



El Sol Shines

"Working Together for a Better Community"



February 2010

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Record year for El Sol for 2009

In spite of the economic slump that has plagued the nation, the El Sol Neighborhood Resource Center provided a record \$1.2 million in free services and programs to Jupiter residents last year.

The amount is the largest since El Sol opened in 2006 and is among highlights of the 2009 Annual Report prepared for submittal to the Town of Jupiter. The report details the results of more than 15 different programs and services such as English language and literacy classes, vocational training, legal assistance, community service, volunteer efforts, meals served and others.

"We gave back to the community six times our budget."

*El Sol Director
Jocelyn Sabbagh*

The center's day labor program was responsible for filling 6,923 jobs last year, down from the 8,798 filled in 2008. The economic downturn was a factor in the reduction, as many companies laid off workers, particularly in the construction and landscaping trades. El Sol's free day labor service operates seven days a week and matches workers with

employers to fill jobs.

El Sol Director Jocelyn Sabbagh said the \$1.2 million in services last year is significant after just a little more than three years of operation.

"We gave back to the community six times our budget," she said in reference to El Sol's current \$206,950 budget that is financed entirely by donations and grants from foundations and individuals.

Services in 2009 included \$454,989 in free legal assistance. Also noteworthy is the more than \$225,000 value of hours worked by volunteers and \$18,245 of community service

work performed by El Sol workers. The value of El Sol programs and services is calculated on the basis of \$19.52 per hour, which the Florida Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service sets as the value of volunteer contributions. Staff salaries are also included.

El Sol President Jill Hanson commended El Sol workers for their dedication to improving the community in which they live as evidenced by their 935 hours of work on various community service projects. They helped with home construction on a Habitat for Humanity project in Jupiter, completed improvements at a pre-school and did painting and landscaping work at a number of homes in several Jupiter neighborhoods. Three El Sol workers qualified for purchase of new homes in their native Guatemala by earning "sweat equity" for work they performed at the Jupiter Habitat for Humanity development.

Other noteworthy accomplishments in 2009 include:

- A total of 4,515 students enrolled in daytime ESL classes (a 15 percent increase)
- 100 students achieved English proficiency in nighttime ESL classes.
- Daily worker attendance averaged 137 workers for a total of 49,907.
- 37,836 noon meals were served, for an average of 105 daily.
- More than 3,654 employers and 1,815 workers are registered to use the El Sol services.

For information on hiring workers or volunteering call 745-9860.



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.

President's message

A new year is off and running

Our year got off to a great start, with the showing of the documentary film *Pueblos Hermanos/Brother Towns*. More than 500 people attended three different showings of the film - at Florida Atlantic University, at St. Peter Catholic Church, and here in El Sol.

We were delighted to welcome many members of the community who have not previously been involved in El Sol, as well as many of the workers, whose families are from Jacaltenango, Guatemala; many of our volunteers; and political leaders from the Town of Jupiter. During the discussion after the film, two supporters made generous pledges to help us copy and distribute DVDs of the film, and a number of people signed up to volunteer.

The film was so moving, such a gently forceful presentation of the forces that cause immigration, the sadness of separated families, and the wonderful role that a place like El Sol can play in addressing difficult issues, in integrating immigrants into the community, and in allowing them to express talents that otherwise would have remained hidden. A young man who was here in Jupiter wrote the music, which was performed and recorded by him and a group of musicians right here in Jupiter. Now he's been deported back to his home country. Our mayor played a central role in the film, explaining what Jupiter did to try to address the perceived problem of workers gathering on Center Street, and how they did it. At the showing at St. Peter's, she told us that she loved the film, and she was so grateful to all of the volunteers of El Sol, for everything we have done to make El Sol not just a reality, but a model for the country.

We hope you will all come to the volunteer recognition on Feb. 28 at El Sol. Last year's event was prepared and presented by the workers themselves, some awards were presented, both serious and silly, and everyone had a great time. If you can come, please let Wilberto Luna know, through his e-mail, wilbertoelsol@yahoo.com, so we can plan how many people we will serve.



Jill Hansen

Two appointed to El Sol Board of Directors

El Sol President Jill Hanson has announced the appointment of Shirley Hirsch of Jupiter and Roger Buckwalter of Tequesta to the El Sol Board of Directors.

