



English Express

Fall 2020

It's Never Too Late to Improve Your English!

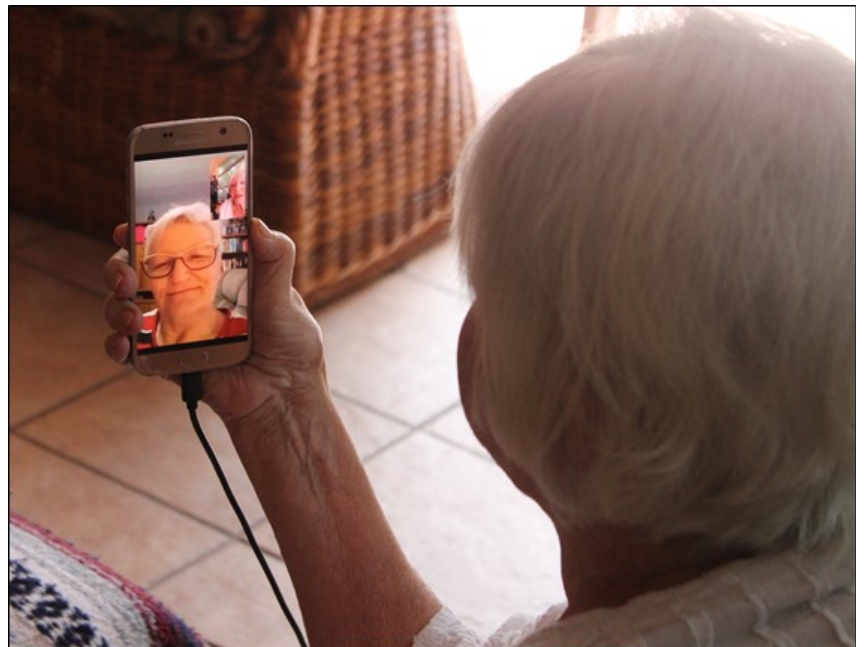
Grazyna was born in Warsaw shortly after the close of World War II. Her father was a war hero, and she loves to reminisce about him. She also talks about what life was like under the Russian regime. She says that many Polish people her age can speak both Polish and Russian because it was required. Most young people in Poland today don't speak Russian. Grazyna studied at the University of Bialystok and then had a series of jobs. She was a teacher, a travel agent, and a certified apartment superintendent. She also made clothing for children. She was a member of the anti-communist party, and for that she lost her job. During the years of martial laws in the 1980's, she and her family experienced hunger as little food was available.

She has a daughter and two grandchildren. She is immensely proud of her daughter who owns a small school in Poland where English is taught.

It was later in life when she and her husband migrated to the United States. They were in their fifties when they arrived 16 years ago. Her sisters-in-law sponsored them for citizenship. Together they learned enough English to get jobs in North Port where Polish and Russian are common languages. Grazyna worked for three years at Warm Mineral Springs and ten years at the International Food Store. Sadly, her husband died three years ago after a long illness. Today, she shares her home with her roommate Lora who is from Moldova. They seem to be best of friends.

We speak together twice a week. Sometimes we work on pronunciation, other sessions are discussions about various topics from idioms to current events. We both enjoy cooking. One day Grazyna surprised me by leaving several different Eastern European spices at my door.

Grazyna is interested in everything, and I learn new things along with her. We have never met each other in person; our sessions are all using Facebook Messenger Video. We chose that app because Grazyna was familiar with it. Zoom, WhatsApp, and other communications platforms would work as well.



Judith McGinty, Grazyna's tutor, wrote this article. Judith is also Newsletter Editor and Board Vice President.

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President's Corner

Well, this is challenging, to say the least. We have all been affected by the pandemic in some way, and we are all trying to navigate life as best as possible. It is amazing to me that in the midst of all the uncertainty of the last 7 months, LVSSC is still making the organization relevant and important to our adult students. A big "THANK YOU" goes out to our students, volunteer tutors and our donors for being loyal and staying with us during these uncertain times. We are continuing our tutoring commitment by finding new ways to teach. The Board of Directors and the staff are finding that Zoom, WhatsApp, FaceBook, Skype, and other communications platforms are helping fill the needs of students and tutors. We are not giving up. We are finding new ways to teach Basic Literacy and English as a Second Language.



