On Sept. 6, 2006, El Sol opened its doors for the first time to day-laborers and employers looking for workers. On Sept. 6, 2011, workers and volunteers and others who happened to stop by sang “Happy Birthday” and “Feliz Cumpleanos” to El Sol in our now traditional happy birthday ceremony.

The theme for the fifth anniversary is “El Sol and Jupiter: Celebrating Five Years of Community.” The milestone will be marked by other events through the fall.

Introduced by center Director Jocelyn Skolnik, El Sol board member Sister Marta Tobon led us through the beginnings of El Sol, saying how important it is for all to be aware of the foundations of El Sol.

Sister Marta showed slides which included rare photos showing workers gathered on Center Street looking for work, as well as of early meetings of workers and of what became the “friends of El Sol.” The slide show also included photos of the early celebrations, including an open house to welcome workers in June 2006.

Diego Rojas, president of the Workers Council of El Sol, spoke about what it was like on Center Street, before El Sol was opened and workers had a safe, organized way of being hired for day-labor work.

Sister Marta, assisted by English language translator and recent El Sol volunteer Jinette Acevedo Cruz, talked about the committee of Jupiter residents who gathered together to support the creation of El Sol.

After singing “Happy Birthday” in two languages, everyone sang the traditional “Las Mananitas,” the song with which many Hispanics greet a holiday.

Father Don Finney of St. Peter’s Catholic Church gave an ecumenical blessing to the future of El Sol and to all the good it has done.

And then, we cut the cake!

In the photos, clockwise from top: Workers and volunteers celebrate; El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia and Father Don Finney; A display board of El Sol photographs put together by El Sol volunteer Lynn Hays; and Sister Marta Tobon and volunteer Jinette Acevedo Cruz.
FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

Join us in welcoming the newest addition to our team!

For a year-and-a-half our grant-writing volunteers pursued an AmeriCorps VISTA grant that would award five full-time VISTA volunteers to our center and enhance our capacity to serve the community. On Aug. 22 our hopes came true with our first two VISTA members joining El Sol!

Gilian M’Maitsi, originally from Kitale, Kenya, is our VISTA systems developer. Gilian, who moved to Jupiter from North Carolina, explained that what motivated her to apply for this position was her personal experience as an immigrant and her desire to volunteer with an organization that helped immigrants and others in the community rise out of poverty. She was attracted to the AmeriCorps VISTA program because she wanted to use her college degree in Business Management and Computer Information Systems to the highest potential - using it to help the community.

When asked what she hoped to accomplish in her year of service, Gilian said, “Knowledge is power. I want to learn how technology can help improve a nonprofit organization. I always want to work in this field and help communities.”

Katie Carpenter, originally from Orlando, is our VISTA volunteer developer. She has taken several of Dr. Tim Steigenga’s courses, traveled to Guatemala and Jacaltenango, and volunteered at El Sol for four years. Katie was looking for an opportunity to work full-time in the organization she had grown to love. When Dr. Steigenga told her about the AmeriCorps VISTA position, she immediately applied.

Katie likes interacting with people from diverse cultures and finds El Sol to be a “good solution to address human needs.” She hopes her efforts will help bring happiness to our volunteer family and would like to recruit more volunteers to support El Sol.

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. Founded as Volunteers in Service to America in 1965 and incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993, VISTA has been on the front lines in the fight against poverty in America for more than 40 years. VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, strengthen community groups, and much more. With passion, commitment and hard work, they help create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

There are three VISTA positions still available that we are looking to fill as soon as possible. For more information please contact me at jocelynelsol@yahoo.com.

We are very excited to have Gilian and Katie on board and look forward to the improvement their work will signify for our community!

Jocelyn Skolnik

Dinner Theater & Talent Night
Sept. 17 will showcase creativity

The talent and creativity of El Sol workers and volunteers will be on stage at a Dinner Theater and Talent Night program Saturday, Sept. 17, that will benefit El Sol.

