



## FALL - 2025 NEWS

### Board of Directors of the Foundation Celebrating 30 years of Solano Literacy Program at the 25<sup>th</sup> Silver Jubilee Authors Luncheon at the Sunrise Banquet Hall in Vacaville, CA



#### NOTES FROM THE BOARD

#### Communications Committee

##### Chair, Kimberly Villaber



#### "Libraries Raised Me — Now, I Give Back"

By Kimberly M. Villaber, Board Member, SCLF

Some of my most cherished childhood memories begin at the Fairfield Library. I

was six years old, holding my mom's hand, when I first discovered the magic of borrowing books. The idea that I could take home any picture book I wanted — as many as my heart desired — felt like winning the lottery.

Each story transported me to new worlds, introduced me to diverse cultures, and sparked a lifelong love of learning.

That early joy in reading shaped everything that came after. It helped me thrive in school, think critically, and stay endlessly curious. It led me to study law at the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, and eventually into a career in health insurance and healthcare administration, where I now serve as Senior Manager of CA Government Programs and National Benefit Policy at Kaiser Permanente's Health Plan Operations Department.

But no matter how far I've gone, libraries have always been my foundation. They are places of equity, imagination, and possibility — especially for children and families who need them most. That's why serving on the Board of the Solano County Library Foundation is deeply personal to me. The Foundation's work to promote literacy and support library programs across Solano County is more than meaningful; it's transformative.

If you believe in the power of books to change lives, I invite you to join us. Your support helps ensure that every child, every adult, and every dreamer in our community has access to the resources that can unlock their potential.

Donate today — and help us keep the doors of opportunity wide open

#### Board Member At-Large,

Ariel Ortila



**Hello FROM Board SECRETARY,  
Authors Luncheon Chair, and  
Children's Author *Ramona Thomas***



**RAMONA THOMAS**  
Children's Book Author  
ramonasbooks.com



Ariel is Board Member At Large of the Solano County Library Foundation, 2024-25.

He migrated to the US in 2015 from the Philippines where he was a Management Consultant for Training and Organization Development Clark Freeport and Subic Freeport campuses.

His first milestones as a productive resident of Solano County were as an *ESL Tutor* at the Solano County Library and as a Volunteer Budget Delegate Facilitator of the Vallejo Participatory Budgeting (PB) Program. His journey towards establishing a career in NorCal included being a live-in caregiver, respite care provider, limited term managerial jobs and safety attendant at refinery shutdowns. In 2017 he was hired as Training Officer at San Quentin State Prison Healthcare, his first employment with the State of California which allowed him to use his cumulative expertise. He retired in 2024.

Post retirement, Ariel became an employment coach for persons with disabilities (PWDs), which allowed him to resurrect his passion from the Philippines where he actively developed and provided oversight on a program for the employability of PWDs.

He is also a digital literacy instructor; provides respite care to parents who have children with disabilities; engages in care calls with seniors; member of the Solano County Library Advisory Council; Treasurer of *Fresh Air Vallejo* and a member of *Solano Together*, a coalition of Solano Citizens advocating for orderly and balanced growth & environmental protection.

He regularly goes to the gym; considers dancing as his way of graceful aging; and engages in fun activities with his grandkids.

It has been an honor to serve alongside such dedicated individuals who work tirelessly to advance literacy and support our Library's programs. I am grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to the Foundation's mission during these past two years, and especially I am proud of the role I played in helping lead the 25th Anniversary Authors Luncheon.

As I step away from board responsibilities at the end of 2025, I look forward to focusing on my family, including my new role as a grandma, and on my work as an author/educator.

This year, 2025 has brought meaningful opportunities — such as presenting at the University at Buffalo's teacher conference on "*How to Teach Black History*," preparing an upcoming speech for Missionary Temple CME Church, and completing a comprehensive teacher's guide based on *Kyndle Serves Up History*.

I will continue to champion the importance of literacy in our community and look forward to supporting the Foundation in new ways in the future.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving on the board and for the support I've received throughout my term. I wish the Foundation continued success in all its endeavors.

