

"Teaching in the classroom, where I was able to work directly with the students, was the most enjoyable part of my education career"

Bob Kenel moved to Sandleheath in The Meadows four years ago after retiring from his 45-year career in education.

"I taught middle school, always," says Bob. "Kids are kids, regardless of where they are; they have the same wants and needs."

Originally from Queens in New York, Bob taught school in Long Island and was a school principal in New York. He moved to The Meadows from Tampa, where he was principal of St. Patrick's Catholic School for 19 years.

He already knew about The Meadows because his sister **Sally Kenel** lives in Kingsmere, and he has friends in the area. He and Sally have cousins in Washington, DC, and New York, who enjoy visiting Bob and Sally in The Meadows.

Arts and cultural venues attracted Bob to the Sarasota area

"I like it here; it's an excellent place to retire," says Bob. "I am a member of Selby Gardens and The Ringling Museum of Art. They offer a lot of great events."

Though Bob is not so much a beach fan, he does enjoy being outside. He especially likes riding his bicycle through The Meadows and beyond.

"I ride my bicycle 15 miles a day and workout at Crunch on University," says Bob. "I like to ride past the Best Kept winners' homes after they are announced, noticing all the special touches people add to enhance their properties and landscaping."

He adds, "Lesley and Bob Totten were among the first neighbors I met. They were very friendly and welcoming."

Once Bob got moved in, he quickly got involved, serving on the MCA's Best Kept Committee for four years and the Sandleheath Condominium Association board for two years before being elected Sandleheath's president last March.

"We have a great group of residents in Sandleheath"

Serving as a condominium association president, Bob says, "is a lot like being a school principal. It's important to listen to people, to know your community and to stay



ABOVE—Demetrio, a success story, with Bob Kenel at Literacy Council

Bob Kenel Sandleheath President

Encouraging Others Comes Naturally

Carlene Cobb—Assistant Editor



ABOVE—Bob in falconry class, Dromoland Castle, County Clare, Ireland

on top of things that need attention.

Bob adds that Best Kept awards may be expanding, and more information about that will be confirmed at the September meeting. New criteria may mean that more people will be recognized for single family homes and condominium associations.

"The Best Kept awards continue to focus on recognizing people for their well-maintained properties—giving them a lot of encouragement and appreciation for their efforts," says Bob.

One day, a post card arrived from The Literacy Council of Sarasota

The post card Bob received was sent to recruit volunteers to work with individuals who want to improve their English speaking, reading comprehension, and writing. He was intrigued and eager to put his professional teaching background to good use by helping others who were

working hard to help themselves. That was three years ago.

Today, he still shares with students his knowledge, expertise, can-do attitude and encouraging words. He says he is very comfortable teaching reading comprehension and writing, and he understands these students need a lot of positive feedback to stick with it and attain their goals.

"Bob Kenel is the best return we could have gotten from that direct mail campaign," says The Literacy Council Program Director Susan Bergstrom.

The Literacy Council of Sarasota developed the Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) class to help people who did not obtain their high school diploma for whatever reason.

"It's very difficult to go back to school as an adult with a family—life gets in the way," says Bob. "Most students are in their 30s and 40s. They want to advance in their careers. We have a small class that meets at 5:30 pm, twice a week, at The Literacy Council on 17th Street.

"One success story is Demetrio, a welder who wants to advance in his job and needs the GED to do that. We've been working together for two years," says Bob. "Another success is Michelle, a grandmother who never finished high school. She is now studying for her GED exams while helping to raise two grandchildren."

The volunteer instructor/mentor role is a perfect match for Bob's skills and interests, and the early evening classes fit into his busy life.

"I'm also a clerk for the board of elections at Shining Light Church on Fruitville Road," says Bob. "Be sure to go vote!"

Earlier this summer
Bob traveled
to Ireland

He marveled at the rugged Cliffs of Moher, and took a falconry class at Dromoland Castle on Ireland's west coast, visited the Blarney Stone and Castle in the southern region of County Cork, and hobnobbed in bustling Dublin, taking in picturesque spots along the way.

"The falconry class was a fantastic experience," says Bob. "The EPIC Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin shows Irish emigrants' stories and all the different places they have gone all over the world. It's very interactive with music and videos. I highly recommend it."

To volunteer at The Literacy Council of Sarasota...

Call Program Director Susan Bergstrom, 955-0421 or email her, sbergstrom@sarasotaliteracy.org.