

2021

HILLSBOROUGH  
LITERACY COUNCIL

*Teaching Adults to Read and to Speak English*

# Visions

A Community Poem Project

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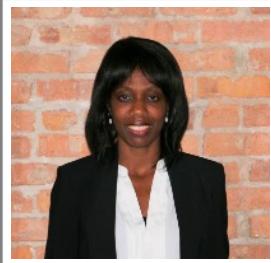
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# Welcome

## Hillsborough Literacy Council President

This year we asked the Hillsborough Literacy Council community to join us in writing poetry that reflects who we are. In these poems, you will experience just some of the vibrancy and richness of the community that our tutors, students and supporters create while working together to improve the English literacy skills of adult learners.



Brandi Meredith

The Hillsborough Literacy Council has been committed to teaching both English and non-English speakers to read and write for 30 years. While Covid-19 has challenged the world over the past year, the HLC community has shown its strength and resilience. The same strength and resilience that an adult learner needs to work week after week on literacy skills even when the road seems slow or tough.

Poetry expresses the beauty of life. The beauty of the HLC community is that it gives learners the tools needed to experience and express themselves through written language. I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Visions, and that you will be inspired to engage further in our community whether as a student, tutor, or supporter.

## Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library Director of Library Services

"I am from a dairy farm in Maryland..."

Language is amazing. It allows us to share memories of our homes and our lives with the community, our friends and our children. That simple statement - "I am from..." opens up a world of relationships, places, food, thoughts, visions, and emotions. These are the parts of our lives that make us who we are. Language - and our ability to craft it - gives us a way to share and be a part of something bigger.



Andrew Breidenbaugh

Every day, the volunteers of the Hillsborough Literacy Council give their time to help others develop the ability to craft their own stories through the written and spoken word. They assist native speakers and new Americans find their voice and their place in our community.

I am inspired by the creativity shown by our students in recognizing the importance of literacy to their lives and in seeking help with basic written and spoken English. I applaud the hard work and dedication of the tutors and Board members of the Hillsborough Literacy Council for committing to improve the lives of our citizens and their participation in our community. Your example serves as inspiration to others who would help bring the world of words to everyone.

Where are you from?

# From the Editor

Readers of this year's Visions will notice that we have created a different kind of publication than normal. This year we used a community poem approach. We sent out a form to all members of the HLC community, asked them to fill it out, and create a poem based on their answers. The form asked people about common phrases or foods, as well as other things in their past and childhood. Many of the poems printed here came without titles, so titles were made out of the first lines of the poems. Once we had several poems submitted by individuals, the editor of Visions created one community poem by selecting his favorite lines from each individual poem. He hopes that you like the final product and invites everyone to make their own community poem out of their favorite lines.



# The Hillsborough Literacy Council

The Hillsborough Literacy Council (HLC) is a nonprofit affiliate of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library teaching functionally and marginally illiterate adults to read and write through its Adult Basic Literacy program. In its English for Speakers of Other Languages program, participants learn to read, write and communicate in basic English.

HLC accepts adults 18 and over. Depending upon the student's level, learning to read can take a year or more.

HLC needs volunteer tutors and will provide them training and materials. We ask our tutors to commit to 48 hours of tutoring time, with a minimum of one hour a week.

HLC seeks funding partners and donations which will directly support the program by providing student materials and supplies for tutor trainings.

For more information, visit [hillsboroughliteracy.org](http://hillsboroughliteracy.org) or call (813) 273-3650.



# 1

## The Community Poem

I am from of inns in December  
and lull the baby Jesus in  
the church and they give  
candy for childrens.

I am from rubber bands and pins  
I am from the New Year  
And from the song “I just called to say I love you”

I am from the town of Señor Epifanio  
Blasting old tunes from his boom box  
Perched on a tree for the whole town to hear.

I am la Caperucita Roja y el Festival de cine  
From el libro El Osito Boribon, la cancion Gato Vinagrito, y la  
pelicula Vampiros en la Habana

I am from Ham made with care by my Mom  
And from Ponchecrema tradition while the Ham cooks  
and listen to La Billo Caracas music.

I am from a combination of fried chicken and plantains. I am from  
somewhere where watermelons meet mangoes.

