

Hope Community Center News

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Thanks to You, Dreams Do Come True!

The dream to go to college is a reality for seven of our high school graduates through your donations and contributions of \$7,500 to the Hope Community College Access and Scholarship Fund. HCC's recent graduates of Apopka and Wekiva High School Karen Chavez, Pedro Gallegos, Ivis Rodriguez, (center) Junior Ambrocio, and (bottom) Daniel Betancourt walked across the stage in May to receive their high school diplomas.

Having accomplished this goal, they each set themselves on the path to accomplish the next challenge – going to college.



Each of these graduates received a Hope Scholarship Award toward their education expenses. Two other young women already enrolled in community college, Elia Garcia and Moontina Petion also received awards which will help them continue their college pursuits.

The scholarship committee made up of board members and staff happily announced the awardees in August.

All of the students are grateful for the chance to improve their own lives so that they can continue to give back to the community who has given them so much.

Congratulations and thanks!

Ask Yourself What Would \$10.00 Do?

I recently observed and participated in HCC's Third Annual Golf Scramble. We had 15 volunteers, two staff members and five months of preparation for the event. Our goal was to raise at least \$10,000 for our College Access and Scholarship Fund. We raised \$5700 for which we are very grateful. But I got to thinking, was this the best use of our time? With so many important issues to address in our community, wouldn't it be easier to simply ask everyone who reads this newsletter to give \$10.00? I imagined what could happen if the 1000 recipients of this newsletter each sent in \$10.00 to HCC in the enclosed envelope. In as little time as it takes for me to ask and the time it would take for you to write the check, we could raise \$10,000. It does not take much to add up quickly. Imagine what financial impact you could have on HCC if you asked your friends as well to donate \$10, \$20 or \$30. Or imagine what it would mean if you would write a bigger check. We work with the poorest of poor and all of you know that the needs of the community are great. We want to support our youth in accomplishing their dreams of furthering their education. Please don't wait for another fundraising event. Make a donation now and know that you are part of a community that believes that educating our youth is the key to a better future for all of us.

—President, Board of Directors, Mary Carroll

Third Annual Golf Scramble

Seventy Golfers & "Three Crazy Nuns Make It a Day to Remember"



On October 2, 2009, seventy golfers came out to support Hope Community Center's College Access and Scholarship Fund at Errol Estate Country Club. Golfers enjoyed breakfast, lunch, a beautiful day and the opportunity to beat the Sisters at putting. Thanks to Massey Cadillac, they also played for the chance to win a Cadillac in a hole-in-one challenge.

Golfers were happy to receive first and second place trophies, great raffle items and hear about HCC's programs from Grace Gonzales, HCC's Resource Development Director. Honorary Chair, Scott Anez, encouraged everyone attending to support the work and goals of HCC. A.T.A.P. took first place in the Men's Division and Sarah Whittington, Suzanne Engelmeir, Andi Harper and Karen Williams placed first in the Women's Division.

The highlight and most touching part of the program was when the students graciously and poignantly told the audience why being able to go to college was so important to them.

The \$5700 raised will replenish a now empty fund as last year's money was distributed to seven of our graduates.

Thanks to all the sponsors, golfers and committee members for their contribution to a beautiful, fun, and rewarding autumn day.

Helping Immigrants Become US Citizens

Since 1995, the Center has been providing citizenship classes to legal permanent residents and in the past year, 28 of our students have passed their interviews, either on the first or second try. Gilbert LeBrón, Citizenship Coordinator, and his group of instructors Rupert Munoz, Mike Serrage, Ed Sanford and Shanna Varela get together on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-9 pm. Gilbert said "Initially the students are usually nervous but after getting used to the informal class, there are no signs of nervousness. They are positively motivated and study at home, with their children who play the role of the "Interviewing Officer" and ask their parents civics and American history questions. Most students want to become US Citizens in order to have the right to vote, others have very personal motives." All express the desire to be a part of the American Dream and experience the freedoms that the U.S. has to offer. Once they are successful in their interview, they usually come back to celebrate with the other students (they always bring food!) and share details of the interview process. We all have seen changes in our students who have participated in this process and passed their interviews. They are now more positive, sure of themselves and very proud to be Americans.



Gilbert LeBrón, Adenia Angeles, Bernardino Maldonado, Cynthia Contreras, Ruby Saristi, Blanca Fajardo, Flora Rodriguez

New Notre Dame AmeriCorps Team Takes Oath

Twenty nine individuals promise “to get things done.”



On September 1, 2009, twenty nine individuals assembled within the Hope Community Center. On that day, nurtured by the sisters of Notre Dame and the Notre Dame AmeriCorps staff, we became a community and took an oath – an oath to “get things done.” Our community hails from all over the world; we come from the grasslands and rolling hills of Central Africa, from the blue seas of the Caribbean, and from the mighty Republic of North America.

