



AMIGOS CENTER
 25999 Old 41, Bonita Springs, FL 34135
 106 South 2nd Street, Immokalee, FL 34142
www.amigoscenter.org

The printing of the newsletter made possible with generosity from:



Amigos Center
Summer 2013 Newsletter

A Time to Give, A Time to Bless...



Summer 2013 Newsletter

Amigos Center



Summer 2013 Newsletter

Meet our Lee County Staff



Denny Brown (*Interim Executive Director*)
 Christina Leddin (*Immigration Specialist*)
 Maria Herrera (*Immigration Specialist*)
 Marisol Dickerson (*Administrative Assistant*)
 Rev. Bob Selle (*President/Pastor*)

Not pictured:
 Sheila Morales (*Parish Nurse*)
 Donna Selle (*Bookkeeper*)

Meet our Collier County Staff



Rev. Andre Mezilus (*Haitian Church Pastor*)
 Rev. Robert Selle (*Hispanic Church Pastor*)
 Daphcar Beldor (*Receptionist*)
 Maria Rodriguez (*Senior Volunteer*)
 Karl Glander (*Service Director*)

Daphcar:
 Our newest staff member is Daphcar. She arrived from Haiti ten years ago and graduated from Immokalee High School. She is a mother of two young children and serves as a Sunday School teacher with our Immokalee Haitian church.

We provide immigrants to SW FL with the tools to be successful and contributing members of our community and the Kingdom of God.



A Time To Give, A Time To Minister, A Time To Help

by Rev. Bob Selle, *President*

This has been a very active year of ministry and service for Amigos en Cristo. Our faith based ministry works with immigrants in Southwest Florida to become more successful members of our communities and to receive the religious training necessary to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Bethlehem Haitian Church - LCMS, our Haitian church in Immokalee, recently celebrated the ordination of Pastor Andre Mezilus and is expected to become a chartered member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the coming months.
- Last year our Amigos Center in Immokalee provided over 285,000 pounds of emergency food valued at \$473,000 and assisted over 1,700 immigrant families. This year is shaping up to exceed those high levels of assistance.
- Our Immigration Centers in Lee County continue to provide immigration counseling and service to Southwest Florida. In 2012 our immigration specialists assisted over 1,600 immigrant clients in our family based immigration ministry, and walked beside each of these individuals as they proceeded on their pathway to citizenship. Since 2001, our immigration centers have served over 9,000 immigrants.
- Pastor Selle has already baptized five children this year and has many others who are preparing for membership in our Hispanic churches in Immokalee and Bonita Springs. *(continued on page 2)*

We need to change

by Rev. Bob Selle, *President*

My job is changing. Since I started Amigos en Cristo in 1997 our ministry has grown by God's grace. That is good. As we grow, our administrative and social service management demands on me have become greater. That is not good. As a result, I have worked with our Board of Directors to create a new Administrative Executive Director position that will be responsible for the management duties of our Amigos Centers and our business office. *(continued on page 2)*



(Denny Brown speaks with staff and volunteers at a recent event.)

A TIME TO GIVE, A TIME TO BLESS, A TIME TO MINISTER, A TIME TO HELP *continued...*

You too can be a part of this exciting and ongoing work. Many of our donors return to their northern state during the summer months and thus, our donations drop precipitously.

- We ask you to take time to consider a donation today to help us continue providing these much needed services to our immigrant community in SW Florida. For your convenience you can donate at our website: www.amigoscenter.org or you can use the enclosed self-addressed remittance envelope.
- While visiting our website I encourage you to enroll to receive our monthly E-news.
- Let us know what you think about us by using our website "Contact Us" page or facebook: www.facebook.com/AmigosCenter

Thanks to all of you very much for your past and present support of Amigos en Cristo! God's Blessings.

WE NEED TO CHANGE *continued...*

This allows me to spend more time doing what I was trained to do, preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our new Executive Director on an interim basis is long time board member, Denny Brown. I will continue to serve as head of the mission Amigos en Cristo, Inc. as president, and will also expand my ecclesiastic duties to our ethnic mission congregations. Denny will develop the Administrative Executive Director position until we find the right person to take this position on a permanent basis. I am excited about this change and ask for your prayers. Please also pray for Denny, for our Amigos en Cristo ministry during this time of transition and for a great candidate to permanently fill the position of Executive Director.

Rededication of Bonita Springs Amigos Center

by Ed Christenbury, Board Member



On August 8, 2013 Amigos Center celebrated the reopening of its newly refurbished immigration office at 25999 Old 41 Road in Bonita Springs on the campus of Hope Lutheran Church. The President of Amigos en Cristo, Pastor Bob Selle, expressed his appreciation to all those who had contributed to this very important work and thanked them for their tireless efforts to support the Amigos Center's services to the immigrant community of Southwest Florida. Pastor Selle complimented the Amigos Center's two Immigration Specialists, Christina Leddin and Maria Herrera and Administrative Assistant Marisol Dickerson for their excellent work in this ministry. He pointed out that during the past year the immigration staff had counseled and assisted over 1,600 immigrant clients, walking beside each of these individuals as they proceeded on their pathway to U.S. citizenship.

