



# El Sol Shines

*"Working Together for a Better Community"*



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## A Leader for Civil Rights

*El Sol receives the MLK Leadership Award at Palm Beach State College*

El Sol has been honored with a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership award by Palm Beach State College. The award is among four bestowed at the college's 13th annual celebration of the life of the civil rights leader on Jan. 12.

Dr. Dennis P. Gallon, president of Palm Beach State College, who presented the award, cited El Sol as an organization that has quickly become a center for various services for low income people in Jupiter and has helped in solving a local problem by creating a safe space for workers and employers to connect. The citation also noted that El Sol's community service program ties into the values that Dr. King firmly stood for during his life.

El Sol Center Director Jocelyn Skolnik said the organization is "humbled and honored" to be recognized for its efforts "to bring immigrants and low-income individuals out of the shadows and fight daily to grant them the most basic civil rights." She said Dr. King was a catalyst for positive change who has been an inspiration in El Sol's efforts to turn cultural tensions for education, integration and equality for all.

More than a dozen El Sol volunteers and workers who attended the awards program at PBSC's Lake Worth campus joined Skolnik on stage after she accepted the award.

Keynote speaker Jeff Johnson, an MSNBC contributor and White House correspondent for The Grio, an African American website, gave an inspirational talk that strongly resonated with the large audience, said El Sol board member Jill Hanson.

"He really challenged everyone in the manner of Dr. King, not to dream a comfortable or easy dream, but to dream things that are impossible," Hanson said.

El Sol's award was one of four presented to an organization, an individual, a student, and a PBSC alumnus. El Sol received the Organization award. Other recipients were: D'atra Franklin, a Fall 2011 PBSC graduate and former foster care youth who has been advocating for those in foster care; Mark Hansen, former member of the Palm Beach County School Board and a PBSC alumnus; and Carlton "Ricky" Wade, franchise owner of 11 McDonald's restaurants in Palm Beach County.

*In the photo above, a group of El Sol staff members, board members, volunteers and workers join Jocelyn Skolnik on stage to accept the MLK Leadership award. At right, Skolnik accepts the award from Dr. Dennis P. Gallon, president of PBSC. Photos by Mark Udry.*



## El Sol is beneficiary of interfaith service

The Interfaith Thanksgiving Service chose El Sol as the recipient of its donation this year, a contribution that will help fund the center's kitchen program.

The 15th annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, coordinated by Jupiter First Church, Temple Beth Am and St. Peter's Catholic Church, collected \$10,183 and turned it over to El Sol.

The service was attended by many El Sol workers, volunteers and supporters. El Sol worker Luis Cholotio gave a speech "in perfect English," reflecting on his gratitude for all this country has done for him, said Suzanne Cordero, an El Sol board of directors member.

"El Sol is a beacon of hope in our community," said El Sol board President Ed Ricci. "Temple Beth Am, Jupiter First and St. Peter's all shared in this hope this past Thanksgiving. We at El Sol are deeply grateful."

El Sol's kitchen program, which will benefit from the donation, provides meals to registered workers seven days a week. Kitchen volunteers also provide food for special events and take-away lunches for workers for community service projects. El Sol's kitchen program relies on donations to operate.

Cholotio's speech at the Thanksgiving service is here:

Good evening,

Four years ago, when I arrived in America, I had no idea what Thanksgiving was all about, not until I went and took English classes and learned more about this wonderful piece of sky called America. I was told that Thanksgiving was one of the most important holidays, when Americans gather together and give thanks to God Almighty for all the gifts He has given to them – even their sorrows. And to commemorate those, who for the first time arrived to this country, who were very thankful to God for finding a piece of land, and for finding natives who opened their arms, and welcomed them.

As a first-generation immigrant, I see this happening again. Tonight, I see those same Native Americans in this room, welcoming us, the pilgrims, by providing us food, which every single one of you did by your generosity to El Sol's kitchen program.

