On Christmas Day, El Sol was bursting with the spirit of giving and goodwill to all when more than 400 people turned out for a festive Christmas Party at the El Sol Center.

They enjoyed a bountiful meal followed by entertainment that included a Christmas pageant and music. There were raffles of TV sets, computers and bicycles. In addition, everyone received a gift. Fifty-two volunteers were led by Alex Fuentes, and the Christmas committee consisting of Sr. Marta Tobon, El Sol Board member Jill Hanson and Diane Williams. The committee and volunteers served a delicious meal of ham, pork, turkey, sweet potatoes, green beans, corn, tortillas, rice and beans, plus dessert and beverages.

“This was triple the crowd we had at Thanksgiving,” said Fuentes. The overflow crowd resulted in some dinners being served in an upstairs classroom and several dozen children eating outside on the lawn, but no one minded. It was a beautiful day and everyone was having a good time. Volunteers served some 440 meals. It was Fuentes’ fifth year of supervising the Christmas dinner. He also oversaw the past six Thanksgiving celebrations.

El Sol board member Sister Marta Tobon, of the Hispanic Ministry at St. Peter Catholic Church, served as mistress of ceremonies and said it was wonderful to see the crowd having such a great time. “It was like one big family celebration; everyone was excited and grateful,” she said. The hard work of volunteers, coupled with donations by numerous individuals, organizations and businesses helped make the Christmas party possible.

Happy New Year!!
Alex Fuentes: El Sol’s Featured Volunteer

Alex Fuentes is well known to everyone who has visited El Sol on Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day — the extraordinary spirit of giving that is being celebrated is due in large part to the skills and energy and love that flow from Alex as he oversees the preparation and serving of the holiday meals. It takes a minimum of 35 volunteers to successfully prepare and serve anywhere from 50 to 350 hungry people. Alex manages to collect volunteers like he collects turkeys and ham and all the trimmings — many of the volunteers sign up year after year not only because it does their heart good but because Alex makes them feel so good. Alex says: “I am indebted to El Sol for allowing me to do this work. El Sol’s work is done in the spirit of giving and I believe in this mission.”

Alex was born in New York City and moved to Miami as a teenager. His family, originally from Ecuador, has been in the food business for many years. Alex and his family have represented national and multi-national manufacturers such as Gatorade and Coca-Cola, have owned two Hispanic companies and have provided Hispanic food products for retail supermarkets throughout the country. They provided MRE tamales to personnel serving in the Iraq war and Desert Storm. His family originated the Breakfast Burrito for McDonald’s.

Alex moved to Jupiter from Miami in 2005 because Miami was too busy and Jupiter looked like a great place to live. When asked what brought him to El Sol, Alex said his mother was like Mother Teresa — she did charity work 24/7, so it’s in his blood. A good friend introduced him to El Sol volunteer Tom Walsh. Tom told Alex about Jupiter’s newly opened resource center, El Sol, which turned out to be a perfect place for Alex to share his spirit and his skills. Alex coordinated El Sol’s first Thanksgiving Day celebration and has been coordinating this event ever since. He has begun overseeing the kitchen part of the Christmas Day celebration at El Sol as well. Both events take a tremendous amount of skill and coordination and strong contacts in the food community. Alex has all three and El Sol is grateful for his service.

Alex had five children, ages 14 to early 30s. His son, Alexander, died last April. Alex dedicates his service to El Sol in memory of his 19 year old son, Alexander Fuentes.

Thank you, Alex, for sharing your spirit of love and caring.

Eddy Lopez
El Sol’s Featured Worker

When volunteers were needed for El Sol’s Fifth Annual Art Fest Eddy Lopez was among those who signed up, just as he has in the past for other events and programs and it resulted in his selection as El Sol Featured Worker for December-January.

Lopez, 32, originally from Mexico has been in the U.S. the past eight years. He has been a great help to El Sol because of his penchant to help out whenever there is a need. When he is not working or volunteering, Eddy enjoys playing basketball and reading. He has a wide variety of other interests and skills as reflected in his idea of his dream job which would include a general contractor, a pilot, psychologist, or a tattoo artist.