"Both of these appointments will strengthen our board and we look forward to their participation," Ms. Hanson said. "Sheila Hirsch brings her experience and dedication as an El Sol volunteer including grant writing and raising gifts for El Sol, and in talking about El Sol to her community to encourage others to participate with us," she said. "Roger Buckwalter brings his experience on boards of other non-profit agencies and his many years of involvement in the Jupiter community as editor of the editorial page of the *Jupiter Courier*," Ms. Hanson said.

Ms. Hirsch is an El Sol volunteer who moved to Florida after attending Indiana University. Her professional career has been devoted to providing accounting services in a variety of fields, including medicine and television. She is

associated with Financial Planning Investment Group in West Palm Beach where she concentrates on compliance as mandated by the SEC and Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). She is a member of Jupiter FIRST Church where she works with the WEB ministry and has served as church treasurer.

Buckwalter retired in 2001 after a 28-year career at the *Jupiter Courier* where he was editorial page editor.

He has served on numerous local boards, including past president of the American Cancer Society and past chairman of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society. Currently he is chairman of the Northern Palm Beaches Cultural Alliance and chairs the community relations committee of the Advisory Board of FAU's Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College. He grew up in Juno Beach and received bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Florida. He is a Vietnam veteran.

El Sol's community service just keeps going . . . and going . . .



El Sol's commitment to community service was affirmed in January by participation of 35 workers in two projects that brightened the Thelma B. Pittman Jupiter Pre-School and provided a home in the Pine Gardens South neighborhood with a new coat of paint and new look.

Work at the pre-school on Martin Luther King Volunteer Day Jan. 18 consisted of replacing old ceiling tiles in three classrooms, mulching two playground areas, and pressure cleaning outdoor walkways. In addition to 19 El Sol workers, volunteers from United Way and parents of some pre-school children also helped along with others from the community.

Removal of the ceiling tiles led to complications when insulation that fell from the attic areas as the tiles were removed had to be replaced with new material. As a result work, which began at 8 a.m., extended into the evening hours before the job was finished.

"What was really, really great is that they did not want to leave until the job was finished," said Ruth Lawson, executive director of the school. In a letter commending the El Sol volunteers she said the new ceiling tiles "make our classrooms look bigger, brighter and brand new."

Ms. Lawson said in a letter to Jupiter Mayor Karen Golonka that El Sol's volunteer labor saved the school \$5,500, enabling them to spend that money on educational materials for the infants, toddlers and preschoolers enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Program.

El Sol President Jill Hanson said the volunteers worked very well as a team and that the project "was a very good experience for everyone."

On Jan. 22, 16 El Sol workers helped to paint the exterior

of a home on Fourth Street in the Pine Gardens South neighborhood that was occupied by a mother and her disabled adult daughter. Volunteers finished the job in a record two hours, the fastest completion of any community service project by volunteers, said El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia.

The Solid Waste Authority provided the paint and tools for the project. Several volunteers from the Paint Your Heart Out and Rebuilding Together of the Palm Beaches also helped in giving the home a new coat of beige paint with blue trim. El Sol workers who volunteered gave up a chance to obtain a paying job through El Sol's day laborer service that matches workers with employers.

Heather Levy, community service representative for the Solid Waste Authority, said the El Sol volunteers did a beautiful job. "The partnership with El Sol has become a truly wonderful one," she said in a message commending the workers.

For information on hiring workers or volunteering at El Sol call 745-9860.

Upcoming Events

Feb. 20 - Bike safety presentation, 9-10 a.m.

Feb. 26 - Community service project, 7:30 a.m.

Feb 28 - Volunteer Recognition Luncheon, 2:00 p.m.

March 5 - Town presentation, 9 a.m.

March 19 - Community service project, 7:30 a.m.

March 19 - Town presentation, 9 a.m.

Music lessons brighten El Sol



On Sunday mornings Room 204 at El Sol is filled with musical notes. Seven recorders are played in tune following the direction of their teacher.

For a year, Sanjay Chakravorty, a senior at Suncoast High School, has been volunteering at El Sol on Sunday mornings to teach music theory and performance to a group of seven students ages 10-12.

The idea for this program started when Sanjay approached Sister Marta and Beatriz Solis seeking a volunteer opportunity and they arranged a classroom for him to share his musical talents with children from our community. Sanjay explained that he wanted to teach music because it is a way for him to give back to the community.

The students are children from the community who were looking for an extracurricular activity but could not afford private or group lessons. Last year some of the students

could not purchase their recorders so Sanjay found a good deal from a musical store and purchased 12 or so recorders for his students.

