41 members had a wonderful La Cena. The food was delicious. Vince asked one of the owners to speak to us about her journey from Rome to Sarasota, and the establishment of this charming bistro.

We had a wonderful Carnevale celebration at Mike and Patty DiMichele's beautifully decorated home. I commend Mike and Patty for hosting, Pam Arfield for doing the food assignments,

Ellen Roderick for managing the registrations, and Julie Bondarenko for coordinating the event. Patty and I led a thrilling raffle of 10 gift cards, each valued at \$50, and a \$75 gift certificate accompanied by a cookbook. We raised \$450 that will go toward our Scholarship awards. Four new members introduced themselves: Deb Casey (GCICS Website), Joan Scanlon-Frank (Sandra Russell), and Mike & Cathy Vignale (Carol Wilson). (Note: Their sponsors are shown in parentheses.)

We are quickly approaching The Giving Challenge which will occur on April 15-16. Ellen briefed the Board on how it will operate. Please take the time to read her article: **The Giving Challenge, Part 1**, appearing in this issue. Ellen will have a second article, The Giving Challenge, Part 2, in the April newsletter which will contain specific details on how you may give to GCICS during the 24-hour donation window.

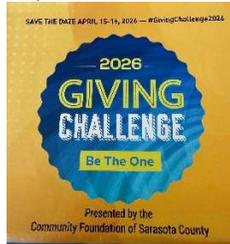
That is all for now. Stay healthy!

Yours truly,
Phil Miner, President and Social Chair

THE GIVING CHALLENGE: APRIL 15-16, 2026

PART I

Article & Photo: Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary & Giving Challenge Chair



INTRODUCTION: Every two years, GCICS has the good fortune to participate in the Giving Challenge (GC) conducted by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County (CFSC). A considerable number of our members are familiar with the GC. Because we have so many new members, I want to explain what the GC is and how extremely beneficial it is to our Society. I have authored a two-part article: Part I herein and Part II in the April newsletter. Please take the time to learn about the GC and consider a donation to support our GCICS Scholarship & Grants Program.

OVERVIEW: The Community Foundation is conducting its 10th online giving day from noon to noon on Wed/Thurs, April 15-16, 2026. It is a 24-hr giving event that supports hundreds of nonprofits in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, and DeSoto counties. GCICS is one of those 700+ non-profits and we are eligible to participate because we are a “Giving Partner,” maintaining up-to-date information on our Society in a site maintained by the Foundation. The purposes of the Giving Challenge are (1) to generate excitement about charitable giving; (2) to heighten awareness about local causes; and (3) to connect philanthropists of all means with local nonprofits to create enduring impact.

HOW IT WORKS: I will provide specific instructions in the April article. However, keep in mind that it is an ONLINE giving day over a 24-

hour period. As in the past, the Patterson Foundation, working with the CFSC, offers a 1:1 match from \$25 to \$100 per donor, per nonprofit. This means that donors can double their impact with no limit on the number of nonprofits they can support. Thus, if I donate \$100 to GCICS’s Scholarship/Grants Program (using credit card), GCICS will obtain \$200. I plan to donate more than \$100 but the Patterson Foundation will match only the first \$100 with an additional \$100. The other key here is that the donations must be made in that 24-hour window. All donations are tax deductible.

CLOSING: It is only through your generosity that we have awarded scholarships to high school seniors of Italian ancestry; and have provided grants to the Sarasota Youth Opera and the Sarasota Ballet’s Dance: The Next Generation. As stated in our [GCICS Articles of Incorporation](#), providing these scholarships/grants is a core purpose under which GCICS was established and granted non-profit status. That purpose reads: *To award higher education scholarships to meritorious future leaders of Italian ancestry and provide financial support to local not for profit youth programs focused on artistic development.* In PART II (April newsletter), I will share the results of GCICS’s participation over the past three Giving Challenges (i.e., what we raised, number of donors), and I will provide detailed directions for you on the giving process.

