

El Sol Shines

"Working Together for a Better Community"



May 2009



President's Message

One of the great partnerships we enjoy at El Sol is with Palm Beach Community College. Two of its professors, Heidi Ladika-Cipolla and Patricia Betancourt, participate in what's called "service learning." Students get course credit for performing services connected with what they are studying. One, a marketing class, recently completed a course project, which ended in the presentation of their work: new brochures and power points that we can use to communicate our message.

The other, a Spanish class at the Eissey campus, engages in a cross language tutoring effort, with Spanish students being tutored in Spanish, and our El Sol English students being tutored in English. At our El Sol ESL graduation, one of the Spanish students gives a speech. As in the past, it was a delight, probably, to the El Sol ESL graduates, to hear someone struggling with their language.

But the student, Christi Fleming, moved her listeners almost to tears, for in her short time working with our ESL students, she really understood what El Sol is all about, and how El Sol is part of the American tradition of "one from many."

Ms. Fleming said that El Sol embodies the motto of our founding fathers, "e pluribus unum." She said we embodied "the principle of shared cultures and values that this nation was founded upon." She said that our country has gained strength from the many people who have made new lives here with new hope and enthusiasm for the future but also bringing with them their own rich heritage of traditions and languages. Indeed America has long been known as the great melting pot because it has fostered the coming together of so many.

She concluded:

It makes me proud to see that El Sol is continuing this great tradition of joining cultures and people, because I have seen from my time here that El Sol brings many cultures together and we can all learn from each other. It not only teaches the students English and the volunteers Spanish, but it also forms a bridge from one culture to another - a bridge built on friendship, mutual respect and understanding. This bridge is represented on the El Sol symbol that you have all seen as a group of people holding hands. When I look at this symbol I think not only of the teacher and volunteers gathered at El Sol today but of those who have gone before forming the long and proud history of this nation and the many diverse peoples who make it up.

I can't express our mission any better than that. Thank you Christi, and thank you PBCC.

Jill Hanson

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Spanish students from PBCC host a fiesta at El Sol.

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El Sol received 150 boxes of food, which was distributed to workers and benefitted the food pantry.



El Sol workers Armando Batz and Magdalena Chocoy pick up litter in the Great American Cleanup.



El Sol volunteers Doug and Joy McGetchin and their daughters, Malia, 4, and Anika, 7, were among the volunteers in the Great American Cleanup. Behind them is project coordinator Mary Anne Oblacynski.

El Sol Workers, Volunteers Help With Great American Cleanup

This year's Great American Cleanup again had a large contingent of El Sol workers and volunteers helping to clear litter from area streets and neighborhoods. It was the third consecutive year that El Sol was represented in the cleanup project.

Thirty workers joined other volunteers, including area residents, who fanned out through the Pine Gardens South neighborhood and adjacent streets Saturday, April 18, to collect 90 bags of trash in a little over four hours.

"They did an awesome job," said El Sol Board member Mary Anne Oblacynski, who coordinated the cleanup for the Pine Gardens Community Organization. El Sol workers who participated wore white t-shirts featuring a message on the back asking persons who had work to call the El Sol Center.

El Sol volunteers Doug and Joy McGetchin and their daughters Malia, 4, and Anika, 7, were among those who scoured the area picking up trash of all kinds. Participants were rewarded afterwards with a pizza lunch at a neighborhood park after the last litter bag was filled.



El Sol workers head out to clean up Jupiter neighborhoods.



El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia and her crew of workers at the Great American Cleanup.

Spanish Students Celebrate Latin Culture At Uniendo Culturas Fiesta



Palm Beach Community College students celebrate Latin American culture at Uniendo Culturas Fiesta.

Ten students from Uniendo Culturas, the recently formed Spanish club on the PBCC Palm Beach Gardens campus, held its first Uniendo Culturas Fiesta at El Sol on April 24.

The event was part of the service learning project "Aprende mientras esperas trabajo!" (Learn while you wait to find a job!) that the students and Patricia Bentancourt, a Spanish professor on the Palm Beach Gardens campus, have done for the past two semesters.

Bentancourt was instrumental in forming the club and arranged to have club members as well as students in her Spanish classes volunteer at the fiesta. The club provided Latin American music and dancing; all the food served was authentic Latin American cuisine made by Restaurante la Ponderosa. Nearly 100 members of the local community joined the students in the celebration of two cultures. Students practiced their Spanish while eating authentic food and learning traditional dances.

Thais Da Silva, president of Uniendo Culturas, and Danelis Sonova, a Spanish club member, entertained everyone while playing musical games and instructing all the participants in both Spanish and English.

