Spring Graduation Brings Smiles And Hugs

On Wednesday, March 25, 2015, El Sol held its first graduation ceremony of the year. A total of 139 students from various classes such as English as a Second Language, Plazas Comunitarias (Spanish Literacy), Sewing, and Computer Skills were recognized for their continued commitment to their education.

There were a total of 150 guests in attendance which included members of the community, friends and family, as well as El Sol Board Members, officers from the Jupiter Police Department, the Town of Jupiter, teachers and other volunteers who came to show their support.

The Graduation Committee is chaired by Dora Valdivia, Associate Director of El Sol; its members include Maricela Torres, Georgette Gill, Gayle Flaherty and Ale Hoffman. Committee members work together towards creating an atmosphere of encouragement and recognition for El Sol's students on their big night. Various donations are obtained from different local organizations who wish to help recognize the students' hard work.

The keynote speaker was Maricela Torres, an El Sol Board Member and volunteer. She shared her personal story of struggle and perseverance while growing, and encouraged every student to never give up on their education, which she believes is the ticket to opportunities that will help improve their and their family’s lives. Food and beverages were enjoyed after the ceremony, while the Mayaland Marimba band added to the festive and happy atmosphere.

Above left to right: Agripina Escalantes, Yilian Salguero, and fellow students on stage; Instructor Chrisepine Oates congratulating a grateful student; Bottom right: Jocelyn Skolnik, Gayle Flaherty, and Dora Valdivia congratulating worker Arcadio Lopez.
Special THANK YOU to
Sal’s Italian Ristorante

The staff, volunteers and families of El Sol would like to thank a very generous local business partner for all they’ve been contributing. An angel sent Sal’s Italian Ristorante to us just a few weeks before Christmas last year. Fabio Bartolotta, owner of Sal’s, and Chef Jon Allen answered our prayers and provided an absolutely wonderful holiday dinner for 400 El Sol workers on Christmas Day. They not only donated the food and staff to prepare it, but brought their extended families to the Center on Christmas Day to serve the food and celebrate the holiday with us.

It was a heartwarming gesture and appreciated more than we can say. After that day Fabio and Chef Jon wanted to learn more about all the services El Sol provides to the community. During a visit and tour of the center we shared not only El Sol’s mission and programs, but also an outline of other events we host throughout the year. Since that day Fabio, Chef Jon and the Sal’s Ristorante family have provided the meal for our 80-person Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in February and tostadas and pizza for 500+ guests PLUS El Sol team shirts for our Annual El Sol/Jupiter Police Department Soccer Tournament in March.

There aren’t words sufficient to express our gratitude. Anytime you go into Sal’s Ristorante’s and Sal’s Express and Pizza locations in our area , please thank them for their very kind support of the El Sol community.

Click here for Sal’s Italian Ristorante menu and locations

Are You Ready for the
GREAT GIVE?

A total of 437 local nonprofits will participate in the Great Give Palm Beach & Martin Counties, a 24-hour fundraiser that takes place May 5 at 5PM until May 6 at 5 pm. This community-wide event, hosted by the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, United Way of Palm Beach County and United Way of Martin County celebrates the spirit of giving and collective effort it takes to strengthen our community by raising money for local nonprofits.

Last year’s event raised over 10k for El Sol, which “could not have been possible without the generous donations from volunteers and other impassioned community members,” said Aubry León, who spearheaded fundraising efforts in 2014. On May 5-6 anyone can make a secure donation of $10 or more to the charity of their choice by visiting GreatGiveFlorida.org or by calling 1-844-GIVE-DAY. Every local gift made during the 24-hour period will be multiplied by additional dollars from a $500,000 bonus pool raised by the Community Foundation.

24-Hours Can Change Our Community
Jack-the-Bike-Man Gets Help from El Sol

Jack the Bike Man is a non-profit organization based in West Palm Beach. The mission of this extraordinary organization is to “…strengthen our community through bicycle education and programs. Our Vision, to create a community of healthy, active individuals by providing hope to the less fortunate through support, training, and access to bicycles.”

It all started when a young Hispanic man fell off his bike in front of Jack’s house, he explains on his website. He fixed the brakes on the bike, and a new passion was born.

Considering all the problems in the world today—childhood obesity, climate change, people having difficulty getting to work because of lack of transportation - it would appear that Jack-The-Bike-Man is doing more than his part to make the world a better place by addressing all of these issues.

