



AMIGOS CENTER
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www.amigoscenter.org

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Year End 2013 Newsletter
 Amigos Center

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



Year End Newsletter

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Church Ministry Highlights

by Rev. Robert Selle and Rev. Andre Mezilus

- 6 baptisms for Hispanic Ministry (seven more are expected soon)
- 7 adult and 4 child baptisms for Haitian Ministry along with three adult profession of faith.



- We have received approval from the Florida-Georgia District to charter our Bethlehem Haitian Church – LCMS as a member congregation of the LCMS.
- Pastor Andre Mezilus was ordained on August 18, 2013 as a pastor of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.
- We made plans for two more men to begin formal preparation for the pastoral Ministry in 2014 through the distance education programs of Concordia Seminary, ST. Louis. MO.



Continued on page 2...

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



A FIRST FOR OUR IMMIGRATION MISSION

by Denny Brown

In October we received approval for the first U-Visa completed by Amigos Center from start to finish. It was for a field worker from Guatemala who was robbed and beaten in the apartment he shared with other Immokalee field workers.

Last year, Maria Herrera joined Amigos Center as an Immigration Specialist. She counsels our clients and helps them file documentation to make them more successful and contributing residents of our community as they progress on their pathway towards citizenship. Maria came to us with extensive experience in U Visas that are granted under certain circumstances by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These Visas are granted to immigrants who have suffered from abuse or a violent crime committed against them. Often, this involves people who have suffered abuse from a spouse or sponsor. Victims of other crimes may also be eligible for a U-visa.

Because the U-Visas are so complicated and require so much preparation time, Maria initiated our U-Visa program on a limited basis until we can arrange for more funding for this very needed service in our community. For 2014, United Way has increased our annual grant by \$2000. We have a few other grants pending for this program. During the past year she has filed U-Visas for new clients as well as follow up filings for clients whose U-Visas are now ready to adjust to Legal Permanent Status.

Congratulations Maria! Keep up the good work helping those in our community with greatest needs!

Amigos Center Client Statistics (Unduplicated)

	2013*	2012	& CHANGE
Clothes Closet	410	790	-48%
English	235	139	69%
Immigration	1,850	1,615	15%
Other Social	180	273	-34%
Pantry Food	1,690	1,738	-3%
Computer Lab ESOL	65	10	550%
TOTAL	4,430	4,565	-3%

* Estimate 2013

Church Ministry Highlights Continued...

- Seven Hispanic theology students have finished four different pre-seminary courses from the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.
- Vicar Saint Luc Charelus completed his second year of theological studies with the Ethnic Institute of Theology at Concordia Seminary.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

- We need volunteers to teach English in Immokalee. Your service makes a difference in the life of your students.

For more information:

Karl Glander | Karl@amigoscenter.org

- We need table captains for our annual fundraising luncheon next March.

For more information:

Donna Selle | dlselle@amigoscenter.org

- We need two new members of our Board of Directors.

If you have the time and the willingness to help:

Pastor Sellel | bobselle@amigoscenter.org

- We count on your generous financial support. Here are several ways you can send your tax-deductable gift to Amigos Center.

Go to our website "DONATE NOW"

Send a check payable to :

"Amigos Center"
25999 Old 41 Road
Bonita Springs, FL, 34135



Save The Date

Our annual fundraising luncheon will be Wednesday, 12:00 PM, March 19 at the Spanish Wells Country Club in Bonita Springs.

For more information:

Donna | (239) 437-6727



New Executive Director

by Denny Brown

I'm a long time "Amigo". I first started helping Donna set up her financial accounting system way back when the administrative offices were a small area outside the back bedrooms of Pastor & Donna's home. We've come a long way since 2002!

A few months ago, our Board realized that Pastor Bob could do so much more if he had some managerial help since he was doing everything from being the primary fundraiser to the preaching minister at 2 churches, to the chief grant writer as well as many other important

duties pulling at his limited time each day. We've had some funding issues in the past few years and have had to cut some important administrative support to make ends meet. For example, our Development Director resigned early this year and was not replaced—just one of several such moves. Unfortunately our churches and some very important social services have not grown sufficiently to meet the demand due to Pastor being spread so thinly.

