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## DONATION CENTER

The Donation Center for clothing and household goods that we opened in the fall is doing well thanks to our dedicated volunteers and our newest member of the staff, Kelly who assists the volunteers in operating the center. We are delighted to have her on board and appreciate her commenting "I feel like I'm a part of a family here at the Café."

Donation Center is open Monday-Friday from 9am to noon at 9201 Cockleshell Ct, Unit 5, Bonita Springs.



A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE 1-800-HELP-FLA OR ONLINE AT [www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com](http://www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com), REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. " REGISTRATION #: CH25732

## Café of Life Contact Information

**Café of Life, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 367794**  
**Bonita Springs, FL 34136**

OFFICE & DROP OFF LOCATION:  
10540 Childers Street, Bonita Springs, FL 34135

PHONE: 239-495-9325

WEB: [cafeoflife.org](http://cafeoflife.org)

FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/caringsharingserving](https://facebook.com/caringsharingserving)

INSTAGRAM: [instagram.com/cafeoflifebonita/](https://instagram.com/cafeoflifebonita/)



CAFE OF LIFE WEBSITE



*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-deductible to the full extent permitted by law.





**CARING... SHARING... SERVING**

# VALUE OF THE FAMILY

**THE CAFE OF LIFE INC.**

**SPRING 2026**

## **Marietta Bala, Board Chairwomen: Value of the Family**

Dear Friends,

Family is one of life's greatest blessings – a central unit for nurturing faith, providing strength, support and modeling God's love. "Children are a heritage and reward from the Lord." (Psalm 127:3) "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6).

Children are loved and valued by their parents. One mother said, "Motherhood has shaped every part of my life. It has taught me strength, resilience, and the power of hope, even in the hardest moments. Watching my children grow and thrive brings me endless joy and purpose."

Parents make many sacrifices, often working several jobs to make ends meet so that their children can have opportunities that they did not have. At the Café of Life, we empower mothers to build healthier more hopeful futures for their families. We provide classes in health and nutrition and teach nutritional cooking skills to prepare nourishing meals. With sewing class, they learn skills to make clothes for their children as well as a means to a livelihood. Children are enriched by music lessons that provides a new skill and self-esteem. Sponsorships of children's camp experiences are provided throughout the year. Our soccer program, swim lessons, crafts, and tutoring add to their development. Scholarships are available to youth who want to advance their education. Parents encourage and support their children in these activities and are proud of their accomplishments. Likewise, children have expressed gratitude toward their parents for their support. They want to pay back and make their parents



"Café family, volunteers and staff, at Outreach location"

proud. When families are challenged by deportation of parent(s), older children take over family responsibilities and care for younger siblings with the help of supportive neighbors and relatives.

We are family at the Café of Life. Staff feel a special bond, and support each other as they work for a common cause of fulfilling our mission. This love and compassion transfers to our clients who in turn help and support each other. Volunteers say "the Café is my family." Donors who visit feel this positive energy as well. The community is a family as we work together in partnership to help those in need. Mainly, we are family with God, expressing love, compassion and caring for each other.

"Let us love one another for love comes from God"  
(1 John 4:7)

Thanks for being a part of our family.

*Marietta Bala, Chairperson  
Board of Directors, Café of Life.*

## **ASSISTING FAMILIES**

**Here are a few of the many ways in which the Café positively impacts families:**

**Citizenship.** Gaining U.S. citizenship is all about improving the lives of the individual and their families as it opens many more opportunities for all to prosper. The Café assists several people each year to obtain their citizenship through providing funds for application fees, one-on-one coaches who prepare the applicant for the test, assisting with the completion of applications and generally helping them maneuver the complicated process. Here we have a mother and daughter who made it a "family affair" by completing the process together and received their citizenship on the same day with the help of the Cafe.



