



El Sol Shines

"Working Together for a Better Community"



September 2009

Volume 1, Issue 6

New houses dedicated

El Sol workers' volunteer efforts repaid back home

After months of hard work in a small Guatemala village and collaboration among several agencies, families of three El Sol workers recently celebrated the dedication of new homes they received under a cooperative program involving El Sol, Habitat for Humanity of Palm Beach County, and affiliate Habitat agencies in Guatemala and Mexico.

The newly completed homes at Tziszaj (in the Jacaltenango region of Guatemala) were formally dedicated Aug. 21 by Luis Samayoa, national director of Habitat for Humanity Guatemala. Recipients of the homes are the families of Roberto Montejo, Pedro Hernandez and Nicholas Quinones. Built of concrete block construction and equipped with all the modern utilities, including electricity and indoor plumbing, construction and purchase of the homes were made possible through low-interest loans to be repaid over eight years. The owners also earned "sweat equity" credits towards purchase of the homes by helping with construction.

Samayoa told El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia that dedication of the new new homes "has been a very moving experience." He also praised Ms. Valdivia's initiative that led to the collaboration among Habitat agencies that allows workers to earn credits towards purchase of their homes by doing community service work in Jupiter, including working on Habitat homes being build in the western area of the city.

Dedication of the new homes was a joyous occasion, according to new homeowner



Luis Samayoa, national director of Habitat Guatemala, dedicates three homes in Tziszaj on Aug. 21.

... Continued on page 3



Proudly standing in front of their new homes are, from left, the Quiñones family, the Jimenez family and the Montejo family.

President's message

September 6 marked the third anniversary of the opening of our doors at El Sol. It is funny that it was such a short time ago, really. So much has changed, in the lives of the workers, the volunteers, the whole Jupiter community, as a result of that opening.

There are probably some, maybe many, who do not know the story of our opening, so it bears repeating.

Not so long ago, three years ago as I write this, men seeking work used to gather on Center Street, in Jupiter. As many as you see in El Sol, on some days, you would see them gathered on Center Street. A truck or a car would drive up, and the men would crowd around the car, asking to be picked for whatever the work was. Neighbors complained. The situation was dangerous, unsafe, unhealthy for all.

People went to town council meetings regularly complaining about the immigrants, basically asking the town to enforce the immigration laws and, I guess, send them all back to where they came from. It was ugly.

The Town of Jupiter responded by proposing two things: an ordinance that would make it illegal to solicit work on the street; and, a center where workers could gather to seek work – what we call in the law, an alternative forum, which they were required to do by the U.S. Constitution, if they wanted to prohibit solicitation.

A community group consisting of representatives of various local organizations became the lead agent to establish a not – for-profit entity, that would be the lead agency for this new center. We searched for a site, we sought political support, we sought financial support. We were all of us really “green” at creating a new organization like this. Where would we get the money? We had no idea. Where would we get a building? We had no idea.

Then, one of our partner agencies, Catholic Charities, got a grant from a private, anonymous foundation, to fund the day labor program. Then, another miracle: The town exercised its option to buy the old Life Song Church property, adjacent to Town Hall, and leased it for the center.



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.

Tim Steigenga, a professor from Florida Atlantic University who had been patiently cultivating the idea of a center for many years, suggested a name: El Sol, after the sunshine, and after Sol Silverman, my husband, who had died after championing the cause of the immigrants with area politicians.

Recently, one of the town leaders told us that he was so surprised, when there was no one on Center Street even after Day 1.

That took lots of planning, and lots of work. He said he is even more surprised at the remarkable daily progress we make, developing really astounding programs at El Sol. Our international Habitat for Humanity connection is but one of our amazing programs.

We owe all of this to so many people, who gave so many hours of dedication over the years, to bring this organization to where it is today. I think of the selflessness of so many, the caring and daring of so many.

We have so much talent, so much goodness, in our midst, that I know that our next three years will be even more amazing.

Jill Hanson

Hard work is rewarded – with good food!

A group of El Sol workers who helped install plywood sheathing on the roof of a Habitat for Humanity home in West Jupiter recently not only learned new construction skills but received an added bonus when they were served a delicious lunch of chicken stew, rice and corn tortillas after their morning of work.

