



El Sol Shines

"Working Together for a Better Community"



November 2009

Volume 1, Issue 8

Holidays at El Sol



Thanksgiving and Christmas are fun and festive for workers and their families



Corn Maya began a Christmas tradition some years ago of having a party for the children of the community, to ensure that they had a happy holiday. During that same time, at Thanksgiving, volunteers from St. Peter's church would go to Center Street and offer Thanksgiving dinner right there, on the street.

After El Sol opened, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations found a home.

Corn Maya continues to have its annual Christmas party for the children, and we will again this year offer dinners both on Thanksgiving and Christmas day. All of this is made possible by many wonderful volunteers.



President's message

Spread the joy

The first year El Sol opened, we did not have any idea to do a holiday celebration. But Thanksgiving came and volunteers from St. Peter's Church offered to make dinner, as they had done on Center Street in past years. Many more people came than we expected.

At Christmas, St. Jude's volunteers offered food and services, so Corn Maya had its annual children's party, and we opened El Sol for Christmas dinner. It was that first year that we wrote a Happy New Year sign in English, Spanish and several Mayan languages. We'll find that and put it up again this year. It's now a tradition, just like our annual Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas dinner.

One of the most touching things was the year that All Saints Elementary School students made gift boxes for each of the men, containing gift cards, toiletries, perhaps some socks or a small clothing item. At Christmas, everyone thinks of the children, and that's not bad, but sometimes the men are forgotten, and that's sad. When the kids made the presentation to some of the workers' leaders, everyone was close to tears.

We hope to be able to do something similar this year. Your generosity through the purchase of gift cards to Target, Walmart, Publix, or of small toiletry items, or even of cash, would enable us to do this again in 2009, to try to bring a bit of joy to people separated by great distance from families at Christmastime.

Thank you for everything that you do all year round. You are the "milagros de El Sol" -- the miracles of El Sol.

Jill Hansen



"Dear Santa . . ."

Immediate Needs Wish List

El Sol's Immediate Needs Wish List presents an opportunity for making gifts to the center that have an immediate impact. Some of the more pressing needs are:

- * A digital rechargeable **camera** for use in registering El Sol workers, \$250
- * **Printing** of color El Sol outreach brochure, \$1,000
- * **Printing** of El Sol Shines newsletter, \$80 per month
- * A week's supply of **coffee**, \$34.45 for five cans.
- * A week's supply of Styrofoam **coffee cups**, \$30 for 2,000 cups
- * A two-week supply of **napkins**, \$27.75 for 7,500 paper napkins
- * A two-week supply of **Cremora**, \$18.98
- * A two-week supply of **sugar**, \$38.07 for a 75 lb. bag
- * A new combination **printer/copier/scanner**, \$750

If you wish to donate any of these items, contact El Sol Center Director Jocelyn Sabbagh at 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.

From the kitchen



The El Sol kitchen has a wish list of its own.

Check your pantry and the supermarket sales and 'buy-one-get-one-free' promotions and drop off donations anytime. Some current needs are:

- * **Canned veggies**
- * **Sponges**
- * **Pot scrubbers**
- * **Knife sharpener**
- * **Hand soap**
- * **Cooking oil**

Worker of the Month for October

Elia Herrera



Elia Herrera has done it again, winning Worker of the Month honors for October after having won in September.

Elia earned the most points by volunteering regularly in the kitchen and participating in English classes and other programs, according to Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna.

Elia joined El Sol just a few months ago

and has been very involved in numerous other activities besides English classes and kitchen duty. She has given two beginning computer classes and volunteered as a teacher one night a week for a new adult education program launched by El Sol. She is married to Edgar Garcia and has a son, Edgar Jr., 15.

Congratulations to Elia for her second well-deserved honor as Worker of the Month.

Volunteers of the Month for October

The Grant Writing Team

The **El Sol Grant Writing Team** is this month's "Volunteer" of the Month. "It is beautiful to see the grant writers work together," said Jocelyn Sabbagh, director of El Sol. "Not only are they excellent writers with great research skills, but they also have an in depth understanding of our community's needs and a real passion for making a difference." The members of the team are **Sheila Hirsch, Shirley Jackson, Laura Kerr, and Patty Oades.**

Sheila Hirsch was first attracted to El Sol when she drove on Indiantown Road and was upset by the protesters. She began in the kitchen and has worked at the employers' registration desk. Being involved with grant writing and all the research each grant proposal entails has given Sheila a keen "appreciation of the struggle any non-profit group has to go through to just survive day to day."

Shirley Jackson, a retired educator, was a grant writer with the Palm Beach County school system. As she points out, "You have to find what El Sol needs and match it with what funders can provide." The team uses the El Sol mission statement as its central core, "Before seeking a new grant, the writers have to get the input of the board, Workers' Council, workers, staff and volunteers." According to Shirley, "Everyone on the team brings a particular background or perspective that adds to the grant process and the ability of El Sol to communicate to the funding agency why they should fund us."

