



# REACHING OUT

THE CAFE OF LIFE INC.

SPRING 2017

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

## Marietta Bala, Board Chairwoman: Reaching Out

Dear Friends,

The Café of Life has always **reached out** to the poor and hungry people of Bonita Springs who come to our site to eat a hot nutritious meal, receive groceries and clothing, and help with daily emergency needs, as that is our mission.

For the past year we have **reached out** in many other ways to meet the needs of the community. Our van makes several runs a day to poor neighborhoods not in walking range to bring hungry people to eat at the Café and they partake in our other services too. After service hours a van driver

is available to take persons who have no transportation to necessary medical and other appointments.

Our Outreach Program identifies others in need in areas of poverty in Bonita so that we can bring services to them. We have **reached out** to migrant communities to help families with their problems and provide food, clothing and emergency assistance.

We **reach out** to other non-profits and offer the use of our building to them for their programs and through partnering with them we can meet more needs of the community.

We regularly **reach out** to our volunteers and donors to express our appreciation for what they do. The loving, caring service of the volunteers is the backbone of our mission and the generosity of our donors helps us to provide services. We could not exist without them.

Overriding all of this we **reach out** to God for guidance as He has called us to this mission and guides us with right decisions for our future direction. "I can do everything through Him that gives me strength." Proverbs 4:13

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be." 1 Peter 5:2

In Christian love and service,

Marietta Bala, Chairperson  
Board of Directors

## Greetings from the Director

The Cafe had another outstanding year in 2016, one that included expanding services and the continuation of the tremendous outpouring from our many committed volunteers and generous donors. In 2016 the Café served just over 20,000 hot meals, provided take-home food and clothing to several thousands and provided \$20,000 in direct financial assistance. This was accomplished with four part-time employees and, doing the heavy lifting was the more than 2,000 individual volunteers donating nearly 12,000 hours (the equivalent of 11 additional part-time employees). Our spectacular donors provided funds sufficient for current operations along with much more in donated food, clothing, household goods, toiletries, etc. Our expanded services last year included the Outreach Program started in February which reaches those-in-need unable to partake of our services at Leitner Neighborhood Park. Already in 2017 the Café has added a Transportation Program (see inside article). Our sincere thanks to all of you who enable the Café to make such a positive difference in the lives of so many needy, and to those who haven't experienced the Café of Life, we invite you to come and visit us.



Partner agency

**Donations needed for our  
take-home food pantry!**

## Staff Profile

Michael Robinson has been a staff member with the Café since the summer of 2014, and before that time he was a volunteer, first joining the team when we were still under the banyan tree. Michael became the Café's first Facility Manager when Leitner Neighborhood Park opened and does an outstanding job of caring for the entire Park. The Park is owned by the City of Bonita but it's the Café's responsibility to operate, maintain and fully fund. Michael, like all our staff, is part-time yet always "goes the extra mile" in caring for the Park, as well as, having

great interaction with our volunteers and our clients. Michael spent 26 years as a nurse and while looking forward to semi-retirement he still wanted to help those less fortunate and is grateful he discovered the Café – it was our great fortune he did!



staff was delighted to assist with this Saturday event which included several vendors, displays of emergency response vehicles and the distribution of children bike safety equipment.

## Transportation Program

In late January 2017 the Café expanded its operations to include a Transportation Program and hired Debbie Novaco as its part-time Coordinator. Although we have been transporting clients to our feeding site for services for more than two years the van was going unused in the afternoons and weekends. Since many of our clients have no reliable transportation and the public transportation is lacking we identified a need to transport clients to the doctor's office, pharmacy, grocery store, bank etc. It was our great fortune that "volunteer extraordinaire" Bob Kurtz found an anonymous donor who provided seed funds which enabled us to launch this new service. We are now able to support clients two-three days a week with transportation services.

