



# Amigos en Cristo

Ministry of the Southwest Florida Outreach Council: LCMS

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[www.amigoscenter.org](http://www.amigoscenter.org)



## September is Hunger Awareness Month

By: Ashby Greenlee

More than 862 million people in the world go hungry. 35.5 million of those people are experiencing hunger right here in the United States. Amigos En Cristo is joining Florida Faith Links in a food drive to benefit organizations fighting hunger in SW Florida. Will you also partner with us this month? Whether it is cleaning out your pantry or starting a church or business food drive, everything helps! Contact Spencer at 239-560-8690 for questions or food pick-ups.

## Census 2010

By: Pastor Bob Selle

Amigos en Cristo, Inc. is partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau to help achieve a complete and accurate count of our population as part of the 2010 Census. Conducted every 10 years, the census defines who we are as a nation. It guides critical decisions on the national, state and local levels and provides insight into population, state, local and tribal government funding and more.

Census data affect us all, which means achieving a complete and accurate count is essential. Every year, the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to state, local and tribal governments based on census data. These data also help determine congressional representation and guide local decision-makers on where to build new roads, hospitals, childcare and senior citizen centers, schools and more.

As a Census Bureau partner, I'll continue to share information with you about upcoming census events, including those in our community. Visit [2010census.gov](http://2010census.gov) to learn more.

## The Joy of Serving

By: Sarah Willig

On July 31, Amigos Center held a one-day workshop entitled "The Joy of Serving". The focus of the workshop was to remind and encourage us in taking care of ourselves so that we can best

serve the families in the community. We talked about the joy of serving through ministry and how stress from working with people who have many issues can often take our joy and how we can make decisions and actions that help us to keep our joy as we serve those in need.

Paul-Andre Mondesir of the American Friends Service Committee in Miami was our workshop leader. We invited other local non-profits to participate and had representatives from Bonita Springs Assistance Office, Boys and Girls Club, Goodwheels, and Salvation Army attend. It was an encouraging and uplifting workshop.

## Client Story

In July of 2005, Carlos Lopez came to the United States as a permanent resident. He made the difficult decision to leave his wife and children in Guatemala, hoping to bring them with him soon. When I asked what would motivate him to leave his family for such a long time he said, "It is very dangerous in Guatemala. You never know if your children are going to be killed or kidnapped. I needed to get my family out of poverty. I worked in the fields like my father did, making just enough to survive. Kids go to school for a half day and then work the rest of the day. There is little opportunity for education and if you're poor like us, you cannot advance; it's all about working to survive. I needed to work in the states to help my whole family, even my mother and father and siblings."

Carlos needed help bringing his family here and becoming a citizen. He was afraid to go to lawyers. He knew too many people who had gone and paid a lot of money to get nowhere. Even if they found a good lawyer, they knew they would never be able to afford the fees. They said they came to the Amigos center when a friend referred them. They were told it was a safe place, an honest place that would take care of them. It was a place they could also afford to get quality work.

At the Amigos Center, Carlos had many papers translated and forms filled out. The Amigos Center advised the family to wait until Carlos became a citizen to petition for his children. If he applied as a permanent resident, it would take longer than waiting until his citizenship and then

applying. In May of 2008, as soon as he became a citizen, he began applying for citizenship through Amigos Center. A year later, May 2009, Amigos Center brought the family back together. Marga Yolanda, age 15, Jessica Maria, age 13, and Jose Carlos, age 12, finally came to the United States to be reunited.

The children said it was hard to be away from their parents and they are so happy to be together. They cannot wait to start school and begin advancing their education. Marga Yolanda wants to become a doctor and is thankful to be in the United States with the opportunity to pursue her dream. Had she stayed in Guatemala, she never would have been able to afford to continue her education and become a doctor. Carlos works as a mechanic assistant. Margarita is busy taking English classes as well as taking care of her children. They are thankful to Amigos Center for helping their family be reunited, and now can joyfully walk down the path together toward a better future.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Crocodile Dock Vacation Bible School-August 17th-21st
- Hunger Awareness Food Drive
- Tour of Immokalee Center – September 8th, 11am
- Tour of Bonita Springs Center – September 10th, 9am

### **Prayer and Praise**

- Please pray for a successful VBS and food drive
- Praise God for Maria Ochoa who is now serving as a case worker in Immokalee.