

Beth-El

Farmworker Ministry, Inc.



The Bus Lady!



Our VBS program encountered a familiar problem this summer: we did not have enough staff to allow for the transportation of 25-30 potential children who wanted to attend our youth activities, but did not have the means. The choice was simple – the mission had to find a way to transport them! The mission needed someone to volunteer to drive our bus, so I volunteered.

I attended a bus training day to learn all of the routes prepared by Jariff, affectionately called “Grandpa” by many of the youth of the worshipping community. The training was followed by a driving session with Pastor Walter and other staff members. By then, I was mildly hysterical! Why did I think I could handle this? I do not like to drive; my Spanish is really poor; I live in Brandon and the first bus route (of three) began at six thirty in the morning! What had I gotten myself into! Then I learned that teenage girls from the worshipping community had volunteered to ride with me. They assisted with the route, and maps and helped the younger children to and from the bus. I could never have done this without Alani and Isabel. They led the children in songs and word games while on the bus and remained at the mission to serve as helpers for the morning activities, then made the return trips with me. I was also able to work with

Sheila who was overseeing the program, and who actually rode with me on the first route of the early shift. Others also helped, and I was touched by the loving and protective manner with which they all treated the younger children.

The “Beth-El Bus Kids” volunteered, too. They sensed my concerns and immediately accepted the responsibilities of telling me where I *should* go and what I *should* do. They saved the lives of numerous chickens, roosters, and little Chihuahuas in the Ruskin/Wimauma area by watching out the windows when I was backing up. They reported anyone who did not have their seat belt “clicked” and were on constant watch for speed bumps (some homemade), all the while critiquing my driving and my Spanish.

Do you know that the little ones often applaud when the bus arrives? Attending VBS is very special for these children. They need to be here and they want to be here. This is what your mission does, it gives hope to these children and their families. They called me the “Beth-El Bus Lady”.



It has been many years since I have worked directly with the farmworkers and their children. The names are different, but the faces and the smiles are the same. Their eyes are filled with joy and their smiles are beautiful.

I have been involved with our mission for decades, but in the last years my time was spent serving on the board and its committees. I realized that I truly wanted some face-to face time with those we serve.

I needed that. I have to admit that I think my favorite job so far is that of the Beth-El Bus Lady. I was hoping that they might ask me again, but Kathy, our executive director, said that she wasn’t certain because a lot of chickens seemed happier knowing VBS (and my driving) were over.

Would you consider volunteering at Beth-EL? It is a wonderful, rewarding experience. Our mission could provide so many more services if we have more volunteers. Please think about it.

Sue Rice
Chair, Beth-El Board

2016 Summer Youth Programs



Walking by Faith

What do you remember best about the 70's? Was it bell bottom jeans, disco or long gas lines at the pump? Or were you even born way back then?

In 1976 Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford were campaigning for president, while this gal was finishing her first year of college at Central Michigan University. But back here in the Wimauma/Ruskin



area, a group of Presbyterians realized that creating a new worship service for the Hispanic farmworking community required more than a few hymns – it required a truly faithful embodiment of the Gospel to feed the poor and care for those in need.

In her book, “Leaving Church”, Barbara Brown Taylor asks what our faith might be like if we put *down the Bible* and became *living words* in the world around us? In her words to “keep the Bible as a field guide,” bearing God’s witness in the world around us.



For 40 years Beth-El Farmworker Ministry has strived to be a faithful witness as ‘*living words*’ to the farmworking community. The mission has grown over the years. Now over 100,000 people utilize our campus

services every year. We have celebrated weddings and graduations, and mourned at the loss of old friends, and at the persistent degree of poverty our farmworkers face every day.

Just this week a family visited. They hadn’t started working yet and had absolutely nothing. No food. No shoes or clothing for their kids except what they had on their backs--and certainly no resources to provide school supplies for the coming school year. What a blessing it was for us to open the doors of our *tienda* (thrift store) so the family could pick out clothing, or to provide food from our pantry, and backpacks from our back to school supplies. All of this was possible because of our faithful partners who donate, financially support, and volunteer – who in reality help this

mission be *living words* in the world around us.