## Parties

The Café's feeding site, Leitner Neighborhood Park, is the location of many private parties throughout the year and is also used by the City of Bonita Springs for their annual "block party". The "block party" is designed to foster good relations with the Rosemary area residents, and as always, the Café



Transportation Coordinator Debbie and Café's 15 passenger van

## Outreach Program

The Café's Outreach Program started in February 2016 is continuing to make a positive difference in the lives of clients who are unable to make it to our feeding site. Sadly, our Outreach Coordinator Joanne is experiencing some health challenges, to which we wish her a speedy recovery, but in her absence volunteers Debbie, Laura and Leslie have pitched in and are taking chickens, canned and dry goods, clothing and toiletries to our outreach clients twice a week. Outreach is directly impacting the lives of 200 + people in need monthly while also spreading the word about services provided at the Park.

## Holiday Season Events

On Thanksgiving a delicious sit-down meal was served by volunteers, along with “goodie” bags and the distribution of take-home turkey dinners to some 60 families. The Christmas season started in early December with the Shadow Wood Community’s kids time at the Park. In mid-December we identified fifty children to receive presents provided by Estero United Methodist Church and The Colony gated community, along with the distribution of thirty “senior/homeless” bags filled with essential toiletries items. Our Christmas dinner served 123 adults and 125 children’s meal and distributed more than 200 fully stuffed stocking and 200 toys donated by the Worthington Women’s Golf Association and Toys for Tots. Deputies from the Lee County Sheriff’s Office, many who brought their families, provided invaluable support to this event.



Christmas



Thanksgiving

## Portraits of Success - Our Clients Speak

A family which resides in the Gargulio migrant camp and needed assistance getting their grandson Eric enrolled in school and obtaining medical care for Robert. The Café was able to help in both cases by getting Eric enrolled and purchasing him the needed uniforms. As for Robert, the Café was able to arrange for medical care, has assisted with the cost of medicine and is continuing to provide on-going transportation for him to doctor appointments.



**Victoria**, along with husband and three young children reside in the Baso migrant camp where she spends the day caring for theirs and other children whose parents are working in the field. She is unable to travel to our feeding site so the Café’s Outreach Program is delivering food, clothing, toiletries and more to her weekly. Victoria even helps the Café by sharing the items with her neighbors when they return from the field. In order to give the family a real Christmas, the Café provided toys, gift cards and a large ham.

## Salute to Emergency Responders



The Café of Life wishes to express our thanks to the Emergency Responders in our area. Captain Day, Corporal Bobbie Hunter, Outreach Deputy Alex Aguilar and all the local members of the Lee County Sheriff’s office are extremely supportive of the Café. They keep a close watch on Leitner Neighborhood Park, provide outstanding support to our Christmas event, and conduct outreach to our clients during meal services. The Bonita Springs Fire Control & Rescue District provides vehicles and equipment in support of activities at the Park. We at the Café salute and thank you all for your service to the Café and our community!

**Beverly’s** small social security check is all she has to live on. When she moved to the trailer park community of Covered Wagon in 2014 her new neighbors mentioned the Café and its van service. Since she has no vehicle she started riding the van to our feeding site and does so almost every day. In addition to the services she receives at the Park, the Café has provided her with repairs to her trailer, the purchase of a drinking water unit and bee infestation removal. Beverly recently commented that “if it wasn’t for this “God” like organization (Café of Life) I don’t know how I would survive”.





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## Endowment Fund

The Board of Directors recently established an Endowment Fund to insure the future financial viability of the Cafe. Thanks to our wonderfully generous donors our current financial position is good, however, as we all know things can change (remember the housing bust and “great recession”). The Endowment Fund will insure the Cafe can continue its mission even in tough times when demand for our services will explode. In addition to cash we can accept some types of non-cash donations like publicly traded stocks and bonds. The enclosed return envelope now has a place where donations can be designated for the endowment. For further information contact our Treasurer Fred Weinman, Northern Trust Senior VP at (239)-498-1991.

**amazon**smile

The Café is a registered not-for profit that benefits from AmazonSmile—a simple and automatic way for you to support the Café every time you shop on Amazon, at no cost to you. Please shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and select the Café of Life as your charity.

## Café of Life Contact Information

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*The Café of Life is a faith-based institution, believing in the teaching of all great religions that one must love and assist one's neighbor in times of need. The Café is not affiliated with any particular religion nor denomination. Our mission is to provide basic human needs to the very poor and hungry people of Bonita Springs, in a manner that preserves the dignity of the client in a respectful environment.*

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.

