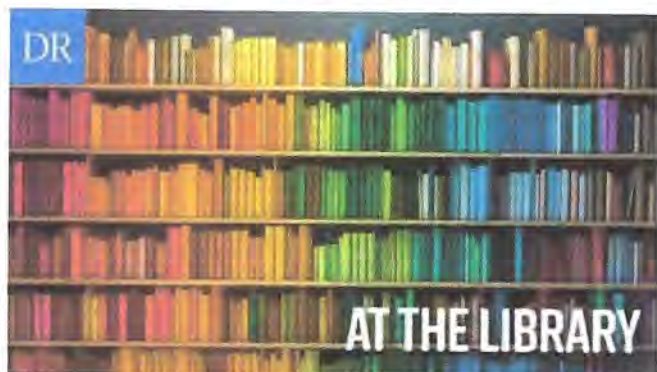


Summer-2025 NEWS

Celebrating 30 years of Solano Literacy Program



Hello FROM THE Board SECRETARY

Ramona Thomas



RAMONA THOMAS

Children's Book Author

ramonasbooks.com



Find my books at
these fine retailers:

amazon

INGRAM



Published Author, Board Secretary Ramona Thomas has been an enthusiastic leader in giving our 25th Anniversary Authors' Luncheon a great start and direction! She is not only the Chair of the Authors and Events organization, but also a patron while participating in the local Art on the Vine Festival. When I purchased her book, *IDK!* asked if she had heard of SCLF Authors Luncheon. Being new to the area, Ramona had not heard of this annual event that supports the Solano County Library. The patron suggested that I would be a great candidate to speak at the upcoming Authors Luncheon fundraiser, and based on what she shared, I became interested.

Shortly thereafter, while attending a fundraiser to support the youth of Vallejo, I met Ravi Shankar, the current Solano County Library Foundation (SCLF) President. During our encounter, he

inquired about my work as an author and asked if I might have an interest in joining the SCLF board. He did an exceptional job of sharing the important work they do in helping to uplift literacy rates in the county. Literacy has always been important to me, so I immediately became interested and wanted to know more.

After meeting with Ravi and the Administrator, Colleen Porter, I was convinced it was a place where I could make an impact. However, I had a dilemma: if I chose to serve on the board, I would not be considered as a speaker for the Authors Luncheon due to a potential conflict of interest. Weighing where I thought I could make the greatest impact, I chose to join the board.

My journey as an author and tutor deeply inspired me. Witnessing the power of literacy first-hand fuels my passion to encourage others to donate resources and time to serve literacy. It is through these collective efforts that we can truly empower individuals and strengthen our community.

GREETINGS FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Patricia Kutza



We get it. You hear praise about our organization from a friend of yours. And perhaps your family has also participated and benefited from one of the [programs we support](#), like [Reach Out and Read](#) or the [Solano County Library's Summer Reading Challenge](#). Or you read about how the Library's tutors are helping adults improve their literacy skills.

Now you are poised to donate but want that extra assurance that your dollars will be used wisely. Do you know there are ways to bolster that assurance?

Spend a few minutes checking out this [Forbes article that shares seven additional ways to vet the Solano County Library Foundation](#)



A chance meeting at Vallejo JFK Library surprised me with meeting one of SCLF's former board members, tutor and her Literacy student (who is my neighbor!)



Love the above image from our Holiday gathering in 2024 –
Author Wade, Mychal Threets, AL Chair Natalie Kidder at the Authors' Luncheon 2024



FOUNDATION ADMINISTRATOR'S CORNER



Administrator Colleen Porter with our event MC Suzanne Bruce at the Authors' Luncheon 2024

Colleen Porter, now in her ninth year, is SCLF's key administrator for all our operations, serving under four past-Presidents and current team! We benefit immensely from her knowledge and experiences involving all phases and aspects of our Foundation including acting as a bridge between the Solano Library and the Foundation.