**GREETINGS FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT and  
Fundraising Chair, *Patricia Kutza***



### Where do we enhance Fundraising in 2026 ?

Want to donate to the programs that the Solano County Library Foundation supports, such as Reach Out and Read, Summer Reading Challenge and Leading to Reading?

If you are currently investing in an IRA and are 72 years or older, you must take a Required Mandatory Distribution (RMD). Did you know that you can donate your RMD to Solano County Library Foundation?

You will receive tax benefits but you must use your IRA administrator to initiate the transfer. Maximum contribution amounts do apply so it is best to discuss with a tax consultant in advance of doing so.

**Foundation Administrator Colleen Porter on “*Libraries Leading to Reading*” Project**



What is this new Literacy program ***Libraries Leading to Reading?*** -- It's a one-on-one tutoring program that the Solano County Library has begun offering to Solano schools to assist students who have fallen behind in reading and comprehension.

The Foundations involvement came about when Suzanne Olawski, the Director of Library Services, approached us in the summer with a request for SCLF's fiscal administration.

We had long been seeking a way to connect more directly and meaningfully with the Library, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity. Our Board approved the request quickly and unanimously, after a thorough review, questions and concerns clarified.

As the administrator of the program, we are involved from the get-go, from tutor background checks and approvals to payroll and T-Shirts. *It's an additional responsibility for the Foundation*, but one which we welcome, as we get to see the results, first-hand. The students are happier and more confident, and their parents are all pleasantly surprised! Go here for a *YouTube video* of some of the parents from the first rollout in Vallejo!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFtDZTAAMPm>

## Solano County Library

**Director Suzanne**

**Olawski Retires .....**



Library Director Suzanne Olawski celebrated upon her imminent retirement at the SCLF Board Holiday Gathering : *Suzanne (L) and Kimberly (R)*

### • **DID YOU KNOW .....**

- **Reading for just six minutes can reduce stress by 68%, and reading for 30 minutes a day**



**could increase your lifespan by over two years.**

- *While global literacy has improved to over 86% of adults, 739 million adults and 250 million children still lack basic literacy skills.*
- Access to books in childhood has a significant impact on long-term success, with children who own even a small home library achieving up to 3 more years of schooling.



**SCLF NEW BOARD MEMBERS joyful share !**

**SCLF has raised over \$6 million to support the life-changing programs of the Solano County Library.**



*Satinder Vasudeva*

*Greetings of the day to you all,*

Recently, Ms. Kimberly & I attended the 6th Annual Literacy Fest, hosted by the *Academy of 21st Century Learning* in Vacaville. The event was well attended and proved very successful, reflecting strong community engagement in support of literacy.

We were able to put forward and share the goals of our foundation, and distributed promotional flyers for the Authors Luncheon as part of our outreach efforts.

Our thanks to Ms. Barbara (CEO) and Ms. Erin (COO) for their generosity in giving us the space to highlight our goal. And a big thanks to Ms. Kimberly for making this possible.

**BOARD PRESIDENT'S**

## MESSAGE

### ***Ravi C. Shankar***

A huge special thank you goes to my team at SCLF: VP *Patricia Kutza* who spearheaded the Auction at the Gala & chaired the Grant, and Fundraising efforts ... *Ramona Thomas* who played dual role as Secretary and Authors Chair ... *Cheryl Stiles* who took on key role of Treasurer & Board Development Team ...

*Ariel Ortila* for being our Exec. Team Member & critical analyst of our funds ... *Kimberly Villaber* for chairing communications and social media campaigns ... and *Satinder Vasudeva* who willingly joined chamber mixers, helped the Auctions team and took part in many outreach events.

Without their willing commitment & team effort working with Administrator Colleen Porter, both our 25<sup>th</sup> Silver Jubilee Gala and the entire year's work on the Board would have been impossible. My deep gratitude to every one of them and their families for their year-round support.

In my brief message at the Gala as President, I recalled how I was recruited to serve on the SCLF board in 2015. Part of my life-long deep mentoring and inspiration to support Literacy came from an inspired childhood mentoring by parents and great teachers. They helped me understand and share these services ...