"I like seeing the progress of my students," Sanjay expressed, "I am able to see how much they have learned going from zero knowledge about music to being able to read and play musical notes."

Sanjay has seen progress in all of the students, but the student who stands out the most in improving is Frida. "Before, she would not really practice that much and because of that she was behind my other students. However, she began to practice more and now she plays and reads music a lot better than she did. Now she is one of the best in the class."

Kathryn Klaas, El Sol's education coordinator, is working with Sanjay so the group of students can perform a musical piece at our next graduation ceremony.

Census work is 'in our hands'

El Sol is partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau to work to ensure that every person living in the United States on April 1 is counted, as part of the 2010 census.

"It's in our hands to ensure that every person is counted, as is required by the U.S. Constitution, because if everyone is counted, then we can count on getting more funds, to help to make our community a better place for all," said Jill Hanson, El Sol president.

To accomplish its goal of counting every person, the Census Bureau has partnered with governments and not-for-profit organizations all around the country. El Sol is taking the lead to bring together representatives from the Hispanic community in Jupiter, to tell them about what's going on, and how important it is to take part in the census.

Already, the Census Bureau is using space in El Sol to give tests for both English- and Spanish-speaking people interested in jobs with the census.

On Feb. 23 there will be a special presentation to all El Sol workers about the need to be counted in the census. Ms. Hanson said many are fearful of interaction with the government, and the Census Bureau will reassure all that under the law, information given to the Census Bureau is confidential. It is, in fact, a crime to give census information even to any other branch of government,

Sunshine Artworks help wanted



Sunshine Artworks, the El Sol affiliate that promotes art work and crafts of workers, is seeking volunteers to help with art projects at the El Sol center. Persons interested in doing crafts, volunteering to take artists to shows, or provide money for supplies are invited to contact Andi Cleveland, event coordinator, at (561) 339-8318, or Betzy Rega, executive director, at (561) 827-9079.

The arts organization had a booth at the Feb. 6 Jupiter Jubilee, at the Abacoa Green Market, and at the entrance of ArtiGras. Art classes also began at El Sol earlier this month with an instructor from the Lighthouse Center for the Arts. A ceramics class is set to begin this month.

Worker of the Month for January

When Domingo Perez is asked what he likes about El Sol, his response is "everything," which may explain why he is being honored as Worker of the Month for January. He won top honors for earning the most points of all El Sol workers for his participation in various El Sol programs and for volunteer work in the community.

Since coming to Jupiter three years ago, Domingo, 29, has taken advantage of every opportunity that El Sol offers, including attending English classes, computer seminars and job training workshops. He also has volunteered for numerous community service projects such as Habitat for Humanity and other home improvement projects. His employment experience includes jobs in landscaping, carpentry, drywall installation and painting.

A native of Chacula, Nenton, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, Domingo said he came to the United States so he could "work and do something productive for my family." His mother and sister reside in Guatemala and

his father is in Mexico. When he's not working, attending classes or volunteering on community service projects, Domingo can often be found in the kitchen at El Sol helping to serve meals, washing pans or doing whatever needs to be done, said El Sol Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna. "He's a very hard worker and always ready to help wherever there is a need," Luna said.

As Worker of the Month, Domingo received preference for jobs three consecutive days.

Congratulations to Domingo for his well-deserved honor as Worker of the Month.

Domingo Perez



Volunteer of the Month for January

When Chef Dom Bakija first came to work as a volunteer with the Friday kitchen crew from St. Peter's, Trish McDonald thought he was kind of shy. She told Marie Howard, "Maybe he's just overwhelmed working with this crew of women; We should be extra nice to him."

Whether it was their kindness or whether Chef Dom is one of those people that just have to get to know you a bit, he's now a hero, not just of the Friday kitchen crew, but of all the kitchen crews. You see, Chef Dom helped to secure our new gas range, which was officially inaugurated in early January.

Chef Dom (as everyone calls him) actually was a chef, who semi-retired here in 2008. Thus, everyone looks forward to Friday lunch, because it usually has that special chef's touch. He was himself a refugee, from the now-independent Croatia, and he stayed for a while in refugee camps. He says that's what inspires him to give back to the workers of El Sol. He says: "Someone fed me, I like to do something in return."