Penny Corell, President

Our students continue to need our help to achieve citizenship, complete their GEDs, and better themselves by speaking and understanding English more fluently. In our 2019-2020 reporting year, volunteers tutored 307 students from 52 countries. That is impressive, especially with the COVID-19 virus requiring social distancing since mid-June.

We are challenged financially, too. Our fundraising events cannot take place as planned, so we are seeking new ideas and grants wherever they are available. Supplies are needed for teaching aids for the students and teachers. Our staff has not been furloughed and are available by phone and email. We are not giving up; we are finding new ways to say "Yes, We Can!"

September is Literacy Awareness Month. We have received Proclamations from Sarasota County and from the cities of Venice and North Port identifying Literacy Volunteers as important contributors to adult literacy. Remember, achieving literacy is not only about reading, writing and speaking well. It is about improving the health, wealth, and security of our community.

Dear Literacy Volunteers,

I just wanted to take a few minutes to say thank you for getting my husband into the literacy program. His tutor has been wonderful. They seem to have made a great connection. We can't thank you enough for all this help.

I don't know where we would have gone if this hadn't worked for my husband. I'm sure you can understand that at 48 years old this was a very difficult life changing challenge for him to take on. He has been unemployed for over a year now, not a high school graduate, and unable to read well enough to enroll in job training courses.

He just wants to get himself an education, a new career, and be able to support himself and his family again. His tutor has been excellent, and he looks forward to all the new challenges she gives to him at every meeting. We hope for a bright future.

Literacy Volunteers' Monthly TUTOR CHAT Sessions on Zoom

Since March we have all experienced the eerie effects of the coronavirus pandemic first-hand. It has caused us to learn new skills that we never imagined we would need.

Until recently, some of us had never even heard of Zoom, much less knew how to use it. But as time has passed and the weeks have stretched into months, we at LVSSC decided it was imperative that we reconnect with our invaluable tutors to resume some semblance of normalcy. And our adult learners were also requesting to get back to their studies.

Staff at LVSSC have attended weekly webinars, scheduled meetings, and practiced our Zoom skills. In addition to the thrill of success, we also discovered the awkward moments, the tech failures, and our own humbling lack of expertise.

One of our tutor trainers, Lavonne, suggested we pass along our findings on the many ways to tutor remotely. We wanted to have a conversation to find out how our tutors were coping, how tutors have adapted, and what was needed to carry on. Everyone was suddenly talking on Zoom, so we used that momentum to organize our first virtual conversation. That was the genesis of the "TUTOR CHAT."

In these Zoom meetings we have discussed our challenges to find a video conferencing platform that works as well for students as for tutors. We have talked about low-tech tutoring with phones, email, texts, and paper packets. We have shared ideas for organizing lessons and materials, we have demonstrated the Learning Upgrade distance learning tool, and we plan to chat about setting goals with students and how to monitor progress.

Some who attend the Tutor Chat share their experiences, ideas, and breakthroughs, some ask questions, and some just listen. The Tutor Chat is very informal and friendly.

All tutors are welcome and we encourage you to give it a try, even if you aren't working with a student at the moment. Just drop in to say "Hi!"