El Sol has a mission to make the world a better place as well. To that end, El Sol workers spend a few hours every month giving back to the community. For the month of March, four workers travelled to West Palm Beach to help make Jack-The-Bike-Man’s world just a little better. The workers: Martin Estrada, Victor Camposeco, Roberto Hernandez and Jose Ruis, painted two bathrooms and the break room at Jack’s enormous warehouse. Melissa Beadle, who had been a Vista employee at El Sol the previous year, helped out as well. After the work was done, everyone went out to lunch at a local Mexican restaurant and enjoyed some good conversation and food; just a little extra perk for those men who stepped up to volunteer that day.
Featured Volunteer
Marsha Goldstein

Marsha is one of the most animated teachers we've ever seen, and we miss her terribly when she leaves us to go back to her home in Connecticut. We always feel a little less energy in the building when Marsha isn’t here with us. She brings enthusiasm, passion and humor to her lessons and she is one of the students' favorite teachers.

Marsha moved to Florida 15 years ago and makes her winter home in the Bluffs in Jupiter. She and her husband Barry have three adult children: Eric, Joille and Evan; as well as nine grandchildren. We’re sure she keeps her family upbeat and happy whenever they get together. Marsha came to El Sol in 2011 after reading an article in the paper about the job training program and all the non-traditional programs offered at El Sol. She began as an employer desk volunteer, then began teaching life skills to women and has since become an ESOL teacher.

She believes in El Sol’s mission because, as she puts it, El Sol is “helping a population that is in such need and I’m so proud to be a part of this effort and I’m so happy that it is in Jupiter.” She also believes that El Sol is “a little oasis, a safe, friendly place, accepting of everyone. This is a place for the workers to put down their burdens.”

Our team at El Sol is lucky and proud to have Marsha with us because we know there are many places where people can follow their passions and volunteer their hours. Marsha notes that the “people who built El Sol have worked hard.” When Marsha isn’t teaching table talk or ESOL at El Sol, she enjoys walking on the beach, reading and spending time with her family.

Featured Worker
Esau Gamaliel Spaon Marcario

Esau Gamaliel Spaon Marcario, our featured worker, is a hard worker from Quezaltenango, Guatemala. He has lived in Jupiter for about ten years, and has made his mark as a talented and much sought-after painter.

“"I learned to paint by watching other painters," says Esau, "I do both interior and exterior painting, and am listed as a skilled painter in the database." But Esau’s talents don’t end there. He is El Sol’s very own Dr. Sheldon Cooper (that’s the guy from Big Bang Theory for those who aren’t into watching shows about geeks.) He’s got a keen interest in mathematics and can work out problems most of us look at and say “huh?”

When you talk to Esau, you better be talking about fractions, percentages and decimals or your conversation will be very short. He’s a student of our Plazas Comunitarias program and comes to El Sol at night to learn English-math is just a hobby with him. “I like to work my mind when I am not at work,” says Esau. “My work is very physical, so when I have time off, I like to rest and work my mind.”

Esau, who is 31 and single, loves all kinds of music and watching action movies on TV.

“I chose Esau because he is a good worker, likes to volunteer, is always smiling and brings his good attitude to the center whenever he comes,” says Wilberto Luna, Labor Supervisor. It’s that good attitude, combined with the good will of all the workers, volunteers and staff that gives our center the positive energy on which everyone comments upon visiting El Sol.

Another “Thank You”

El Sol would like to give many thanks to students from Trinity Christian School of Palm Beach Gardens for volunteering their time at the Sunshine Organic Community Garden on March 20th. The volunteer group, comprised of 17 students, turned compost, trimmed, cleared out weeds, hauled off debris, planted, and harvested. The hard work paid off. The garden looks great! A special thanks to Jocelyn Skolnik for reaching out to Trinity Christian for a helping hand.

