



English Express

Winter 2023

Student and Tutor: A Remarkable Pair



Juliette, a Haitian university graduate with a degree in administration, arrived from Haiti five years ago fluent in French and Creole and with an eagerness to learn English. Deb Metzler, a retired educator, became her tutor within a couple weeks of her arrival and they continue to meet regularly.

Initially, they met at the library in North Port. Juliette lived close by and was able to walk to the library.

More recently, they often have their sessions at Senator Bob Johnson's Landing, a county park along the banks of the Myakka River in North Port. Juliette got her driving license a couple of years ago and now is able to drive to her lessons. During the worst of the pandemic and when Deb who is a "snowbird" is in Maine, they meet via FaceTime.

Deb had French classes in elementary school many decades ago but says she remembers little more than "Bonjour". However, Juliette's English classes in school provided her with the English sounds for the alphabet and that gave this tutor and student a foundation for their initial lessons.

In the first couple of years while working with Deb, Juliette demonstrated her dedication to learning English through her weekly one-on-one lessons and her attendance in English classes offered through Literacy Volunteers at the North Port Library as well as classes at Suncoast Technical College.

In Haiti Juliette used her degree in administration and was employed as an office assistant in a law practice. In recent years since living in the US, she has worked in an assisted living facility and currently is employed in a supermarket. Juliette aspires to become a registered nurse.

She is motivated to master English to the level where she will be successful attending college and reaching her current professional goal. With her ongoing commitment to learning there is no limit to what she might achieve.

Juliette is filled with gratitude for all the Literacy Volunteers who she has worked with since arriving in this country.

In addition to their English lessons this pair has shared many personal stories and life's challenges over the past five years. They clearly have a special bond of respect and friendship.

Literacy Volunteers Celebrates 40th Anniversary!!

In 1982, Literacy Volunteers of America - Venice was born. The founder, Eleanor C. Byrnes, arranged a meeting of thirty community members in the Venice High School auditorium.

Seventeen tutors recruited from that first group went on to teach twenty students.

Eleanor Crockett Byrnes had been active in Literacy Volunteers of America - Buffalo in New York and served as their chairperson for eight years before moving to Venice. She was well aware of the value and the need to promote literacy across the United States. Her pioneer spirit stemmed from her great, great, great, grandfather, Davy Crockett.

On Dec 8, 2022, Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County celebrated **40 years** of changing lives through literacy education in South Sarasota County.

The celebration took place at Jacaranda Trace in a beautiful ballroom-like setting at no cost to our organization! We so appreciate Jacaranda Trace's generosity and the hard work of Diana Verhulst, Arts & Leisure Director, and her staff!

Sue Spayd, Vice President, provided leadership to make this event possible. Paddy Padmanabhan, President, presided as Master of Ceremonies. Many board members, tutors, and students attended, volunteered their time, and provided a wide variety of both sweet and savory foods. A special thanks to Janita Wisch, board member, for the beautiful table decorations and fresh floral centerpieces, and to David Williams who took awesome photos and videos of the celebration!

Some of our students wore clothing representing their countries. The students listed below and North Port Coordinator, Karen, and her husband, Dave, provided the entertainment.

Karen Paredes, Ecuador
Karen and David Bridegam, USA
Harry Avalyon, Armenia
Polina Belyanskaya, Russia
Daniela Moreno, Chile
Gonzalo Pavez, Chile

Pianist and invited audience participation
Dance instructors performed Argentine tango
Actor in humorous video on the use of idioms
Operatic singer sang in Russian
Dance instructor with Fred Astaire Dance Studio
Dance instructor with Fred Astaire Dance Studio

Sabrina Hernandez was not able to attend the 40th Anniversary Celebration, but she asked her tutor, Joe Giorgianni, to read her beautifully written message of thanks and gratitude to Literacy Volunteers. Her tutor, Joe Giorgianni, has dedicated 14 years as a tutor to our organization! Thank you, Joe, for your time and dedication to Literacy Volunteers. You can read Sabrina's message on page 7. More photos taken at the 40th celebration are on page 8.

