



El Sol Shines

"Working Together for a Better Community"



September 2010

Volume 2, Issue 7



From left, Bob Hays explains procedures for installing hurricane shutters; a worker secures shutters in place with bolts; and participants in the hurricane shutter training pose after the session.

El Sol workers trained in shutter installation

As the hurricane season picked up last month, a group of El Sol workers successfully completed a training class on installation and removal of hurricane shutters, as part of El Sol's efforts to prepare workers to do storm preparation work for homeowners.

The class, at the Jupiter home of Lynn and Bob Hays, was organized by David Schwartz, an AmeriCorps summer volunteer at El Sol. Nine workers participated in the class and their records will reflect that they successfully completed the training. The workshop began with a presentation by Schwartz of the different types of shutters homeowners use to protect their structures.

Schwartz was followed by Bob Hays, who explained features of the Hays' heavy-gauge aluminum shutters, cautioning that "each one is a little different and the edges are sharp and can cut your hand." Next came the hands-on work of

installing the shutters outside on four of the Hays' 20 windows and securing them with bolts. Again, Bob cautioned the workers about handling the bolts, saying, "if those are gone, the shutters will not work."

After the four sets of shutters were in place, Bob led the workers to an adjoining neighbor's home to explain the features of accordion type shutters that were in place.

By all accounts the training was a success, with Bob and Lynn both citing the enthusiasm exhibited by the workers for the hands-on training on installation of the hurricane shutters.

"They were very eager to put them up," Bob notes. Although no one knows for certain if a hurricane will hit Jupiter, those who completed the training will be ready to help homeowners protect their properties if a hurricane does hit the area.

El Sol thanks Lynn and Bob for offering their home and services for the training class and for their hospitality of providing cooling refreshments of ice water and sodas for all participants on a hot Saturday afternoon.

From the president's desk

Looking back on four miraculous years

On September 6, we celebrated the fourth anniversary of opening our doors here at El Sol. Before we blew out the candles on our cake, workers, volunteers, board members and staff all expressed wonderment that we had done so much in a relatively short time. It was a joyous occasion.

But it could have been different. Three years ago, the grant that had given us our start was about to expire, and we did not see where the money would come from that would enable us to continue. Then a miracle walked through our doors: Our board member Ed Ricci brought a remarkable and modest woman for a tour of El Sol, and immediately at the close of the tour, she wrote a check that kept our doors open for that first year.



Last year, and again three days before our birthday, we again received generous donations from that same foundation that has enabled us to continue operating.

It was that generous woman who more than anyone has enabled El Sol, since the day we opened our doors four years ago to workers, to become a true resource for the entire community of Jupiter, certainly a model for our county and, some say, for the nation.

Four years ago, we did not know if anyone would come in off the street. We did not know if any employers would come to hire the workers. Today, we have about 2,000 registered workers and 4,000 registered employers.

All of the programs that have sprouted over the past four years would have been impossible without the generosity of that woman. In the next months, we will be looking to you, our dearest supporters, for your ideas, for you to bring your friends to see El Sol, for your help in figuring out how we can replace that foundation of our support, which has been about half of our budget.

Starting after the first of the year, a food pantry program operated by C.R.O.S. Ministries will begin to operate out of El Sol two days a week. This will bring even more wonderful partners, from two area synagogues and four churches, and, we expect, even more Jupiter families in need. This is another of the "miracles" of El Sol.

Jill Hanson

Volunteer spirit



Nine El Sol workers helped to paint a house in West Jupiter on Aug. 20 for Habitat for Humanity, part of the ongoing community service work the workers do every month. By volunteering, workers learn new skills that improve their employment opportunities. Also, workers who are eligible can earn sweat equity credits toward purchase of a new house constructed by Habitat for Humanity in their homeland.

Mission Statement of El Sol

El Sol's vision is for a premier day-labor center providing skilled, dependable workers to employers. We are also committed to promoting strong economically and ethnically diverse communities in which all people can achieve their highest potential.

El Sol seeks to improve the quality of life for all residents of the Town of Jupiter through:

- * Organizing and supervising Jupiter's day-labor hiring in a controlled and sanitary atmosphere;
- * Educating Jupiter's day-laborers and contractors about their rights and responsibilities;
- * Assisting Jupiter's immigrant population to become an active and integrated part of the larger Jupiter community;
- * Building bridges and communication among the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups in Jupiter;
- * Providing occupational training, language and literacy instruction, counseling, health education, legal and other services to individuals in need.

Happy Anniversary, El Sol!



4-years-old & going strong



El Sol workers, volunteers, staff and supporters helped to celebrate the center's fourth anniversary this month. At left, Jose Domingo Esteban and Pedro Cruz Lopez enjoy cake. At right, El Sol board member Yvonne Santiago and President Jill Hanson cut the anniversary cake.

El Sol's fourth anniversary celebration on Labor Day was characterized by many heartfelt expressions of gratitude by workers, board members and staff on how El Sol has helped them and benefitted the community. There is much to be proud of.

In the four years since El Sol opened, thousands of day-laborers and others have found jobs, both temporary and permanent. They have also been able to learn English, and computer and vocational skills.

