A group of El Sol workers joined with other neighborhood volunteers to collect 125 bags of litter along streets in the Pine Gardens South neighborhood in this year’s Great American Cleanup on Saturday, April 24.

Equipped with metal litter pickup tools and plastic bags, volunteers fanned out over a large area bounded by First Avenue on the north, Tony Penna Drive on the south, Loxahatchee Drive on the west, and Old Dixie Highway and the railroad on the east.

They collected a diverse amount of debris such as paper, cans, cardboard and other material that had been discarded along street rights-of-way.

"Everything went well and everyone worked really hard," said El Sol board member Mary Anne Oblaczynski, the site volunteer coordinator.

El Sol Center Director Jocelyn Sabbagh also praised the volunteers for their efforts noting that they worked hard “and were very quick.” Ten El Sol workers participated in the cleanup, along with 39 neighborhood residents, including several children who accompanied their parents.

The Great American Cleanup is a project of Keep America Beautiful. Local sponsors included the Solid Waste Authority and Keep Palm Beach County Beautiful.
President’s message

Spring ushers in changes, improvements

Coming up at El Sol over the next few weeks will be many changes in what we look like. Thanks to a generous grant from our neighbors at Lost Tree Foundation, we are able to upgrade some of our equipment and furnishings. So when you come into El Sol, you will not have to wonder, let’s see, who’s here that can help me? There will be a reception desk facing the front door, and the person sitting there will be in a position to see everyone who comes in, and direct them to where they need to go. That desk will also function as the labor coordinator’s desk. Already, some changes have begun to happen.

Of course, as with all changes, it will take some getting used to, and there may be some temporary inconveniences while the changes are happening, but in the end, we hope it will make our great center even better.

One of our board members, Ed Ricci, says if you bring people into El Sol, they love what they see here. Over the past couple of months, we have had many visitors. Jeff Binder, one of our regular volunteers, who in his “day job” is pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Tequesta, brings members of his parish one Saturday a month, to introduce them to El Sol, and to give some assistance in the kitchen. As noted below, Bradley Harden and his dad, Roger, also visited on a Saturday morning. We also welcomed representatives of the Palm Beach School District, including Clare Valier, who is a resource teacher for Adult ESOL programs, as well as Margarita Pinkos and Connie Berry, from the district’s Multi-Cultural Education Department. All have said how impressed they are with what we have done at El Sol. Connie Berry is also president of the board of Caridad Center, a center that provides medical care to migrant workers and their families, as well as helping us out at El Sol, from time to time, with our health care needs. As noted elsewhere, she came back to speak to our ESL graduates.

We also had visits from two of the candidates for Mayor of the Town of Jupiter. We had heard that these candidates were opposed to El Sol, but both, after visiting us and seeing what we do, pronounced themselves impressed with our operation, and stated they were satisfied that we were providing needed services.

Dr. Ruth Doran, director of the Guatemala Maya Center in Lake Worth, also visited, as did Sister Rachel of the Maya Ministry, to talk about ways in which we can collaborate. We look forward to working with them in the future, as we grow and get better.

Jill Hanson

A visit from an old friend

Bradley Harden, son of our late volunteer Eileen Harden and Roger Harden, stopped by El Sol during his Easter break.

Friends of Eileen will be happy to hear about how great Bradley is doing. He is on course to graduate summa cum laude from the University of Florida, with a degree in biomedical engineering. He has been accepted to five very prestigious graduate programs, to work toward his doctoral degree.

We know how proud Eileen was of him, and we can imagine how she is “kvelling” in heaven over his accomplishments.

Congratulations, Bradley!

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.
El Sol graduates 72 students in English, basic studies

Seventy-two students were honored at El Sol’s spring graduation ceremony, marking another successful season of classes in English and basic studies. Fifty-eight students from the English program earned certificates of participation from the Palm Beach County School District, which partners with El Sol to provide English classes. Another 17 students were recognized for completing the basic education program, Plazas Comunitarias.

