



**LITERACY  
COUNCIL**  
OF SARASOTA

2026

The 19th Annual

# LITERACY MATTERS

*Luncheon*



## Double Your Impact!

An anonymous donor will match every gift dollar for dollar, **up to \$10,000**, helping us expand access to adult literacy programs across our community.

# LITERACY MATTERS BECAUSE *Opportunity* MATTERS

**A**t the Literacy Council of Sarasota, our work is guided by a simple but powerful belief. When adults have access to essential reading, writing, and language skills, they are better equipped to thrive. Families are strengthened. Workplaces grow stronger. Communities benefit.

Every day, adult learners come to the Literacy Council with different goals and starting points. Some are building foundational literacy skills. Others are learning English, preparing for a GED, or advancing through our Career Pathways Program. Together, these programs form a continuum of support designed to meet learners where they are and help them move forward with confidence. Progress looks different for every learner, but the outcome is the same. Greater independence. Expanded opportunity. A stronger sense of belonging.

This year, the Literacy Council is stepping into a new chapter. With a newly adopted strategic plan, the board and staff have committed to a focused and intentional path forward. The plan sets clear priorities to strengthen programs, deepen partnerships, and ensure we are thoughtful stewards of the philanthropy that fuels our mission. It reflects both the responsibility we carry and the promise of what is possible. We invite you to learn more about this plan and the vision guiding our work.

You will hear today from Erika, whose journey reflects the determination and hope shared by so many of our learners. Her story reminds us that literacy is not just about skills. It is about dignity, opportunity, and the ability to shape one's future.

As we unveil a refreshed brand and mission, we do so with gratitude for the community that makes this work possible. Thank you for believing in adult learners and for standing with the Literacy Council as we continue strengthening families, workplaces, and our community.

With gratitude,



**Laura Randall, CFRE**  
Board President



**Tom Melville**  
Executive Director

# TODAY'S *Program*

## Wine Reception

11:00 - 11:30 am

## Welcome

Laura Randall, Board President

## Master of Ceremonies

Jeffery Kin, Executive Director, Sarasota Rising

## Presentations

James E. Duffy Friend of Literacy Award - **eSmart Recycling, Tony Selvaggio**

Volunteer of the Year Award - **Dan Gulliford**

Vicente Medina Zequeira Student of Excellence Award - **Erika Villalobos**

## Guest Speaker

Jessica Muroff, President and CEO, Community Foundation of Sarasota County

## Closing Remarks

Jeffery Kin

**J**essica Muroff began her tenure as the third President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County in January 2026. This marks the fourth nonprofit Muroff has led as CEO, generating game-changing results at every stop.

Prior to joining the foundation, Muroff spent six years leading United Way Suncoast, one of the state's largest United Ways, serving a five-county footprint that includes Sarasota, Manatee, DeSoto, Hillsborough, and Pinellas counties. Muroff has been recognized by Florida Trend as one of Florida's 500 most influential leaders for three consecutive years and has been a driving force for philanthropic innovation at the local, state, and national levels. Since 2019, she has prioritized community impact through modernized, data-informed grantmaking, collaborative initiatives, and programmatic partnerships. Earlier in her career, Muroff served as CEO of Girl Scouts of West Central Florida and of Frameworks, a Tampa Bay-based nonprofit advancing social and emotional learning for children.

Muroff holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of South Florida and a graduate certificate in strategic foresight from the University of Houston. Please welcome Jessica Muroff!



# A *New Chapter* FOR THE LITERACY COUNCIL OF SARASOTA

## Our Mission

At the Literacy Council of Sarasota, we empower adults with the **essential reading, writing, and language skills** they need to thrive—strengthening families, workplaces, and our community.

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This mission reflects who we are today and the future we are committed to building: **a community where adults have the tools they need** to fully participate, contribute, and succeed.



# HOW WE'RE BUILDING *Lasting* CHANGE

Alongside our renewed mission, we are strengthening the organization behind the work. These five strategic pillars guide how we grow our impact, steward resources responsibly, and ensure we are equipped to serve adult learners for years to come.

## Our Strategic Pillars



### Strengthening Learning Experiences

Ensuring adult learners receive effective, efficient, and supportive instruction.



### Building Capacity to Serve

Strengthening our organizational capacity so we can support more learners, staff, and volunteers.



### Elevating the Importance of Literacy

Sharing our impact to build greater awareness and community engagement.



### Sustaining Our Impact

Diversifying and expanding resources to ensure long-term stability and growth.



### Leading with Accountability

Strengthening governance and board leadership to guide the organization forward.



# WHAT LITERACY

Behind every statistic is a person. These are the voices of adult learners whose lives have been strengthened through the Literacy Council of Sarasota—at home, at work, and in the community.



*Carlos*

Alta Vista Elementary School Parent

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The classes have given me confidence and a sense of security. I now take the risk to speak in English and I want to learn more and more. At home we speak Spanish, but when my children bring friends home now, I understand their conversations and that is very important as a parent.

I have a strong desire to speak better English. That way I can see myself having more opportunities and a better job. I have always wanted to open my own restaurant, but for that I need to speak English.



*Dilcia*

Emma E. Booker Elementary School Parent

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Being here I had to face my biggest challenge - to learn English. I started at a zero-level, and I feel that I have advanced a lot thanks to my teacher and her patience. Now I have a job in a laundry facility and feel that I can communicate much better. Most important, when I go to my son's medical appointments, I understand better and I can read the prescription bottles.

Thank you very much for all your support!

**Being here I had to face my biggest challenge - to learn English.**

# MAKES Possible



*Elvia*

Gocio Elementary School Parent

The opportunities that they offer us to learn English online at home are the best! As immigrants in this country, learning English will help us to better figure out our lives, be able to express ourselves, and to socialize with others.

Thank you, Literacy Council, for helping us to give our children the opportunity of a better life!

**As immigrants in this country, learning English will help us to better figure out our lives**



*Mireya*

Tuttle Elementary School Parent

These classes have truly motivated me to keep learning more about the English language and to improve on what I've already learned so I can continue practicing every day. The materials and the way the class is taught are so dynamic and engaging, it's made learning feel enjoyable and meaningful.

Thank you so much for everything! This experience has made a beautiful difference in our lives.

## MAKE A GIFT TODAY!

**Literacy opens doors—to better jobs, stronger families, and a deeper sense of belonging.**

Your support helps adult learners gain the reading, writing, and language skills they need to thrive. Together, we can expand opportunity, strengthen our community, and ensure more adults have the tools to move forward with confidence.



# THANK YOU TO OUR *Sponsors*

## NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE

Two Anonymous Donors (generously underwriting this event and will match every gift dollar for dollar, up to \$10,000!)

## INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARD



## NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

Linda T. Jones

## STATE BOOK AWARD

Henrietta Lee Levins



## COMMUNITY BOOK AWARD

Evan Ackerman  
Tom Melville & James Cooper  
Laura Randall

## PATRON

Eileen Parkinson  
Millie Wieber  
Cady Ferguson  
Grier Ferguson



Thank you to our performing artists today

Rebecca Dikranian - Piano  
Michael Mendez - Vocals

[sarasotaliteracy.org](http://sarasotaliteracy.org)