The impact on the Jupiter community has been huge, as El Sol evolved as the largest social service agency of its kind in North Palm Beach County. Last year, for example, El Sol provided a record \$1.2 million in free services to Jupiter residents, the most since the center opened in 2006. The first six months of this year services valued at \$442,135 were provided.

In addition, 3,289 jobs were filled by Jupiter residents through the day-labor service, which matches workers with employers needing workers.

Among those expressing thanks at the anniversary celebration was Rito Hernandez who said, "El Sol has given me a lot unconditionally without expecting me to give back and we have to give back unconditionally." In addition to

serving as a place where one can find jobs, learn English and new skills, he said El Sol is a place where he and others can go and be safe.

El Sol President Jill Hanson recalled the day the center opened, Sept. 6, 2006, when she said she hoped people would come and that they did indeed come and availed themselves of El Sol's services and hospitality.

"Thanks to everyone who helped make this dream possible," Jill said.

Other speakers included El Sol Board Members Jeronimo Compeseco, Yvonne Santiago and Diego Rojas, president of the Workers Council, as well as Jocelyn Sabbagh, El Sol center director. A large crowd of El Sol workers and volunteers enjoyed servings of anniversary cake and were entertained by the Corn Maya Marimba Band.

El Sol by the numbers

A few noteworthy facts and figures from the second quarter 2010:

- * 2,147 jobs filled
- * 25 percent average job placement rate
- * 1,970 workers registered
- * 4,125 employers registered
- * 84 adults enrolled in evening ESL classes
- * 1,224 attended day-time ESL classes
- * 5,064 meals served
- * 4,587 volunteer hours worked
- * \$183,306 value of services provided
- * 8,767 workers signed in for an average of 97 per day

FAU donates to El Sol's computer lab

FAU does it again!

The Florida Atlantic University community is once again helping out the El Sol Neighborhood Resource Center. This month, FAU is donating 13 computers to El Sol. Back in May, FAU donated 15 computers. El Sol is grateful to board member Tim Steigenga for making both donations happen.

The computers will be used in the computer lab, which is open to workers and clients to access the Internet. The computer lab also hosts classes twice a week, teaching students topics ranging from how to turn on the computer to how to save information onto a flash drive.

FAU's good deed does not stop there. The older computers that are being replaced by FAU's computers will be either raffled among El Sol's workers or sent to schools in Guatemala.

The following example proves how the availability of technology can make a difference in someone's life. Abraham, a 19-year-old worker from Guatemala, learned how to use a computer at El Sol. Back in his native Jacaltenango, Abraham had always seen computers on TV shows, but never had access to one. When he came to El Sol and saw the resource center offered classes, he immediately signed up to learn everything about computers. He was a committed, hard working student, and in a couple of months he became a monitor in the computer lab, teaching others how to properly use the computers.

El Sol loves computer donations! Please keep El Sol in mind if you or your loved ones are ever planning to replace a computer.

We only accept full computers. No separate computer components, please.



Omar Herrera receives a literacy certificate from Kathryn Klaas, former education coordinator at El Sol.

Plaza Comunitaria program honors its first graduate

Omar Herrera, whose education stopped at the fifth grade in his native Mexico, is the first El Sol worker to earn his elementary and secondary education certificates through a program developed by the Mexican government to provide Mexicans and Latinos living abroad the opportunity to continue or improve their education.

Studies show that such students can learn English faster and more efficiently if they first have a sound education in their own language. El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia said the program, called Plaza Comunitaria (Community Plaza), has opened a new door for Herrera who is more confident about the future and what he wants to do.

Plaza Comunitaria is a web-based system that offers a wide range of classes from basic Spanish literacy and ESL to university-level classes in diverse subjects. There are more than 200 Plazas Comunitaria programs in the United States. At El Sol, students needing assistance are paired with Spanish-speaking volunteers who serve as tutors.

Herrera received his elementary school certificate on Jan. 13 and his high school certificate June 25. "I feel very happy to have successfully finished this path and expect to go for my bachelor degree," said Herrera, 27. He said his formal education in Mexico had ended at the fifth grade. At El Sol he has participated in ESL classes, vocational training and volunteered at Habitat for Humanity's home construction project in West Jupiter.

He is currently employed in construction in Port St. Lucie. He enrolled in the Plaza Comunitaria program at El Sol in September 2009 and was among 40 people who were first tested to determine at what level they would begin their studies.

El Sol's Plaza Comunitaria program was launched with the assistance of Plaza Comunitaria of Homestead, Florida, until El Sol obtained authorization from the Consulate of Mexico early this year. Ms. Valdivia said El Sol is working with the Guatemala Ministry of Education to get a similar program based on the "Mexican experience."

Congratulations to Omar Herrera for his outstanding achievements and serving as an inspiration for others.

Worker of the Month for August: **Genaro Gonzalez-Santiago**

A commitment to learn English and volunteering for numerous community service projects earned Genaro Gonzalez-Santiago Worker of the Month honors for August.

Since coming to Jupiter three years ago from his native Vera Cruz, Mexico, Genaro, 34, has been a regular at El Sol. His main reason for coming was to obtain work.