Connie Berry from the Palm Beach School District’s Multi-Education Department was the keynote speaker at the graduation ceremony, on April 12. She gave an uplifting speech encouraging students to continue pursuing their education.

After receiving their certificates, several students shared their class work. Rafael Guarchaj, winner of an El Sol poetry contest, read his winning poem aloud. Aurelio Lopez read a poem that he wrote in the style of Jorge Luis Borges.

Two other students brought the audience to tears as they read aloud class work that expressed their gratitude to El Sol for the opportunity it has given them to finally receive a classroom education. Ramon Barreno wrote a poem in which he shared that El Sol is his “first school” and how thankful he is to have the opportunity to learn after leaving his family to create a better life for them. Eugenio Par, a student in the Spanish literacy class, did not know how to read or write in Spanish before beginning the program, but at the ceremony he read aloud a paragraph that he wrote.

Following the ceremony, students, teachers and community supporters enjoyed a reception with sandwiches generously donated by Chick-Fil-A.

Sunshine Artworks puts artists in the spotlight

Sunshine Artworks has been busy the past two months promoting El Sol artists and their artwork. Paintings and handcrafted jewelry are being displayed and sold around the area, and Sunshine Artworks volunteers are gearing up for the third annual Artfest, coming this fall.

Artfest 2010 will be Sun., Nov. 7, from 1 to 5 p.m. at El Sol. The first planning meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Wed., May 19 at El Sol. All are welcome to help make this year’s festival better than ever.

Lenin Cochoy, Pedro Chavajay and Juan Alberto were each able to sell original paintings in April. Lenin Cochoy was one of the artists that showed his work at a fundraiser for the Cancer Alliance Help and Hope Foundation. Two of his paintings were on display at the student exhibition at the Lighthouse Center during April.

Ines Perez Lopez’s hand-made rosaries are being sold at St. Peter’s Church gift shop. Ines Perez and Pedro Chavajay have items for sale at the Lighthouse Center for the Arts gift store.

Note cards featuring the paintings of Pedro Chavajay are available in the office for $12.00 for a set of six.

The Lighthouse Center for the Arts will conduct art classes beginning in May. Painting and Drawing class will be Mondays 9-11 a.m. Ceramics class will be May 14 and 28, 9-11 a.m.
Hire a Worker campaign sparks record hiring

El Sol’s “Hire a Worker” campaign launched March 27 is credited with helping to increase the number of jobs filled through the day-labor program, which has also registered more than 40 new, first-time employers coming to hire workers during the same period.

Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna said there has been a noticeable increase in hiring overall since the “Hire a Worker” promotion began with the use of newspaper advertising, notices in church bulletins, and distribution of fliers in the community. A tally of first-time users of the labor service since the special hiring campaign began shows more than 40 new employers registered.

“Employment has been good,” Luna said at the close of business Wednesday, April 28, when 46 workers were hired of the 87 registered, for a record 53 percent placement rate. On Saturday, April 24, a total of 60 jobs were filled, a 47 percent placement rate. Luna said more persons who hired workers in the past are also returning. The jobs filled are for landscaping, painting, digging, general labor, housekeeping, debris clean up, moving, construction and a host of other tasks.

There is no charge for the day-labor service, and employers pay the workers directly. More than 1,895 workers are registered at El Sol along with more than 3,500 employers.

For information about hiring workers call 745-9860.

Painting, planting and pruning for service

El Sol workers participated in the fourth community service event, which is part of the 2010 Annual Community Service Program at El Sol. Twelve committed El Sol workers gave four hours of their time to trim and paint a house at 913 Hawie St. in Jupiter in partnership with Paint Your Hearts Out of The Palm Beaches. The crew was formed by both experienced and beginner workers in painting and landscaping, all learning from each other. It has been another successful event where El Sol workers have given back to the community.
Mary Anne Oblaczynski & Barbara Winterton
Volunteers of the Month for March

This month’s volunteers of the month are - and have been since El Sol opened its doors - the twin guardians of the exchequer of El Sol. They are Mary Anne Oblaczynski and Barbara Winterton. Between these two volunteers, all of the center’s financial activities are covered.