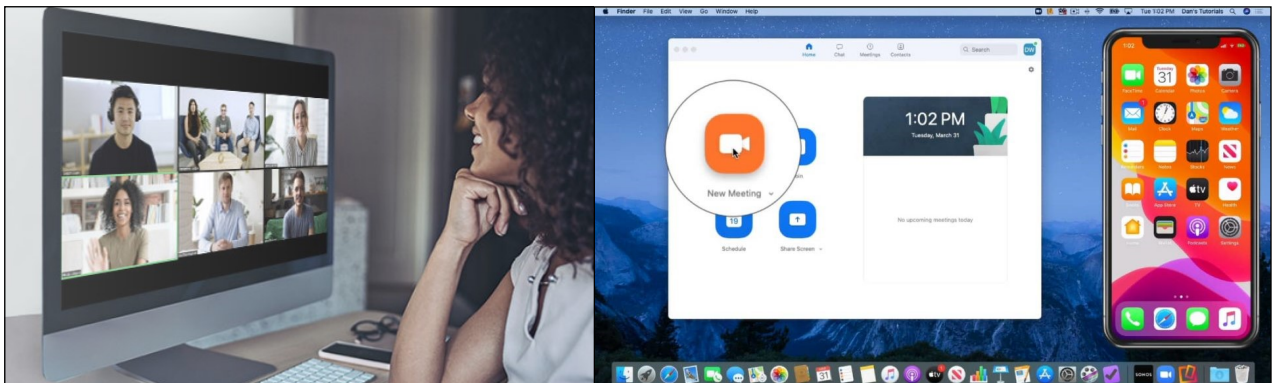
We've missed you and look forward to seeing you soon! The next Tutor Chat is Wednesday, October 7, at 1:00 PM. Please register by email:

Peter venice.literacy@gmail.com

Karen north.port.literacy@gmail.com

Questions? Email Karen or Peter at the email addresses above.

Tutors Can Join Tutor Chat Sessions Using Different Devices



Tutors with Mac or Windows laptops with webcams, iPads, iPhones, Android Smartphones, or ChromeBooks can join the sessions with video. You can also join using a landline phone or a non-Smart cellphone. After you register, you will receive an email with a link to click to join with video and phone numbers to call to join without video.



CAROL BURNS



CITIZENSHIP Made EASY For VISUAL Learners



This class is called CITIZENSHIP MADE EASY because that's just what it is – EASY.

Visual aids help you remember test answers.

At the beginning of each lesson Carol will give you the topic for the session, and at the end of each lesson she'll give you the questions and easiest answers to remember.

These short YouTube videos allow you to watch as often as you want and whenever you want. I hope you find it educational, helpful and entertaining.

Sign up at (941) 861-1352 for a 7-week Zoom class beginning October 10. These 1-hour sessions allow you to meet your classmates and ask questions regarding citizenship.

A Note from a Tutor

Peter and Kim,

I just wanted to send you both a note letting you know how much I am enjoying my ESL teaching right now! I meet my student on "WhatsApp" twice a week for an hour. I am finding the whole experience is much more efficient than both of us driving over an hour to reach the library.

Since my student is a young mother with a little one at home, she is able to keep him busy during that hour, yet can help him if needed. We are working on such things as irregular verbs, but also I am preparing for her to eventually take her citizenship test. I have found it helpful to email her specific papers for her to study before our lesson, such as grammar reviews and papers on United States history.

Because of the virus, I now rarely go out so this challenge has been both exciting and rewarding for me! Hopefully, other tutors are having the same experience! Thanks for all you do!

Nancy Kennaugh

Literacy Changes Lives!

Learning Upgrade is for Everyone

Since 1982, we have helped thousands of students to learn English, improve their reading skills, or study for the GED test. Students and tutors benefitted immensely from this one-to-one interaction, and students learned to better speak, read, write and understand English. Our program worked, until March 2020 that is.

In March, we were shook to the core because a virus known as the COVID-19 struck forcing the Sarasota Libraries, locations of our offices and study rooms, to close its doors to the public for several months. Even since they reopened, one-to-one and group meetings have not been permitted.

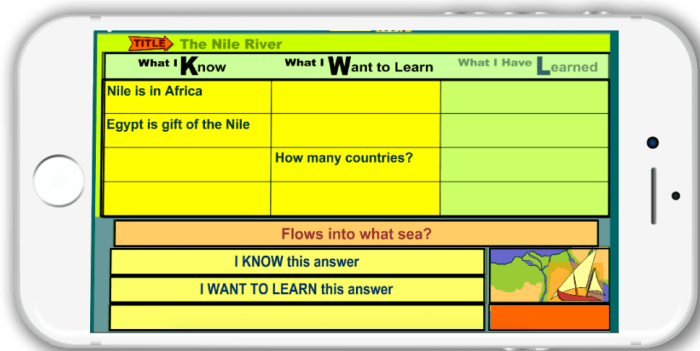
We immediately sought the use of technology to permit continued contact between students and tutors. Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, WhatsApp, and FaceBook Messenger are being used by many tutors.