On behalf of all the workers of El Sol, I deeply thank you all for donating this meaningful amount of money to us. Thank you for having us in mind, thank you for welcoming us.

Let us all, natives and pilgrims, continue this tradition and devote to God and His laws, honor and thank Him for His blessings and His grace, which I believe is what Thanksgiving is really all about.

God bless you, God bless America, and Happy Thanksgiving!



## Hope for health comes to El Sol

The Hope Mobile came to El Sol recently, giving women the opportunity to have free or reduced-cost mammograms done. Eleven El Sol women received free mammograms. The Hope Mobile's day at El Sol was part of a Susan G. Komen grant to educate women in our community about the importance of self-exams, breast health, and signs to watch for.



## Recognition to a dedicated volunteer

Jill Hanson belatedly was recognized for her 2010 Volunteer of the Year award last month when she received her Spirit of El Sol plaque that she was to have received at last February's Volunteer Recognition lunch but was unable to attend. Shown above are, from left, Betzy Rega, El Sol health coordinator; Sally Isham, volunteer coordinator; Hanson; Dora Valdivia, associate director, Jocelyn Skolnik, director; and Wilberto Luna, labor coordinator.



## Workshop advises safety first

El Sol workers were able to attend a workshop on safety during the holidays. Participating in the class were Elcy Valdez and Norma Arcensio from the Palm Beach County Court Victim Service Division; three officers from the Jupiter Police Department; and Jill Hanson from El Sol's legal department.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

## Volunteer can relate to workers' plight

*Jinette Cruz brings her multi-tasking talents to help fellow immigrants*

**Jinette Cruz** came to El Sol as a volunteer last spring, after Keiser University engaged with El Sol to start a service learning project there. The project, through Kimberley Lea, dean of the West Palm Beach campus, was to be with the legal program at Keiser. Jinette is studying at Keiser to be a paralegal, with a hope of one day being a lawyer. She was the first and very enthusiastic recruit to Keiser's service learning project.

Since she has been at El Sol, she has contributed her tremendous talent and time, not only by creating a dynamic Know Your Rights training, but also by running a week-long "Get to Know El Sol" program at Keiser, through which the university's students, faculty and staff got to know El Sol and donated over 100 pounds of food and paper goods to El Sol's kitchen.

Jinette's enthusiasm for El Sol is a natural, because she herself came to this country as an immigrant from the Dominican Republic. She had to leave her then 1-year-old son in her home country, while she came here with her husband to try to make a better life for their family. She has a lot of empathy for our clients, who, like her, have had to leave family behind, to work hard, sometimes at jobs no one else wants to do. She knows what it means to be down to your last \$23 and no idea where the next \$1 will come from.

Jinette's hard work and a bit of luck paid off, and she now greatly appreciates being a U.S. citizen. She and her husband have a lovely home in Royal Palm Beach (she commutes almost one hour each way to volunteer at El Sol) which they enjoy with their two sons. (Her 3-year-old is a charmer and her older son is a popular student leader at Summit Christian School.) Jinette's husband is employed as a butler in Palm Beach, and is an excellent cook, as well as being active in following the politics of his home country.

Jinette is a certified translator of legal documents, among her many talents. Her work at El Sol has been many-faceted. She has helped El Sol clients to complete immigration paperwork. She has driven clients to court, helping to explain the legal system to them in the process.

But her most outstanding contribution was her half-day Know Your Rights workshop. She worked with Juan Danilo Montejo of Corn Maya to create a funny yet educational short play, about the potential dangers immigrants can face, and how they can protect themselves, when dealing with immigration or police. Then she organized a week at her college, where students, staff and faculty had the opportunity to learn more about El Sol, and to donate food or paper goods, for use in El Sol's kitchen.

Jinette is a multi-tasker. Besides being an active parent in her children's school, and active in her church, she is also an officer of Phi Theta Kappa Student Honor Society, and recently was awarded a scholarship at Keiser called "Students Making a Difference."