I am from macetas con flores, futbol, las cojidas, planchas, canicas,  
burrito de San Andrés

I am from comida de mar, Fútbol, y montar bicicleta  
And from “Gracias, lo lamento , y porfavor”

From Feijoada and hide and seek  
And from Tudo bem!! (Means "ok" I am fine) and the singer Roberto Carlos

I am from my brother always say take care and my mother bless  
you.

and from swimming every summer vacations on Cata bay beach and  
every week going to the cinema.

I am from eating sandy sandwiches on our beach blanket and  
building castles with my sister.

I am from camping adventures carefully planned each year by my  
father.

And from Chips Ahoy, Pepsi, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Bacon Grease  
in a Coffee Can on the Stovetop

I am from Red Rover, Dodgeball, Basketball in the alley, and Riding  
on the Bike Handlebars

From “Look further than the end of your nose” and “I’ll give you  
something to cry about”.

I am from “good people finds good people,” the bbq grill, and I Did  
It My Way  
From hide and seek and Turkish Kebap!

I am from a grandmother whose apron always smelled of flour  
and whose bosom could calm even the heaviest of hearts.  
From a grandfather who pretended to steal your nose  
and could entrance you with tall tales of woodsmen and long  
journeys.

From playing cards with my siblings and my grandmother, my father's mother, a game called "May I?" Even though she is gone, we still play from time to time, and whenever we do, we always talk about her

I am from motor oil, oyster shells, and blackberries. I am from books, mosaic tiles, and a white cat who I declared I would marry.

La piscina, pelota de aire, paletas, parrilla, y hamaca.  
From mis padres, mis hermanos , mis profesores de la infancia

And from bowling in the street  
I am from "Excuse me" "Sorry", and plenty of bad language!

Midsummer afternoon  
A warm breeze moves the porch swing

I am from the whir of a lawn mower on a warm Saturday morning.  
I am from "we're moving" - and ANOTHER new school.

I am from reading all the books in English from my library! I am from petting all the hamsters at the pet store! I am from airplane rides to another country, with a hamster in my lap!

I am from late night laughter with best friends  
And from video rentals on Friday nights.

I am from the rushing wind of riding bikes with no hands, the sticky sweet smell of climbing loquat trees, and the whirring sound of dialup internet.

This earth is *our* home, where everyone is from.  
From no particular place, I come from everywhere I've ever been.

# 2

**The Hillsborough Literacy Council** supports our tutors who graciously volunteer to help students develop strategies and techniques for reading and comprehension. It is a lifelong learning process and our students excel in their dedication to participate in the process. The following are poems written by our current students, members of the HLC community, board members, tutors and staff. The poems have been printed in the exact manner in which the students have written them. Please enjoy and learn about our amazing students through their work.



# **Individual Poems**

## **I Am From We Sang**

I am from we sang  
Pimpon, blue doll and  
Rice with milk

I like festival of the school

I am from of inns in December  
and lull the baby Jesus in  
the church and they give  
candy for childrens.

I am from where you feel  
the support of the family  
and people when you need

-By Flor Guzman

## **Beautiful Time**

I am from Summer days I go to the beach many times  
And from the sea water is hot and the sun is bright  
And swimming for hours and drinking beers

I am from Amalia Domingo Soler books stuffed into my little  
bookcase in my bedroom

I am from Ham made with care by my Mom  
And from Ponchecrema tradition while the Ham cooks  
and listen to La Billo Caracas music.

-By Jetzy Yrady

# Where I Am From

I am from a loving family,  
Mamá, Papá, and tres hermanos  
From Guanajuato, Mexico.  
I am from, “!Buenos Dias!  
“!Arriba! !A trabajar!”

I am from a kitchen working the corn mill  
for tortillas, for tamales.  
I am from dinner spreads of pinto beans y queso y salsa.  
A lot of salsa!

I am from a pueblo of church festivities,  
And dances, and neighbors, and hard work.  
I am from the town of Señor Epifanio  
Blasting old tunes from his boom box  
Perched on a tree for the whole town to hear.

I am from Guanajuato,  
My dear Guanajuato.  
I am from a loving family,  
My dear loving family.

-By Josefina A.



# Untitled

Midsummer afternoon  
A warm breeze moves the porch swing  
Pages turn slowly

-By Bill Hunter

## Sweetie Family Memory

I am from a family that like freshly baked pizza.

I am from my brother always say take care and my mother bless you.

and from swimming every summer vacations on Cata bay beach and every week going to the cinema.

