

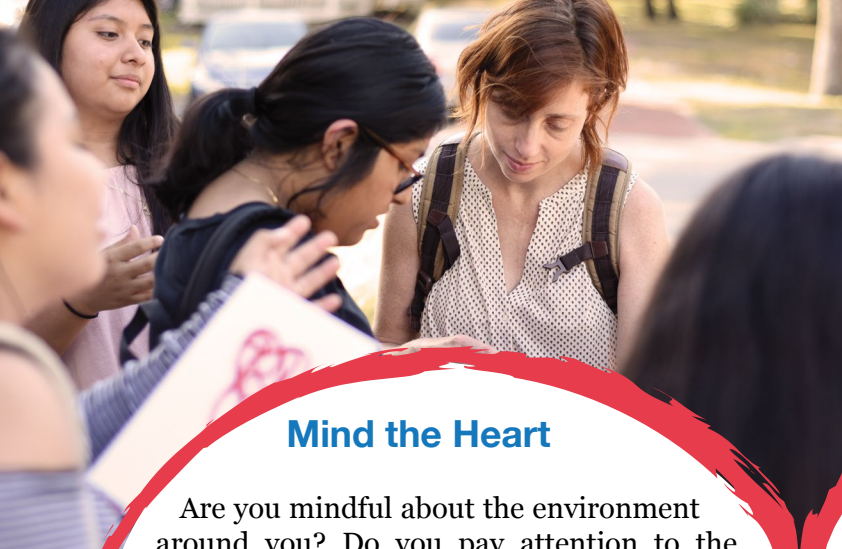


HOPE
CommUnity Center
Building Community, Enriching Lives.

Winter 2018 Newsletter



(Top) Mind the Heart project leaves their mark on Hope's South campus and in the hearts of many in Central Florida.
(Bottom) Bridgewater State University students tend to the community garden at Hope as part of their immersion.



Mind the Heart

Are you mindful about the environment around you? Do you pay attention to the roads that you take to work or the buildings that you pass by? Such questions were brought to mind by recent artists visiting Hope CommUnity Center.

Maya Gelfman and Roie Avidan visited Hope CommUnity Center to invite Notre Dame AmeriCorps members, staff, and *Sin Fronteras* Youth Group members to participate in their collaborative performative experiment called “Mind the Heart.” For the past nine years, the two artists have promoted **mindfulness** through site-specific street art, public actions, community events and lectures. Now they are in the midst of a one-year tour of the United States.

Roie and Maya say about the project, ***“Throughout this year we not only create our own site-specific works, but are inviting communities and people to actively partake in the project and mark their own spots of significance and mindfulness in the public domain.”***

The Mind the Heart project challenges people to see beauty where others see something common. That nuisance crack in the



sidewalk you frequently avoid? The water leaking onto the sidewalk? According to the artists, those are the city’s scratches and injuries, like the ones on your bodies, and the living vessels of the environment around you.

A week after presenting to Hope’s Youth Group, Roie and Maya transformed the community room in Hope’s North Park office into an art gallery. The room featured images submitted by collaborative artists (the Youth Group and staff participants) who accepted the challenge of finding places they considered common or significant to their own lives and placing a red yarn heart on it. Roie and Maya added, ***“All come to show that everywhere means something to someone, so you should walk around with an open heart.”***

Before leaving, Maya and Roie gifted both of Hope’s campuses with yarn murals. They chose the words ***“Be Longing”*** to capture the spirit of Hope and the importance of being in the present and longing for something more.

Learn more about their artistic mission at **mindtheheart.org**



Organizing for an Alternative Reality

She walks and talks with conviction as she goes door to door asking people, “*What do you need?*” She is Lashae Copeland, Hope CommUnity Center’s Community Organizer for South Apopka and a two-year Notre Dame Mission Volunteer AmeriCorps veteran. One of Lashae’s many strengths is her ability to see what others are likely to overlook.



“South Apopka is a community that is underserved and a place that isn’t celebrated even though there is so much to be celebrated about the resilience of the people.”

Lashae Copeland, Community Organizer for South Apopka

In Lashae’s work, she observes that community leaders are rebuilding and developing opportunities for change and growth in South Apopka. Leadership development is one of the many positive impacts community organizing can have on the public. “*Community organizing is about creating a reality that hasn’t been experienced before, allowing the community to express their discontent with the way things are and giving them power,*” Lashae says as she contemplates what community organizing means to her. “*It’s about them having the power to create a better life for themselves and for generations to come.*”

Through community organizing, residents call attention to their issues. They know best what they need. Lashae’s passion for the people of South Apopka shines through as she speaks about her intention to **agitate, advocate and mobilize the community** to be their own problem solvers, recognize their oppression and create their alternative reality. “*You have to be able to imagine and be creative because you’re creating this world that people can’t see but know is possible,*” she declares, showing her conviction and her dedication to the empowerment of the South Apopka community.