Laura Kerr, with extensive experience in engineering, has "done a great deal of technical writing." The wording in grant proposals needs to be very specific and detailed, so that experience was useful when she became part of the grant writing team. Laura was "impressed by the 2008 El Sol Art Fest and was attracted to what El Sol was doing in the community." Laura also volunteers with Girl Scouts and is outreach chair for the Society of Women Engineers.

Patty Oades, with a journalism background, loves new challenges. She had often driven on Center Street in

Jupiter and was aware of some of the problems. When everything came together, she saw how El Sol had solved a problem for the workers and for the city. Patty has "always been a researcher" and research is a large part of preparing a grant proposal. "Looking for new ideas and possible programs has been exciting."

Some of the previously received grants have made it possible for El Sol to acquire ESL educational materials, install a portable phone system that makes it possible to reach anyone in the building, and funding toward another staff person. A recent grant application will focus on safety issues. If the grant is approved safety training and equipment will be available for the workers.

Jocelyn reports these grants have been approved in 2009: Lost Tree Village Foundation, Community Foundation, Western Union Foundation and Dollar General Literacy Foundation. She expects a response soon to grant proposals for the Million Dollar Round Table Foundation and the Federation of American Consumers and Travelers.

Upcoming events

Nov 20: Community service event with Solid Waste Authority

Nov 21: Guatemalan consulate and Guatemalan leaders meeting

Nov 26: Thanksgiving dinner celebration

Dec 4: Town of Jupiter code compliance presentation

Dec 5: Jupiter Police Department presentation

Dec 5: Health Department H1N1 & immunization vaccines

Dec 11: Movie night

Dec 18: Community Service Event with Habitat for Humanity

Dec 25: Christmas dinner celebration

A Day in the Life of El Sol



Classes, training, work, meals – just another busy day for workers, staff, and volunteers

6 a.m.

El Sol itself is not quite evident at 6 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 7, when the first workers arrive. It's still dark outside, and a line of about 20 men is waiting by the entrance of the dimly lighted center for the doors to open. The workers have come mostly by bicycle or on foot, although a few have been dropped off. They're dressed in sturdy shoes, jeans and tee shirts. Many have caps, and a few have sunglasses, prepared for a sunny day that seems unlikely with the blustery fall weather outside.

The doors open, and Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna greets the first workers at his desk with his computer booted up and ready to record their availability. All of the workers have been here before, and as they file by, each shows his simple ID with a photo, an address and a date of birth. Wilberto explains that to register here as a worker, each person must have a photo ID and proof of Jupiter residency. Since it's a Saturday, it's more likely that some of the workers already have weekday jobs, which they hope to supplement with a few extra hours of work on the weekends. There is a sheet to sign if the worker



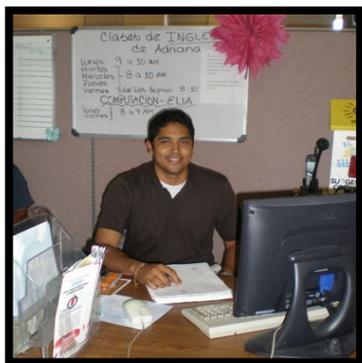
one of the waits is over as several volunteers in the kitchen have set out hot coffee and donated bread and pastries. By 7 a.m., it is almost fully light outside, and the first woman worker arrives.

8 a.m.

For the most part, the men greatly outnumber the women workers, and the work most often requested by employers is yard work or landscaping. Kevin, the volunteer working the morning shift on the employer desk, explains that most of the employers who want someone to help with housework generally will call ahead to arrange for a woman to work. Kevin demonstrates just how easy it is to register as an employer. The first time, the employer provides a name and address, explains the nature of work desired, how many workers needed and for how many hours, and the rate

of pay that will be offered. If there is a need for one of the workers to speak English, that is recorded and accommodated. The employer receives a card for future reference, and within minutes leaves with the number of workers requested. The employer is expected to provide transportation to the work site, any tools and explanation that is needed, payment in cash and transportation back to the center. It's not required but expected that if the worker is kept out through lunch that the employer will provide lunch as well as water and breaks. With El Sol's status as a resource center and not as a hiring employer, it's important that the center does not set fees but instead asks employers how much they plan to pay the worker. When asked, most employers answer \$10 an hour.

The employers are the lifeblood of the center. It's why the workers have come and why they're waiting. Workers need to be checked in at the center by 8 a.m. to have a chance to be called to work that



participation in English classes. Any special training or volunteering helps move the worker up on the list to be called and matched with an employer.

Although the workers keep streaming in, those who are already here wait quietly around the tables in the main hall, talking with each other and waiting. Waiting for coffee, waiting for work. Between 6:30 and 7 a.m. at least



day. By 8 a.m. this Saturday, 148 workers have shown up, and 19 lucky ones have been matched with employers. The remaining workers wait. Some flip through a newspaper, a few talk on cell phones, and others talk among themselves. But they're all waiting.