In addition, since August of 2012, the Amigos Center has filed over 390 Applications for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) for undocumented young students and graduates who were brought to this country at a very early age by their parents or family members. These individuals who receive deferred action status can remain in this country, obtain a drivers license, a Social Security card, legally work and pay in-state tuition should they attend college.

Amigos Center's Executive Director, Denny Brown, also expressed his appreciation to all those who have, over the past decade, so faithfully supported this important ministry in our community, both financially and with their volunteer time, and urged them all to continue their efforts as the need for compassionate and professional immigration counseling and assistance has grown so substantially in Lee county in the past years.



Theological Studies

Pastor Selle presents Immokalee Lutheran Church member Sergio Campos with his certificate of completion of Christian Doctrine course with the Center for Hispanic Studies, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. Eileen Rujana-Ortegon and Reynaldo Bernal of Bonita Springs also received their diplomas for completion of their Church History course. This is an important way to prepare church leaders in the Hispanic church.

ANDRE MEZILUS

Andre Mezilus is pictured with his Theological Diploma and Certificate of Completion of Theological Studies at Concordia Seminary. Andre received a divine call from Amigos en Cristo to serve as pastor of our Immokalee Haitian Church. He was ordained and installed into the pastoral office on August 18, in Immokalee. This marks the first time Amigos en Cristo has trained someone within its ministry that successfully resulted in ordination. The Lord willing, it will not be the last.



Immokalee Lutheran Hispanic Church



The last Sunday of each month is our Friendship Sunday where church members participate in an after service pot luck lunch. Pictured is Pastor Selle entertaining some of our younger church members. Pastor Selle currently has 7 young people in his baptism classes in Immokalee.

IMMOKALEE ENGLISH CLASSES

Volunteer teacher Sue Chapman is pictured with some of her students. We currently have three volunteer teachers at our Immokalee Amigos Center working with 74 enrolled English students. Students are gradually using our English language learning lab with more frequency. When not in class with their teacher, students are encouraged to log onto our Rosetta Stone software to work on their English language skills. More students are returning to class now that the work in the fields has stopped during the summer months.



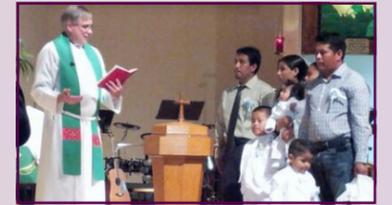
Amigos' Compassionate and Skilled Immigration Team

by Ed Christenbury, Board Member

With the Congress of the United States now considering comprehensive immigration reform legislation, and the increase in the Latino community in Lee County growing by more than 170% over the past ten years, Amigos Center is indeed blessed to have on it's staff a skilled and professional immigration team fully capable of addressing the challenges that lie ahead. Immigration law is considered by many to be one of the most difficult areas of the law, and Amigos' two specialists, Christina Leddin and Maria Herrera are both accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeal to practice in this very demanding field. During the past year, Christina and Maria, assisted by the skilled help of Administrative Assistants Marisol Dickerson and Maria Isabel Diaz, managing the multitude of details required for each application, prepared over 1600 documents for immigrants and non citizens in southwest Florida. These applications covered a large field of actions ranging from what is called a U visa for individuals and their minor children who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse due to criminal activity, to applications known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which seek to avoid the removal of bright young high school graduates and others who were brought to this country undocumented when they were very young and now know no other country. The years ahead will certainly provide many more opportunities to assist immigrants and non residents in our community in their dreams to become United States citizens, and will require the help and support of our team and many others. Pastor Bob Selle recently observed that "I am truly humbled when I see the wonderful work that our staff is doing in this area, and the help they are giving to some of the weakest of the weak in our society through this ministry. I watch their work and always recall our Lord's words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" Matthew 25:40 (KJV).

BAPTISM IN BONITA SPRINGS

We recently baptized three young boys in our Bonita Springs Hispanic ministry at Hope Lutheran Church. Pastor Selle and Donna participated in the celebration meal at the parent's home next to our Kingston Amigos Center.



July 21 we also received Santiago Ortegon-Rujana as a member of the Kingdom of God through the waters of Baptism. Santiago is the son of Jesaiias (a member of our Board of Directors) and Eileen (our Webmaster).



TEEN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

We sent six teenagers (three Hispanic and three Haitian) to the Teen Leadership Summit hosted by the Florida-Georgia District LCMS in Lakeland, Florida in August. Karl Glander and Daphcar Beldor served as chaperons. One of the teen leaders is Yulisa. She was baptized by Pastor Selle last year and is now in confirmation class. While at the summit our teens developed leadership skills that will serve them well both in the church as well as outside. Pray for them.