I am from only where are two season and rain from may to november.

I am from my house smell rose every time my boyfriend bring flowers.

and from watch tv, dance zumba or read agatha christie is very funny.

-By Luzmariam Sandoval

## Happy Memories

I am from cold winter days building snowmen with a carrot nose. And from a home which smelled like the forest when the Christmas tree was up.

I am from Nancy Drew mystery books stuffed into my little bookcase in my bedroom taking me to new places without ever leaving my chair.

I am from roast chicken made with care by my mother.

And from hoping to win the good luck coin from the Vasilopita each January.

I am from days in the sun at the beach, breathing in the salty ocean air and swimming for hours.

I am from eating sandy sandwiches on our beach blanket and building castles with my sister.

I am from camping adventures carefully planned each year by my father.

And well practiced movements to set up our tent and toasting marshmallows at the campfire at night.

-By Christine Jacques

## I Am From

I am from motor oil, oyster shells, and blackberries. I am from  
a too loud TV in the kitchen, a ditch in the backyard, pears. And  
from altar calls sung to “Just as I Am” followed by fried chicken and  
sweet tea. I am from  
  
crazy mom and scary dad and a tiny grandmother in pink cowboy  
boots with too many kittens.

I am from books, mosaic tiles, and a white cat who I declared I  
would marry.

-By Donna Walker



## I Am Now But Memories Too

I am from loving parents and many “best friends.”  
I am from a time of jump rope, hide & seek and hopscotch.  
I am from “don’t tease your sister and drink your milk!”  
I am from the whir of a lawn mower on a warm Saturday  
morning.  
I am from “we’re moving” - and ANOTHER new school.  
I am from the wind and the briny smell of the air sailing with my  
dad.

-By Carol Bockenek

## Where I'm From

I am from a place where two hearts met, one from old Southern roots and the other from the Caribbean Sea.

I am from a combination of fried chicken and plantains. I am from somewhere where watermelons meet mangoes.

My home was sacraments, saints and crosses, as well as penance



and privilege. My home was a contradiction, in every sense of the word, from good ole boys to a good dose of humble pie.

I am from here. From today. My home is in me. It is who I am every day. I can choose my daily outlook and pull from where I'm from. My home of my past defines me, guides me, directs me, reminds me...and grounds me.

I am home everyday



-By Frances F.



## Also Known As If And Love

I am from my wife Toni, my daughters Sarahtia Annie Lou and Zoe Asha Michelle, my two brothers and three sisters, my dearly departed cousin Andrew who was the first to know Toni and I were engaged - even before we actually told him he somehow knew - and my mother AKA Ma AKA Bubbe AKA Sara.

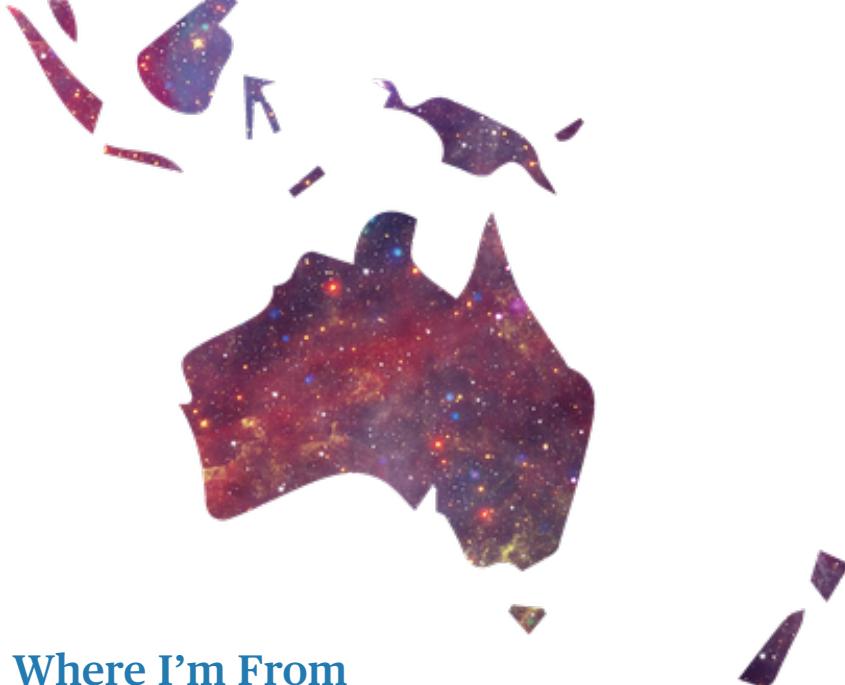
I am from Indian Biryani - with a little yogurt to curb the spiciness, and Mango Lassi to celebrate the joy of flavor and from playing cards with my siblings and my grandmother, my father's mother, a game called "May I?" Even though she is gone, we still play from time to time, and whenever we do, we always talk about her.