El Sol Labor Coordinator Wilberto Luna praised Lopez as an excellent worker whose positive outlook and willingness to help others make him an excellent role model for others to emulate. Congratulations to Eddy Lopez and his well-deserved recognition as El Sol’s Featured Worker of the Month. The honor gives him priority for hiring for three days.

El Sol’s 5th & 6th years

Watch the success of El Sol’s 5th & 6th years.

View on YouTube

Two short, 5 minute movies (with music!) of the success of El Sol’s 5th & 6th years. HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, EL SOL!!
The Season of Miracles...

Loxahatchee Club Educational Foundation

El Sol has received a $14,620 grant from the Loxahatchee Club Educational Foundation that will fund El Sol’s successful vocational training sewing program for a year.

El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia said it is the first grant the organization has received to fund a vocational program and is greatly appreciated. “It will allow us to undertake a two-level sewing curriculum that includes a teacher, sewing materials, handouts for students, and sewing machine maintenance,” Valdivia said.

Mary Putney, President of the Educational Foundation, said, “We looked at various ways to support El Sol and decided that supporting job training and life skills education through the sewing program fit with our Foundation’s mission to support both education and our local community. We are proud to be associated with El Sol.”

The objective of the El Sol’s sewing classes is to provide real life marketable and income-generating sewing skills. Volunteers assist students to improve their sewing skills. Students have learned how to do alterations and how to create products such as bags and crafts, many of which were featured at El Sol’s Art Fest on November 4th.

Thanksgiving Turkey Dinners

Just before Thanksgiving, Patti Bowman organized a Turkey Giveaway to be held on 11/17 from 2-5pm. It included the non-perishable “fixins” from donations and or purchase. Drew from Food Shack recommended El Sol use boxes instead of our usual plastic bags, which made more sense. Drew also volunteered to store the turkeys in their walk-in freezer at the Food Shack until the day of the turkey giveaway - huge problem solved!

Volunteers prepared the turkey and fixins boxes for over 45 families in need.

Quantum Foundation

In mid-November, El Sol received a $20,000 from the Quantum Foundation to help with El Sol’s operating expenses.

Christmas Donations

During this holiday season, two El Sol board members anonymously contributed a total of $4,000. The Jupiter Walmart Store gave $1,000. JupiterFIRST Church donated 16 new bicycles that were among raffle prizes, and students at All Saints Catholic School provided individually wrapped boxes of personal hygiene items for El Sol workers. Volunteers chipped in another $200 in cash and gift cards.

Other donors included a Michigan man who dropped off a $5,000 check. A check for $10,000 came in the mail the day after Christmas with the notation that it is to be used “where it is most needed.” Another letter contained a check for $5,000.
November Community Service: Abacoa Community Gardens

Last month, on Saturday November 17th, three El Sol workers volunteered to help in the plots at Abacoa Community Gardens, 1022 West Community Drive, Jupiter (Next to LifeSong Community Church in Abacoa). Alaiya Dewji, intern from Florida Atlantic University, provided transportation to workers Jelani King, Oscar Ailon, and Manuel Garcia to the site of the community service event. El Sol volunteer Andi Cleveland made sure that sandwiches were provided for the workers. The volunteers planted marigolds and basil. Next, the volunteers tied together “teepees” to support tomato plants. The community service outing was beneficial to both the neighborhood receiving services and the workers providing the service. The workers learned tips on vegetable and herb gardening, power tool safety, and received some English lessons in the process. At the same time, the caretakers of Abacoa Community Gardens were able to expand their beautiful and functional garden.

The volunteer workers were given Certificates of Appreciation on behalf of El Sol for their community service to Abacoa Community Gardens.

Worker Training: Bicycle Safety and Repair Class

For persons who rely on bicycles for transportation, Jim Corman was the go-to person at El Sol recently for special tips on everything one needs to know in order to maintain and repair bikes.