The luncheon treat was sponsored by Corn Maya, Inc., long-time partner of El Sol in providing services and programs to the community. Ms. Patricia Mendoza, whose family moved into a new Habitat home earlier this year, prepared the meal with the assistance of other volunteers, including Constance Holmes, a Corn Maya board member, Ms. Holmes cousin, Ellen Gersch, Pascala Lopez Diaz, wife of Corn Maya Board member Galindo Diaz, and several EL Sol workers.

"We wanted to say thank you to Habitat and the workers, and for the workers to have a nice lunch," Ms. Holmes said. El Sol workers had helped with construction of the Mendoza home previously and the family is one of four that were assisted by Corn Maya with the application process with Habitat for Humanity that led to their being able to purchase affordable homes in the project in West Jupiter.

El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia said the Aug. 21 service project that saw El Sol workers gain new job experience and skills by measuring, cutting and installing plywood roof sheathing went smoothly and that a number of positive comments were received about their work.

She also commended Ms. Holmes for obtaining free bus tickets from Palm Tran that allowed the El Sol workers to take the bus to the job site.



El Sol workers installed plywood sheathing on a Jupiter home under construction by Habitat for Humanity. Seventeen workers volunteered for the community service project and enjoyed a delicious lunch afterwards, sponsored by Corn Maya, Inc.



New homes dedicated

(Continued from Page 1)

Roberto Montejo, who said his wife Ana "cooked for all the families to celebrate and welcome Habitat at the dedication."

Nicholas Quinones, who used to wear a big Texan hat while waiting for work at El Sol, called Ms. Valdivia to thank her for her efforts and said, "My family and I can sleep better now and I am not afraid of the rain."

Quinones and Pedro Hernandez returned to Guatemala earlier and, with other family members, helped with construction of their homes. However, each has a son in Jupiter who are members of El Sol. Completion of the three new homes in Guatemala by Habitat for Humanity, is likely to be just the beginning of a program that will see many more such affordable homes being built, according to El Sol's Ms. Valdivia. She said dozens of other El Sol workers from Guatemala and Mexico are being screened by their respective Habitat for Humanity agencies for eligibility to participate in the home ownership program.

"These three homes will spearhead what will hopefully be many, many more homes to be built for deserving families," she said.



Cell phone fundraiser

Most people have one or two unused cell phones sitting unused, gathering dust. Now they can be put to good use and benefit El Sol.

Old cell phones can be donated to El Sol as part of a cell phone donation program through CellularFundraiser.com.

El Sol will receive \$10 for every six cell phones collected and turned over to CellularFundraiser.com. Collection bags are available in the volunteer office or through Dora Valdivia at El Sol.

Art Fest needs volunteers!



The Art Fest Committee is seeking additional volunteers to help with this year's event, set for Sunday, Nov. 1, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Volunteers are needed to serve as cashiers, hosts and hostesses and with serving snacks and beverages. If you would like to help with this noteworthy event please contact Andi Cleveland at andriacleveland@comcast.net.

Volunteer of the Month for August

Jenny Gomez

Jenny is one of our volunteers who came in the door because she saw the demonstrators, and realized this is the place she wanted to volunteer. She saw a letter about some co-workers who were volunteers at El Sol, and thought she wanted to do it, but she didn't walk through the door until one Saturday, when she saw the demonstrators out there picketing.

She was also responsible for organizing El Sol's participation last April 18 in "Power to Care," a volunteer day for employees of Florida Power & Light. More than 15 employees of FPL came here and learned about what we do here, helped us with our communication plans, with food delivery and many other programs.

Jenny does just about everything at El Sol: She started out working on the employer desk, then she offered to help out keeping track of volunteer hours, so every Sunday, she takes our volunteer book, and enters and adds up all the hours for all the volunteers for the past week. It is very important to keep track of our volunteer hours, because we can show how strong our support is in the community, and that at El Sol, for every dollar donated, we get at least \$3 in volunteer services.

Jenny was concerned about the workers, who often sat for hours, waiting for work, with nothing to do. She thought maybe some of them would like to try jewelry making. She bought beads, and several of the women in particular took to making beautiful beaded bracelets, necklaces and earrings. The women were able to sell them at our Art Fest, and now continue to take them to area farmers' markets and different festivals.