They used to do it all; now a hired accountant does some of the work. Barbara set up Quickbooks and now she does petty cash accounting and entries into the fundraising database. Both volunteers have worked on helping to set up annual budgets, do monthly statements and reconciliations, and make deposits. They are always available for advice for board members and staff.

Mary Anne grew up in Jupiter and now lives in Pine Gardens South. It was through her involvement in her neighborhood association and in St. Peter’s Catholic Church that she became involved early on, with the community group that was supporting the creation of a day labor program in the Town.

She came to the early meetings, and when someone said a treasurer was needed, she said, “I’ll do that.” That was about five years ago, and now El Sol won’t let her go! Mary Anne is also a member of the board of directors of El Sol, and has been since the beginning.

Barbara Winterton grew up in New York City. Like Mary Anne, she became a bookkeeper/accountant almost by accident. In Barbara’s case, it happened when she married a sailor and moved across the country to Starkey, Oregon, a small lumber town.

After having two babies, she went to work for the only accountants in town, and learned how to do almost every aspect of accounting work. Barbara’s training in this field led to a series of very interesting jobs when she finally moved back to New York, working mostly with accounting in the music and entertainment industries. She worked with, among others, Will Smith and the Village People! (We are waiting to see her version of YMCA, of course.)

Barbara and Mary Anne were both Girl Scouts, and now are both serious volunteers. Besides her involvement in El Sol, Mary Anne is also the president of CERT, which is a group of volunteers working with the Jupiter Police Department who are trained to assist in special events, disasters and education. She is also a member of the police chief’s advisory board. She is involved in her neighborhood association in Pine Gardens South, where she organizes the annual Great American Cleanup. Oh, and by the way, she works days for a company that builds and manages hotels.

Barbara volunteered for Children’s Home Society and Peggy Adams Animal Rescue before she found El Sol in a newspaper ad, and we began to take up all her time. She, too, has a day job, working with local accountants. Barbara says, “My parents raised me to volunteer.”

Mary Anne has four children and one grandchild; Barbara has two sons and a granddaughter on whom she dotes.

Thank you Barbara and Mary Anne for keeping El Sol on the straight and narrow!

Mateo Diaz-Perez
Worker of the Month for March

The commitment of Mateo Diaz-Perez to learn English helped him earn Worker of the Month honors for March.

Mateo, 55, is a native of Guatemala who has taken just about every ESL class offered by El Sol and who continues to attend classes regularly in his desire to become proficient in the language of his adopted country.

He also has participated in other courses and workshops to improve work skills, according to Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna.

Since coming to Jupiter, Mateo has gained extensive experience doing landscaping and pool work.

As reward for being recognized as Worker of the Month, Mateo received priority for hiring on three consecutive days.

Congratulations to Mateo for his well-deserved honor and for being an excellent ambassador for El Sol.
The El Sol kitchen recently got some new equipment, thanks to the Friday lunch crew, who helped bring it all about. A new freezer, sink and countertop were all added at no cost to the center.

El Sol by the Numbers

Some facts and figures from the first quarter 2010:

* $258,629 in services to the Jupiter community
* 1,472 Jupiter workers placed in jobs
* A total of 3,502 employers and 1,895 workers registered
* Average attendance of 145 workers daily
* 2,475 students in ESL classes, a 63 percent over 1st quarter of 2009
* 183 recipients of free medical or dental services, including H1N1 vaccinations.
* 59 persons in financial literacy classes provided by RBC and Wachovia Banks.
* 2,622 enrolled in daytime computer literacy classes.
* 524 hours of volunteer community service by workers
* $55,000 in legal services; 26 new cases, including three wage theft cases
* 10,580 meals served, an average of 118 per day