Celebrate Black History Month
“Embrace Hope for Racial Understanding”
w/ Dr. Kitty Oliver

Monday, February 12 | 5:30 PM
800 S. Hawthorne Ave | Apopka, FL | 32703

For more information
please contact
Lashae Copeland
at 407.880.4673.



New Skills for Mothers

Hope CommUnity Center has been developing life skills and relationship skills through their Nurturing Family Program for over ten years. This year, they elevated the learning experience for the mothers of the Parenting Alumni Group to a new level. University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) approached Hope with a new program that educates the mothers about nutrition and creating quick and healthy meals at home.

UF IFAS’s *Cooking Matters* curriculum introduces healthy best practices like ‘eating the rainbow’ as a reminder to eat colorful fruits and vegetables and reading nutritional labels to avoid fructose, glucose, and other harmful chemicals. **“It reinforces the idea that [the Parenting Alumni mothers] should make changes in their diet and lifestyle to be healthier for themselves and for their families,”** says Hope staff member Dulce Barrera. She added, **“Small things make a huge impact in their lives.”**

The new UF IFAS curriculum has been well-received. Many of the moms are surprised but grateful for how accepting their families have been to the healthier meals. Teresa Chacon, a Parenting Alumni mom for over two years shares her adoration for healthy living with her fellow moms and influences them to eat right and workout. **“I feel good, I feel so good. I want to teach people that if you change the inside, you change the outside.”**

Additionally, the *Cooking Matters* program inspired Hope’s Youth and Family Department to initiate their own physical fitness initiative with Notre Dame AmeriCorps member, Bianca Apallon. **“I want to help them feel better about themselves and let them know that fitness is for everyone,”** says Bianca, who has brought her passion for physical fitness to the moms as their trainer. She added, **“I look forward to having them.”**

“I feel good, I feel so good. I want to teach people that if you change the inside, you change the outside.”
-Teresa Chacon, Parenting Alumni

“At Hope, we view language learning as an excellent tool for building community.”
-Elizabeth Ortel, Dir. of Academic Support

English Classes Return to Hope

Back by popular demand: Beginning in early October, more than 90 enthusiastic students started English classes at Hope, which were offered for the first time in **more than two years**. The classes brought together people from diverse national, cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds and included some who are already good friends of Hope—Community Advisory Committee members, parents of children in *Sin Fronteras* Youth Group, the *Adelante Caminantes* program, and Citizenship Program participants—as well as newcomers from the local area. More than half of the group completed the 10-week volunteer-led program composed of original curriculum inspired by Popular Education and participatory learning models and methodology.

On the last day of HCC’s fall English class cycle, the students from all three ESOL levels gathered together for a conversation café and student recognition ceremony. Energy levels were high, and the students smiled, laughed, and embraced old and new friends with handshakes and hugs while they chatted about three major topics covered during the course cycle: introducing themselves, describing their families and immigration history, and sharing information about their everyday activities. Spaces for meeting and sharing like this are few and far between in our everyday lives. As advanced students broke the ice with beginner students, and intermediate students shook hands with volunteer teachers, we could see everyone gaining confidence and realizing how much there was that they wanted to share.

At Hope, we view language learning as an excellent tool for building community. Ultimately, learning a language is about **learning** to communicate, **sharing** with others, and **creating** new relationships for collaboration and mutual support between students and volunteer teachers. Practically speaking, learning English breaks down the very concrete barriers that immigrants and their families face in everyday places and interactions that native speakers take for granted. While learning English, we learn about the everyday realities we share, and we can imagine new ways of thinking and acting to make a better community and world possible.





Personal Transformation Through Service

Open Hearts at Remington College

For over 47 years, Hope CommUnity Center has played a great part in enriching the lives of all who cross their path. Through service, we solve problems, strengthen communities, and improve the lives of others.

Gilyvette Perez is an Occupational Therapist Assistant student at Remington College in Lake Mary, Florida and volunteer for the Level A Class of Hope's ESOL program. She helps adults to learn the basics of reading and writing in the English language. Through service, Gilyvette has experienced a personal transformation like never before. She says, *"I've learned a lot. I'm a very shy person, so being in that class has helped me get out of my shell."*

"I've been recommending Hope to a lot of my classmates," says Gilyvette. She says this with a bright smile as the end for the semester with Hope CommUnity Center nears.