GCICS WELCOME BACK PICNIC AND BOCCE INVITATIONAL X

Hammock Preserve, Sarasota, FL, January 24, 2026
Article and Photos by: Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

INTRODUCTION: First, a million thanks to the team that planned and pulled off a terrific Bocce Picnic on a gorgeous Saturday at Hammock Preserve: Tom Hurban, Vin DeNicolas, Julie Bondarenko, Phillip and Marianne Gordon, and Yours Truly. We hosted 45 members and 2 guests, of which 6 were brand new members: Diana Barrese, Deb Casey, Sharon Leber, Mario and AnnaMaria Porto, and Michelle Testa. Our two guests were Lucy Tenda (Mary Lou Ferrari's friend) and Janice Porteous (Carol Wilson's cousin from Montreal).

BOCCE PLAY: My observation was that the teams were well organized and that folks enjoyed playing so much. It was a gorgeous day: 84 degrees, puffy white clouds, blue skies, and sunshine. Bocce play began shortly after 1:00 pm with several newcomers playing. The Jack and Joan Ferrante/Dana and Mary Dalton team was victorious and they were presented with Olympic style medals! Thank you, Tom, and Vin.

APPETIZER TABLE AND BUFFET: Julie did a fantastic job organizing food assignments in the two weeks prior to the picnic. The time she devoted to this effort truly paid off. We had delicious dishes from salads to mains to desserts. The appetizer table overflowed with goodies: deviled eggs, meatballs in a sauce to die for (newer members Joe and Gayle Tenebria brought them), gigantic shrimp, and several other

choice items. Sorry I did not get a photo of the appetizer table, but it was perfect. The dishes on the buffet included fresh fruit salad, a huge Caesar salad, strombolis, chicken wings, incredible eggplant parm, and on and on. And oh, the desserts. . .as the author I have literary license to single out two I really loved: the homemade tiramisu (thank you, Robert Gaglio) and ricotta Italian cookies with icing (thank you, Steve Mulligan).

FACILITY: We are so fortunate that Phillip and Marianne Gordon live in such a beautiful community with a clubhouse and bocce courts that are topnotch. And what a bargain – the rental cost GCICS a mere \$100. The spirit of the afternoon was wonderful. Phillip and Marianne were perfect hosts. Marianne was at the gate at exactly 12:30 to direct our entry onto the property. Julie had organized a team to set up and clean up. Phillip and Marianne were everywhere that we turned, answering our questions and overseeing our use of the facility.

CLOSING: At least half if not more of us were there to enjoy the fellowship of the afternoon, to watch and cheer on our favorite bocce players, and to enjoy the delicious foods members prepared with love. I say this so that members who might not have attended because they do not play bocce will consider coming next year. It was a special afternoon in the history of GCICS.



Spectators Cheering Their Team



Mario & AnnaMaria Porto, Diana Barrese, Michelle Testa



Julie Bondarenko and Jolene Ruffo



Gayle & Joe Tenebria and George DiCostanzo



Laura Heald, Jack Ferrante, Mary Dalton, Vin DeNicolas



Ellen Roderick and George Arfield



Pat Bulut, Janice Porteous, Mignon Snider



Joe Raia, Gene & Barbara Barattini, Lucille Raia

GCICS LA CENA: CACIO ITALIAN BISTRO

Article by: Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

Photos by: Phil Miner, GCICS President & Ellen Roderick

A recurring event in the GCICS Program Year is “La Cena.” Member George Arfield initiated these events while serving as GCICS Social & Cultural Chair. When he stepped off the Board in June ‘25, Phil Miner volunteered to plan the La Cena events. When Phil was elected GCICS President, he chose to continue as “Social Chair.” Here is the definition of Cena: *Cena is a Spanish and Italian word that translates to “dinner” or “supper” in English. It refers to the main evening meal. In Spanish and Italian-speaking countries, cena is a central part of the day, often a time for family and friends to gather and enjoy a leisurely meal. The meal usually consists of multiple courses, starting with appetizers, followed by a main course, and often ending with dessert.*

