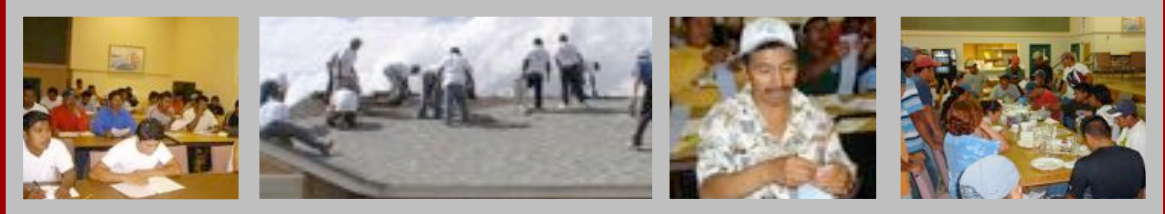




El Sol Shines

"Working Together for a Better Community"



October 2009

Volume 1, Issue 7

El Sol workers recognized by Jupiter Town Council

El Sol's involvement in community service projects was praised by Mayor Karen Golonka and the Town Council during a presentation Sept. 22 by the Rebuilding Together organization that El Sol has partnered with in a number of neighborhood and home improvement projects.

The accolades came after Rebuilding Together President Joanna Aiken presented a plaque to the town in appreciation of its support for the improvement projects that are conducted by volunteers from the two nonprofit organizations.

El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia, accompanied by five El Sol workers, spoke of the benefits of the partnership with Rebuilding Together that has helped to improve neighborhoods and the quality of life for residents.

In commending El Sol and Rebuilding Together, Mayor Golonka said the town is blessed with many dedicated volunteers and noted that El Sol came about because of the commitment of people in the community. "We thank the workers at El Sol for volunteering and for being a part of this community," she said. Ms.

Valdivia also lauded the collaboration between El Sol and Rebuilding Together, stating that "community partnership is community empowerment." She noted that residents of the community are the best experts about what is going on in their neighborhood and which families may need help.

She said that to her, "volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year but when you volunteer as El Sol does through our workers, you vote every single day about the kind of community you want to live in." Ms. Valdivia introduced the five El Sol workers who were representative of the many El Sol members who have volunteered on various community service projects in the community saying, "they vote every day to make a difference in the lives of others."

El Sol worker Domingo Perez read a statement in which he thanked the town, El Sol and its partners for the opportunity to give back to the community. "We understand the needs of others because we have the same needs. That is why we volunteer, to build a better community and to make people feel proud of us," Perez' statement said. Ms. Valdivia stepped



El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia spoke before Town Council.



Domingo Perez expressed appreciation of El Sol workers for the opportunity to give back to the community by volunteering. Others shown are Pablo de la Cruz, Agosto Vail, Juan Carlos Guterrez and Javier Ruiz

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President's message

Helping immigrants build a future

I have just returned from an amazing journey to Guatemala. If anyone ever asks you why you work with what they call "illegal aliens," besides saying, I've never met an alien, much less an illegal one, it might help them to understand if they could take a trip to some place like San Miguel Ixtahuacan and experience the life that many who are migrants throughout the world experience.

The Internet says San Miguel is 90 air miles from the capital of Guatemala. This would be about the distance from here to Miami, but it is incredibly distant in time and prosperity. It takes a day-and-a-half to get there. It is unbelievable to an American that people in a country that is only two-and-one-half-hours by air from Miami are so poor. It is almost impossible for young people, no matter how bright, no matter how deserving, to escape that poverty, except by leaving.

A young man is a nurse. He got a scholarship, through his church. Another young man was trained to be a doctor -- by the Cubans. For most, however, there is no option to get that education; it is too expensive, the family needs the money too much. So, no matter how bright you are, you go to work as a campesino (a farm worker, who often travels many miles each day, to carry heavy, heavy burdens, on their backs, to endure very hard work). That's for maybe \$25 a week, which is less than \$2,000 a year.

We met two guys who had been El Sol members, who have recently returned to their home towns which are not far from San Miguel, one in Aguacatan, a very beautiful spot, the head of the Rio San Juan, plus a young man who had lived in West Palm Beach, but was very familiar with El Sol and the work we do. It was great to see them and meet their families who were so happy to have them back. But they come back changed.

At El Sol, we are fortunate, that we get to help some of these people to develop their talents, to get educated, to learn English and computers and now, to get a high school education.

But there are still many sad, sad stories, of people who have incredible talents – for leadership, for the arts, for intelligence, who end up with no choice. We meet them every day in El Sol; we all know them. What a blessing those people would be to our country, if they could stay here; and what sorrow may happen, if their dreams are deferred: will they, as Langston Hughes said, dry up, like a raisin in the sun?

I have to add that the people that I met in San Miguel have an incredibly strong faith despite their suffering, and a beautiful culture.

Jill Hansen

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.