Board and Staff at 40th Celebration

L-R in back: Peter Norrman, David Williams, Paddy Padmanabhan, Claudia Daniels, Sandy McIntye, and Joe Pokorney

L-R in front: Kim Pike, Sue Spayd, Nancy Pike, Karen Bridegam, Mary Seyler, and Judith McGinty

Board members not pictured: Jim Patterson, Polly Skinner, and Janita Wisch



President's Corner



Paddy Padmanabhan, President

I want to start by thanking the Board for electing me as the President of the Board for this fiscal year (July 2022 - June 2023). It is an honor and a privilege to be not only a member of this august organization but to be the president of the board.

First, thank you to all the tutors who have been doing an incredible job over the last three years despite challenges through the pandemic and natural disasters like Hurricane Ian. You have been doing an amazing job adapting to the situation and utilizing technology to uphold our slogan, "Literacy Changes Lives".

I want us all to use the positive energy of this new year to find ways and means to recruit more tutors to meet the increasing demands of our community in south Sarasota County.

If you have ideas and suggestions that we should consider, please share those with us. In order to increase and improve communication, we plan to have frequent networking of the tutors. All tutors are invited to attend the first Tutor Networking Session and free luncheon on Wed., Feb. 15, 11:30 - 12:45, at the United Way Office, 4242 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice (next to Book-A-Million which is next to the Walmart at the corner of US 41 and Jacaranda Blvd.). Contact Sue Spayd to register no later than Feb. 10. Phone or text: 717-342-8181 Email: start.now.north.port@gmail.com

Double Your Impact! Give via the Flanzer Trust.

Our Annual Appeal letters were mailed to volunteers, donors, and potential donors in November. There has been a heart-warming response with over 50 donations via the Louis & Gloria Flanzer Philanthropic Trust. Thank you again to all those who have donated. If you would like to donate, but haven't yet, please donate via the Flanzer Trust so your donation will be matched.

Donations can be made online with a credit card or by mailing a check. To donate online, go to: www.Flanzertrust.org and click on "Make A Donation." Then click on "Choose a Charity." Scroll down to **Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County** and click on [Donate>>](#) and then click on "Donate Now." You'll need to enter your credit card information.

To contribute by personal check, make it out to The Louis & Gloria Flanzer Philanthropic Trust and write Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County on the memo line. Mail your check to: The Louis & Gloria Flanzer Philanthropic Trust, 1266 First Street, Suite 1, Sarasota, FL 34236.



THANK YOU, JUDITH

Literacy Changes Lives



Judith McGinty

Judith McGinty joined Literacy Volunteers in August 2014, and her first student was “Just Harry” Avalyon from Armenia, who entertained us at the 2015 Annual Meeting with a humorous presentation on how much he loved American idioms. Harry produced an updated video version for the 40th Anniversary Celebration that had us all laughing.

Judith joined the Board of Directors in April 2015 and volunteered to be our Newsletter Editor in 2016, producing her first newsletter in May.

Judith recently resigned from the Board and her Newsletter Editor position. She will be missed, and we want to recognize the contributions she has made to the Board and to this organization. In addition to volunteering, Judith has been a generous financial donor to both Literacy Volunteers and to The Foundation of Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County.

Judith served as Literacy Volunteers’ Vice President in 2020-2021 and as President in 2021-2022. She was on the Event Committee that brought authors Randy Wayne White and David Baldacci to Venice for our author events on Feb. 28, 2019 and March 12, 2020. As Newsletter Editor, she interviewed tutors and students and wrote their stories. Judith was quick to volunteer for other Board responsibilities, like interviewing a new employee and participating in various projects taken on by our “working board.” She and her husband, Joe Pokorney, learned about volunteering at Fox Lea Farm in Venice as a fund-raising project with Venice-Nokomis Rotary. In 2020, they signed up Literacy Volunteers to work there to raise funds. Board members as well as spouses and friends worked an evening at a horse show. It was a fun, team-building experience, but also the coldest night in February 2020.

We hope new volunteers will follow Judith’s example. Start out by tutoring and then gradually become more involved in the operation of this 40-year-old life-changing nonprofit organization.

MEET THE LVSSC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are happy to introduce the new part-time Executive Director of Literacy Volunteers. Sue Spayd became a volunteer in March 2020, joined the Board in 2021, and became Vice President in 2022. She was the Team Leader for the Giving Challenge in 2022 that raised over \$12,000. Some students and tutors have met Sue in the weekly Student Chat that she leads on Zoom.

