



CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF EMPLOYMENT

by Ellen Russell

After many years away from traditional employment, I needed an opportunity that would translate my soft skills into a current and expanded workplace.

When I came to the Academy, I was given new challenges and was excited to learn the skills that would offer me a chance to integrate into the new world I was now encountering. Here at the Academy, I found the experience and training I needed to allow me to begin a new career path.

Then something extraordinary happened. I was offered a Transitional Employment position. With the incredible support system and the safety net I so needed, I am currently a productive member of the team at the Sarasota Public Defender's office as a data entry clerk.

I am so full of gratitude for both the members and the staff at the Academy. Their encouragement, professionalism and our shared values of kindness, empathy and service inspire me every single day. This amazing community has me looking forward to a brand-new future, where now, nothing can hold me back. I am climbing the mountain!



Ellen Russell working at the Public Defender's Transitional Employment (TE) position

WARM WELCOME TO RUSTY JOHNSON

by Rusty Johnson

I was born into a military family in Philadelphia. As such, we moved around a lot compared to other families of my generation. I traveled from Pennsylvania to Texas to Washington D.C.-back to Texas and then across the Pacific to Japan. I was old enough to remember everything and still have a soft spot in my heart for all things Japanese!



At age 18 I was living on my own in San Francisco and was lucky enough to be there in my early 20s when the 'Summer of Love' occurred. It was such heady times; so much fun, with great rock concerts, dancing and meeting people from all over the world. I have now lived in five different states and traveled through many others. I landed in Sarasota in 2014 where I immediately went to work for a local insurance agent as an office associate. Sadly, that position was eliminated in 2026 and I am now searching for my next opportunity.

As a new member, I am still finding my way; meeting new people hourly and acclimating to this amazing environment! The moment I crossed the threshold for the first time I could feel the upward lift in body, mind and spirit. I have gravitated to the Business & Technology team where I've helped produce our News at Noon PowerPoint. I thoroughly enjoy the Spanish Workshop. I want to learn more about multimedia, and since I love to dig in the dirt, I hope to help tend the raised-bed garden out back, as soon as it cools down about 20°! My hobbies today include reading, cooking, taking care of my one orchid (no gardening from my 4th floor apartment), BritBox television and occasionally sketching. It's great to be here with all of you. Thank you for making me feel so very welcome.



Academy at Bradenton members and staff in the CPR/AED/First Aid training workshop

STAYING ALIVE

Big thanks to Casie Piper of Heartsavers of Manatee for delivering an engaging CPR/AED/First Aid training to both our Bradenton and Glengary campuses. Nearly 50 members and staff received their certification and can now effectively respond to a variety of emergency situations.

Casie made the training fun and informative, instructing us in a way that really helped make the information straightforward. Many of us agreed that, despite having done this course many times in the past with other providers, this training was the most effective. We are grateful for her knowledge and skill at presenting.



Academy at Glengary members and staff in the CPR/AED/First Aid training workshop

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Featuring the paintings, drawings, jewelry, ceramics, music, dance and more created by the members of the Academy at Glengary and the Academy at Bradenton.

**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 12
1:30 - 4:00 p.m.**

*Additional parking located in the public lot in front of Best Buy.
Cash or check preferred. Some artists may accept cash app.*



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