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## ASSISTING FAMILIES

### CLIENT STORY – MARTINA



Martina immigrated at age fourteen and started a family at eighteen which now consists of a husband and four children. She feels very fortunate to have found the Café for she attends the services 3-4 times a week to help keep the cost down on her family's basic needs. In 2019, Martina and her husband's hard work paid off as they became first-time homeowners and now, they both work for themselves, Martina cleans homes and Ricardo has a lawncare business. Martina is thankful to the Café for providing assistance with their first mortgage payment. She is also grateful for our enriching her four children's lives with music lessons that included guitars and a piano from a generous Café donor, and for sponsoring their children for swim lessons and summer bible school. Both Martina and Ricardo give back by volunteering when they can at our daily services.



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### CLIENT STORY – JESSICA



Jessica, a Café of Life scholarship recipient, is in her last year finishing a nursing degree at FSW. Her goal is to work in the ICU and eventually get a doctorate in anesthesia. While being a student, she has worked 12 hour shifts at NCH where her fellow nurses describe her as a compassionate caring person who is thoughtful and kind to her patients and is always willing to help. Jessica said, "In the future I would like to help my parents even more since they have done so much for my brothers and me. They work really hard and are my role models." This fall her dream was abruptly interrupted as her parents were deported and she suddenly became the parent of her younger siblings. This change in circumstances caused Jessica to quit school in order to work full-time to support the family, along with her oldest

brother who works two jobs. In addition to her scholarship funding, the Café of Life has given financial assistance, emotional support, and provided a generous sponsor who gave the family gifts and Christmas dinner. We respect the courage and bravery of this family in overcoming adversity, and the Café wants to help Jessica finish her education so that she can reach her dreams.

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### REUNITING FAMILIES.



Several times a year the Café is asked to help reunite families by providing transportation, bus or airline tickets. Usually, the circumstances are client(s) need to return to where their family lives because the situation here is unsustainable. This can be due to health, as in the picture where the gentlemen's health was such that he could no longer earn a living and wanted to return to Guatemala where he and his son would have family to help support him. Or, another common situation is when help is needed after the family's bread winner is deported and the family wishes to be reunited in their home country.

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## THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

Nothing says “family” more than the holidays and the Café continued its tradition of celebrating the holidays in style. We are so appreciative of all the support we receive which enables each to be so special. Thanksgiving included the Copperleaf community providing 500+ elaborate meals which were distributed at four low-income locations, and special meals, also from the Copperleaf community, for our senior clients. Christmas sponsors provided over 1,300 presents to 473 children, 39 children’s bicycles, 50 infant gifts from First Presbyterian Church, and numerous families were sponsored with gifts, mostly from a FGCU group. The Lee County Sheriff’s Office was instrumental in our main gift distribution event, which also included the Bonita Springs Mayor & City Manager.



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## HOUSING COSTS

Along with food, housing is a basic essential for every family and almost everyone is experiencing the high cost of housing in SWFL, but no one struggles more than the most vulnerable - our client families. Many persons who were sharing rent have moved from the area, leaving the burden of the total cost on one family. The rising cost of utilities, groceries and school expenses are also pressures. The Café works hard to service this challenge by offering assistance with rent and utilities, generally on a one-time emergency basis. The generosity of our donors enabled the Café to provide nearly \$100,000 in assistance in 2025 and the demand is growing.



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## YOUNGER GENERATION OF THE CAFÉ FAMILY

Two of your newer staff members, Tony and Alex, are young and still very early in deciding their career paths, however, both are inspired by helping others and have come to appreciate the “service” aspects of the non-profit industry. Tony started a program this past Fall in social services at Florida Southwestern College with hopes of making this a career goal. He is the son of longtime staff member Yadi which enabled him to quickly integrate into the “Café of Life family”.

Alex, for which English is a second language, has been concentrating on improving his English verbal and writing skills and has recently been accepted into Florida Southwestern College starting this summer. He has earned a certificate in accounting operations and is using these skills in his work at the Café. He, too, has quickly become part of the “Café of Life family”. Both are receiving financial assistance for their education through the Café’s scholarship program.