One of Sue’s first assignments will be to recruit new volunteers, especially tutors, and oversee the entire volunteer program including recognition and retention.

Sue’s office is in the North Port Family Service Center in our computer lab, but she will out of the office often coordinating with our two Coordinators and doing community outreach.



Sue Spayd

Attention Tutors and Students:



ProLiteracy Education Network is a comprehensive collection of online courses and resources for adult literacy and ESL instructors, program staff, trainers, and adult learners. The web site is:

<https://proliteracy.org/Professional-Development/Education-Network>

To access resources on ProLiteracy Education Network, you'll need to create an account.

Because Literacy Volunteers is a ProLiteracy organizational member, our tutors and students can enjoy free access to all of the resources on the ProLiteracy Education Network. You will need to enter our Organizational Membership Number which is ORG032265 (O is a letter and 0 is a number).



Literacy Volunteers
of South Sarasota County

Enter to Win

Two (2) Round-Trip Flights
Valid for travel on Southwest operated,
published, and scheduled service.

Donate \$10

Tickets donated by:

Southwest®
via the **Florida Literacy Coalition**

The winner will be notified on
Friday, March 31, 2023.
Travel Expiration Date: **12/31/2023**

www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

Tickets available at both Literacy Volunteers offices:
Venice Office 861-1352 - North Port Office 861-1320

Free READING and ENGLISH help for ADULTS.

So Many Students Had No Idea About Hurricanes

When Ukraine was invaded, Hanna was living there with her two young children about 800 miles from the Polish border and not far from Russia.

She quickly determined that they needed to leave the country and get to a safer place, far from the invaders. She drove to Poland although it took several weeks. They slept in train stations at night for safety. They saw bodies everywhere along the way. She was able to contact her husband who was working on a construction contract in Germany. They reunited and soon discovered that a distant Russian relative in North Port could help them immigrate to the U.S. through a government program known as Uniting for Ukraine. Those who come under the program must have a place to live. He provided that. The web site for Uniting for Ukraine is <https://ukraine.welcome.us/>

While this was unfolding, Dan, a Venice resident, was looking for ways he could help the Ukrainians. He read an article about Literacy Volunteers and the need for ESL tutors. He quickly enrolled in a tutor class and soon was matched with Hanna, a recent arrival from Ukraine. He learned that her living arrangements were less than ideal. When he realized she and her family were living in a mobile home, he became concerned. A serious hurricane was forming in the Atlantic and could hit her new neighborhood.

We share this story with you because we wondered how the newest arrivals were preparing for Hurricane Ian. Dan found out that his student had no idea how dangerous the situation could be. He decided to bring this new immigrant family into his own home in Venice. And because he is a real estate agent, he was able to help get them an apartment. They also bought an old car that Hanna's husband is able to maintain.

Dan is working with Hanna to get a green card and to fast track her English language skills because Hanna, a masters prepared chemical engineer, wants to continue her career but needs better English ability.

This Literacy Volunteers tutor went beyond the role of a tutor, may have saved lives, and certainly enhanced the lives of these new residents.

New volunteers are needed! 100 adults are waiting for tutors.

Click on the gold bar for your area to print volunteer recruitment cards to tack on bulletin boards and hand out. Printed cards are also available in each Literacy Volunteers office. We need your help!

Venice, Englewood, Osprey, and Laurel area



Volunteer tutors needed!

Call 941-861-1352

www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

You can become a tutor to help local adults learn English or improve reading skills. You do not need to speak a foreign language or have tutoring experience. Training will be provided.

Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County

300 Nokomis Ave. S., Venice, FL 34285 (in Library)

North Port area



Volunteer tutors needed!

Call 941-861-1320

www.LiteracyChangesLives.org

You can become a tutor to help local adults learn English or improve reading skills. You do not need to speak a foreign language or have tutoring experience. Training will be provided.

Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County

13800 S. Tamiami Trail in North Port Library

Message from Sabrina Hernandez, ESL Student



Sabrina

I want to start by saying thank you to Literacy Volunteer of South Sarasota County, my classmates, and a special thank you to my teachers. Thank you for dedicating your time, for your big, generous hearts, and investing your time and energy in me and my classmates. In particular Joe Giorgianni, my personal tutor who I feel very close to, you have taught me many things, been patient with my pronunciation of vocabulary and grammar. You have been a true and very supportive friend, and I consider you as part of my family now and as someone I can always count on. Every Friday you have been there, very punctual, with new notes and exercises which helped me to improve my English.

I also want to thank Joe LaDu, the teacher for the advanced class on Saturdays, always with great stories, allowed us to express ourselves and every day we learned something new, using the book and our own experiences. And to Sue Spayd, a teacher who was born to teach, very organized and who always brought something new and interesting to the class. Your classes were great and I loved the content. Each of these people helped in one way or another to improve my English.

When I started this program I had intermediate English with many deficiencies in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. I wanted to improve my English because I am a dentist from another country, and I needed to get my dental hygienist license, get a job and so that my patients would understand me. I also had to get a good TOEFL score to apply to universities to study for 2 more years to get my dental license and have a career in the USA. The truth is I have achieved everything. I am a hygienist in Florida, I have a job, and I can communicate great with my patients. I was also able to obtain a good score on the TOEFL and apply to universities. I was accepted to the University of Puerto Rico, where I will be receiving my classes in English and Spanish and I will start there next year. I hope to continue in this program and continue learning from these wonderful people.

Many thanks, Sabrina Hernandez

Local Nonprofit Holds Fundraising Event for Literacy Volunteers



This group of START members made it happen! After two postponements and a location change (thanks to Ian), START held its Card and Game Party at Hotel Venezia to benefit Literacy Volunteers of South Sarasota County .

The organization **Sharing Talents And Resources Together (START)** was established as a service club offering hands-on support to area non-profit organizations whose focus is to improve the well-being of individuals within Sarasota County. Their web site is <https://www.startofsc.org/>.

The members of START held a fundraising Card and Game Party on November 9, 2022, in Venice. Literacy Volunteers was the beneficiary of the event. There were about 140 people who participated, spending their time playing their favorite card games and board games.

The event gave our organization the much-needed exposure to recruit tutors for our organization. There was quite an interest from the participants to join Literacy Volunteers as volunteer tutors.

The Card party was very successful! START donated \$3,000 to LVSSC. We are extremely grateful and thankful to START for their generous donation.

40th Anniversary Photo Gallery



Thank You for Your Financial Support!

July 2021- June 2022

\$9,000 and over

Jan Gallas, LVSSC Past President
State Library - CARES Act grant
United Way of South Sarasota County

\$5,000 - \$8,999

The Louis & Gloria Flanzer Philanthropic Trust

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Gulf Shores Realty of Florida LLC
Carolyn R. Shrauger

\$500 - \$999

Penny Corell
Plantation Friendly Associates
Sandy McIntyre
James Patterson
Stephen Picazio, Sr.
Jim and Karen Woods

\$200 - \$499

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Judith Pike
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Tina Padmanabhan
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Patricia Schofield
Mary Seyler
Sue Spayd
Valorie Stackpole
Robert Storm
Stuart Drew
Donna Sweet
Vladimir Teplitskiy

\$50 - \$99

Sharon Betterton
Esther Bird
Carol Burns
Dan Crites
Cindy Mick
Karen Taylor
Nancy Winans
Leslie Yard
Nancy Zarowin

Thank you to everyone who made Individual and Family membership contributions.

**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

Mailing Address and Venice Literacy Office:
300 Nokomis Ave. S.
Venice, FL 34285 Phone: 941-861-1352
venice.literacy@gmail.com

North Port Literacy Office, 13800 S. Tamiami Trail
North Port, FL 34287 Phone: 941-861-1320
north.port.literacy@gmail.com

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Vice Pres...Vacant
Secretary...Nancy Pike
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Executive Director

Sue Spayd

Literacy Coordinators

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Karen Bridegam, North Port

Tutor Trainers

Denise Gastineau, Venice
Laura Gregory, Englewood
Lavonne Radonovich, North Port
Amy Rehberg, Venice
Paula Sheppard, North Port

Newsletter

Need - New Newsletter Editor
Sandy McIntyre, Layout

Speaker's Bureau

Paddy Padmanabhan

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