If you are interested in volunteering in the garden, do not hesitate to contact Michelle at volunteer@friendsofelsol.org for more information.
El Sol’s 3 New Part Time Staff Members

Angelica Aguilera was born in Dalton, Georgia and raised in Indiantown, Florida. She graduated from Palm Beach State College where she earned her Associate of Arts degree in 2010 and is completing her Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing. Angelica was a volunteer at Big Brothers Big Sisters where she gained 2 years of experience as a Case Manager. Angelica is committed to helping others. Working with diverse at-risk youth from ages 5-17 and their multicultural families has helped Angelica understand people of different backgrounds in her community. In addition, she volunteered to be a mentor for 3 months, working with her mentee whom was struggling with reading and math. Her mentee reached her goal of improving a grade level in each subject. Angelica took her position to heart; it was rewarding for her to see the smiles on these children’s faces—building confidence and self-esteem because they improved on a subject or two they were struggling on. She’s looking forward to putting smiles on children’s faces again through the Read a Recipe for Literacy Program!

Cliff Ross was born and raised in Sterling Heights, Michigan where he spent most of his summers on his grandparent’s farm. Cliff moved to Florida to become an Environmental Chemist, testing water and soil samples. After a few years in the laboratory, Cliff decided to pursue a teaching career at Martin County High School in Stuart, Florida, where he taught science for thirteen years. In the last year, Cliff decided to follow his dreams of starting a landscape business called Absolutely Growing. Cliff is excited to join the El Sol team as the Part-Time Garden Coordinator. As the Garden Coordinator, he will be in charge of managing the Sunshine Organic Community Garden.

Surynai Janowicz, better known as Suri, graduated with honors from Indian River State College with a degree in Organizational Management. Meanwhile, Suri has over 8 years of experience in the legal field. Suri is a Florida Registered Paralegal and has assisted lawyers in personal injury cases. Suri’s passion is in the area of immigration law. Suri is a big supporter of small businesses since her parents were small business owners in Venezuela and in the United States.
VISTA News and Events

Meet New Vista Member

**Katerina Pecora** is a native of Lima, Peru. While in high school, she discovered a love of volunteering, primarily working with underprivileged populations. After graduating from high school in Lima in 2006, she was accepted into Unife University in 2007 to study psychology. By 2013, Katerina completed the six-year humanities and psychology program, earning her psychology license in the process. During this time, she interned for a year at the Adolescent Mothers’ Shelter in Lima.

Katerina spent the following year and a half researching burnout among the employees of the Adolescent Mothers’ Shelter. After a successful thesis defense, she graduated with honors. Through hands-on interviews, questionnaires, observations, and strict social-scientific methods, Katerina compiled a qualitative and quantitative thesis meant to inform and improve the state of the social workers’ conditions. This effort further inspired her to work with underserved populations seeking out those social issues that may be hindering their quality of life.

Katerina also took a position with a major South American corporation conducting psychological evaluations to assess candidate’s readiness for promotion, then worked at a primary school with children who had behavioral and academic difficulties. These experiences reinforced her commitment to understanding human behavior among a gamut of institutions. Ghandi said, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Katerina continues to look for opportunities to make a difference and is very grateful for the opportunity to serve as a volunteer with AmeriCorps.

Day of Recognition for National Service

VISTA members were acknowledged individually by Executive Director Jocelyn Skolnik and Mayor Karen Golonka to receive their certificates of recognition. Afterwards, the VISTAs played the video they created, “50 Ways El Sol is Helping to End Poverty” in honor of the VISTA 50th Anniversary. If you haven’t yet watched it, be sure to check it out on El Sol’s YouTube page.

This was the second year the Mayor of Jupiter participated in the recognition ceremony for El Sol VISTAs. We hope to continue this as an annual tradition. Congratulations to the El Sol AmeriCorps VISTAs on all their hard work.

Left to right: VISTAs Katerina Pecora, Leigha Kiger, Esabelle Herrera, David Urieta, Aubry León, Mayor Karen Golonka, and El Sol Executive Director, Jocelyn Skolnik
Paired with the Sunshine Organic Community Garden, El Sol offers horticultural and nutritional workshops to maximize the garden’s positive impact on everyone’s lives. Raw Chef Nina Kauder of Rawsome Eats has so generously taught many of these workshops. On February 11, Chef Nina taught a workshop on how to make zucchini noodles (zoodles) with sunflower seed and tomato pesto sauce. She also taught workers and volunteers how to make zucchini hummus dip. Zucchini, a summer squash, are known for being good sources of potassium and anti-oxidant value.

