



CARING... SHARING... SERVING

HOPE

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

THE CAFE OF LIFE INC.

SPRING 2024

Marietta Bala, Board Chairwomen: HOPE - Hope for the Future

Dear Friends,

Many families are struggling to put food on the table, pay rent, and meet other basic needs due to rising costs. Parents work hard to provide a livelihood in hopes that their children can have a better start on life than they had. Hope is the one thing that can get them through their dark times. It can make the present moment less difficult to bear with the belief that tomorrow will be better, and that they can make positive changes in their lives.

With hope anything is possible. They have hope through their faith in God. Isaiah 43:2 tells them, *"When you go through deep waters, I will be with you."* This hope helps them prepare for the future.

The Café of Life is helping people improve their lives. We provide assistance and basic needs to make their lives easier. The women gain skills for a better future through classes in sewing, gardening, cooking and health care that benefits their families.

All kids need a little help, a little hope, and somebody who believes in them. We provide them enrichment experiences through camps, tutoring, music lessons, crafts and math for preschoolers, and scholarships for high school grads that gives

them hope that they can reach future dreams. Immigrants seeking citizenship have help with paperwork and studies for the exam that provides them hope for a future in this country.

In moments of challenge, Hope motivates us to keep going and to focus on our mission. When we have hope, we believe that better days are ahead and that we can make positive changes in people's lives and the community.

We are grateful to you, our volunteers and donors! Your continued support and commitment have been a beacon of hope to people in need, helping them to reclaim their future as they recover from conflicts and crisis. Thank You!

With Blessings and Gratitude,

Marietta Bala, Chairperson
Board of Directors, Café of Life

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11

THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

The Café continued its tradition of celebrating the holidays in style. We are so appreciative of all the support we receive which enables each to be so special. Thanksgiving included the Copperleaf community providing 500+ elaborate meals which we distributed at four low-income locations, 100+ prepare-at-home family meals provided by Estero Church and special meals were also delivered to our senior clients. Our Christmas sponsors provided over 1,000 presents distributed at our feeding site, plus 50 infant gifts and numerous families were sponsored with gifts.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



Providing baby items for expecting mothers



Teaching new skills like sewing



Providing citizenship tutoring and fee assistance



Providing health and nutrition instruction



Providing mental health counseling through a partnership with Counseling for Community Wellness



Providing instruction on gardening



Providing primary healthcare on-site



CARING... SHARING... SERVING



Sponsoring kids at Boys & Girls Club programs

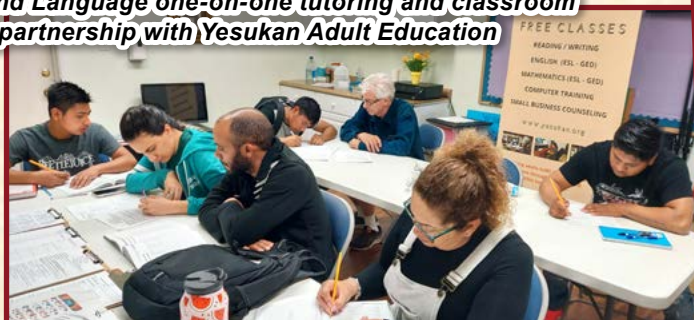


Sponsoring kids for after school programs



Expanding horizons with music lessons

Providing English as Second Language one-on-one tutoring and classroom instruction through partnership with Yesukan Adult Education



Providing post-high school scholarships to include purchasing of computer

CONGRATULATIONS YADI!

Yadi, Café of Life's Site Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, has reached a milestone of 20 years with us. It has been quite a journey for her to get to this point. Yadi came from Mexico with her family when she was 5 years old. Her father worked at the local Gargiulo Packing House and her mother would babysit many children. It was a challenge coming from a different country and only knowing Spanish. She had to learn English quickly as she was the translator for her parents. After high school she and her husband married and worked in restaurants. They bought their first house at age 20 and started a family 3 years later. She is the proud mom of four wonderful children. Her daughter is attending college in Nashville and is graduating this year with a B.A. in Film and is starting her own career.

When Yadi came to the Café in 2004 the clients were immediately attracted to her warm, upbeat friendly personality. Her empathy and compassion with the clients and bi-lingual skills help identify and meet their needs. They know and trust that Yadi will help them as she is always there to guide and navigate them through challenges in their lives. She has been a "Beacon of Light" for those in crisis. The fact that her past life experience is similar to theirs inspires them and gives them hope that they can have a successful future life here too.



Yadi has grown along with the Café for in 2004 she was the Café's only employee. Yadi states, "I am so grateful to have started my work at the Café of Life. It has been both my inspiration and my school. Throughout the years I have learned so much from the Café, volunteers and clients. I am the person I am today because of them. I am truly blessed."

Thank you Yadi for all that you do for the Café and the Community. You have been an asset to the operations of the Café, we salute your success and we appreciate you.

SCHOLARSHIPS



Enrique, a first-generation Latino, is a scholarship recipient with a dual major in Biology and Chemistry at FGCU. As an honor student, he is aspiring to become a medical doctor. Last summer, with the help of the Café, he was able to study in Japan. "I felt being able to read/translate articles in different languages is important in a science field. I was able to learn the basics of the Japanese language to communicate with those around me.

While in Japan, I traveled throughout the country to experience the different cultures in each city. My program was on "Ancient and Modern Japan". By taking classes, and visiting temples and museums, I was able to get to know the Japanese culture a lot more and understand their way of living. My new Japanese friends helped me become more culturally immersed as I tried and liked new foods, and stayed with a friend and his family at their home.

"I am appreciative of how much the Café of Life has helped me through my scholarship, but helping with a study abroad trip was surreal. Without the Cafe of Life's help, I would not have been able to have this wonderful once-in--a-lifetime experience; it helped me achieve one of my lifetime dreams. I am forever grateful for their help with my trip."

This experience has helped inspire Enrique and gave him Hope that he can achieve the future career that he desires.



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P.O. Box 367794
Bonita Springs, FL 34136

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FIRE VICTIMS

December 2022 there was an arson house fire in Bonita in which several young immigrant men sustained burns, one very severely. Our case manager, Lety, along with a volunteer former judge, helped support the victims while working closely on the prosecution. The trial occurred in January 2024 and the defendant was found guilty.

The Office of the State Attorney sent the Café a letter, which reads in part, "I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge what an integral part your organization played in bringing the defendant to justice. Please accept my best wishes and deepest thanks for the service and support you and your agency provided to mine".



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The Café of Life is a faith-based organization believing in the teaching of all great religions that one must love and assist one's neighbor in time of need. The Café is not affiliated with any particular religion or denomination. Our mission is to provide basic human needs to the very poor and hungry people of the Bonita Springs area in a manner that preserves the dignity of the client in a respectful environment and to enrich and empower people to be all that they can be.

The Café of Life, Inc. is a registered 501(C)(3) tax exempt organization. Your gifts to the Café are tax-deductable to the full extent permitted by law.