We also participated in a pilot for the Learning Upgrade app. In June, twenty students who were not participating in other distance learning were introduced to Learning Upgrade.

Their learning activities were reviewed and analyzed by a group of Coordinators and Board members. The results of their analysis led to its adoption as another LVSSC distance learning tool.

Learning Upgrade is a program where students, monitored from afar by a tutor, can independently access a series of pre-planned lessons that encourage and teach. Students take a placement test when enrolling and are placed in the appropriate course. The students can access lessons at any time of day or night using any device (cell phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer) that they may have. The Learning Upgrade application automatically retains a complete record of the activity and performance of every student, permitting a tutor to step in at any time to assist the student when needed.

Because of the limited number of “seats” available, we are contacting students directly to inquire of their interest.



Learning Upgrade Student Courses

English

Reading & Comprehension

Math Upgrade K-8

GED Math

Digital Literacy

Adult Literacy Fact

68% of adult literacy programs are struggling with long student waiting lists, and **less than 10%** of adults in need are receiving services.

Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County has a long list of North Port adults waiting for tutors. **Volunteers willing to tutor remotely are needed at this time.**

Government Proclaims September as Literacy Awareness Month

Through the month of September, Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County actively participated in the 28th annual National Literacy Month to bring awareness to the fact that more than 36 million American adults struggle to read, write, do math, and use technology above a third grade level. Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County is part of a national network of organizations that work every day to end the adult literacy crisis. The City of Venice Mayor's office, the City of North Port and the Sarasota County Commissioners all proclaimed September as Literacy Awareness Month.

"About one in six adults is still not literate," said Penny Corell, President of Literacy Volunteers. Here in Sarasota County, 14% of adults 16 and older are at or below Level 1, the lowest basic literacy level. Literacy helps families be healthier and safer and provides people sustainable opportunities to support themselves through work, contributing ultimately to the economic growth of our region and our country." The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Literacy (PIAAC) examined the United States and 23 other industrialized countries and found the U.S. mean literacy score was below the international average, ranking 16th out of 24 nations.

Regional literacy organizations are collaborating to promote literacy in the area during the month of September 2020. Manatee Literacy Council, Literacy Council of Sarasota, and Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County are working together as the Suncoast Adult Literacy Alliance (SALA).

Their efforts are part of a nationwide attempt to bring attention to the literacy crisis in the United States. For nearly 30 years an alliance of literacy organizations including ProLiteracy, the American Library Association, and the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, have named September as National Literacy Month.

Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County (LVSSC) is doing something about it. Since 1982, we have been training volunteer tutors to work one-to-one and in small group classes with adult learners to improve their English language reading, writing, and speaking skills.

During the coronavirus crisis, LVSSC has been re-inventing itself. Staff has learned new online meeting technology and then coaches volunteers who are teaching their adult students with Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, and other programs.

Throughout the month of September 2020, LVSSC is promoting literacy awareness through its Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter feeds and also on its website:

www.literacychangeslives.org/

Several local tutors and learners appear in short video testimonials about their support of literacy.



Ron Feinsod, Venice Mayor, presents the Proclamation to Penny Corell, President of Literacy Volunteers.