Jerry Licklider

Dedicated El Sol volunteer

Some of you have heard about the death of Jerry Licklider, one of our most faithful and loyal volunteers.

Jerry was one of the very first supporters of El Sol. He was at the meeting of our Jupiter Democratic Club, when Professor Tim Steigenga and Council member Jim Kuretski came to debate whether or not the Town of Jupiter should create a day labor center. He came with us, when we all went to the Town Council meeting and stood up with our blue shirts on in support of a center, when my late husband, Sol Silverman, spoke so eloquently and persuasively about why the Town should create a center.

From that day forward, Jerry was always here when we needed him: He was at the employer desk at 6 a.m. at least three days a week (and at our volunteer recognition, he received the "Early Bird" award in honor of his steadfastness). He was there at our opening event, and most recently sat in the audience as El Sol's workers were honored for their volunteer work in the Jupiter community. In fact, even on the morning of his death, we received an e-mail from Jerry, offering to volunteer for our upcoming Art Fest.

Jerry was the person who took care of his mom (she was in her 90s) and when his sister went away, he took care of her house. He seldom complained about anything; he was always reading political books or fiction or the newspapers. Through his church, he arranged for food left over from some local banquets to be delivered to us at El Sol. He was a loving and giving man. His death is a loss to us all. He will be deeply missed. Our sympathy goes out to his grieving family.



Jill Hanson and the Staff and Board of Directors of El Sol

A glowing endorsement

From time to time, we hear back from employers just how much El Sol workers have meant to their projects and small businesses.

We'd like to share one employer's comments, sent to us after he received last month's El Sol Shines. John L. Smith is general manager of River Forest Yachting Centers, which hired an El Sol worker on a permanent full-time basis in 2006.

"I just wanted to take a moment to tell you and the entire El Sol staff how pleased we have been with the young man we hired thru your organization. . . He is honest, dependable, sober, with a tremendous work ethic and as of this date he has just been promoted to a higher level of responsibility with a substantial increase in pay. . . I happen to be a resident of Jupiter and I have seen firsthand some of the people that have chosen to protest your organization but, as a resident and employer it is a far better system than before and it's unfortunate that these protesters do not realize that many of your workers are in fact properly documented. I certainly hope that more employers will consider using your organization because I'm sure you have more registered workers with the same desire as our staff member and I think that they will realize the positive impact you make to our community. "

El Sol abides by a Code of Ethics

As a nonprofit organization that is dependent on the public trust for its support and success, El Sol's Board of Directors, staff and volunteers have committed to abide by a Code of Ethics that was adopted by directors earlier this year.

The code consists of nine principles that are intended to preserve the integrity and trustworthiness of El Sol and to maintain a high standard of transparency and responsibility. By reading and signing the code, directors, staff and volunteers agree to abide by the principles.

"Our most important asset is the trust we enjoy from the public and by agreeing to the Code of Ethics we are making a continued commitment to ethical practices and the highest standards of accountability," said El Sol President Jill Hanson. The principles in the code include a pledge to honor El Sol's status as a not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization and to disclose situations in which a personal interest conflicts with one's El Sol obligations.

Another provision is a pledge to neither use nor allow the use of El Sol resources or information to further any personal interest and to conduct one's self in a professional manner, treating others with dignity, respect, courtesy and equality at all times. Persons who have not signed the Code of Ethics are asked to contact Volunteer Coordinator Sally Isham.

Art Fest is coming!



A color pencil drawing by Jupiter High School student Itzel Martinez, 16, is the winner of El Sol's Art Fest 2009 poster contest. The 2nd annual art show is **Sunday, Nov. 1 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

The poster was judged the best for its creativity and for adhering to the contest theme of "Building Bridges With Art." The drawing depicts a person placing the missing pieces of a puzzle in a globe suspended above three other persons representing Mexico, Guatemala and the United States.

Martinez said she was inspired by the notion "that we are all brothers and sisters and we should be united. To me it means we are all a piece so the puzzle and it takes all of the nations to be together in order to have peace," she said. She will receive a \$100 prize for her winning poster at the Nov. 1 Art Fest at El Sol.

The show, which is free, will feature a diverse array of paintings, jewelry and handicrafts, including Guatemalan apparel and crafts, said Art Fest Co-Chair Andrea Cleveland. Several paintings will also be raffled at the show.

For more information call 745-9860.



This painting of a sunset on Lake Atitlan in Guatemala that will be among selected paintings raffled at El Sol's 2nd Annual Art Fest.

El Sol workers volunteer to lend a helping hand



Roberto Pinda was among El Sol workers who volunteered to clear debris and cut back 20 years of vegetation overgrowth at a home on Center Street.

El Sol workers who cleaned trash and cut back vegetation at a home on Center Street were praised for their hard work Sept. 25 by neighbors and the Solid Waste Authority's Joanna Aiken for helping to beautify the property and enhance safety for motorists.