"This activity was not just another task we did; it became something that changed and impacted someone's life forever," said Da Silva. "I feel the time we spent working prior to and during this event helped everyone at the El Sol Center. That is a rewarding feeling all on its own."

The students raised \$730 at the event. The money will pay for school supplies for the English as a Second Language students at El Sol.

Figuratively Speaking: El Sol in 2008

- 8,798** jobs filled
- 2,350** employers registered
- 1,371** workers registered
- 137** workers served daily
- \$831,441** value of services to the community
- 36,264** meals served
- 200** graduates of ESL programs
- \$234,000** in free legal assistance
- 19,089** hours worked by more than 142 volunteers
- \$343,602** value of volunteers' service
- 6** grants received, **3** pledged for 2009

PBCC Class Assists El Sol in Marketing Services

A Palm Beach Community College service learning class has created several new marketing tools that are expected to greatly enhance outreach and promotion efforts of El Sol.

Students in a Hospitality Marketing/Service learning class at the PBCC Lake Worth campus produced two colorful brochures plus Power Point presentations to assist the nonprofit center in marketing its job referral service to homeowners and businesses, and to reach potential donors and volunteers. The marketing materials were developed over eight weeks under direction of Associate Professor Heidi Ladika-Cipolla. The results of their work were presented to El Sol representatives on May 4, the last day of the class.

El Sol President Jill Hanson praised the students for their outstanding work and the professionalism they exhibited in researching and creating the marketing materials. "These excellent marketing tools will be invaluable in helping us inform employers and the public about El Sol's day labor service and other programs," Hanson said.

The Celebration Continues for ESL Grads



Flor Montejo, honored as the Outstanding Graduate of El Sol's Spring ESL Class. She scored a perfect 100 percent on the final exam, the only student to do so.



The proud graduates show off their certificates.

A group of 35 Jupiter residents, the majority from Guatemala and Mexico, celebrated their graduation from El Sol's Spring ESL program April 13, when they received certificates for successful completion of the nine-week program.

Ms. Flor Montejo, 32, was honored as the outstanding graduate, having scored 100 percent on the final exam. The latest class brings the number of adults who have completed the ESL program to nearly 400 since classes began in 2007.

Ms. Irma Zender, keynote speaker, of Broward College in Pembroke Pines, FL, lauded graduates for their commitment to study hard and learn English, saying that by doing so they have taken the first step towards becoming winners. Proficiency in English "will help you both personally and professionally, including helping you to obtain a better job," she said.

"Studying may have bitter roots, but the fruits are sweet," she added. A native of Columbia, South America, Ms. Zender immigrated to the United States 20 years ago. She is the director of Broward College's Project RENEW that assists immigrants with developing or improving their English language and job training skills. Several dozen volunteer ESL teachers were also honored with awards at Monday's graduation ceremony. They included students from a Palm Beach Community College Spanish Class and Florida Atlantic College.

In congratulating the graduates, Dr. Robert Gingras, Associate Dean of the community college, said the school is "very, very proud to be associated with El Sol" and that it benefits the PBCC students by helping them improve their Spanish at the same time as they are assisting ESL students to learn English.



Singing and guitar playing were part of the graduation ceremony.

More about the ESL graduation is in the April edition of El Sol Shines.

Volunteer of the Month for April

Diane Williams

This month's Volunteer of the Month, Diane Williams, chairperson of the El Sol Health Committee, "enjoys helping people."

Diane and the committee focus on helping prevent illness, informing workers and their families about health options, and dealing with issues and concerns. Often, she contacts local organizations to encourage them to bring in their people. For example, the Visiting Nurse Association has provided checkups; Union Positiva from Miami offers HIV/AIDS testing; the Palm Beach County Health Department has been at El Sol several times to screen for tuberculosis; and eye checkups are available, and those who need reading glasses can purchase them for \$1. More complex vision problems are referred to local participating optometrists. Assistance has also been arranged for hearing problems and special medical situations.

The Health Committee also provides services for women. On June 15, 33 women will receive mammograms provided by HOPE Project when its mobile mammogram unit visits El Sol.

As El Sol President Jill Hanson explained, "Diane is a force of nature. She didn't have any experience in the health care area, but she came into El Sol, saw a need, and then made a program to make health care happen."

Because her father was a yacht captain, Diane and her siblings became fluent in Spanish. "I had many wonderful experiences," she said. The family lived for six years in Cuba, one year in Panama, and 15 years in Puerto Rico. The whole family spent time on the 100+ foot yacht and lived in towns and cities along the way. When her father began working out of Panama, the whole family traveled



for three weeks in their station wagon from Homestead, Florida, through Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica on the way to Panama. (Dad had already taken the yacht down.) Because of a landslide, more than 100 miles of Mexico were spent on a train while sharing space with goats and chickens. After Castro came to power, the family's exodus from Cuba came in the middle of the night when they left everything behind and fled back to Homestead.

