



THIS HOUSE IS A HOME

by Ray Reilly



(L to R) Ryan Krajewski, Diana Marte, and Ray Reilly in Business & Technology

After my mom passed away in 2023, my housing situation became tenuous. I lived in the trailer my mom left for me but after hurricanes Ian and Milton, there was over \$100,000 in damages and it was not up to code, nor was it safe. I lived every day in fear that I would have to leave and be out on the street. With both mental health diagnoses (anxiety and bipolar disorder) and multiple sclerosis, the stress of my living situation felt amplified.

Katie Scott at the Manatee County Public Safety Department was the first to provide support when I was still in the trailer with no electricity. She, and pretty much everyone in my support network, was encouraging me to go to Salvation Army. I was resistant at first, but when I finally did go, it was a relief.

I stayed at Salvation Army for several months while Centerstone helped me apply for social security and the Academy began helping me look for employment. When I left Salvation Army, it was thanks to Volunteers of America who offered me an apartment. It has been a long time since I could say that I feel safe and secure in my home. This takes so much pressure off my mind. I have so much gratitude for Centerstone, Volunteers of America, Katie Scott and the Academy at Bradenton for being by my side through so much instability. As an Academy member, it's a relief to know that I have community support through whatever comes my way.

WELCOME TO MAURICE ALBRITTON

by Maurice Albritton



My psychiatrist recommended that I check out the Academy to build friendships and skills. I loved it from the moment I stepped into the building. The culinary team looked so professional and clean, and I've always loved the idea of working in a kitchen. I was also excited when I saw all the computers in the Business & Technology team.

When I work in culinary, I chop and dice ingredients, set the tables, and clean. In Business & Technology, I'm learning how to make flyers and other documents. I feel like every day I learn something new that will improve my future. It's truly a great place to be. Everyone here seems to be big-hearted so I fit in well because I have a big heart too.

When I'm not at the Academy at Bradenton, I like to fix things around the house. I can fix anything from A to Z. I also collect fans and have an antique fan at my home.



(L to R) Maurice Albritton with Culinary Instructor Alicia Velez

LUNCH & LEARN



Academy at Bradenton Ambassador Lunch & Learn

TELL TWO FRIENDS...

If you're of a certain age, you may remember an old shampoo commercial where a Hollywood starlet said, "I told two friends, and they told two friends, and so on..." While the Academy won't give you shiny hair, it's definitely worth talking about. That's where our Ambassadors come in. From filling seats at fundraisers to connecting us to employment partners, Ambassadors are our champions who commit to helping us grow.

Along with founding Sarasota Ambassador Stewie Bitterman and Board of Directors President Rosemary Stack, our Director William McKeever has initiated the Ambassador program at our Bradenton location. With gratitude, we welcomed our newest Manatee Ambassadors: Pascal and Marie Berthou, Bill Blalock, Elyse Burton, Maya Ivanjesku, Tammy Cox-Leavell and Hamza and Sonya Tlemsani. Our champions!

If you are interested in becoming an Ambassador, stay tuned for updates. We will be hosting another informational session soon. If you love what we do and want to yell it from the rooftops (or your next networking event), consider becoming part of the movement!

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I LET GO

by Carolyn Daniele

Before I taught my first art class at the Academy, I was worried. Would people show up? How would I know what they wanted to paint? And how was I going to manage all of this while wearing a microphone and being on camera?

I had over-prepared. I had paper, paints, water buckets and everything I thought we might need. I began by giving them a demonstration. And then I did something that turned out to be the most important part of the whole class. I let go. Instead of trying to control what everyone painted or how they painted it, I let them do what they wanted. What happened was wonderful.

Each person approached it differently. Different colors appeared, different styles, different ideas. What touched me most was the courage of those who had arrived believing they couldn't paint. They painted anyway. At the end, everyone held up their artwork. There were proud smiles everywhere. Letting go of my expectations and my need to control everything was the best thing I could have done. Once I stopped trying to manage the outcome, everyone was free to find their own way.

I'm discovering that this doesn't apply only to painting. I'm learning to let go of expectations and control more and more in my own life. Apparently, an art class can teach the teacher, too. And that may have been my favorite part of the day.



Carolyn Daniele
(Second from R) with
Academy at Glengary
members and staff

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