

October 2015

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Beth-El

Farmworker Ministry, Inc.



Food for Thought

It is said that Americans on average will gain 10 to 15 pounds during the upcoming holidays. It is a season with so many choices -- wonderful foods and special times with family and friends. But, for our farm working families choices are few.



For the farm workers here on work visas from Mexico, they have left their families behind to earn a better wage. Most of what they earn is sent back home to support their spouses and children. It is a lonely time, too -- separated from their loved ones for seven months at a time -- all so that they can offer their family more choices back home.

For other farm workers who follow the crops around the U.S., choices are limited by the fate of the growing season. Was it a

good year or bad? Was the family able to stay healthy? Was their enough food to put on the table? And will the children be able to go to school? For those living in continuing poverty, choices are limited.

Perhaps, one of the greatest choices we will ever make is the wise use of our time. Will we spend it feasting on junk food, or seek a more nutritious alternative? In this season of abundant choices, how can we make a difference in the life of our neighbor. Are we able to adopt a family for Christmas, or plan to send a child to Cedarkirk, can we help serve a meal at Cena Comunitaria, or help out in the food pantry? In God's name how can we be fruitful with our choices until all of God's children find their place at the table.

Dios le bendiga,



Kathleen Dain
Executive Director

Generations

It's Tuesday evening. The sun is setting on the farms in Wimauma, Florida. Most folk are home by dusk in this rural town, except for grandpa, as he is affectionately called by Beth-El's youth group. Grandpa has been picking up each member of the youth group for many years, so that they can attend Sunday school, youth club, or the countless other activities Beth-El offers for children and teens.



While some parents are unable to come to church regularly, their children welcome the opportunity for fellowship and worship. Many teens have been coming to Beth-El since pre-school--not because they were forced by their parents, but because Beth-El has become their home. You see, most of these young people were born in the U.S., or emigrated as children from Mexico. But, the majority of their parents are either migrant workers, or low skilled workers, who came in pursuit of the American dream. Some of the older youth have even worked in the fields themselves to help support their families.

No matter their current circumstances, every one of these teens is intimately familiar with their parent's struggles that brought them to this "Promised Land". Many spend their days at work in the scorching sun, or work low-skilled jobs to provide a better future for their children.

Change has been a constant in these teen's lives, be it moving several times in their lives from trailer homes, or apartments; caring for their siblings while their parents work odd shifts, or being the first in their families to graduate from primary school. They not only have to struggle to find their identities, and place in society as individuals during these vulnerable years, but they also must live between two worlds: trying to honor their parent's culture and traditions, while becoming part of the new American fabric.



Irrespective of their legal status, or cultural identity, they are first and foremost, just like all other American teens going to school, playing sports, performing in the school band, and doing the things teens do. They dream of getting good jobs, traveling the world, becoming pop stars, and of course, falling in love. Unfortunately, most of these youth will be tempted to drop out of high school. For some, their hopes of being part of the American dream are even more uncertain due to their parent's legal status, or even their own. Some know that they may never be able to attend college, or enlist in the armed forces after being the best in their ROTC program at school, or worse yet, be separated from their families by deportation. Notwithstanding their realities, they dare to dream big, and aim high, and work hard to attain their dreams. Why, you may ask? I believe it's because they have incredible faith in GOD. A faith that has grown, in part, thanks to Beth-El offering them and their families educational programs; basic food staples, when they could not make ends meet; health

clinics to educate their parents; legal services, and so much more. Beth El is home, their refuge, their sanctuary from the challenges of everyday life!

On this particular night, they talk about bullying at school, shootings, and a boy and girl who became parents during their freshman year of high school, and now can't get along. They rehearse music and dance for an upcoming service, and work out the details of the upcoming garage sale and how they will use the money earned to offset the cost of summer camp at Cedarkirk.

Youth group has ended for today, and grandpa urges them to hurry back on the bus, so they can get home in time to do homework.

They rush off, as I turn off the lights, and gather my things. Despite the challenges before them, I am certain that they know that they are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in them.



Ofelia Uribe

**What do you do with 12
pallets of cranberry jelly?**

That was the question Beth-El

faced when over the summer months we received 18,000 cans of cranberry jelly through our emergency food program.

Part of Beth-El's new hunger relief program is to create and share recipes made from the foods distributed each week at our food pantry.

Together with the nurses at Florida State College and our own Maria Galarza, we created a tasty cranberry salsa and then offered samples to the recipients of the food pantry. It was a huge success so much so that many have asked us for the recipe. Our dream is to continue to share "What's in the Bag" recipes and resources and fresh produce are available.