Sunday, members of our community gathered in worship for the “Blessing of the Backpacks”. Our sanctuary was filled with joyful faces as child after child came forward to receive their summer program certificate and brand new backpack filled with school supplies. Some children were overcome with tears, perhaps just to know that someone cares. Just to know that someone they may never meet, cared so much that they gave them this wonderful gift.



Forty years forward, our farmworkers continue to struggle to provide for their families, but Beth-El Farmworker Ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to be a source of support and encouragement to our neighbors in need. As the mission looks back at the last 40 years, we are also looking forward, too. With the completion of our new warehouse we will be able to serve as a distribution site providing resources for our community and other mission partners in our area. Our mentorship program directed by the mission’s outreach resource coordinator will help those in our community eager to take the next steps toward economic self-sufficiency. And, as always we will be here to love, support, and encourage those we serve.

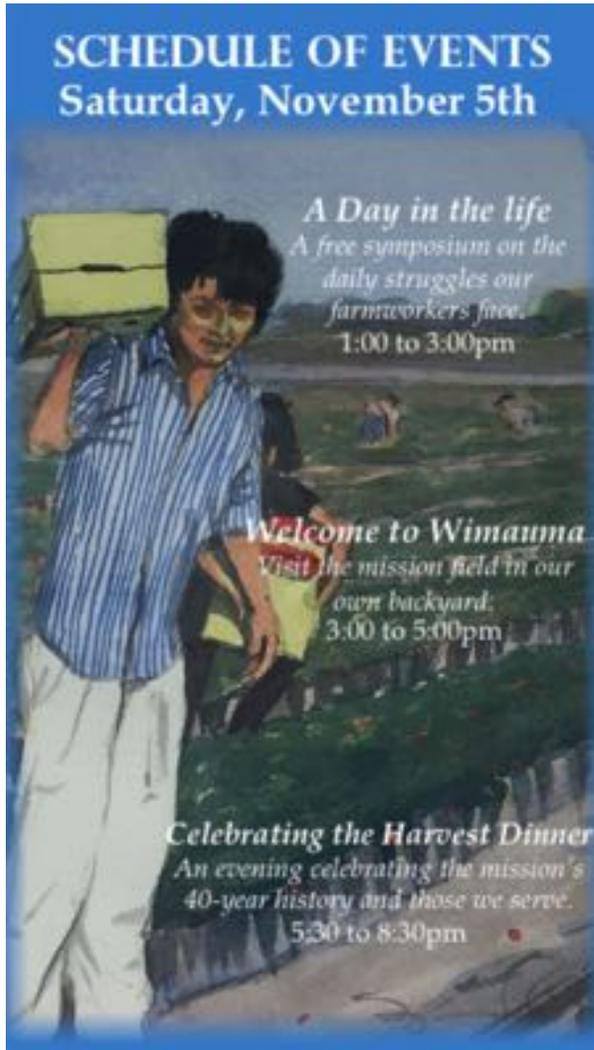
I hope that you will be able to join us on November 5th as we honor our farmworking community, remembering how far we have come and how far we have yet to go.

Dios le bendiga

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy".

**Kathleen Dain
Executive Director**

40 Years Forward



Round Table Discussion on Farmworkers' Daily Struggles

Saturday afternoon Beth-El farmworker Ministry will host a round table symposium on the life and challenges our farmworkers face every day.

Guest speakers include members of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Frontera de Cristo Border Ministry, and the National Farmworker Ministry, and local farmworkers.

The event is free and open to the public.

Celebrando la Cosecha: Celebrating the Harvest

The Celebration will include a look back at our 40-year history along with innovative plans for the future.