**ANNA** – in *Sanskrit* represents food/nourishment or nutrition served with kindness to those who need it urgently.

**VAIDYA** – represents healing, medicine and medical aid of some needed level offered to the needy and suffering..

**VIDYA** – represents literacy/ability to read, write and communicate ...thus, knowledge.

While nourishment sustains, medical help promotes recovery of wellness, VIDYA or LITERACY (*the cause of our Foundation*) goes farther – a life changing long way to uplift and promote our all-around wellbeing.



The Literacy Programs of Solano County Libraries, which are what the Foundation supports, make a difference in the lives of adults and children in Solano County every day and are especially important now more than ever.

Thank you so much to everyone for attending this special 25th Annual Authors Luncheon and for your generous donations, sponsorship, souvenir ads and participation!

*We hope to see you on **Sunday, November 1st 2026!***  
**R a v i**

**MOMENTS FROM THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY AUTHORS LUNCHEON, NOVEMBER 2, 2025**



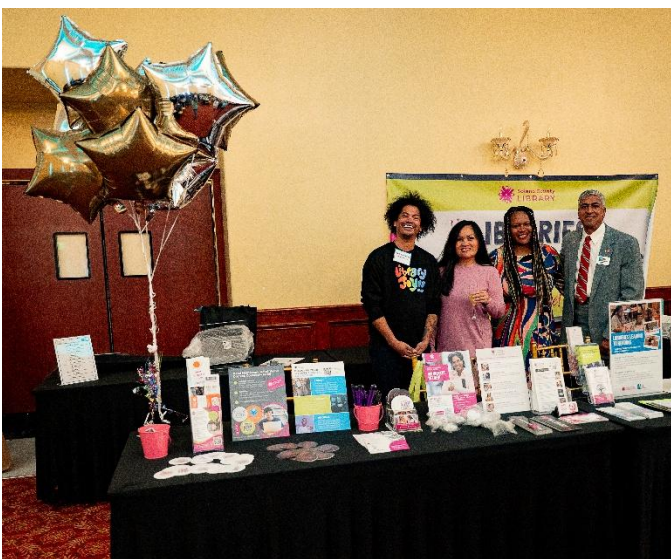


**Cheryl & Ramona with Sunrise Staff**  
**Tenaya**

**WELCOME!**















## MAY 2025 SOLANO LIBRARY LITERACY CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTEERS & TUTORS





**Our Display at the Hispanic Chamber Mixer @ Touro University**



**SCLF BOARD MEMBERS - SATINDER & KIMBERLY AT THE VACAVILLE literacy fest IN SEPT. 2025**

### **Slogan**

Learning today, leading tomorrow

Educate a child, build a nation

Every child deserves education

Books are your best friends

### **Meaning**

Education creates future leaders

Education makes the country strong

Everyone must get a chance to learn

Reading shapes one's mind.







Enjoy these pictures from that joyful event.

### In our next-4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

#### Newsletter

- SCLF 2026 Officers & BoardBoard Holiday Gathering 2025
- Glimpses: 2026 budget, goals, events
- 2026 Board Retreat & Calendar

**Newsletter Team:** *Ravi, Patricia & Colleen*

**Our Admin. Director, Colleen Porter and myself** as President of SCLF, recently attended a key Nonprofit Networking Best

Practices workshop.

It was organized by the **Solano Community Foundation** in Fairfield, following the LIVE SOLANO, GIVE SOLANO campaign,, Giving Tuesday campaigns. Guest speaker was **Courtney** from "Give Minnesota" spoke about various current challenges of reduced funding, political climate, nonprofit needs and social media/AI campaigns to reach new donors..

Some key take aways from that well attended event (in person and on zoom) are:-

1. **With a fair start for year#1, drawing MORE people and increasing AWARENESS, early in the game**
2. **Preplan annual activity and profile well. Achievable Aspirations and Realistic Goal setting is key.**
3. **What do most controls exist? Communicate Consistently! Top-3 Matrics - More Donors, More Money or \_\_\_\_\_**
4. **Last, not least - "Feedback Story" i.e, What to LET GO or Sunset, going forward.**