An attentive group of about 15 men were on hand for a December 8 workshop Corman conducted at El Sol that covered such things as how to fix punctured tires, adjust brakes and maintain gears as well as chain maintenance and replacement.

Corman also explained the rules and rationale of street safety, such as: a cyclist with reflectors and lights, who obeys traffic laws has a 2 percent chance of getting hit by a car while in the bike lane. In contrast, there is a 25 percent chance of getting hit by a car if he rides on a sidewalk.

Corman, owner of ProMobile Bicycle Repair, whose slogan is, “We Come to you!” brought his expertise and bicycle workshop trailer to El Sol for the class. The event was arranged by Emmanuel Carreno, Vista Vocational Training Coordinator for El Sol.

“Jim did an excellent job,” Carreno said. “The workshop was very productive and helpful to the guys who needed some tips for maintaining their bikes.” Carreno, who served as workshop translator, said he hopes to schedule future workshops by Corman at El Sol where many of the migrant day laborers who come to obtain jobs are bicycle owners.
More than 40 men and women who successfully completed El Sol’s Fall Night Education Program were honored at a November 20th graduation ceremony where certificates were awarded students in ESL, computer skills, and Spanish literacy classes.

The graduates included 29 who completed ESL classes, ten who finished computer instruction and four who completed elementary studies as part of the Plazas Comunitarias, a Spanish literacy program. Education Coordinator Dawn Fae Adolfson commended the students for their accomplishments and praised the more than 40 volunteers who contributed to the success of the classes.

The Eileen Harden Book Award, a $25 Books-A-Million gift card, was presented to ESL student Juan Vasquez Lopez for his perfect attendance in Level A and Gabino Manuel for achieving the highest grade of 96 percent on exams in Level D. Other awards of five desk computers were presented to exceptional English students: Ignacio Guzman Perez, Petrona Maria Francisco, Erika Torres, Felix and Cindy Maritza Lopez, and computer skills student, Fernando Viena. The computers were donated by Frank Brandy of St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church.

Four English students received English dictionaries as awards for health related posters they created in conjunction with the Staying Healthy curriculum. The recipients and their poster themes were: Maria Soledad Sanchez (importance of exercise), Victor Quinonez Silvestre (over the counter medicine), Erika Torres Felix (childhood obesity), and Cindy Maritza Lopez (stroke). The dictionaries were donated by the Rotary Club of Jupiter-Tequesta. Alfredo Vasquez Garcia was awarded a desktop computer by El Sol for the best overall poster with stress as its theme.

Betzy Rega, El Sol Health Coordinator was guest speaker for the graduation event.
The Pine School, Hobe Sound, First Participants in "Meet the Worker" Pilot Program

A new educational outreach program to provide schools in the community with a better understanding of El Sol’s mission and vision was launched recently when a group of 12 students and their teacher from Pine School in Hobe Sound met and interviewed El Sol workers. The objective of the program is to heighten awareness among school students of the work and lifestyles of El Sol workers in the community. “In exchange, students are also able to share their lifestyles and serve as examples about the value of education as an asset in life,” said El Sol Associate Director Dora Valdivia who developed the program.

Led by teacher Amy Jonas, the Pine School students interviewed El Sol workers as part of their class project about Latin Americans and immigration issues. Vickie Granati, El Sol’s day-time ESL coordinator helped with introductions of the students and workers. The students came prepared with questions and were able to practice their Spanish skills as they interviewed various workers. As a result, workers and students learned from one another as they shared their experiences.

The students later wrote essays about their experience that are impressive and a reflection of their experience and understanding, Valdivia said.

For example, Avery Camp wrote: “I learned a lot in this experience. I learned about the life of a worker and felt sad. She has a hard life but tries to make the best of it. I did not have an idea of how difficult the life of immigrants can be. I liked the experience. I want to return to El Sol and help these people.”