Mission: SCLF Supports the programs of the Solano County Libraries & the Literacy and Lifelong Learning Needs of the Community Page 2

A visit to the Springstown Library in Vallejo

Feb.2025



An unplanned visit to the Springstown Library in Vallejo last month brought me great joy and fun, witnessing the first day of this Van. The library staff were so great speaking with the children and their moms.

Communications Committee

Chair, Kimberly Villaber



Social Media Committee Chair Kimberly in a reflective mood at the SCLF Board Retreat in the Spring.

The welcome addition of Kimberly to our SCLF board earlier this year added a quiet resource and made an early impact for the better... She listened attentively and watched the members review issues, suggest options and vote on various board motions. Then, she was an active participant at the Board Retreat with, then bare minimum quorum. Soon, she took on the communications committee as chair ... collaborated with our administrator to layout, implement social media campaigns including LinkedIn and Facebook.

As the Authors Luncheon committee began its deliberations for 2025, Kimberly secured a Physician from Kaiser who is a Pediatric

Care specialist to deliver another key address at our Luncheon in November! That was significant.

As the periodic meetings of the AL team began, Kimberly had yet another key role to play – recruit and guide a committed, graphic design professional to volunteer in creating many needed documents, flyers, brochures, etc. This will not only help save money but also build a critical resource for our Foundation. Thank you, Kimberly, – you are a quiet contributor, but a critical team member.

Reading to Pets is a fun, popular program at JFK.

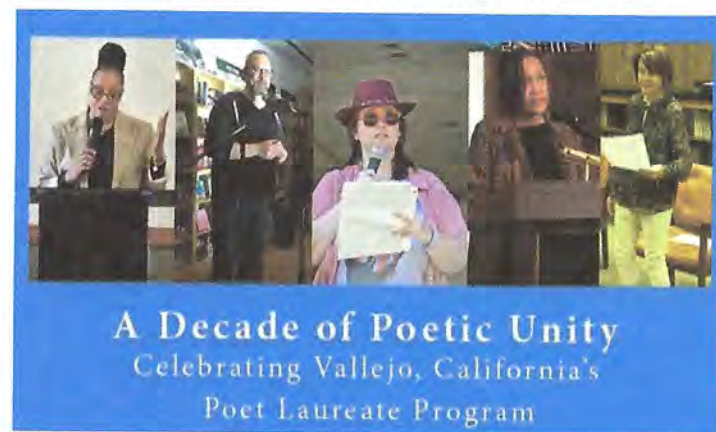


Partnering with the Solano Hispanic Chamber at their March Mixer in Vallejo's Touro University!



Other key events our Foundation participated includes the Cinco de Mayo celebrations on the Suisun City Waterfront in and the 10th Anniversary of Vallejo City's Poet Laureate which was led by our

past President and Poet Laureate, Dr. Genea Brice (1st Left below)



Treasured words from our board TREASURER

Cheryl Stiles



How is the Foundation doing fiscally? Our donors, supporters, and board members often ask. With the new executive team that swing into a huddle and determine the 3 most pressing issues financially and to take 5 immediate early action this Spring, Treasurer Cheryl Stiles has spearheaded an early January grant writing and submissions choice, establishing a realistic, optimistic budget for the year, initiated with the finance committee ways to save money, reduce costs, increase revenues with a couple of creative mini-fundraisers or thanksgiving celebrations. Thus, Cheryl says

"I am a resident of Fairfield, CA, who has dedicated much of my career to training, education, and literacy. I served as the Director of Client Services for the Center for Executive Education for many years before retiring from the University of California, Berkeley. Throughout my extensive career, I have developed training programs while serving in the Army, worked as a Program Administrator for the Upward Bound Program at Holy Names College, and collaborated as a consultant with Apple Computer for several National Urban League Conferences. My

very first job in high school was at a public library, where I discovered my love for libraries and recognized the vital role they play in the community. In addition to my professional endeavors, I enjoy traveling to different countries, meeting new people, and learning about their cultures.

I have always aimed to be actively engaged in my community, whether it involves working at the voting polls, assisting the School District part-time, feeding peacocks, or driving kids to school. Literacy is essential for everyone, especially for future generations. When I was invited to join the Library Foundation, I recognized it as a valuable opportunity and was happy to accept.