I am from "if you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all" and "if it's not yours don't touch it" and "friends may be temporary, but family is forever."

From sprinklers, bushes, hoses, and a trampoline and from Friday night online Zoom Shabbat (Sabbath) prayers.

I am from the sounds of my daughters playing and laughing, as my wife and I mirror smiles to each other and as Richard Bach wrote in his meaningful, metaphysical, miraculous book... I am from "the gull sees farthest who flies highest."

-By Matthew David



## Where I'm From

I first arrived in Minnesota, in the middle of a deep-freeze night.  
A blanket of snow glittered under a full moon.  
My grandmother said, “We come from a long line of gypsies.”

A DNA test said my long-wandering ancestors originated in East Africa and Western Asia, converged in the Mediterranean, then migrated to Northern Europe, to eventually appear in Minnesota.

In the flow of things, one state of being led to another.  
Vaguely showing the way, some river-like force kept presenting itself.

With brothers, sisters, and small tribes of neighborhood children, we played games and sang songs that seem to last forever.  
Out-foxing dogs and nosy neighbors, we patrolled the streets.  
On rickety bicycles, we owned a world of backyards and narrow alleys.

We picked oranges, dates and mulberries, made sweeter when stolen.

(Could God really watch our *every* move?)

Unexpected waves of change flooded the country.  
“Duck and cover,” teachers said, training school children  
to hide under their desks, to survive a thermonuclear bomb.  
On Christmas I prayed for world peace.  
I camped at the library with Nancy Drew, Mark Twain, and Anne  
Frank.

Life lessons, illustrated in Golden Comics, resonated electric.  
Energized by Kool-Aid and Bazooka bubble gum, I dreamed.  
Flying like a superhero, in wildly invented scenarios,  
I could save the world, or at least do no harm.

Nearly 1,000 full moons have since come and gone.  
Countless borders, oceans, ships, loves and dreams later,  
I see now: I am a guest visitor in this home called Earth.  
We - *all of us* - live under one roof of skies filled with far off galaxies.  
This earth is *our* home, where everyone is from.  
From no particular place, I come from everywhere I've ever been.

-By J. Marie Dolphin



## I Am From Comida De Mar

I am from comida de mar, Fútbol, y montar bicicleta  
And from “Gracias, lo lamento , y porfavor”  
From fiestas patrias, navidades, cumpleaños  
I am from Los pollitos dicen ala ronda  
I am from Mi hija y mi madre.

-By Libia

## I Am From Rubber Bands And Pins

I am from rubber bands and pins  
I am from the New Year  
And from the song “I just called to say I love you”  
From the birdhouse.

-By Galina



## I Am From April 23

I am from April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day  
And from Derin  
I am from “good people finds good people,” the bbq grill, and I Did  
It My Way  
From hide and seek and Turkish Kebap!

-By Ezra Ozgul

## I Am From My Father, Sister, Brother

I am from my father, sister, brother  
From Feijoada and hide and seek  
And from Tudo bem!! (Means "ok" I am fine) and the singer Roberto Carlos  
I am from flowers and “churrasco” in family

-By Juliana Ferreira Leite Wrobelwski

## I Am From Cebiche

I am from cebiche, papa a la huancaina, lomo saltado and  
from  
La piscina, pelota de aire, paletas, parrilla, y hamaca.  
From mis padres, mis hermanos , mis profesores de la infancia  
And todos los domingos almuerzo familiar, compartir el verano con  
los niños, ir al campo hacer picnic.  
From “Arroz con leche” and “Vamos de paseo”