We have, from the plurality of our community, the ability to take action. That action bestows impetus to our power. If we define power as Hanna Arendt once did, to mean “where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities,” then we have assembled as a community not only to become empowered, but also to empower others.

Together, as an empowered community, we agreed upon the principles that will guide our deeds. We promised to labor with love and compassion and to work with care and respect. We pledged to keep an open mind in all our dealings, and to cultivate compassion, trust and care into our relationships. Armed with our shared experiences and the support forged by our relationships, we venture into the depths of an unknown year of service, offering perseverance and unwavering dedication to those we meet along the way.

We are weaving a complex tapestry that is much bigger than any of us, and so it involves thousands of participants of every age, gender and ethnicity. We are working with the lost children of incarcerated parents, the wandering souls of refugees, the dirt adorned hands of farm workers, and the divine schemes concocted by an order of super nuns. So in one year, when we contemplate the tapestry that we are currently weaving, we will see a carefully crafted narrative within the pattern of the finished product. And this narrative will be the benchmark that we use to answer one very simple question: “Did we get things done?” —from the AmeriCorps team, compiled by Pedro Lopes



Collaboration Between UCF and HCC Benefits All

This August, Hope Community Center had the opportunity to add three new members to its staff working in conjunction with the University of Central Florida’s Master of Social Work program. Carla Powell, Kaidi Tastet- Ortiz and Lucy Paine, will complete a one year internship here working at least 500 hours each during the Fall and Spring semesters as part of their curriculum as MSW students. The girls jumped into action at HCC and have already begun several projects in the community. They will be working with local schools including Apopka High School, Wolf Lake Middle and Apopka Middle Schools offering their services for individual student needs as well as small group work about such topics as self-esteem, grief and loss. The Hope Community Center offers a very successful Nurturing Parenting Program, and for one of their projects, the interns created a new program called Madres Jovenes which started September 29 and is targeted specifically for teenage moms and moms-to-be. Lucy, Carla and Kaidi are available at HCC Mondays and Tuesdays. For questions, the students can be reached at 407.880.4673, extension 236.



UCF Interns Welcomed at AmeriCorps’ Trainings



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Elizabeth Castillo



Gezer Abrocio

Student Advisory Board Proud To Be First at HCC

A Message from Youth Board Member—Eli Garcia

We are proud to be the first HCC Youth Advisory Board. Elizabeth Castillo has been part of AmeriCorps for two years and participates in every youth activity. Gezer Ambrocio is a senior at Apopka and plans to continue his education in college. He is involved with the youth group plans to start a soccer team that would represent the youth group of HCC. Sergio Serrano is a sophomore at Wekiva High School; he is also an honor student. He is a participant and a leader in the youth group. Finally, Eli Garcia is attending Seminole State College; she is a worker and a volunteer at HCC, who participates in youth group activities and also works with S.W.E.R. (Students Working for Equal Rights) where she motivates youth to work for student rights. It is a new beginning for us to represent the youth of HCC and, we know, as leaders, we will do our very best to achieve excellence for these youth so that they can become leaders and also bestow upon them what they need for them to attain what they will need to succeed in life.



Sergio Serrano



Eli Garcia

Summer Jobs For Youth a Win-Win Situation

Wow! A summer job paying \$8 an hour for teens from low income families! This is a win-win situation for all and Hope Community Center took advantage of the opportunity hiring twelve youth to work as camp counselors at the Center and to foster the youth credit union project, Pennies for Power and Darter Dollars. These young interns came to HCC through federal stimulus money given to WorkForce Central Florida. The interns helped staff HCC's Kidz Kamp and developed a website and a policy and procedure manual for the youth credit union. Most of the WorkForce interns were African American and new to HCC, partnering with the Latino youth from HCC's youth group, Sin Fronteras. They did a great job and the income earned helped in many ways. One youth said, "this money will make a big difference because my father recently lost his job."

At summer's end WorkForce Central Florida and HCC asked the youth to evaluate the experience. Here are just a some of the comments from participants when asked, "What was your greatest learning experience this summer?" Says Joyce, "Everyone has their own story and that history is much more than the past, rather something that shapes our future." Sofia responded, "I would rather die knowing that I made a difference in someone's life than making all the money in the world." And Karina said, "I see now the impact that I can make on someone's life by just helping them and being there for them." Robyn commented, "The experience helped me figure out what I want to do with my life! It helped me to think about what kind of person I want to be." Elizabeth commented, "I learned I am a leader!"



Nine of twelve students shout for joy at receiving checks!