



CARING... SHARING... SERVING

OUTREACH

THE CAFE OF LIFE INC.

FALL 2024

Marietta Bala, Board Chairwomen: Outreach

Dear Friends,

The Cafe of Life staff and volunteers are always available at the Leitner Park site to provide a hot - meal, groceries, clothing and other basic needs to poor, hungry disadvantaged people. It is also a hub where other services are provided by community partners as free medical care, haircuts, and classes. However, there are so many others whose needs are not met. Our buses transport some from poor neighborhoods who are not in walking range to the Cafe for a meal and to partake in our services.

For others our goal is to go into disadvantaged neighborhoods and migrant camps to provide services not met. Seven poor neighborhoods are provided food, hygiene, clothing and other items. Community partners as Lee County Mobile Library distribute books and provides activities for children, Family Health Center provides medical screenings, plus there's more. We bless the communities we are visiting by helping them get a better life. God gives us the ability to deal with difficult situations and bring hope and joy to people who need it. We are united in God's work and together we can make

our part of the world a better place. We give glory to God and thanks to our faithful partners for generous support and guidance they have provided to impact families living in poverty.

Volunteers who come with compassionate hearts and a genuine desire to help, give of their time energy and skills and show love by encouraging others. This makes' a difference in a person's life; it's the heart that matters. We cannot do this life changing work without you. We are blessed to have generous donors who help us to fulfill our mission to reach out, touch hearts and help those in need. If you can touch somebody's life in a little way, what better thing is there?

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be..."

1 Peter 5:2

With Blessings and Thankfulness,

Marietta Bala, Chairperson
Board of Directors, Café of Life



DIRECTORS UPDATE

The demand for services continues to grow and the Café is meeting this challenge by expanding its staff, and, of course, this is only possible due to the generosity of our many compassionate financial donors. Operations Assistant Claudia Diaz and

Logistics Assistant Tony Munoz have joined our team and their skills have enabled us to serve more clients. Additionally, our capacity to serve was increased with the purchase of a new cargo van funded entirely by one very generous family.



OUTREACH PROGRAM

In 2016 Joanne, a part-time coordinator was given mission to reach neighborhoods not being



served by our daily service site. She worked out of the back of her personal car. Lety, current coordinator, was hired part-time in 2017 and was initially supporting 10-15 families. She immediately recognized the need for services beyond just food which led to establishing support groups and many new services over the years. Now staffed with a full-time coordinator and part-time

assistant, we're serving 215 families in six neighborhoods with weekly distributions involving a convoy of Café and personal vehicles and many dedicated volunteers. Thanks to Lety's efforts, the Lee County Library, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Harry Chapin Food Bank, American Heart Association and Family Health Centers also participate.



Support Groups evolved into Empowerment Programs with partners who provide professional speakers and teachers on women's health, nutritional cooking, sewing, gardening, and conversational English.



Senior client services include fresh produce and dairy delivery

These programs are supported by The Bridge Fund, The Colony Project, Pelican Sound Charitable Foundation, Harrell Family, Rotary Club of Bonita – Naples and St. Leo's Catholic Church Ladies Guild.

CLIENT STORIES

My husband passed away unexpectedly in July of a heart attack while working landscaping for a local gated community. This event shocked my entire family, including my three minor children who still do not understand why their father left them when they needed him the most. He was always the breadwinner, his death left me so broken, helpless, and overwhelmed with all the family and financial responsibilities. I did not know how to start all over again without him, what to do, or where to go for help. I reached out to the Café who took the time to work with me and gave answers to all my questions.

They provided me with resources I was not aware of and advocated on my behalf like nobody else ever had. One of the Café volunteers organized a go-fund-me at the community my husband was employed. The generosity of that community has been overwhelming, as well as the help my family has received from the entire Bonita community. My family was in no way prepared for the unbearable loss of a loving husband and caring father. We have endured such a tragic event but at the same time we have been taken care of by a wonderful organization that provided us light during the darkest days of our



lives. We are grieving our loss but with God's help through generous people like the people at the Café of Life we will move forward. Gloria



Pablo is a recent immigrant who arrived in the US with serious dental problems and the significant cost for treatment was beyond his reach. It was so serious "he felt like a complete failure". With the emotional and economic support of the Café, he was able to acquire a full set of dentures. This greatly raised his self-

esteem and "now I feel happy and again have enthusiasm for life, for working, for conversing with my family and friends, and for eating". "Thank God I found the Café of Life for your generosity and kindness have left a profound mark on me. I will always carry in my heart the kindness that you have shown me".

Our annual distribution of backpacks, school supplies, uniforms, socks and underwear to 350 children continues to be a memorable event for the children, their parents and our wonderful volunteers. Partners who made this possible were the West Bay community (funding), the Palmira community (organizing), and the Lee County Sheriff's Office (transporting, 50 backpacks and ice cream van). Additionally, volunteer Cindy provided hygiene items and Rosita's Hair Salon gave free haircuts.

BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT



SUMMER EVENTS

Thanks to the outstanding support we receive from our donors, the Café sponsored children for a variety of summer camps/lessons...



14 for the nine-week YMCA Camp



25 for swim lessons



5 for Arts - Bonita



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P.O. Box 367794
Bonita Springs, FL 34136

Local
Postal Customer



RED CROSS PARTNERSHIP

The Café has expanded its mission through a partnership with the American Red Cross Community Adaption Program which focuses on enhancing the capabilities of organizations that are likely to be impacted by natural disasters. Through this program, the Café now has a “whole building” generator, an emergency disaster response vehicle, an AED, and our office will be a distribution center/respice site post hurricane. Additionally, we're hosting hurricane preparation classes.



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The Café of Life is a faith-based organization believing in the teaching of all great religions that one must love and assist one's neighbor in time of need. The Café is not affiliated with any particular religion or denomination. Our mission is to provide basic human needs to the very poor and hungry people of the Bonita Springs area in a manner that preserves the dignity of the client in a respectful environment and to enrich and empower people to be all that they can be.

The Café of Life, Inc. is a registered 501(C)(3) tax exempt organization. Your gifts to the Café are tax-deductable to the full extent permitted by law.