Kristen Wenke, a fellow Remington College student has also been volunteering at Hope CommUnity Center. While living in Apopka for most of her life, Kristen has driven by HCC many times. For the past 3 months, she has spent Mondays and Wednesdays volunteering as an elementary tutor. Kristen says about her tutoring experience, *"I have learned how to interpret other people's emotions through body language, it will definitely help me as an occupational therapist."* From this experience, Kristen gains much more than fieldwork practice. By volunteering at Hope, Kristen also has the opportunity to learn more about herself. *"I [learned a lot] working with kids who come from different countries. I can't imagine what it would be like to come to a country [where people predominately speak] a language that is not your own,"* she says as she reflects on her time here so far.

Thank you Gilyvette and Kristen for your service here at Hope.

Board Member Bob Does it All

For over 15 years, Hope CommUnity Center has had the pleasure of having the help of an exceptional person. His name is Robert "Bob" McIntosh, a multi-generational Central Florida native. Bob initially connected with the Apopka farmworker ministry not long after finishing law school at the University of Florida in 1984. He had previously volunteered in Guatemala for two years with The Peace Corps.

Bob holds community service in high regards. ***"I wanted to do something along the same lines as The Peace Corps,"*** he said, which explains his devotion to making a difference in underserved communities at Hope CommUnity Center. Since leaving his service with The Peace Corps, he served on HCC's advisory board, taught English classes, and currently volunteers with Hope's Citizenship Program. Bob knows what works. ***"I try to keep studying***

fun for the students," Bob shares his enjoyment for helping with English and Citizenship classes. His fluency in Spanish is a great asset to Hope.

In May 2015, Bob traveled to El Salvador with 20 community members, board members, staff,

and friends from Hope for the beatification of Blessed Archbishop Óscar Romero. Romero was killed while celebrating Mass in El Salvador in 1980, which was the same time that Bob was serving with The Peace Corps in neighboring Guatemala. ***"I got to know some of the people I help a little better,"*** he says about the trip.

Now retired from years of practicing law, Bob works as a legal/immigration aid for those in need and teaches law classes at Barry University in Orlando, FL. He recently brought a class of students on a visit to HCC to dine with volunteers and connect with undocumented families. ***"It was pretty profound for some of them,"*** he recalled. This experience has even influenced some of his students to practice immigration law.

Calligraphy, ceramics and 100-mile bike rides are just some of the many hobbies Bob has outside of volunteering with HCC. His hands are also full with two children, three grandchildren and a wife of forty years. The retired attorney said his life has come, ***"kinda full circle,"*** and often contemplates, ***"From a spiritual standpoint, where am I going to put my time?"*** We are pleased that his time has been spent with us and hope to have him here for many years to come.



What passion will you bring?

Begin your volunteering journey today by contacting Lynn Devanie at ldevanie@hcc-offm.org or visiting hcc-offm.org.





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Mission: Hope CommUnity Center is a service learning community dedicated to the empowerment of Central Florida's immigrant and working poor communities through education, advocacy, and spiritual growth.



Alejandra Salinas is a native North Carolinian and Dreamer. Now, she is also Hope's new Service Learning Assistant. In Alejandra's new role, she primarily works with host families. Host families warmly and lovingly open their homes to students who, during their fall and spring breaks, participate in an immersive learning experience, Service Learning. Students from schools from all over the country live with families and share life stories. It is a beautiful and often life transforming experience for both.

Alejandra moved from North Carolina with her husband and family to Central Florida in 2016 with few friends, families, and job opportunities. Through her connection with RCMA, she learned about Hope's traditional celebration of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). At this event, she connected with an organizer who encouraged her to join the Get Out the Vote campaign for the 2016 national election with the *Sin Fronteras* (Without Borders) Youth

Group. Alejandra remembers the instantaneous warmth and connection she felt with people here at Hope. After months of feeling isolated and alone, she had friends, family, and purpose here in Florida. And soon after volunteering for a summer during Kids Camp, Alejandra was offered her current position in Service Learning. She reflects, *"I walked into this position so easily and so naturally."*

She loves that in her day-to-day role she can touch hearts and touch minds, just as Hope touches hers. Perhaps for the first time in her life, she saw herself, her own immigration story, and her own experiences with the host families with whom she works. She says that because of this, the connections she has with families comes naturally. She says, *"Working with host families is where I started to really grow. I could compare my story, my life and my own struggles to what these families are going through. I know what it is like to be in fear of being separated from your family."*

Help us in welcoming Alejandra to Florida and her new family at Hope!



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