

Notables

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GL Homes President Misha Ezratti, GL Homes VP of Community Relations Sarah Alsofrom, RaNiyah Janae Goode, and Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County CEO Kristin Calder at Apex at Avenir in Palm Beach Gardens with books GL Homes donated to the Literacy Coalition. [TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]

Read and react: How Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County is transforming lives every day

The organization's 34th Annual Love of Literacy Luncheon is scheduled for April 10 at the Kravis Center and will feature New York Times and USA Today best-selling author Victoria Christopher Murray.

By **Steve Dorfman** • Notables Staff Writer

As you read the words on this page, try to recall the period in your life before you knew how to.

It's likely you can't.

If you're like most folks reading this article, you probably take for granted your ability to read the same way you do your ability to see and speak.

But for far too many people of all ages in our community, the ability to read and write at a functional level is not something they can take for granted — because they were never properly taught how to do so.

Good thing, then, that long ago Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County recognized this reality and set out to do something about it.

Since its 1989 founding, Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach



New York Times and USA Today best-selling author Victoria Christopher Murray. [JASON FROST PHOTOGRAPHY]

County has been dedicated to ensuring that individuals in

Palm Beach County receive the help they need to improve their literacy skills.

And one of the most important and popular ways they raise funds for — and awareness about — their noble mission is via their annual Love of Literacy Luncheon, the 34th edition of which is being held on Thursday, April 10, at 11:30 a.m. at the Kravis Center (701 Okeechobee Blvd., West Palm Beach).

The event's keynote speaker will be New York Times and USA Today best-selling author Victoria Christopher Murray, who has written more than 30 novels and will speak eloquently about the importance of bringing literacy and a love of reading to underserved communities.

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LITERACY

from 1D

Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County also depends on the largesse of its myriad community partners — which, for many years, has included the good folks at GL Homes.

“It’s companies like GL Homes that allow us to create and sustain programs to ensure that every child and adult in Palm Beach County becomes a reader,” said Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County CEO Kristin Calder. “By supporting literacy, every person is able to achieve his or her full potential.”

GL Homes President Misha Ezratti said that his company so strongly believes in Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County’s mission because “literacy for children and adults is a fundamental skill that’s essential to creating an informed and educated society. It improves our community’s quality of life and ensures we have a skilled workforce. Reading opens hearts and minds to a new world of ideas and possibilities.”

Among the people who most need the Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County’s support and advocacy are the following:

- The preschool child who lives in a home that doesn’t contain a single book.
- The child who feels alienated and angry because they struggle to read as well as their friends.
- The family who lives in poverty because their parents don’t have the literacy skills to qualify for a job with a livable wage.

Last year, Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County’s various programs reached nearly 56,000 adults, children and families — and statistics show that the need for these programs has never been greater.

As Calder noted, some 46% of third-grade students read below grade level, which puts them on a path to fall behind in every subject and be at greater risk for dropping out of school. In addition, around 22% of adults age 16 and older lack basic literacy skills, preventing them doing such things as filling out a job application or reading a bus schedule.

But what Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County and GL Homes want people to remember is that people are



Literacy Coalition board members Debra Ghostine and Bernadette O’Grady.

[TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]



GL Homes Project Manager Amanda Messano and Operations Manager Natalia Sangio.

never too young, or too old, to develop literacy skills and a love of reading.

GL Homes Vice President of Community Relations Sarah Alsofrom has seen firsthand how powerful books can be to children.

“GL Homes loves the Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County’s online children’s book wish list, which is why we donate to it so heavily,” said Alsofrom. “This program ensures that children who have limited access in the home to their own books will have the kind of age-appropriate books that can lead to a lifelong love of reading. One new engaging book can spark the imagination and transform a young person’s life.”

Word.

IF YOU GO

What: Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County’s 34th Annual Love of Literacy Luncheon; proceeds benefit Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County

When: Thursday, April 10, 11:30 a.m.

Where: Kravis Center, 701 Okeechobee Blvd., West Palm Beach

Tickets: \$200

For more information: Call 561-767-3370 or email Communications@LiteracyPBC.org