Saturday evening, you are invited to a special dinner of thanksgiving in support of the

farmworker community. Dinner tickets may be purchased for yourself, for a farmworker or both.

Space is limited; please reserve your seat today!

On the Road with Javier

They came by the thousands. They came from all over. They represented all corners of the United States and from around the world. I met a lot of new faces and I saw some familiar ones. It felt good to bump into people who I knew from Beth-El. And it was even more awesome to hear my name being yelled out in a place I had never been to before. At times, it was a little embarrassing because I recognized some of the faces but couldn't quite remember their names. I was reassured that It's normal, but I don't know.



In writing this, these things sound like I may be talking about a regular work group experience at Beth-El. However, I'm referring to the 2016 Presbyterian Youth Triennium event held at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, a short driving distance from Indianapolis.

The theme of the Triennium was: "Go into the world and make disciples." It was a great event and I enjoyed it very much. It was even more enjoyable because I was in the company of my wife, Laura. She is still a farmworker. We had a tremendous time talking to all those young people about all the great work that goes on at Beth-El, and It was just amazing the responses we obtained by both young and old after learning about our Mission.

The responses and reactions were great as evidenced by a young girl saying that she wanted to make a cash donation right there on the spot. Another couple of young ladies from China kept returning to chat with us and even asked us if they could assist us in any way they could, so they helped us by volunteering at our booth. At times, you could see it in their faces. The looks of amazement for what our mission does, and an impulsive, yet genuine, verbal commitment by many that they would definitely visit Beth-El if they ever came to Florida. I felt really proud about our

Mission and the farmworkers we serve.



Some folks came up to me and said they had either visited and or knew about Beth-El from years past. Despite this, I can honestly say that many of the young kids that came to talk to us, and really listened, will probably remember Beth-El and our plight for the farmworkers when they look back at their Triennium experience. So, did we go out and make disciples? I guess we won't know until I receive that call or email from someone that says "Hi, remember me? We met at the Triennium and we want to come help the farmworkers." Those words will be music to my ears.

Javier

Javier Izaguirre
Operations Manager

Meet Sheila Villamar

We are pleased to introduce Sheila as our new operations assistant. Sheila will be working with Javier to coordinate volunteers. You can reach her at sheila@beth-el.org



Immediate Needs

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry has an immediate need for the following items:

- **Personal Hygiene Products**
- **Deodorant**
- **Mosquito repellent-protection against Zika**
- **Baby Formula (Enfamil preferred)**
- **Baby Wipes**
- **Socks**
- **Toilet Paper**
- **Laundry Detergent**
- **Linens and bedding sheets for new arrivals**
- **New or gently used shoes for boys and girls-all sizes**
- **Hats – baseball caps**
- **Musical instruments (all kinds)**
- **Canned Goods**

Volunteer Opportunities



We have regular volunteer opportunities every week at Beth-El. Every other Monday, volunteers help sort and pack rice and beans for the weekly food pantry. On Tuesdays, numerous volunteers are needed to help out in the food distribution program. Wednesday and Thursday's are re-packing days to prepare for the following week's distribution. If none of those opportunities fit your schedule then give Javier or Sheila a call at 813-633-1548. They have a whole list of special projects that can be customized to fit your schedule.

I would like to become more involved at Beth-El Mission as a Volunteer:

- Community Dinner
- Food Pantry
- Lead VBS
- Organize a Workgroup
- Organize a Food Drive
- Organize a Clothing Drive

I would like to donate \$_____

- Summer Camp Scholarships
- Back to School Program
- VBS Supplies
- College Scholarships
- Music Lessons for Youth
- Food Pantry
- Mission's Greatest Need

Support Beth-El Mission with your online contribution today.



**A Printable Copy of this Newsletter is Available on our
Website at: www.beth-el.org or by emailing us at: info@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

PO Box 860

Wimauma, FL 33598-0860

Phone: 813-633-1548

Email: info@beth-el.org

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.



Share



Tweet



Forward