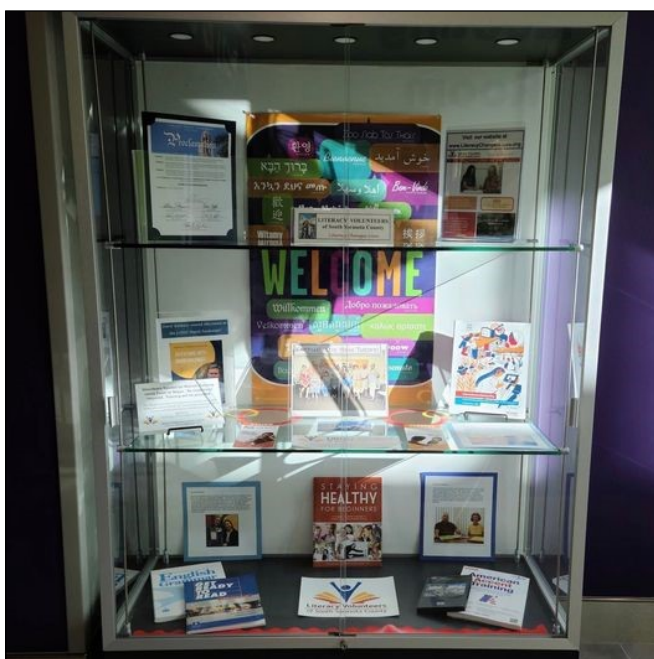
Literacy Volunteers Displays in South County Libraries

The William H. Jervy Jr. Venice Public Library, the North Port Public Library, and the Shannon Staub Public Library all mounted special exhibits or displays commemorating National Literacy Month. Our communities could see the actual proclamation documents along with other literacy related items.

County Commissioners in both Sarasota and Manatee Counties proclaimed September “Literacy Awareness Month” in the two counties. Moreover, the Venice City Council and the North Port City Councils also declared September “Literacy Awareness Month.”

During the entire month of September, Literacy Volunteers celebrated National Literacy Month by partnering with the Literacy Council of Sarasota and Manatee Literacy Council. The three organizations named themselves SALA, for Suncoast Adult Literacy Alliance and cooperatively boosted literacy issues on local media.

SALA developed video interviews of adult learners and tutors telling about their experience. The videos are posted on all three Facebook pages as well as our websites. Check out: <https://www.literacychangeslives.org>



Shannon Staub Library in North Port



William H. Jervy, Jr. Venice Public Library

Literacy Volunteers Board members Mary Seyler and Paddy Padmanabhan chatted on FaceBook Live with Bill Gunnin, Exec. Dir. of North Port Area Chamber of Commerce, on September 4.

A video of the interview is still available on the North Port Chamber Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/NPACC/videos/1224300387955762>

Also, information was added to our Facebook page every day of the month, including graphics, quotes and video clips.

<https://www.facebook.com/LiteracyVolunteersOfSouthSarasotaCounty/videos/3203920559723474>

Occasional news releases were sent to local newspapers, including the Venice Gondolier and the Venice Herald Tribune.

We hope you discovered something about National Literacy Month during September.

SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Sarasota, Florida



Proclamation

WHEREAS, *an estimated 3.6 million adults in Florida, 24% percent of those 16 and older, lack even the most basic reading skills, according to estimates by the National Center for Education Statistics; and*

WHEREAS, *adults with low literacy skills experience personal, social, and economic hardships that affect their ability to function and provide for themselves and their families, and the literacy level of parents and/or guardians has a direct impact on the literacy level of their children; and*

WHEREAS, *the Suncoast Adult Literacy Alliance (SALA), a regional partnership of the Literacy Council of Sarasota, Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County, and Manatee Literacy Council, celebrates the contributions of hundreds of trained volunteer tutors who work with adult learners to achieve their educational goals.*

NOW, THEREFORE, WE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA,
do hereby proclaim September 2020 to be:

LITERACY AWARENESS MONTH

PRESENTED *this 8th day of September 2020.*




Michael A. Moran *Chair*
Sarasota County District 1 Commissioner



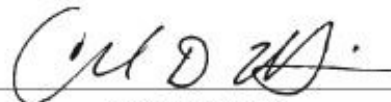
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Sarasota County District 4 Commissioner



Christian Ziegler
Sarasota County District 2 Commissioner



Nancy C. Detert
Sarasota County District 3 Commissioner



Charles D. Hines
Sarasota County District 5 Commissioner



Karen E. Rusling
Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller



MODERN UNITED WAY BLUEPRINT

South Sarasota County

Venice, North Port, Englewood, Nokomis, Laurel, Osprey

Dr. Jim Patterson, the immediate Past President of our Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County has also served as a board member and past chair of our United Way of South Sarasota County (UWSSC). He recently asked Barbara Cruz, United Way's CEO, about the exciting new plans for the future of this vital community asset. Literacy Volunteers has received strong support from the United Way so their future and wellbeing are extremely important to our organization. We hope you will support their projects, programs and fund raising.