As the *treasurer of the board*, I am committed to effective budget management. It is the foundation's responsibility to keep our community, donors, supporters, and fellow board members informed about our financial status and to take the necessary actions to maintain transparency and accountability.

The new finance committee has identified three pressing financial issues that we currently face and has already begun addressing them. This past spring, we submitted grant requests and will continue our grant writing efforts throughout the year. We have established a realistic and optimistic budget for the upcoming year. Additionally, the finance committee is exploring ways to save money, reduce costs, and increase revenue through creative mini fundraisers.

Community members can support the Solano County Library Foundation in various ways including donations, volunteering, and advocacy. This year, we are celebrating the "25th Anniversary of our Authors Luncheon" which is our largest annual fundraiser on November 2nd. We invite you to consider sponsoring a table at the luncheon or donating items for our live and silent auction events. Your support truly makes a difference! For more information about donating or purchasing tickets, please visit our website.

<https://solanolibraryfoundation.org/donate>

Kudos to **Cheryl** and **Ramona** who researched and matched Vacaville's Sunrise Event Center to be our top contender for the 25th year Silver Jubilee Authors' Luncheon in 2025. The team

explored the site, went on a tour with their staff and found many exciting features that could make our special event shine bright and be memorable.



Our ace Tutor Volunteer and Executive Team Member, **Ariel Ortilla** complements the many initiatives and perspectives of our Board Secretary & Author, Ramona Thomas, to boost SCLF to the next level this year!



Board member Ariel Ortilla with Secretary Ramona

Ramona was thrilled to learn from our past Vice-President, **Jeannie Strong** that a mini fundraiser was held successfully in 2023 and it proved to be more of a celebration and expressing gratitude to our donors/sponsors. Here they are, happily sharing that past board experience.



Past Vice-President Jeannie Strong with Secretary Ramona

MAY 2025 SOLANO LIBRARY LITERACY CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTEERS & TUTORS



A moment of reflection between Administrator Colleen & Board VP, Patricia while Solano Library's David (L) honors a volunteer tutor with a certificate



Past President Genea Brice with Secretary Ramona & Member Ariel



Tutors, Volunteers Honored by Solano Library Management

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT *Ravi C. Shankar*



Greetings! An enthusiastic executive team of Board Secretary Ramona Thomas and Board Treasurer Cheryl Stiles took the initiative to find a modern, multiple choice lovely event center for our 25th Authors' Luncheon in Vacaville. Soon, we drove over and visited the impressive and elegant Sunrise Center.

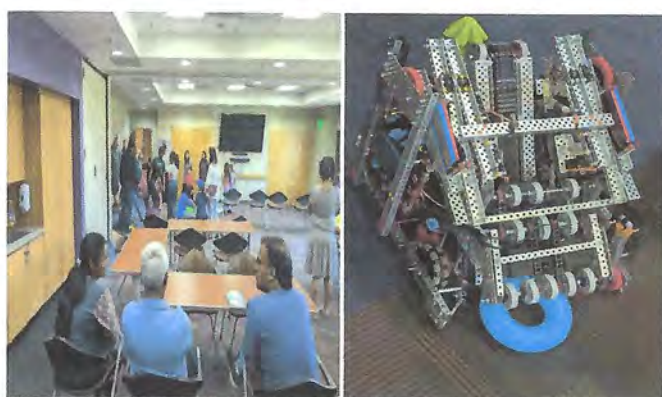
On another note, Ramona Thomas not only got an article published in the Daily Republic...but successfully organized the gathering of our key sponsors, past Presidents and all our board members at the Wooden Valley Winery for an appreciation/celebration gathering.

Then, our newest member **Kimberly Villaber** took the initiative to lead our Social Media and Website Communications Committee as Chair and published three successive, well received posts on LinkedIn and the Foundation's social media. Lastly, we have already searched, interviewed, and appointed four (4) other new members with promising and impressive potential in **Amy Fabi, Brian Travis, Juanita Martin & Satinder Vasudeva**. Read their profiles here ...