Student Jack Stubblefiled wrote that he felt how fortunate his life was because the life of immigrants is very hard and complicated. “They cannot see their relatives and do not have money but (these) people work very hard. I am very happy I had the experience of interviewing with an immigrant.”

Ms. Jonas, Chair of Pine School World Languages Department, said she could tell from the students’ excitement that not only had they broken a language barrier but they had also broken a culture barrier as well. She noted that the students matured more in the two hours spent at El Sol in a real-life situation than they could have in a whole year in the classroom. Jonas, who is also Off-Campus Education Coordinator for Pine School said she believes their experience will have a lasting impression on their lives as both students and as people.

Because of the success of the first Meet the Worker program involving Pine School Students, Valdivia said she plans to extend it to other schools in the region.
Meet The New VISTAs!!

Alyssa Wood, AmeriCorps VISTA Systems Developer

Alyssa Wood is originally from Vero Beach, Florida, and is the new VISTA Systems Developer. She graduated in 2012 from the Florida Atlantic University Wilkes Honors College with a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies. She wrote an Honors thesis on the intersections of Food Justice, Environmentally-Minded Diets, and Elitism.

Alyssa comes to El Sol after months of serving the Food Deserts of Appalachia via Organic Farms and Soup Kitchens in Western North Carolina. She has extensive knowledge and experience in organic agriculture and hopes to spearhead a community garden at El Sol to support the Hot Lunch program.

In her spare time Alyssa enjoys hiking, SCUBA diving, gardening, playing with her dog “Banjo”, and cooking.

Dawn Gosseck, AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer Developer

Dawn Gosseck is originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and jokingly claims to be the “youngest snowbird ever.” Dawn comes to us after having recently completed her Bachelor’s Degree in Community Education & Engagement at the University of Wisconsin –Milwaukee, with a double minor in Community Organizing and Women’s Studies.

Prior to her arrival in Jupiter, Dawn spent her time volunteering for the 2012 Presidential Election campaign. She also worked as an Intern at 9to5 Milwaukee (the National Association of Working Women), where she focused on Workplace Rights and promoting national legislation for the Healthy Families Act.

With a strong distaste for winter, and a passion for Social Justice, Dawn is excited to have the opportunity to work for El Sol.

El Sol’s VISTAs: Emmanuel Carreno, Andrew Bartholomew, Alyssa Wood, Dawn Gosseck, and Royce Emley
El Sol’s “Wish List “

Kitchen
• Volunteers to conduct a Food Supply Drive: (canned goods, vegetables, proteins, coffee, sugar, creamer)
• Volunteers to conduct a Paper Supply Drive: (napkins, paper towels, plates, 8oz cups, bowls, forks)
• Shelving Units $720
• Industrial Dishwasher and plates, cups, silverware

Education
• English/Spanish Dictionaries
• Copy Paper
• Colored Paper
• Pens and Pencils
• Notebooks
• Gift Cards and other incentives

Labor Program
Volunteers to conduct a Cleaning Supplies Drive: (Toilet Paper, Clorox Wipes, 60 gallon trash bags)

Office Supplies
We need LOTS of copy paper!!!!!

Sewing Program
• Universal sewing machine needles, size 10, 12 and 14.
• Good quality sewing thread in all colors
• standard plastic bobbins
• Rotary cutter
• Rotary cutter replacement blades
• Sharp scissors for cutting thread and small thread clipping scissors

Childcare
We need volunteers to do childcare activities during our nighttime classes while parents are in class. Shifts are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday from 7-9PM

El Sol’s Vision 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’s Hiring Hall is open
• 6am-2pm Monday through Saturday
• 7am-12noon Sunday

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

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Jupiter’s Neighborhood Resource Center
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Jupiter FL 33458
Phone (561) 745-9860
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Find us on the Web at www.friendsofelsol.org
Follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/ElSolJupiter
See us on Facebook at B Sol, Jupiter’s Neighborhood Resource Center

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