-By Charo Carreras

## I Am From Arroz Congris

I am from Arroz congris, carne de cerdo asado, yuca con mojo,  
tostones. I am from  
Yaquis, pon, cartas, escondidos.  
From Susan Cintron!  
And from “Coger un 10,” “Estás en llamas”  
I am la Caperucita Roja y el Festival de cine  
From el libro El Osito Boribon, la cancion Gato Vinagrito, y la  
pelicula Vampiros en la Habana

-By Susana

## North Meets South

**I am from** Habana, Cuba

**I am from** Maria Esther (my mother), Maria Antonia (my sister) and Alexander (my brother).

**I am from** beans, rice, chicken, beef, eggs, meats, and good bread

**And from** bowling in the street

**I am from** “Excuse me” “Sorry”, and plenty of bad language!

**From** shade, tables, trees, fruits and vegetable plants, like mango and banana

**I am from** New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day

**From the** scent of perfume, alcohol and coffee

-By Alberto Galban

## I Am From Macetas Con Flores

I am from macetas con flores, futbol, las cojidas, planchas,  
canicas, burrito de San Andrés

From Airelys, Juan, Nayeli, Rosario

And from el pase del niño, semana Santa, Carnaval, Miércoles de ceniza, día de los difuntos.

I am from yapingacho, encebollado, humitas, ceviche,  
From “Aprende a saludar! y “Dios le pague!”

-By Cristian

# I Am From Louisville, Kentucky

I am from Louisville, Kentucky and now Tampa, Florida

I am from Mickey, Donna, Scott, Erin, Amy, Mommaw and Poppaw.

And from Chips Ahoy, Pepsi, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Bacon Grease  
in a Coffee Can on the Stovetop

I am from Red Rover, Dodgeball, Basketball in the alley, and Riding  
on the Bike Handlebars

From “Look further than the end of your nose” and “I’ll give you  
something to cry about”.

I am from the swingset, the dog pen, the garbage cans, the barb-  
wire fence to the distillery and the flower beds

And from the May crowning of Mary, Catholic school picnics, Friday  
night fish fries and Spaghetti Suppers

And from Honeysuckle, Milkweed Pods, Sweet Iced Tea from  
Aluminum Cups and Percolated Coffee after Sunday Dinner

From “Band on the Run”, “Crocodile Rock” “American Pie”,  
“Bohemian Rhapsody” and “Rubberband Man”

-By Jill Deleon



# Surprise!

I am from ajiaco and arroz and Campbell's canned soup, sweet blackberry and milk popsicles from the roadside cafe, guava fruit picked from a tree, waffles on a Sunday morning, and chicken nuggets from McDonald's.

I am from Skip-It! I am from Rummikub! I am from cycling on a cul-de-sac! I am from reading all the books in English from my library! I am from petting all the hamsters at the pet store! I am from airplane rides to another country, with a hamster in my lap!

I am from a little preschool called Inquietudes with my best friend Maria Fernanda, and running around in the kindergarten playground of A.B. Coombs with Tyler, Eric, and Renata. I am from stilts during recess and mass on Fridays at school.

I am from abuelita, gordita, negrita, flaco, mono, mi lucerito, and every bit of song my mother sang like "Arroz con leche," "or "Lady in Red" on neverending loop.

I am from green grass, dirty city concrete, fruiting guava trees, garter snakes, and quiet reading spots on the floor of a house, finca, or apartment.

I am from the movie Chucky and the musician Carlos Vives. I am from Laura Pausini and Britney Spears. I am from the undercover surprise in your eyes!

-By Melissa N.

# I Am From Strong Women

I am from strong women-grandmothers, aunts and mother--who taught grit and grace, teachers who taught how to learn, and friends who taught how to enjoy the moment and cut loose.

I am from tumbling tots, dance classes, and Sunday school. I am from mad libs and logic puzzles. I am from Candyland, Chutes and Ladders, and Sorry! I am from the Bernstein Bears, the Mixed Files of Ms. Basil E. Frankweiler, and the Boxcar Children. I am from Up All Night and T.G.I.F.

I am from boomboxes and mixed tapes. I am from gameboys and cordless phones. I am from overalls, Hammer pants, swimsuits, and pleated skirts. I am from homemade noodles, collard greens and sweet potato pie, and snowcones and icees.

I am from the rushing wind of riding bikes with no hands, the sticky sweet smell of climbing loquat trees, and the whirring sound of dialup internet.