GCICS holds La Cena events every month or every other month, depending on the major events (e.g., St. Joseph’s Luncheon, Carnevale) that are scheduled. We usually acquire 25-40 seats in a local Italian restaurant, and members register on a first come first serve basis. Usually, attendees order what they wish off the menu and pay their tabs individually. However, we have had a couple of fixed price La Cena’s of which Cacio Italian Bistro was one of them that took place on Feb

2, 2026. The restaurant opened just for us (this restaurant is normally closed on Mondays), with forty-five seats available. We filled thirty-nine. Members Vince Amato and Josephine Fontana know the Italian owners, two sisters from Rome, and recommended Cacio to Phil. He negotiated the menu, price, time, and date while Ellen Roderick took the reservations.

We had delicious meals in a charming “bistro.” The servers were most accommodating. Many members ordered wine from the extensive wine list. We raised our glasses and sang Happy Birthday to two members: Joe Tenebria and Beth Rose. Hors d’oeuvres included a charcuterie selection of cured meats and imported cheeses, homemade meatballs, and focaccia. Attendees had a choice of six entrees: shrimp, spaghetti, salmon, pork tenderloin, chicken, or eggplant parm. Homemade tiramisu rounded out our dinner. Vince Amato introduced one of the owners and asked her to tell us a bit about the sisters’ journey to America and the establishment of their Sarasota bistro. I suspect most of our members would agree that it was a wonderful evening of fine dining and fellowship in a charming setting. Just look at the smiling faces in the photos.



Josephine Fontana & Vince Amato



Guest Lucy Tenda, Mary Lou Ferrari, Audry Koertvelyessy



Elaine Quirin, Mignon Snider, Barbara Barattini



Patty Miner & Ellen Weinberg



Back Row: Vin DeNicolas, Julie Bondarenko, Patty & Mike DiMichele, Ellen Roderick

Front Row: Guest Doug VanHooser, Anne Crowley, Sally Rogind

CARNEVALE CELEBRATION & SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER
Shrove Tuesday, February 17, 2026
Article & Photos by Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

It was a joy to return to Mike & Patty DiMicele's beautifully decorated home for CARNEVALE (3rd year in succession), an evening of festive dress, masks, and frivolity. While 51 registered, 42 attended (41 members + 1 guest) due to the flu and one broken wrist. The photo booth was popular, and most came in for a pose. As the photos illustrate, there were plenty of beads, feathers, and masks. We thank the cooks and bakers for the feast and Pam Arfield for food coordination. Phil Miner did a fantastic job securing restaurant gift cards, and he and Patty sold plenty of raffle tickets, raising \$450. We raised \$2,220 from reservations as well as donations from members who could not attend but wished to support the cause! Thank you all for your generosity.



Joan Scanlon-Frank



Deb Casey



Cathy & Mike Vignale



Mike & Patty DiMicele



Roseann & Robert Gaglio



Ellen Roderick



Mary Lou Ferrari & Beth Rose



Phil & Patty Miner



Kurt Johnson & Nadine LaPira-Wolos



Julie Bondarenko & Patty DiMicele



Doris & Tom Hurban & Beth Rose



Jack & Joan Ferrante



Dana & Mary Dalton

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Past Presidents

Joseph Raffaele, PhD	1988-1992
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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



The following restaurants have recently donated \$50 gift certificates. Thank you, Phil Miner, for all your hard work in obtaining all these gift cards. Remember, the monies obtained by raffling off these gift cards at our events help to fund our scholarships.

1. Cacio Italian Bistro
2. Deep Lagoon and Oyster Bar House – Osprey
3. Divan Turkish Cuisine
4. Pazzo on Orange

Trivia Italiana: Did You Know

by Mary Rinaldi



Leonardo da Vince invented the following:

1. Parachute
2. Robot
3. Triple Barrel Canon
4. Underwater Diving Suit
5. Armored Car
6. Machine Gun
7. Catapult
8. Mechanical Lion
9. Vancian Doors
10. Ornithopter
11. Helicopter – Aerial Screw

Source: da-vinci-inventions.com