The event is from 5 to 9 p.m. and includes a dinner featuring delicious Guatemalan cuisine. All proceeds will go to El Sol. Tickets are $10 for adults and a free-will donation for children.

The program will include the premiere of a play titled, “WSOL Presents the News, A Comedy of Errors,” written by El Sol English teacher Susan Mitchell and performed by students who are learning English in classes provided by the School District of Palm Beach County.

A talent show featuring a variety of musical performances by El Sol workers, volunteers and others is also scheduled.

“We have a fun and festive evening of delicious food and great entertainment planned for the entire family and it is all for a good cause, to support El Sol,” Mitchell said.

Tickets are available at El Sol, 106 Military Trail, at the southwest corner of Indiantown Road and Military Trail. For information call (561) 745-9860.

Spanish language classes offered for El Sol volunteers

Are you an El Sol volunteer who would like to learn some conversational Spanish? Or are you a volunteer who knows a little bit of Spanish but would like to learn more?

Luis Cholotio, a student at Palm Beach State College, is offering two levels of Spanish classes at El Sol. “Spanish for Gringos,” a class for “nearly intermediate” Spanish speakers meets from 10 to 11 a.m. on Tuesdays at El Sol.

Cholotio is also offering to teach a beginning Spanish class from 11 a.m. to noon on Fridays.

Originally from San Juan La Laguna, a community on the shores of Lake Atitlan in Guatemala, Cholotio has been in the United States for several years. His command of English is excellent and he’s an accomplished teacher of Spanish language conversation.

Cholotio doesn’t charge for the classes, however, many of his students show their gratitude by offering a freewill donation to him.

If you’re interested in either class, contact Sally Isham, El Sol’s volunteer coordinator, at (561) 745-9860.
Couple creates art & good food at El Sol

Connie and Bill James are honored as Volunteers of the Month for August

Connie and Bill James have been familiar faces at El Sol since shortly after the center opened.

Every Wednesday, Bill can be found in the kitchen serving lunch, while Connie leads arts and crafts with workers.

The Jameses have been in south Florida since 1991, first as snowbirds and then seven years later as year-round Jupiter residents. Both from Long Island originally, Bill was a marketing manager with the New York phone company for 30 years, and Connie was a travel agent with a women’s travel organization, where she escorted groups of women to nearly every country in the world.

They married in 1991 and came here to be near Connie’s daughters.

Before discovering El Sol, Connie and Bill worked together as literacy volunteers. Both enjoy helping people and giving to others who are less fortunate.

As a member of the Wednesday Kitchen Crew, Bill says he gets his gratitude from the appreciation the El Sol workers show to him and his crewmates, when they serve a delicious, hot and nutritious lunch.

Connie only has to set up her paints at a table and she’s soon surrounded by eager artists.

Connie’s good friend Bobbie Young says, “Only Connie could inspire great art - from pet rocks to bird houses.”

Connie has a son, three daughters and eight grandchildren. Bill has a son, two daughters and five grandchildren.

Bill and Connie: two loving people with a whole lot of love to spread around. Congratulations on a well-deserved honor as Volunteers of the Month!

Worker gives back to center & community

Domingo Perez receives August honor, his third for Worker of the Month

Domingo Perez has earned top honors as Worker of the Month for August, the third time he has been recognized for his volunteer efforts, community service and other good deeds.

Perez, 31, also was Worker of the Month in January and February of 2010. Since then he’s continued to excel and to take advantage of every opportunity El Sol offers for service and self-improvement.

“He is a good worker and good guy with a great attitude,” said El Sol Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna.

Perez has participated in various community service projects, helped paint the stairwell at El Sol, participated in an HIV screening, studied English, and taken computer workshops.

When he is not working or volunteering at El Sol he likes to play soccer.

A native of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, Perez came to the United States nine years ago, settling first in San Jose, Calif., before coming to Jupiter four years ago. He came to the U.S. to work and help his family. His mother and sister are in Guatemala and his father is in Mexico.

He can often be found in the kitchen helping with meals, washing pans and lending a hand with whatever else needs doing. He also takes great pride in his painting skills, both interior and exterior so it is no surprise that when asked what type of work he likes most he says “painting.”