On March 12, Chef Nina taught a workshop on how to prepare lentils in three different ways. El Sol workers learned how to prepare lentil taco lettuce wraps, lentils with cinnamon apple and oatmeal, and spicy lentils. Lentils are great for their low cost, high protein, and high nutrition. Thank you Chef Nina for making these kitchen workshops possible.
Sunshine Community Garden Celebrates its One-Year Anniversary

Recent community surveys exposed the high rate of diet-related diseases and food insecurity among Jupiter’s low income population. In response, El Sol established the Sunshine Organic Community Garden on Earth Day 2014. Our garden has been open to the entire community, with priority membership for low-income residents. A minimum of 10% of harvests from each garden is donated to the Jupiter Food Pantry and El Sol’s Hot Meals Program to ensure that the garden improves the diets of everyone in need, not just its gardeners. In just one year, the garden has harvested 1,199 pounds of produce, hosted multiple horticultural and nutritional workshops, and cultivated El Sol’s mission of two-way integration by creating a safe space for people of all backgrounds. It has also hosted ArtFest Preview Night, Garden Committee meetings, a book club, and numerous potlucks such as the one on April 22, 2015 to celebrate Earth Day and its one year anniversary.

Special thanks to: Alyssa Wood, dedicated staff and volunteers, Lost Tree Village Foundation, Palm Healthcare Foundation, Whole Foods- PBG, Weinig Foundation, June O’Hagan, Town of Jupiter, and numerous private donors. Your dedication to fighting diet-related diseases and food insecurity has changed the Jupiter community for the better!

Seems like the ribbon cutting ceremony was just last week (above). Now the Community Garden is thriving (photos below).
Health and Safety

Code Compliance Officers, Sandra Lazo de la Vega and Henry Cordoso, visit El Sol

The Town of Jupiter and El Sol have come together many times to find ways to enhance the lives of the workers who come to El Sol. One example of this cooperation is when Sandra Lazo de la Vega and Henry Cordoso, Code Compliance Officers with the Town of Jupiter, come to speak with the workers about Jupiter’s codes and regulations. “We feel people who violate the codes do so out of lack of education. So we try to educate them so they don’t inadvertently break any rules.”

Sandra and Henry are bilingual, which is a big help when it comes to communicating with the day laborers at El Sol. They can tell them about the trash pick-up schedules, why plywood isn’t a good idea for windows, and the importance of making sure the house number is visible from the street. They also remind them of their right to call the city to enforce certain codes such as broken windows needing repair or numbers not on house. Renters should know that it is the responsibility of the landlord to ensure the rental property is up to code. Sandra and Henry highlighted many examples of how the town works to help El Sol’s workers to keep their surroundings clean and safe.

Diabetes Awareness

Siobhan McRostie - Gross is a nurse from Jupiter Medical Center and one of our bilingual MyClinic volunteers. Siobhan comes to El Sol every month to educate our workers on diabetes awareness, nutrition, and exercise. Today she made a delicious quiche with herbs and vegetables from our community garden.

OSHA Addresses Landscaping Issues

Henry Shpiruk, Compliance Safety & Health Officer of the US Department of Labor-OSHA came to El Sol to do a presentation on the rules, regulations and discuss dangers for those who work in landscaping. It is the first of a series of worker presentations and OSHA campaigns for the year.

OSHA Alliance

El Sol has formed a partnership with the Alliance division of OSHA. We are excited with this new partnership. It will allow El Sol to develop safety and security informational cards to inform about basic rules and regulations for the continued health of our workers.

Health Fair

Despite the rainy weather 70 plus community residents came in to get screened, learn about skin cancer, autism, HIV, oral health and talk to nurses from the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA).

The girl scouts were also here working on their silver award by helping out other girls with much needed clothes.

A great big thank you to all our partners: VNA, MyClinic, Health Care District, Richard David Kann Melanoma Foundation, FAU Autism, CAP, Caridad center, Humana and the girl Scouts.
In Memoriam
Jan DuFour

It is always sad to say goodbye to one of our own. Jan DuFour, 81, of Jupiter, Fla., formerly of Martinsville, N.J., passed away on April 11, 2015.

The sudden loss of a dedicated and energetic volunteer is felt by all at El Sol; from her fellow volunteers, to the entire staff and those whom Jan so graciously served. When we had a volunteer gap to fill in the kitchen, Jan was the first person to offer to help. Her ‘can do’ attitude was so appreciated.

Jan was introduced to El Sol through her longtime traveling buddy and El Sol Board member, Lee McCarthy. When Jan told Lee that she enjoyed cooking, Lee encouraged her to help out in the El Sol kitchen. Since April 2008, Jan was a skillful member of the lunch crew. Jan was a loyal and generous volunteer, who dedicated her every Thursday morning to help serve the hungry in our community.