Jinette is definitely a student making a difference. She has been a gift to El Sol. She says, "It's an honor to know that I was selected volunteer of the month at El Sol. It's a pleasure to serve El Sol and its members, and working with you as well. I thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve my community."



## WORKERS OF THE MONTH

## Workers honored for dedication

*Raul Morales and Ricardo Juan Francisco are recognized for November and December honors*

Two dedicated El Sol workers, **Raul Morales**, and **Ricardo Juan Francisco**, earned Worker of the Month honors for November and December respectively.

"They are both hard-working men who are always willing to help out at El Sol when they are not working or attending classes," said Wilberto Luna, El Sol Labor Coordinator.



Morales, 51, originally from San Marcos, Guatemala can be found in the kitchen every morning making and serving coffee to fellow workers.

"I like El Sol very much and it has helped me and it is all for free so I like making the coffee," Morales said. He obtained his high school equivalency diploma by attending night classes at Jupiter Community High School and attends El Sol English classes regularly. He proudly noted that he is now at level three.

Morales' earlier life in Guatemala was marked by tragedy in 1984 when his mother and father were murdered during the decade-long civil unrest in that country. He said he was forced to move to another province after his parents were killed because he was fearful for his own life. Morales has also lived and worked in Georgia in addition to Immokalee, Homestead and Indiantown, going wherever there was work. He's harvested tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes and other crops.



Ricardo Juan Francisco, 40, Worker of the Month for December, is a native of Soloma, Guatemala, and like others, comes to El Sol in the hope of getting a job. He said he formerly owned a small clothing store in Guatemala.

Since coming to the United States he's worked in construction and landscaping, and had a job for a time making barricades. Before coming to Jupiter Francisco lived in Riverside, California, where he worked in construction, and in Indiantown.

At El Sol, he attends English classes regularly and is never hesitant about volunteering at the El Sol Center. "When I don't work I take English classes and if there is something that needs to be done here I can do it," Francisco said. He also enjoys playing soccer on a team with others from El Sol.

Worker of the Month honors are awarded on the basis of various criteria, including participation in classes and community service activities. The honorees are given priority for jobs for three days.

Congratulations to Raul Morales and Ricardo Francisco for their well deserved honors.

# Holidays at El Sol

*Food, fellowship bring workers, volunteers together for Thanksgiving & Christmas*

El Sol ended 2011 with big celebrations for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

On Turkey Day, about 175 people dined on turkey and all the trimmings, plus assorted desserts.

"We have to thank the Big Heart Brigade of Palm Beach Gardens and and Christ Fellowship church for providing the dinners that everyone enjoyed," said **Alex Fuentes**, dinner chairman. More than 25 volunteers pitched in to make the event a great success, he said. Volunteers also presented a program on the history and meaning of Thanksgiving.

El Sol's Christmas celebration was the biggest ever, serving more than 400 people a delicious lunch of ham, turkey, rice and beans, cole slaw, desserts and Jamaican tea.

This year featured a "bounce house" slide for kids, and gifts were distributed to more than 250 men and women and more than 100 children. Many, many people contributed to making this year's Christmas a happy one for so many, including over 50 volunteers on Christmas Day, as well as many more in the days leading up to Christmas; generous donors who gave money to enable us to buy gifts for men and women; and others who gave toys and gifts so that children would have a merry Christmas.



## El Sol's Mission Statement

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.



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Find us on the Web at [www.friendsofelsesol.org](http://www.friendsofelsesol.org)

Follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ElSolJupiter> 

See us on Facebook at [El Sol, Jupiter's Neighborhood Resource Center](http://www.facebook.com/ElSolJupiter) 

**El Sol's Hiring Hall is open**  
 6 a.m. - 2 p.m. Monday through Saturday  
 7 a.m. - 12 noon Sunday

**Donate** online through Network for Good through our website [www.friendsofelsesol.org](http://www.friendsofelsesol.org)

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