But Jenny wasn't busy enough, so she decided to try teaching English, which she does on Tuesday evening.

Jenny was born in Ecuador, but grew up in New York

City, in Queens. She lived close to Shea Stadium, where the New York Mets play baseball.

Her "job" in her family was to be the translator for her parents, with teachers, doctors, and so on. In school

she excelled in mathematics, and attended the prestigious Brooklyn Tech High School. She started work as a draftsperson, but ended up studying engineering and then got a master's degree in marketing.

About 10 years ago, she came to visit her brother in Florida, and fell in love with the place. She found that FPL was hiring, and got a job there. She now works for NextEra Energy, a related company of FPL, which provides alternative energy such as wind and solar.

Jenny says her parents are her examples for giving. "They didn't have a lot, but they always gave back, so I try to do my part." Jenny does more than her part. She does the work of many. Thanks, Jenny, for giving back to El Sol.



Jenny (right) organized El Sol's participation in FPL's "Power to Care" Day, bringing in FPL employees to work on several projects at El Sol.

Worker of the Month for August

Estrada Martin

Estrada Martin, who arrived in Jupiter earlier this year, has won top honors as Worker of the Month for August.

Estrada, 53, is a native of El Salvador and moved to Jupiter earlier this year. Although a newcomer to the community and to El Sol, he eagerly participated in English classes and signed up for community service projects at every opportunity, said Dora Valdivia, El Sol associate director.

"He is very hard-working and has a lot of initiative and is always wanting to help in every way," she said. Also, he is a skilled landscaper and enjoyed his work very much, she noted.

The Worker of the Month honoree is entitled to first preference for jobs for three days.

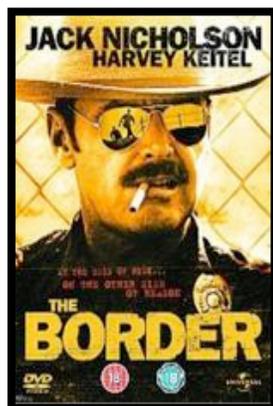
October Movie: The Border

On Oct. 9, El Sol will show *The Border*, a film made in the 1980s, with Jack Nicholson and Harvey Keitel as border patrol agents, one corrupt, one going beyond his duty to aid a beautiful immigrant woman.

Length: 104 minutes

English: Spanish subtitles

Starring Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Elpidia Carrillo.





El Sol celebrates 3 years of success

El Sol celebrated its third birthday Sept. 6, with a celebration filled with stories, reminiscing, kudos and gifts – not to mention plenty of birthday cake and the Happy Birthday song.

The celebration marked three years of El Sol, starting with a handful of people who worked hard to provide a place for day laborers to safely get work. Today more than 200 volunteers help El Sol provide language classes, job training, meals, legal aid and other services to immigrants.

El Sol's three-year history was retold by El Sol President Jill Hanson, through the story of Antonio Delgado, one of the first volunteers at El Sol, who was forced to leave the United States and settle in Canada. Delgado, now a successful potter, sculptor and artist, sent three pieces that were presented to those being recognized.

Pottery pieces were presented to former El Sol President Mike Richmond; Patricio Silvestre, president of Corn Maya; and to El Sol Director Jocelyn Sabbagh and Diego Rojas, president of the Workers' Council.

The gifts represent "the best of what we've done over these past three years," Hanson said. Delgado's own story "embodies the cruel and sad plight of immigrants in this country. People like yourselves whose talents aren't allowed to blossom here."

Sister Marta Tobon recognized El Sol volunteers, including those who have been with the center since the beginning, and teen student volunteers.

El Sol is an example of a community that responded to difficult immigration challenges in a creative, humane and successful way, said Roger Buckwalter, retired editorial page editor of the *Jupiter Courier*, who spoke at the celebration.

"To those who say that El Sol is at odds with the spirit of our country, the spirit of a people from so many different places and so many different backgrounds, we say, forcefully and constantly: *Nosotros somos uno, y podemos ayudarnos el uno al otro* – we are one and we will help each other," Buckwalter said. Also speaking at the celebration were Jim Kuretski, town councilor; and Dan Liftman, staff assistant for Rep. Alcee L. Hastings.