I am from where every holiday means extended family gathering even flag day, where it's not your birthday without an elaborate theme party and cake, and where every season has its own parade.

-By Brandi Meredith



# I Am From The Banks Of The Elizabeth River

I am from the banks of the Elizabeth River  
from the basement of the Portsmouth Naval Hospital.  
I am from the banks of the York, and the Chesapeake Bay.

I am from a mother with a Boston accent  
And a father always under car hoods.  
I am from rural becoming suburb.

I am from the rolling wheels  
Of bicycles and skateboards wherever they took me  
Among the clanking of sailboat masts  
and the fishermen emptying their salty oyster nets

I am from blackberries fresh from the vine  
Into pancakes, and honeysuckle in the nose and on the lips.

From a creaking old house with paneling on the walls.  
A one-acre yard I hated to mow.

I am from late night laughter with best friends  
And from video rentals on Friday nights.

-By Eric Hughes



# I Am From A Valley In the Mountains

I am from a valley in the mountains.  
From majestic, craggy peaks  
and tall, slender birch trees that create a vision of white  
regardless of the season.

I am from a town so small there are no strangers.  
From a place where the workers toil endlessly in the paper mill  
and the smokestacks spew heavy, gray plumes that smell of rotten  
eggs,  
contradicting what should be the freshness of crisp mountain air.  
From a place where the river running down from the mountains  
should be cool and clear,  
but whose rapids run polluted downstream.

I am from an ordinary house that was tall and narrow  
one just like every other on the street  
lined up in perfect order, closely together,  
made of red-gray shingles,  
none unique.

I am from the glorious lilac tree in the front yard.  
From its euphoric perfume  
wafting up to my third-story bedroom every spring,  
completing the serenity of my tower, my sanctuary..

I am from traditions where French community life was the norm  
and American ways seemed foreign.  
From a language that was a smattering of French and English.  
From a place where kids played in the street until dark  
and required nothing more than a rubber ball to find entertainment.

I am from Sunday turkey dinners that made my mouth water  
and over-fried everything else that made my stomach hurt.  
I am from homemade birthday cakes thickly covered in sweet,  
white icing.  
I am from the day when Death made the birthday cakes stop.

I am from a grandmother whose apron always smelled of flour  
and whose bosom could calm even the heaviest of hearts.  
From a grandfather who pretended to steal your nose

and could entrance you with tall tales of woodsmen and long journeys.

I am from these people who worked so hard,  
yet could be comfortable with life, no matter how hard it came.

I am from dreams and hopes,  
contradicted by those same traditions,  
From grand aspirations that were encouraged  
while the unspoken rule was to stay where you were.

I am from a father whose velvet-gloved iron hand taught me  
discipline

while encouraging me to soar.

From this father who spawned my dreams,  
enriched my spirit and molded my soul,  
but confused me with his anger when I left to make my way.

I am from contradiction,  
From a place where what was said and done out loud  
was not always what was meant and unspoken.

I am from a family who lost way too much to Death.

I am from the remnants of anger, deep sadness, quiet tears and big  
noises,

From a family who could still somehow, miraculously, come  
together to create music.

I am from “When the Saints Go Marching In,”  
sitting at the piano on my father’s lap,  
and from “This Land is Your Land,” singing in harmony with my  
siblings.

I am from our anger and sadness when the music stopped.

I am from a life of contradiction  
From a world of conflicting messages,  
hidden emotions and intentions,  
and a Gemini spirit.

I am from a desire to find a sole path,  
a different way,  
and the need to listen to and follow my own heart.

I am from the life I created for myself.  
From my dreams, my failures, my triumphs,  
I am from no one place.  
Not even one of mountains or birch trees, paper mills or lilac trees.  
I am from all those contradictions  
somehow melded together and rolled into a single, often-conflicted  
soul.

-By June Hyjek



# Special Thanks

## Hillsborough Literacy Council Board of Directors

Brandi Meredith, President

Jenifer Schneider, Vice President

Drew Pfeifer, Treasurer

William Hunter, Secretary

Carol Bockenek

Paul Suppicich

Karla Guzman-Mims

Joanna Cheshire



## Library Support

Andrew Breidenbaugh, Director of Library Services

Matthew David, Manager of Library Learning Experiences

Eric Hughes, Adult Literacy Liaison

Melissa Nye, Literacy Assistant

# Special Thanks