"It is amazing what these men did with some clippers, a machete, some shovels and a chainsaw," Ms. Aiken said of the workers who volunteered for the community service project.

They labored for four hours under a hot sun and cleared debris from around the home at 322 Center St. and cut back vegetation from 20 years of tree and vine

growth. The vegetation was so dense that it had obscured vision of motorists attempting to turn from the Pine Grove neighborhood onto Center Street.

When word spread in the neighborhood about the work under way neighbors came by to thank the volunteers for what they were doing for the neighborhood.

The workers were praised also by Dora Valdivia, El Sol associate director, who said, "Once again El Sol workers have given a lot and done a lot for the benefit of the neighborhood and for the owner of a home that needed great help."

Worker of the Month for September

Elia Herrera

Elia Herrera de Garcia has been in Jupiter just a short time but her outstanding accomplishments were more than enough to win her honors as Worker of the Month.



Since joining El Sol two months ago Elia has given two beginning computer classes daily, worked in the kitchen, and volunteered as a teacher one night a week for a new adult education program offered by El Sol. She has also taken English classes. Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna notes that she is a person who can't stand to be idle.

"She is always looking for something to do," said Luna. Elia, a native of Jacaltenango, Guatemala, is married to Edgar Garcia. The couple has a son, Edgar Jr., 15.

Congratulations to Elia for her well-deserved honor as Worker of the Month and as such is entitled to priority for job referrals for three days.



Town Council recognition

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in to finish the statement when Perez was momentarily overcome with emotion.

The Town council and the audience gave the workers a loud round of applause. The other workers present were Pablo de la Cruz, Augusto Vail, Juan Carlos Guitierrez and Javier Ruiz. Jupiter homeowner George Bendkenstein, expressed his gratitude for the new roof, new windows and other improvements that volunteers made to his home at 309 Second St. during a recent community service project. He said he especially wanted to thank the workers at El Sol.

Volunteer of the Month for September

Martin Coleman

Martin Coleman is Volunteer of the Month for October 2009. When Martin signed up to be an El Sol volunteer shortly after El Sol opened, he wrote that he could come in for only one hour a day, one day a week. Now, it seems Martin is here more than he is not here. Martin helps out in the kitchen sometimes, but he is best known for his help in teaching English. He believes it is very important that all the workers learn how to speak English.

Martin was born and grew up in Bloomfield, New Jersey, but moved to Florida about 40 years ago, after he completed his service in the United States Air Force. In the Air Force, he had an interesting career, which included flying on secret missions during the Cold War, in those pre-satellite days, when the U.S. spied on the Soviet Union by airplane.

After the service, Martin first moved to Miami, then to Pine Island, on Florida's west coast, where he had a barbershop. When his wife passed away, Martin decided to retire, and moved here to Palm Beach County.

He read about El Sol in the newspaper and decided to volunteer. Usually, you can see Martin conducting table talks, so the guys can practice their English in a conversational setting. He also will buy English language books at the request of his students. On Monday mornings, he goes to a social meeting at a church. The people bring in clothing, so Martin has brought clothes from there to distribute to the workers. The ladies from the group were very happy to receive a thank you from El Sol. Martin is also involved in the El Sol Spanish class for volunteers.

He says that he likes to come here, because he thinks that the people need to learn to speak English, and it is a way that he can give back to society. Joking (or maybe not), he says that he is "doing penance for all of my sins." But seriously, he says, he gets a great satisfaction out of helping people.

Thank you, Martin, for all that you do.





El Sol

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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 Sponsor

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Adult ed program puts students back on track



In Mexico and Guatemala, many families are forced to choose between sending their children to school and sending them to work so they can help put food on the table. Unfortunately, many children are forced to forgo schooling in order to help their families and are unable to complete their basic education, if they are able to begin school at all.

El Sol began meeting these educational needs last January by offering Spanish literacy classes for adults who had never learned to read and write. In September, we expanded our basic education opportunities by beginning to offer a program called Plazas Comunitarias.

Plazas Comunitarias is an adult basic education program administered by the Mexican Institute of Adult Education and is designed specifically to provide Spanish-speaking adults of any nationality the chance to complete their basic education. Students "enroll" in the grade level at which they left off as children and upon passing their final course exams, are able to progress to the next grade level until they have finished the program.

The course curriculum replicates the math, reading, history and science material taught in elementary and middle school, and we offer these classes three nights a week so that students can attend after work.

The students' desire to improve their lives through education is obvious through their regular attendance in spite of the long days they work before coming to class and the students are truly grateful for this opportunity.

As one student commented when asked about the program, "Time doesn't stop so I have to take advantage of the chance to study while I can because I may never have it again."

All classes are taught by volunteers. We are currently seeking more teachers. If you are interested in teaching (and speak fluent Spanish) please contact Kathryn Klaas at El Sol at 561-745-9860.