Above, speakers and special guests (from left) were: Dan Liftman from Rep. Alcee Hastings's office, Roger Buckwalter, Sister Marta Tobon, El Sol Director Jocelyn Sabbagh, former El Sol President Mike Richmond, current President Jill Hanson, and Jim Kuretski, town councilor. Below, pottery was presented to (from left) El Sol Workers' Council President Diego Rojas, Sabbagh, Richmond, and Corn Maya President Patricio Silvestre.



A "squirrely" situation on the job

Betsy Rega, kitchen coordinator and member of the board of Sunshine Artworks, tells this story about a rather exciting day when she, her son Michael and El Sol worker Domingo were trying to get some yard work done:

"Domingo, Michael and I had an interesting adventure this morning here in the Farms. Domingo was trimming some trees when a nest of baby squirrels came falling down. He called me, I called my friend Brenda from Busch Wildlife.

She told us to make a nest, place it under a shady tree within eye's view of the mommy, who was up in the tree yelling at Domingo. (Moms . . . we're all alike!) Then catch the babies, who were scampering away like toddlers during bath time, all four of them. Then place them in the nest and leave them there for Mommy to come and get them.

We did just that, and Mommy came down got her babies. She's now back in the tree with them. Whewwwww! It was an adventure for us all!"

Immediate Needs Wish List

In addition to our regular needs, El Sol has an immediate need for:

A decent digital camera
The one we have is taped together, often doesn't work, and doesn't take very good pictures anymore, and we use it for registration, as well as to document what we do.

Coffee, coffee, coffee!



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 Sponsor

This month's edition of *El Sol Shines* is printed by a generous donation from

HAYSMAR, Inc.

Research & Analysis Since 1991

If you would like to sponsor a future newsletter, please 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

Sally Isham

Wilberto Luna

Jocelyn Sabbagh

Dora B. Valdivia

Mary Pat Webster

Diane Williams

Notes from the Pantry



Welcome to all the new kitchen volunteers: Lisa Bishop (Wed/Thur), Erika Villatoro & Oberti Delgado (Sunday), Cary Fitzpatrick (Sunday), Paulo Garcia (Saturday), Thayra Diehr (Friday), Amanda Coffey (Sat/Sun), and Alice Van Nostrand (Thursday). We still have openings in the kitchen, especially the early-bird shift (6-8 a.m.)

Financial Report: Please try to be conservative and use the food that is available in the kitchen to cook with. Bernie will make a list of all essential items for the kitchen; you will be reimbursed for these items if you need to make an emergency purchase. Any product not on Bernie's list will not be reimbursed. If there is something that is not on Bernie's list and you feel it should be, please let Jill know. Thanks for your understanding.

Coffee Making: The lunchtime kitchen crew agreed to completely take over coffee prep for the next day. This means having the large pot and a small pot ready to plug in, and the sugar containers full. The early morning volunteers thank you for your help.

New Oven: Our old stove/oven has been fixed and it has dials WHOO HOO!! It cost \$435.00 to repair. The repairman said it could last two weeks, two months or two years. Jocelyn has submitted a grant to a local philanthropic organization for a replacement. Thanks to Dom Bakija for getting the estimates for a replacement. We will let you know how that goes.

Old Freezer: The volunteers who attended the meeting voted to remove the old freezer. We will be working to build a counter and storage center in its place. Please, Please, Please, if you have the time and feel like cooking up some chicken or any other product in the freezer, take some home. If you do bring in food, just leave a note on the refrigerator that it is there and what date you cooked it.

Worker sign-in book: The worker's council has voted to allow any worker who volunteers in the kitchen to receive points for their work. Please remind any worker who serves or washes dishes to sign the book, which is located on the counter, next to the kitchen log book. The workers will thank you!

Our next kitchen meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 16 at El Sol. We would love to have a representative from every shift.

Upcoming Events

Sept. 22 – Presentation to Town of Jupiter Commission on Rebuilding Together, 7 p.m. El Sol and Rebuilding Together Palm Beach Board members will make a presentation to town officials.

Sept. 25 – "Rebuilding Together" community service project on Center Street

Sept. 26 – Hispanic Heritage cultural event & ice cream social

Oct. 9 – Movie Night: *The Border*

Oct. 30 – Habitat for Humanity community service project

Nov. 1 – Art Fest 1-4 p.m.