Like many El Sol workers, Perez has volunteered countless hours on community service projects including work on Habitat for Humanity and other home improvement projects in Jupiter.

Congratulations to Domingo Perez for another well-deserved honor as Worker of the Month.

Keiser University stocks El Sol’s pantry

Jinette Acevedo Cruz turns out to be ‘a drum major for El Sol’

You never know when serendipity will pop up, but El Sol’s Jill Hansen knows to always be prepared for it.

About a year ago, Hansen spoke to a group of Keiser University students about opportunities for service learning at El Sol. One student, Jinette Acevedo Cruz, was very interested in the idea of serving at El Sol.

“Turns out, she is a one-woman dynamo,” said Hansen. “In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., a drum major for El Sol.”

Cruz organized an effort in which Keiser students gathered goods for El Sol for a week – from paper towels to rice and beans, plastic spoons to coffee and Crema. Because of Cruz’s enthusiastic leadership, deans, professors, department chairs and students got caught up in the drive.

Keiser showed the “Brother Towns” documentary film about El Sol in a continuous loop throughout the week of the drive. The result was more than 100 pounds of items donated to El Sol.

Cruz even went the extra mile and together with a friend purchased 60 pounds of meat and added it to the donations.

After the donations drive, Cruz organized a Know Your Rights training for El Sol families, and has been an active volunteer at the center.

Shown in the photo above are, from left, Keiser students and faculty members Abby Goode, Arin Miller, Ayelin Sanchez, Robin Allen, Jinette Cruz and Elizabeth Cardona.
Relaxation, stress relief techniques well received

In these current times, many people experience stress over work, the economy, finances and family. A relaxation class at El Sol on Aug. 11 helped El Sol men and women learn techniques to handle stress.

The class was taught by Jim Terrusa, stress relief expert, and was organized by El Sol volunteer Annelle Wilson. About 20 participants learned breathing techniques, imagery, meditation and other ways to relieve stress. The class was well received and enjoyed by all participants, said Betzy Rega, El Sol’s health coordinator.

The participants were actively involved in learning techniques such as imagery and meditation that can be used in their daily activities to relieve the stresses of everyday life. Terrusa also explained how stress is received by the brain, and the connection between the mind and the body.

Dunkin Donuts, Burger King and Wendys provided gift certificates and coupons that were presented to the participants upon completion of the workshop.

Terrusa and his wife, Sari, operate the Transformational Studies Institute, a private mental health counseling practice, on Indiantown Road in Jupiter. He has traveled extensively throughout the world giving seminars on stress relief.

Supporting Terrusa in translating was Lucy Montague-Bernstein, retired from the United Nations in New York. In addition, Berta Woodstock, retired registered nurse, and Wilson, who is a retired school counselor and mental health counselor, provided assistance.

El Sol’s Mission Statement

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
Jupiter’s Neighborhood Resource Center
106 Military Trail
Jupiter FL 33458
Phone (561) 745-9860
Fax (561) 745-9834

Find us on the Web at www.friendsofelsol.org

Follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/ElSolJupiter

See us on Facebook at El Sol, Jupiter’s Neighborhood Resource Center

El Sol’s Hiring Hall is open
6 a.m. - 2 p.m. Monday through Saturday
7 a.m. - 12 noon Sunday

Donate online through Network for Good through our website www.friendsofelsol.org

Staff
Jocelyn Skolnik, director
Dora Valdivia, associate director
Wilberto Luna, labor center coordinator
Dawn Fae Adolfson, education coordinator
Betzy Rega, health coordinator

El Sol Shines is published nine times a year
Diane Laney Fitzpatrick, editor
Mike Richmond, Communications Committee chairman

Contributors:
Mike Richmond
Dawn Fae Adolfson
Royce Emley
Jill Hansen
Lynn Hays
Sally Isham
Jocelyn Skolnik
Dora Valdivia

To join our email distribution list, send a request to diane.fitzpatrick@mac.com.