Therefore, Pastor and our Board decided that now was the time to remedy this situation. We'll separate the theological side of our agency from the social and administrative side. Pastor Bob will continue as the primary Theological & Preaching Executive while we'll have an Executive Director of Social Services and Administration responsible for the secular side of our agency. Both Pastor and the new ED will jointly share the Fundraising responsibilities of our group. Pastor Bob, as CEO of Amigos en Cristo, will continue to oversee the entire agency but will have some management and supervision assistance to divide the load and provide better results in both the secular and theological sides of our business.

SOME IMMEDIATE BENEFITS WE'RE EXPECTING ARE:

- 1) 50-100% growth of the attendance and other church metrics for especially the 2 Hispanic churches we've already planted.
- 2) Growth in new contacts and donors to take us to a more sustainable revenue level, and a return to growth in new social service and theological programs.

I was fortunate enough to be able to serve as the interim ED of Social Services and Administration for a trial period ending 10/31 and "re upped" to do that job till year end. Other obligations preclude me from continuing beyond that time. This trial period worked well and I'm more convinced than ever that this is the proper next step to take Amigos en Cristo to the next level our mission dictates—to provide an abundant and successful religious, social, and economic life making the immigrants to SWFL more successful and contributing members of our society.

YOU CAN HELP IN MANY WAYS:

- 1) Continue to pray for us.
- 2) Consider volunteering for this 20-25 hour per week job if you have a fundraising, administration, and/or supervision background.
- 3) Re evaluate your fundraising support to help provide temporary assistance to pay for hiring a part time executive.

Immokalee Amigos Center Points of Growth

by Karl Glander, *Immokalee Service Director*

OUR VOLUNTEERS

The year 2013 has been a year of many changes at Amigos Center in Immokalee. Our volunteers continue to amaze me with their dedication to serving our Lord Jesus. We are very blessed to have so many volunteers who serve from one to four days per week. We could not touch the lives the way we do without our volunteers.



ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

At the beginning of the year we offered English classes on Monday and Wednesday at 9:00 AM. Since September we have been having classes four days per week. In October we added an evening class on Wednesday at 5:30 PM. I am using the same curriculum but have changed the delivery to more of an outline format. This format gives the student a quick reference to aid in the learning process, (*learning English is hard enough, we needed to make it easier*).

While 90% of our students are progressing we continue to have some lag behind. When possible we have split classes into two or three. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday we could use, no, we need tutors so we can have smaller classes. We have 18-30 students per day attending English classes. If you feel God is moving you to serve with the Amigos Center, E-mail me at Karl@amigoscenter.org.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Every Wednesday I meet with the youth for Bible study and other social activities. This year we took 5 teenagers to the LCMS Florida-Georgia District Middle School Youth Gathering at Lake Yale. In August we took four kids to the Teen Leadership Summit in Lakeland.

ENGLISH PRAYER SERVICE

Also we started an evening prayer service. We have a part of the population in which English is their primary language. My application for the Specific Ministry Program was just sent to the seminary in St Louis. I hope to start my seminary education in March and begin to offer Church Services in English. We have many people who need to hear the Gospel of our Lord. Please pray for us this year as we continue to spread the greatest story.



Farewell to Marisol

by Rev. Robert Selle

With best wishes and deep regret we said goodbye to long-time Amigos Center staff member Marisol on October 31. For over eleven years Marisol filled a number of key positions on our staff: both full-time and part-time employee she served as our Case Worker in Bonita Springs (2002 to 2012), she helped open our Golden Gate office (2005), served as Case Manager for hurricane recovery work (2006), and since 2012 served as part-time Immigration Administrative Assistant. Marisol was always ready to carry out her duties toward our clients with a smile and offer a prayer. She left Amigos Center to work as a bilingual general assistant with the Bonita Springs Lion's Club Eye Clinic. Congratulations Marisol! Marisol also hopes to continue to serve Amigos Center as a volunteer.