According to Barbara Cruz, the allocations process was completely streamlined for the nonprofits requesting funding. The compiled data within the system allows for UWSSC to laser focus on assessing the needs of our community and gives them a roadmap to where their funding is needed the most.

Strengthening donor relationships, volunteer experiences, digital campaigns and peer-to-peer fundraising are also part of the Modern United Way of South Sarasota County.

Investing in a cross-platform system called FrontStream has allowed UWSSC to work closely with donors to better define the impact of their gifts, strategically engage volunteers and accurately record volunteer hours. The platform also gives them the technology to create engaging digital giving campaigns and peer-to-peer fundraising events online. They have also added a Text to Give Platform called OneCause that allows for quick and inspired giving.

A recent and complete refresh of the UWSSC website and social media channels help to better engage the community, strengthen channels year-round and deliver best in class fundraising, content and digital experiences.

There is much more to learn about this new Modern United Way of South Sarasota County, their impact initiatives and their COVID19 fund that are supporting our community. You are encouraged to log on to their website at www.uwssc.com to read more and donate if you are able.

Continued from page 1.

For many of our sessions, I send learning material through Messenger in advance. But not always. This is a more casual learning experience than most. Grazyna is an older woman, not preparing for school or employment. She has been in this country for many years and simply wants to speak more clearly and understand more English. What she needs is the opportunity to have conversation with English speakers.

Grazyna recently decided to return to Poland to help her daughter whose children are young.

She will remain there for eight months, but without interrupting her English lessons because we will continue just as we have.

Using distance learning takes no more prep time for the tutor than conventional learning. In fact, it is very time saving because there is no travel. I have discovered that it is quite easy to scan training aids and send them to my student.

When Grazyna returns to North Port and COVID-19 is history, I look forward to meeting her in person. She has become a friend.

Thank You for Your Financial Support!
July 2019 - June 2020

\$10,000

United Way of South Sarasota County

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Jan Gallas & FaceBook Friends

\$2,000 - \$4,999

Arline Smyth Quinn Charitable Foundation
 Heron Creek Community Foundation

\$1000 - \$1,999

Coach House
 Gulf Coast Community Foundation
 Sandy & Chuck McIntyre & Family
 Redenta & Steve Picazio
 Scott Ritter

\$500 - \$999

Boone, Boone & Boone, P.A.
 Rosanne Nietupski
 Jim & Pauline Patterson
 Nancy & David Pike & FB Friends
 Joe Pokorney & Judith McGinty
 Venice Apothecary
 Venice Sunrise Rotary
 Women's Sertoma
 Jim & Karen Woods

\$250 - \$499

Irma Arroyo
 George Carpenter
 Joyner Family Insurance
 Mehserle Wealth Management
 Judith Pike
 Lavonne Radonovich

\$100- \$200

Lynette Barr
 Joan Bauerlein
 Nancy Behning
 Lee Besse
 Esther Bird
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\$100- \$200 Continued

Drew Stewart
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 Kevin Van Kleeck
 Sherrey Welch
 Mark Witte
 Barbara Wojkiewicz
 Judith Wolf

\$50 - \$99

Benjamin Abramson
 Mary Lou Belisle
 Sharon Betterton
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 Marc Hapke
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 Mary Kay Karl
 Marina Lvovsky
 Jeanne Madden
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 Janita Wisch
 Nancy Zarowin
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Also, a **BIG THANK YOU** to everyone who purchased tickets for **An Evening with David Baldacci**.

**Literacy Volunteers
of South Sarasota County**
300 Nokomis Ave. S.
Venice, FL 34285

Literacy Changes Lives



FIRST CLASS

Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County

www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

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venice.literacy@gmail.com

North Port Literacy Office, 13800 S. Tamiami Trail
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north.port.literacy@gmail.com

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Paddy Padmanabhan

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