A color pencil design by Kelly Napoli, 15, a Jupiter High School sophomore, has been chosen as the commemorative poster for El Sol’s Third Annual Art Fest.

Kelly’s entry won the grand prize award in a contest to select the Art Fest 2010 poster that will serve as the signature promotion tool for the festival. The contest was open to area high school students. Kelly will receive a $100 cash prize.

She said she devoted about five hours a week for three weeks to finish the design that depicts a color wheel of art showing the different nations.

“They all run together to form the same masterpiece through El Sol,” Kelly said.

Art Fest Committee chair Andrea Cleveland said, “Kelly did a beautiful job. Her poster was emblematic of the Art Fest theme of Connecting Lives Through Art.”
I want to tell you the story of a miracle, or perhaps, just a story of people coming together to help to make a miracle.

This month, our 30-year-old refrigerator broke down, irretrievably, exhausted from the effort of helping to make and store so many meals, day after day after day. The repair people told us what the bill would be, and also told us they couldn’t guarantee we wouldn’t have another equally expensive breakdown in two weeks or two months. Plus, it would take weeks to make the repair, because parts would have to be ordered.

Some would have despaired. Not our fabulous kitchen volunteers. Andi and Betzy swung into action, preparing an e-mail to send to all of our volunteers, explaining our desperate plight. Chef Dom was called in for a special consultation. He went to work with his friends and the Friday kitchen crew. Meanwhile, another volunteer talked to her brother about it.

In a day or two, Chef Dom had promises for the whole cost of the fridge, coming mostly from the Friday Cooking Crew.

In the meantime, this other anonymous person called up very early on a morning last week (about 6 a.m.) and said, ‘My sister is a volunteer there, and she always tells me about El Sol and what a special place it is. How much will the refrigerator cost?’

Dora told him the cost, thinking he was going to pledge maybe $200. She gave him our website address, to make a donation online, and later in the morning found he had donated the whole cost of the new refrigerator.

In the meantime, other kitchen volunteers were making donations. The new fridge was ordered, and in place within two weeks of the initial breakdown, all thanks to the energy and initiative and love, I will say, of our volunteers.

We had other excellent funding news this month: Allegany Franciscan Foundation recognized El Sol with a large grant, which we will receive over the next two years. This will enable us to fund our program to address the health needs of our community. This grant was researched and written by our team of grant writing volunteers.

How can any organization be so fortunate to have so many truly incredible truly dedicated volunteers, who give not only their time and talents, but also give their treasure, and who then go out and spread the word of El Sol to all their friends and families?

Thank you all, for all that you do, to make El Sol truly a place of welcome in our community.

Jill Hanson

P.S. Come to Art Fest – Sunday, November 7, 2010 – 12 noon to 4 p.m. Invite your friends!

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 Shines October 2010

Hispanic Heritage Day celebrated with PBSC

A festive Hispanic Heritage Day celebration at El Sol Saturday, Oct. 2, featured music, dancing and a drama performance about Guatemala’s Independence Day by Palm Beach State College students and others from the Jupiter Hispanic community.

A crowd of more than 225 enjoyed the program that was sponsored by the college’s Spanish Club, Uniendo Culturas, said PBSC Spanish Professor Patricia Betancourt, advisor to the club. In addition to the Guatemala Independence Day performers other entertainment was provided by the Alegro musical group of Columbian musicians, and a Mexican dance group from Delray Beach.

“We had a little bit of everything,” Ms. Betancourt said of the program. Last year the PBSC Spanish Club’s Hispanic Heritage program at El Sol featured Mexico so Guatemala was chosen for this year’s observance, she said.

Volunteers needed for Thanksgiving dinner

Alex Fuentes, chairman of this year’s Thanksgiving dinner at El Sol, has issued a call for volunteers to help with the event. About 20-25 persons are needed.

This year’s dinner will begin at 11:30 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, with a holiday program, followed by a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, the fourth year that Fuentes and fellow volunteers have provided.

“We’re having turkey, mashed potatoes, green beans, desserts and beverages and I hope to get tortillas,” Fuentes said.

Volunteers who can donate an hour or two of their time to help are needed.

For information and to volunteer call Alex Fuentes at (561) 401-3791 or contact him at aichfuentes@aol.com.

Ugalde family’s gift keeps on giving

An El Sol family’s widespread support is making a difference here.

A few months ago Henry Ugalde, the husband of Nora Ugalde, passed away. Nora has been the secretary for our public meetings, since we started meeting five years ago. At Henry’s death, the family asked that donations in his name be made to El Sol, and as a result, El Sol recently received more than $1,500 in donations from friends and family of Henry and Nora.

Few know, however, that our very first “organizational” grant came through Henry’s efforts.

Back in 2006, the Palm Beach County chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management gave us a grant of $1,000. This was our first real grant. Henry was a member of that organization, and it was through his influence there that El Sol was named to receive this grant.

More than just the money, the recognition by a group of established human resources professionals gave us a bit of credibility, as well as hope for success as an organization.
It’s a bright, new look for the assembly hall

The interior of the El Sol Center has a new, bright look thanks to efforts of a group of workers who pitched in to paint the walls around the stage and then the rest of the interior walls.

The stage also received a thorough cleaning and a new coat of wax.

The result is a clean, “orange sherbet” hue to the interior that is appealing to the eye and just in time to welcome patrons to the upcoming reception and screening of the “Brother Towns/Pueblos Hermanos” documentary, Saturday, Nov. 6, and Art Fest 2010 on Sunday, Nov. 7.