10 a.m.

Candelaria, one of the volunteer English instructors, and six workers convene in an upstairs classroom for an hour-long English lesson. Candelaria says that she only speaks a few words of Spanish but since this is a higher-level class, all of the participants understand English and are practicing their grammar and sentence structure.

Most of the English classes are held during the week when as many as 30 might fill the classroom to learn the very basics of English. On Saturdays when more jobs are available, the classes are smaller, generally under 10



people.

Besides the classes going on, the Corn Maya office in the back corner of the center is open, and Constance, a Corn Maya volunteer, puts

out an electric keyboard for anyone who is interested in providing a little music. One man plays quietly, while several others come into the office to talk with Constance and look at pictures and scrapbooks of Guatemala. She explains that Corn Maya is a non-profit organization separate from El Sol but joined in spirit of supporting immigrants.

Their organization provides translation, emergency, education and recreation services for immigrants as they adjust to life in the United States and try to improve the economy and situation of family and friends still in Guatemala. One of their current projects is to sell coffee from the "Rio Azul" to provide scholarships for children in Jacaltenango. Bags of local coffee will be lovingly wrapped in the woven native fabrics, which can be used as a purse after the coffee is enjoyed.

While there are many activities going on in the center, a few more employers come in and take workers out with them. By 10 a.m., 24 workers of the 148 who came in that morning have gotten work. As the time draws nearer to 11 a.m., some of the workers start to sign themselves out while others find other ways to occupy their time and wait for lunch.

Noon

By noon, a handful of volunteers have worked their magic in the kitchen and the food that has been giving off wonderful aromas is being

served. The workers quietly line up and pay a small amount for a hearty lunch. Miguel and Lenora are adult volunteers who supervise the kitchen crew staffed mainly by volunteers from the high school earning their community service hours. Today's menu includes rice and beans, pulled pork and chicken, salad, bread, desserts and ice tea. Lunch is served seven days a week, often using donations from generous supporters like Publix, CR Chicks and St. Jude's Catholic Church.



While most of the workers are eating, a second wave of volunteers arrive to man the employer desk. Wilberto is still at his desk, calling out names to see which workers are still here. Some workers have finished lunch and are working in the computer lab behind Wilberto's desk. Here they can use the Rosetta Stone programs to polish their English or use the Internet. Someone has donated an extra computer to the center, and Wilberto is holding a raffle for it. By now, employers have taken 33 out of the 148 workers who came to the center today looking for work.

By 1 p.m., the workers are thinning out. Lunch is over; classes are finished, and the kitchen and tables have been cleaned. Most of the remaining workers have signed out knowing that it's unlikely that they will get work that day. Their wait is over. By 1:45 p.m., as the center starts to close down, the final total is 35. Out of the 148 hopefuls who came to the center that day looking for a few hours of work, 35, or 24 percent, found it. Wilberto has worked at the center for 2½ years, almost as long as the center has been open.



"Twenty-four percent is a good day," he explains.

"Anything over 20 percent is better than average for us.

When it rains, sometimes only 10 percent of the workers get a job."

2 p.m.

The last workers leave. Wilberto goes through the building, turning off the computers, turning off the lights. Walking out the front door and looking back at the center, the arch of tissue flowers from last week's Art Fest is still in cheery evidence. And it will be there tomorrow when the center opens again.





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

Newsletter Print Sponsorship

The past six issues of *El Sol Shines* were printed by a generous donation from

HAYSMAR, Inc. Research & Analysis Since 1991

El Sol is in need of future newsletter sponsors. Contact El Sol at (561) 745-9860 or email diane.fitzpatrick@mac.com.

El Sol Shines is published and distributed via email monthly. To receive the newsletter, send a request to diane.fitzpatrick@mac.com

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



2nd annual Art Fest is another El Sol success



El Sol's 2nd annual Art Fest, "Building Bridges with Art," Nov. 1, was a success.

The artists had a wonderful time, not only getting ready for this event, but for the wonderful turnout from our community.

This year, a few new vendors were added and proved to be a great addition to the event.

The Art Fest committee, led by Betzy Rega and Andi Cleveland, thanks the Lighthouse Center for the Arts for its collaboration and support. A special thank-you goes to all the volunteers, who did an outstanding job.

El Sol by the numbers

El Sol by the numbers

Noteworthy items from the 3rd Quarter Report:

\$315,580 in free services to the Jupiter community

10,745 workers attended El Sol for an average of **117** daily

1,186 Jupiter workers placed in jobs

1,163 workers registered as of September 30

3,047 employers registered -- a new record

7,200 meals served for an average of **80** daily

1,000 enrolled in daytime and nighttime ESL classes

\$138,025 in free legal assistance involving **42** cases

Health checkups for **24** persons and free eyeglasses for **3**

6 patients treated at Caridad Clinic for serious eye defects