While waiting for work he's participated in day and evening ESL classes and volunteered for work on Habitat for Humanity homes and on other community service projects.

"He's an excellent worker and one of those who volunteers for every single community service opportunity," said Wilberto Luna, El Sol labor coordinator, who congratulated Genaro for his selection as Worker of the Month. As the top El Sol worker Genaro receives priority for jobs for three days.

Genaro said that by volunteering he's acquired skills



Volunteer of the Month Genaro Gonzalez-Santiago is congratulated by El Sol Labor Center Coordinator Wilberto Luna.

in painting, landscaping, pressure washing and construction, which he enjoys most. Besides work and volunteering, Genaro said he likes attending church.

Congratulations for a well-deserved honor.



Diane Laney Fitzpatrick

Volunteer of the Month for August

Diane Laney Fitzpatrick

The August Volunteer of the Month is Diane Fitzpatrick, editor of our prized *El Sol Shines* newsletter.

A member of the Communications Committee and an El Sol volunteer since February 2009, Diane is using her technical and graphic arts skills in the redesign of El Sol's website. Last year she redesigned El Sol's publicity brochure.

She also uses her creative talents to design publicity materials for Sunshine Artworks and prepares portfolios of El Sol artists for art exhibits. Recently she helped design note cards for Sunshine Artworks that feature colorful paintings of El Sol artists.

Diane's work with *El Sol Shines*, Sunshine Artworks and the website has been outstanding, said President Jill Hanson. "We have a newsletter that any other organization that I know of can't believe how fabulous it is." Jill said. "El Sol is so fortunate to have Diane as a volunteer and her honor as Volunteer of the Month is well-deserved."

A former newspaper reporter and editor in her native Ohio, Diane graduated from Kent State University with a degree in journalism and worked as a reporter and editor for daily and weekly newspapers in Youngstown and Cleveland Ohio. At home, she has a "back up" editor who she can share ideas with, her husband Tim, vice president of marketing and communications for NextEra Energy and FPL. They are the parents of daughter Cary, 17, a senior at Jupiter High School; Jack, 19, a student at Arizona State University; and Mike, 24, who teaches English in Changchun, China.

Editing the newsletter, helping with re-design of the website and helping with Sunshine Artworks is a real joy, Diane says. "I love the people, I love art and graphics and doing the newsletter, laying out the articles, and I feel like what I'm doing makes a difference." In addition to her work for El Sol, she is vice president of the Jupiter High School band boosters and last month was featured in a *Wall Street Journal* article about stay-at-home moms and work-at-home moms.

As an El Sol volunteer, Diane's creativity and dedicated efforts have helped tremendously to shape the positive image that El Sol enjoys throughout the region and nationally. Congratulations Diane as Volunteer of the Month and thank you for all that you do for El Sol.



El Sol

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Resource Center

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www.friendsofelsesol.com

El Sol's Hiring Hall is open

Monday – Saturday 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Sunday 7:00 a.m. to 12 noon

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Join the **PBCC Spanish Club** "Uniendo Culturas" to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month 2010. Please wear clothing to represent your heritage! Bring your family!

There will be **FREE** music, dancing & more!

We welcome all to participate in the festivities and partake in a fun filled evening to promote cultural diversity in our community!

For more information call Patricia Betancourt, M.A.
Spanish Club Advisor, 561-207-5050
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UNIENDO CULTURAS Spanish Club



CELEBRATING THE BICENTENNIALS!

ARGENTINA, CHILE, COLOMBIA & MEXICO

II Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration at "El Sol"

Date: Oct. 2, 2010

Time: 6-9 p.m.

Place: El Sol, Jupiter's Neighborhood Resource Center located on the North West corner of Military Trail and Indiantown Road in Jupiter, FL

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'Fiesta Latina' to celebrate cultural heritage, bicentennials

El Sol and Uniendo Culturas, the Spanish Club at Palm Beach State College, will celebrate the bicentennials of Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico at "Fiesta Latina," a cultural celebration.

The event is set for Saturday, Oct. 2, at El Sol. It is free and open to the public. Families and children are encouraged to come in clothing representing their heritage, and enjoy music, dancing and other festivities.

Fiesta Latina kicks off a month of festivities for Hispanic Heritage Month.

For more information on Fiesta Latina, contact Patricia Betancourt, PBSC Spanish Club advisor at (561) 207-5050.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Sept. 26 – Florida Atlantic University presents a talk on famous Hispanic Americans, 8:30 a.m. at El Sol.

Sept. 27 – Meet the Artists reception, 5:30-7 p.m. in SR Atrium at Florida Atlantic University's Jupiter campus. Several El Sol artists have works displayed at "Escenas de America Latina II."

Oct. 2 – "Fiesta Latina," a kick-off to Hispanic Heritage Month, 6-9 p.m. at El Sol, with Uniendo Culturas, the Spanish Club at Palm Beach State College.

Oct. 8 – Friday Movie Night – to be announced – 7-9 p.m.

Nov. 7 – Mark your calendars: ArtFest, El Sol's annual art show, is set for noon-4 p.m. Paintings, handmade jewelry and crafts for sale.