For these and the earlier reason of receiving two significant grants for which we applied in January, my confidence in this team and our administrative director, Colleen Porter, is higher, as we all navigate towards our big event!



RECENTLY ... AT OUR CORDELIA LIBRARY ...



Children and young parents were found rejoicing at the demonstration of Robots and its world, raising their curiosity in S.T.E.A.M. education!!

SPONSOR/DONOR APPRECIATION AT WOODEN VALLEY WINERY – MAY 31ST, 2025



Board welcome to the guests by SCLF President Ravi Shankar



Former SCLF Presidents Jan Stevens and Dr. Frances McCullough with Key sponsors/donors Georgia and Steve



Board Member Ariel Ortila addresses concerns & clarifies to the guests.



Board Secretary Ramona Thomas informs Authors' Luncheon progress to-date.

SCLF WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

We are excited to introduce our four new Board of Directors of the Foundation! Amy Bernardino Fabi, Brian Hyunh Travis, Satinder Vasudeva and Juanita Martin bring unique, strong educational expertise of diversity to take the foundation's outreach and impact to new levels during 2025-26.



Amy Bernardino Fabi

Amy Fabi is a strong advocate for equitable access to resources and opportunities for our community members. Libraries are extremely valuable and important institutions that provide tools to ensure successful development throughout different stages of our lives and promote mental wellness.

As a First 5 California Commissioner and a past First 5 Solano Chair, she knows the importance and impact of early learning and bonding. Talk. Sing. Read. Play. Libraries provide this level of engagement and foster healthy bonds.

Amy is an integral part of the leadership at the Asian Pacific Islanders Chamber of Commerce (APAPA) and a well recognized, distinguished activist.



Brian Hyuan Travis

As a 25+ year leader in law enforcement, campus safety, and public administration, with a strong track record in strategic planning, community engagement, and crisis response. Brian has successfully led multi-agency partnerships, developed inclusive safety programs, and managed complex operations with transparency and accountability.

Brian is also experienced in budget development, policy review, and board-level collaboration — skills that translate well into foundation governance and mission advancement.

Brian is also a published author! His book "2nd Chances in Life" is a compelling real story of his journey with the twists & turns ... from his humble beginnings to his distinguished life today.

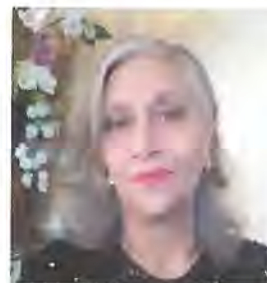


Juanita Martin

Juanita Martin's skills include various supervisory and managerial roles in nursing and medical assistance. Juanita is also skilled in writing and writing design, public speaking, and other artistic roles as she is a published poet herself!

She is Fairfield City's 1st and distinguished Poet Laureate.

Also, Juanita serves on the Solano County Arts Council, California Association of Psych. Techs., Solano County Parks & Recreations.



Satinder Vasudeva

As an educator in India, Satinder brings over 33 years of experience in teaching and understanding child psychology. Satinder has successfully led and managed a team of teachers, assisting them in curriculum development, grade level evaluation and in collaborative projects.

Satinder's network in the East Indian American community in the bay area has great potential to expand SCLF's outreach and bring greater fiscal resources to our projects in the near future.

In our next - 3rd Q Newsletter

- Authors' Luncheon Updates...
- How Libraries across Solano County celebrated the 4th of July and Literacy
- Board Member Profiles: Ariel Ortila & Kimberly Villaber
- Summer Programs at our Libraries in Benicia, Cordelia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Vacaville, Vallejo
- Preliminary Reports on Leading to Reading Project, newly Administered by SCLF
- In gratitude to our incredible founder, key sponsor, past President Beth Shedden
- Solano Library Dir., Suzanne Olawski - Exciting News

Newsletter Team: Patricia Kutza, Colleen Porter & Ravi Shankar.