Her first career was with the airlines. Lasting for 15 years, that position provided Diane with wonderful travel opportunities. When the airline industry changed dramatically, she became a distributor and sales manager for a worldwide food manufacturer. Fortunately, says Diane, "the company encourages employees to do volunteer work." As a result of her food experience, Diane first served El Sol as part of the kitchen staff. Then Sister Marta and Mike Richmond asked her to lead the Health Committee.

A single mom with an 18-year-old son, Diane is a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Palm Beach Gardens. Diane says she would like her next business card to read "*Philanthropist in Training*" *We Can Save Lives Together*. Diane continued, "I have learned that it is not what you have that makes you who you are, but what you can give . . . I feel so much fuller as a person when I can spend my time giving to others."



Worker of the Month for April

Antonio Ixtos Sohom

April's Worker of the Month is Antonio Ixtos Sohom. Antonio became worker of the month by attending English classes and taking part in volunteer activities, such as the Great American Cleanup.

He is from a small town in Guatemala. He is 26 years old, and besides English and Spanish, he also speaks Quiche.

Antonio says that he likes English class, because he needs it for the job. El Sol volunteer Lee Swanson is one of the ESL teachers that he likes. He didn't know any English when he came here, and now he can speak English. He also likes the computers at El Sol, and the fact that he can get jobs here.

Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna says that Antonio is always one to volunteer for every activity. "He always wants to help out," Luna said.

Food Distribution Helps El Sol Families



As a participant in this year's postal workers food drive, El Sol distributed several tons of canned food and other commodities to workers and needy families on Saturday, May 9. It was the third consecutive year that El Sol has served as a distribution center for the donated food.

The center received 90 boxes of food from the letter carriers' food drive and another 60 from Publix. Volunteers unpacked the containers and stacked the goods on tables around the El Sol assembly hall for easy pickup by workers and families later Saturday evening. Included were canned vegetables, meat and fish, pasta, rice, cereal, soup, juice and desserts.

El Sol President Jill Hanson praised volunteers, including El Sol workers, regular volunteers, and members of Corn Maya, for their hard work in organizing and distributing the food. "There was much work because, fortunately, we got much more food than we anticipated. We were able to get food for our pantry, as well as to distribute much food to needy families and workers, and without the volunteers we simply could not have done it," she said.

Jill also commended St. Vincent De Paul volunteers who picked up the food from collection points and trucked it to El Sol. The food drive marked the 17th year of the food campaign for the needy, which is sponsored by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Upcoming Events

May 18-20 – Registration for ESL nighttime summer semester

May 21 – El Sol general meeting 7:30 p.m.

May 25 – Memorial Day. El Sol will be open 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

May 26 – VNA Health Day. 1 to 6 p.m. El Sol, in partnership with the Visiting Nurses Association, will handle general medical check-ups and visual eye screenings for the workers and the rest of the community.

May 29 – "Paint Out From Your Hearts" Event. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. El Sol workers will paint a house in a Jupiter neighborhood in partnership with Habitat for Humanity and other community organizations.

June 5 – Town of Jupiter presentation at 9 a.m.

June 19 – Habitat for Humanity Community Service Event. 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. El Sol workers will help to roof a house under the Annual Community Service Program

June 19 – Town of Jupiter presentation

July 4 – Independence Day. El Sol will be open from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.



Donations Happily Accepted by El Sol

El Sol is accepting donations for its kitchen, office and for the workers. No donation is too small! Donations can be dropped off inside the center anytime before 2 p.m.

Take advantage of local grocery stores' "two for the price of one" and "buy one get one free" promotions and donate your free item to El Sol. The kitchen especially needs pasta, rice and canned food, especially beans and tomato products.

Gift cards are welcome for any stores where El Sol can purchase supplies.

For El Sol's kitchen:

- Coffee
- Paper plates
- Styrofoam cups
- Paper towels
- Napkins
- Plastic utensils
- Canned goods
- Rice
- Pasta
- Sugar
- Powdered coffee creamer
- Fresh milk
- Fresh fruit (apples, oranges, grapes, etc.)

For El Sol workers:

- Gel hand sanitizer
- Heavy-duty work gloves
- Plastic safety glasses
- Ball caps or hats
- Adult bicycles
- Bicycle locks
- Bicycle reflectors or lights

Educational supplies:

- Dry-erase markers
- Pencils
- Notebooks
- Spanish/English dictionaries

For El Sol's office:

- Copy paper
- File folders
- Pens
- Paper clips
- Staplers and staples