Howard Whittset, El Sol’s maintenance coordinator, who supervised a group of El Sol workers on the project, said the workers were “very good.”

El Sol volunteer Andi Cleveland donated the paint for the stage area where artwork will be displayed at the Art Fest.

After finishing the stage area, workers expressed an interest in seeing the remainder of the assembly hall walls painted. They took up a collection among the workers that generated $73 to purchase the paint to cover the rest of the center.

El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia said the workers were very motivated to see that the entire Assembly Hall area was painted.

“They said, ‘This is our second home and we want it to look nice.’”

El Sol worker gives back as kitchen volunteer

El Sol workers don’t like to pass up an opportunity to give back to those in need.

So when they saw that fellow worker Marie Sulfrain, a Haitian native, was coming into El Sol every morning bright and early at 6 a.m. to help in the kitchen, they decided to take up a collection for her, to recognize her dedication to serving all the workers.

Marie takes English as a Second Language classes through community education at Jupiter High School, where she is in a class taught by El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia. After she helps prepare breakfast for the workers in the mornings, she goes to another English class, at El Sol, at 8 a.m.

The workers in the Workers Council recognized that Marie doesn’t get any opportunities to go out for work, yet she is quick to volunteer in the kitchen every day.

They presented her with the donation and thanked her for her volunteer efforts.
Worker of the Month for September: Catrina Ecoquij Ixmatan

In the nine months that Catrina Ecoquij Ixmatan has been coming to El Sol, she can usually be found attending English classes and her dedication has earned her honors as Worker of the Month for September.

Her achievement represents quite a change from her first days at El Sol, according to El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia, who said, “She did not speak any English and was very shy and I can see she has improved very much.”

Catrina attends English classes just about any time that she is at El Sol and her progress in learning English has given her more self confidence, Ms. Valdivia said.

Catrina, who is from Guatemala, has worked mostly in housekeeping and cleaning jobs since coming to Jupiter. In her free time, she enjoys shopping, as well as cleaning her own home.

As Worker of the Month she receives priority for hiring for three days.

Congratulations to Catrina Ecoquij Ixmatan on her well-deserved honor.

Volunteer of the Month for September: June Brown

June Brown, Volunteer of the Month for September, remembers a very warm August day more than four years ago, when she and Sister Marta Tobon were handing out flyers informing migrant day-laborers that El Sol would be the place to go for jobs when the Center opened in a few days.

“I had just retired and was looking for something to do. I remember it was hot,” she said. But the heat didn’t seem to affect Sr. Marta in her nun’s attire, habit and all. “Seeing her, I said just can’t give up,” June said.

Fortunately for El Sol, June didn’t quit and has worked tirelessly on behalf of El Sol and those in need. Long before there was a staff, June busied herself organizing the office, answering the telephone, helping with mailings and other tasks such as staffing the employer desk and working in the kitchen.

Nowadays, she uses her more than 30 years experience as a paralegal to work helping workers who have been injured or otherwise victimized by crimes. She is part of a team of volunteers that work with the Victims Services office of the State Attorney General to apply for special visas that allow victims to obtain temporary legal status while their cases are being investigated and prosecuted. Three people currently being assisted are hit-and-run victims. They’ve spent weeks in hospitals and June and other volunteers drive them to doctor’s appointments, physical therapy several times a week, counseling at Victims Services and often to St. Peter Catholic Church twice a month to pick up food.

One of the workers was injured in a mugging. One of the hit-and-run victims has steel rods implanted in a leg that was seriously injured and other wounds left one arm useless. Another worker was hurt when he was mugged. For June, volunteering seems “like a social worker.”

She spends lots of time on the phone and processing volumes of paper work but she isn’t complaining. Rather, she says helping workers is very rewarding. “They are so kind and humble and don’t expect anything and because they aren’t expecting anything they are so grateful for what help they get,” she said.

El Sol President Jill Hanson praised June for her dedication, noting that not many are aware of her contributions because she does not talk about what she does.

“She really loves the workers and helps so many of them even when it may cost her or cause her problems;” she said. “El Sol is fortunate to have a volunteer of June’s outstanding caliber who is making a difference in the lives of so many.”

Congratulations to June on her well-deserved honor as Volunteer of the Month.
Computers received from FAU

Florida Atlantic University’s donation of 15 computers was warmly received this month. The computers are being used in El Sol’s computer lab. Shown in the photo, from left, El Sol worker Domingo Perez, El Sol volunteer Tom Choate and FAU professor Tim Steigenga.

Workers attend monthly town meeting

Twenty-three El Sol workers attended the Town of Jupiter monthly presentation earlier this month. Frank Melillo and Jose Gonzales from the Town of Jupiter made a presentation on housing regulations. Workers heard information and asked questions about landlord and tenant obligations, housing requirements, health regulations, sanitation and other topics.

Jupiter FIRST crew serves breakfast

El Sol workers were treated to a delicious breakfast Oct. 16 by volunteers from Jupiter FIRST Church. Workers enjoyed a tasty egg and sausage casserole wrap, fruit salad, juices and milk. The kitchen crew included David Kaiser-Cross, executive minister; Deborah Kaiser-Cross minister of Pastoral Care; El Sol board member Sheila Hirsch; Frank Pascarella; Joyce and Rich De Francesco; and Frank Palmieri.