Cranberry Salsa

Dice one can of jellied cranberry sauce.

Dice small orange

Dice small amount of mango
(mix with lime juice)

Dice small amount of apple

Dice cucumber

Dice green pepper

Dice jalapeño pepper

Dice garlic clove

Mix all together and store in covered container. Refrigerate until ready to serve. No additional seasonings needed. Amounts of ingredients can be adjusted according to taste.

Volunteering at Beth-El

The weather has been ideal these past few days for working outside.

This past Saturday I had the opportunity to work with a group of

students from both Eckerd College of St. Petersburg and the University of South Florida of Tampa.



It was breezy and the sun was shining, but it didn't feel hot. We worked on tearing down an old playground set that had seen better days. There were rotting boards, exposed nails, wasp nests, and plenty of sharp edges. So we felt that although we were going to be left without the playground area, safety was more important. It was hard work but fun, too. At the same time we were working outside a group from First Presbyterian Church of Brandon was busy indoors rehabbing a room to be used as a library.

We all came together at lunch time offering thanks to God and to share in a wonderful meal prepared by the women of Beth-El's worshipping community. After enjoying generous portions of tostadas and brownies we returned to our tasks for the afternoon. By mid afternoon most of the playground had been disassembled, and the library was beginning to take shape.

So aside from our wish to provide a comfortable space for visitors to read, meet, and study, we were also thinking about the children's safety, with our work outside. And to top it off enjoyed a very tasty meal, too.



So, why are we doing all these things?

The answer is simple; because we want Beth-El Mission to be a place of comfort to others. We want our facilities and our campus to be attractive and safe. We want people to feel welcomed. We want to give back to the farmworkers and we want them to feel they are valued. So what better way to do this than by working hard, just like them, and the only way we can do this is by working together. In collaboration and with the same goals in mind.



In the picture on the left, you see my wife, Laura Izaguirre, planting strawberry plants. It takes a strong back to plant strawberries. Laura works hard so that you and I can enjoy eating strawberries whenever we like without worrying about how they got to the supermarket.

Yet, while we may not give too much thought about how strawberries get to our tables, we must not forget that it's not just about strawberries. We must remember that most of the fruits and vegetables that we eat, fresh or frozen, had

to be hand-picked, and more than likely, it was a farmworker who picked them.

Enjoy!

Javier Izaguirre
Operations Manager



Cena Comunitaria
Thursdays 5pm to 7pm

Since beginning in late August, hundreds of farm workers and families from our community have come to Beth-El to share in a community dinner. It takes about 5 to 6 volunteers to help prepare and serve the meal. If your church or group would like to volunteer, please call Rosalva at 813-633-1548 ext. 231. ¡Gracias!

Beth-El Smiles

For a number of years I have visited Beth-El a few times a year because I knew the importance of its ministry to farm workers' lives. I would visit during the open house, maybe have lunch with

Dave, a friend and the previous executive director, or maybe bring out a bag of rice or two and some clothes for the clothes closet. It was not until I joined the board of directors, now in my second year, that I realized it takes dedicated staff and a host of volunteers



to deliver the support services and ministries.

Something wonderful is really happening at Beth-EI. Everyone is smiling as they perform their duties,

whether filling food pantry bags, receiving all kinds of deliveries, preparing meals for the crews, working in the yards, or slinging a paint brush, to name a few weekly tasks. Everyone is smiling because everything that helps Beth-EI helps the farm workers', their families, and even anyone who comes to Beth-EI with a need. Never have I been a part of an organization where God's presence is felt in everything that we do! That is why there are so many smiles.

After a little more than a year and a half of personal, deliberate, participation in Beth-EI activities, I continue to learn a little deeper everyday how vital Beth-EI is to these families. I pray for Beth-EI every day, and I pray that you will join us! Please visit our website www.beth-el.org and see how you can get involved. You will have an impact to many and will be transformed. I promise!

David Childs

The holidays are right around the corner.
Please contact Pastor Walter if you would like to
adopt a family this Christmas season.



Be Sure to Visit Our New Website
at www.beth-el.org

Beth-El
Farmworker Ministry, Inc.

Fueled by Volunteers and Your Faithful Prayers and Support

Our mailing address is:
18240 Highway 301 South
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Email: info@beth-el.info



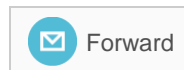
Web: www.beth-el.org

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry is open Monday through Thursday from 8a.m. to 5p.m., or by special appointment.

We are closed from noon until 1p.m. for lunch.

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