The El Sol family will miss her wit and generous spirit. She is survived by her son, Chris DuFour and two grandchildren, Warren and Nicole; her daughter, Liz DuFour and 11 brothers and sisters.

Jan, you will be dearly missed.

(Health and Safety continued from page 9)

Bicycle Safety is Reinforced for El Sol Workers

On March 27, El Sol began a new, ongoing instructional program called, PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY: DON’T BE ANOTHER VICTIM.

Some facts:
One pedestrian and one bicyclist are struck by drivers on average each day in Palm Beach County. In Palm Beach County, 1,363 pedestrians were hit, and 76 were killed from January 1, 2011, to December 31, 2013. There were 1,347 accidents involving bicyclists, leaving 23 dead. Furthermore, there has been an increase in bike and pedestrian accidents in Jupiter (particularly on Indiantown Road and its surroundings). 2014 had a record number of accidents. The majority of accidents were due to bikes going counter-traffic on sidewalks and mid-block crossings.

New Health and Safety Effort:
The majority of workers at El Sol do not operate motor vehicles; their main method of transportation is either foot or bicycle. Therefore, workers are extremely at risk when not understanding—or following – the rules of the road. This lesson plan is aimed to inform and increase awareness of what can be done to maintain safety and avoid becoming another accident victim.

El Sol is working closely with the Town of Jupiter in order to create a more bike friendly Jupiter. If you have any concerns to voice, please fill out the Town of Jupiter survey here: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8_2fnqG3affELFx7pvV7J3QA_3d_3d

The presentation is in English and Spanish. The lesson was a collaboration of many El Sol departments and features El Sol personnel in realistic settings throughout some of the most dangerous places in Jupiter for both pedestrians and cyclists. The rules of the road along with safety measures are shown and discussed. After the presentation, a question and answer period is held. Students are then administered a ten-question post-assessment.

To date, over 100 students have taken part. Our goal is a minimum of 150 different participants on an ongoing basis.
Bits and Pieces...

Graduation photos (above, left to right): Jakelin Gonzalez, Computer Literacy student; Sewing Teacher Myrtelina Cintron receiving a bouquet of flowers; volunteer Instructor Akemi Inamoto congratulating a student; Instructor Chrispine Oates congratulating one of her students.

Community Service: El Sol worker paints interior at Jack-the-Bike-Man

Chef Nina’s Workshop: José Velásquez sampling zucchini hummus on romaine lettuce

VISTAs group photo- Aubry León, Katerina Pecora, David Urieta, Esabelle Herrera, and Leigha Kiger

Soccer Tournament: Stryker’s Team
Mission Statement

El Sol is a 501(c)3 nonprofit whose mission is to improve the quality of life of all residents of the Town of Jupiter by providing services to those in need, especially day laborers and their families.

Vision

El Sol promotes a harmonious integrated community in which all people can achieve their highest potential. We seek to be the model for other communities dealing with day-laborers.

Staff
- Jocelyn Skolnik, executive director
- Dora Valdivia, associate director
- Wilberto Luna, labor coordinator
- Betzy Rega, health coordinator
- Karen Clark, office manager
- Michelle A. Rivera, Volunteer Coordinator
- Vickie Granati, daytime ESOL coordinator
- Ale Hoffman, nighttime ESOL coordinator
- Aubry León, AmeriCorps VISTA Leader
- David Urieta, AmeriCorps VISTA Outreach Coordinator
- Leigha Kiger, AmeriCorps VISTA Financial Literacy Coordinator
- Kelley Walton, AmeriCorps VISTA Community Impact Evaluator
- Esabelle Herrera, AmeriCorps VISTA Earned Income Developer
- Katerina Pecora, AmeriCorps VISTA Vocational Training Coordinator

El Sol Shines is published six times a year
- Wendy Sue Meehan, Editor
- Robert Cadogan, Communications Committee Chairman

Contributors
- Betzy Rega
- David Urieta
- Dora Valdivia
- Jocelyn Skolnik
- Karen Clark
- Lynn Hays
- Michelle Rivera
- Royce Emley
- Vickie Granati
- Wilberto Luna

To join our email distribution list, send a request to elsolshines@gmail.com