After graduating in 1960 from hotel school, he went to Italy, where he lived for a time in a refugee camp, and from there went to France. In 1964, he ended up in the U.S., where he worked for many of the finest restaurants in New York, such as the Four Seasons. But pretty quickly, he got a job working at a private golf club on Long Island, and stayed there many years until his retirement.



Chef Dom Bakija

Toward the end of last year, Chef Dom – like many of the kitchen volunteers, fed up with and a bit frightened of the old stove -- with something of a mysterious air, asked about whether we would accept the donation of a new stove. Exactly like the old one, he said, with six burners, and a grill, and two ovens, but this time, both ovens would work, as would all the burners. Chef Dom's

mystery donor would cover the entire cost of the new range, he said. Early in January, to the delight of the kitchen volunteers, the area behind the stove was thoroughly scrubbed, and the new stove installed.

Chef Dom is married, with three adult children: A son is an economics professor at Williams College in Massachusetts, another is a high-school art teacher in Ithaca, N.Y., and a daughter works as managing editor in advertising in Manhattan. He also has two grandchildren.

Chef Dom has more plans to update our kitchen and make it easier for all. He's also talked about helping to train some of the workers to do kitchen work. We are all so grateful to him, for his commitment to El Sol, and for helping to make life in our kitchen a little easier and safer. We are looking forward to future adventures with Chef Dom. (Hey, that sounds like a good name for a TV chef show!)

(P.S. Chef Dom wants everyone to know that a professional chef's job is not as glamorous as the TV shows indicate. "To succeed, you have to be dedicated to very hard work and very long hours -- and very few holidays!")



El Sol

Jupiter Neighborhood
Resource Center

106 Military Trail

Jupiter Fl 33458

Phone (561) 745-9860

Fax (561) 745-9834

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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Editors

Mike Richmond

Diane Laney Fitzpatrick

Contributors

Jill Hanson

Lynn Hays

Sally Isham

Kathryn Klaas

Wilberto Luna

Jocelyn Sabbagh

Dora B. Valdivia

Mary Pat Webster

Diane Williams

Brother Towns film premieres

The premiere of *Brother Towns/ Pueblos Hermanos*, the documentary film on immigration that was screened to a capacity crowd at El Sol in January, lived up to its billing as a story where "there are no easy answers, but where emotions of every sort abound."

The film chronicled a poignant story of how Jupiter and its sister-city Jacaltenango, Guatemala, are linked by immigration, family and work. As the story unfolds we see the people and hear the voices of those whose lives have been affected, sometimes tragically, as a result of loved ones who emigrated to seek work in the United States. The terrorism and death visited upon villagers during a decades-long guerilla war is seen through the eyes of peasants whose faces still bear traces of the fear they experienced and who told how they saved their lives and their village by negotiating with the Army to build a road connection to other villages.

El Sol President Jill Hanson said the film was very moving. "It made me realize that no matter how hard life here is their life in Guatemala is much harder." The film featured El Sol as a place that is able to help immigrants and others achieve their full potential, she said. In the film, immigrants are shown being referred for jobs, learning English and receiving computer and job training. Jupiter Mayor Karen Golonka and Town Council Member Jim Kuretzki, also tell how the town, in cooperation with area residents, came together to resolve problems caused by large numbers of migrant day laborers, whom formerly solicited jobs along city streets.

At the conclusion of the film the audience showed its acclaim with loud applause. The film inspired Victor Tello, a native of Guatemala who came to the U.S. as a Fulbright scholar, to pledge \$1,000 to El Sol for the purchase of *Brother Towns* DVDs that will be used for fundraising and outreach efforts.

The feature-length film also played to large audiences at Florida Atlantic University's Jupiter campus and St. Peter Catholic Church. Following the Jupiter screenings, a crowd of 1,000 turned out for the *Brother Towns* premiere in Jacaltenango. Future plans call for additional screenings of the documentary in Jupiter and elsewhere.

Among those attending the Jupiter premiere were former Jacaltenango residents Roxany Diaz and her husband Luciano, who said the documentary triggered memories of their arduous journey 13 years ago to reach the United States in their quest for a better life. Roxany recalled how they trekked across the Mexican desert for 32 hours before crossing the U.S. border into Texas. Today she works as a teacher's aide at a private school, her husband is employed in construction and they have two sons. The couple also became U.S. Citizens.



At left, a capacity crowd fills El Sol to watch the premiere of *Brother Towns*. Above, Victor Tello (left) and Charles Thompson, producer/director of the film.