



April 2012

Washington Newsline

Nothing But the Best for Farmworkers

By David Strauss, Executive Director, AFOP

On Friday, February 10, 2012 AFOP held its annual day of training in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with the United States Department of Labor. This year, over 100 leaders and staff of AFOP's 51 member agencies participated.

The highlight of the day was the opening presentation by Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training. The Employment and Training Administration is the part of DOL that oversees the entire Workforce Investment Act array of job training programs, including the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), operated by AFOP's member organizations.

Ms. Oates praised the work of the grantees of the NFJP and had



Photo by Ayrienne Parks, AFOP

Assistant Secretary of Labor Jane Oates addresses audience at the AFOP's Mini-Conference in February.

some special news: the quarterly performance report for the first quarter of Program Year 2011 (which covered July 1-September 30, 2011 and the preceding three quarters) showed excellent results

in the three performance measures common to all federal job training programs: entered employment rate (EER), employment retention rate, and six

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From America's Fields to the Capital

By Vashti Kelly, Children in the Fields Campaign Engagement Manager, AFOP

The *Children in the Fields Campaign* youth councils' members are hosting a conference entitled "Youth Voices in Action: Conversations from America's Fields" in Washington, D.C. on April 26 and 27. This national, youth-led conference centers on U.S. child labor in agriculture and will give the youth from across the country a

platform to bring their stories from the fields to the nation's capital to educate the public on the plight of farmworker youth.

"Youth Voices in Action" is not intended to be your typical two-day conference. The conference is designed to be interactive with the panel discussion topics

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NEWSLINE BRIEFS

AFOP Welcomes Jeanna Vaughn

Jeanna Vaughn was hired to fill the new position of Director of Workforce Development at AFOP. She will work with the Department of Labor funded National Farmworker Jobs Programs around the country, providing technical assistance and training. Jeanna has worked in the employment and training field for the past three years, primarily with youth and young adults facing serious barriers to employment. She served as the youth employment programs coordinator for northern Virginia as well as a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) case manager. Prior to this, she worked as an executive assistant at a national education association dedicated to furthering college opportunities for low-income and first-generation students. Jeanna obtained a Bachelor's degree in sociology from American University and a Master's in Social Work from George Mason University.

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The AFOP Washington *Newsline* (ISSN# 1056-8565) is produced by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP), a national federation of nonprofit and public agencies that provide training and employment services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. AFOP's mission is to improve the quality of life for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families by providing advocacy for the member organizations that serve them.

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The Future Brightens for Farmworkers after Devastation

By Ayrienne Parks, Communications Director, AFOP

A little more than two years ago, life for people living in Haiti, already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, took a turn for the worse. On January 12, 2010, the small Caribbean island was leveled by a devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake, followed by a multitude of aftershocks. The government claims there were 316,000 deaths as a result of the earthquake, though some experts note it is very difficult to determine the exact number of those who lost their lives. Regardless, the devastation was clear, with more than 1.5 million individuals left homeless following the disaster.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the lead agency for the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, the population of people still living in those camps two years later was down by 66%. While this is certainly progress, that means 34% of the people who were displaced after the earthquake are still living under these distressing circumstances. Some individuals have had the opportunity to escape the destruction by coming to the U.S. In 2011, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano granted Temporary Protected Status to Haitians in the U.S. This provides authorization for them to work and send money home, hopefully helping aid the ongoing, but painfully slow, recovery.

A January 2012 report by Oxfam notes:

"Two years after the earthquake, over 519,000 Haitians still live in tents and under tarpaulins in 758 camps, mainly in metropolitan Port-au-Prince; half of the rubble remains uncleared; cholera has claimed thousands of lives and poses a major public health threat; few Haitians can access basic services; much of the workforce is unemployed or underemployed; 45 per cent of the population face food insecurity; and elections, followed by a political stand-off between the new president and parliament, have impeded reconstruction progress."

AFOP's member agency in Virginia, Telamon



Photo courtesy of Telamon Virginia
Haitian NFJP clients work in a computer lab.

Corporation, recently shared some of their work helping Haitian farmworkers in their community through the National Farmworker Jobs Program. Nelson Diaz, a Telamon Employment Marketing Specialist recounts those efforts:

This past November, while visiting one of the Bowman's apple orchards with Fernando Perez II from the Migrant Education Program, I had an opportunity to promote our services to the migrant farmworkers that were living in the camp. Among them was Willem Saturne, Gary Luxamar, Junior Louis and his brother, Maxener Louis - four young farmworkers who had been traveling from Florida to New Jersey to Georgia and then to Virginia. But their story goes back to their country of origin, Haiti. They emigrated after the devastating earthquake struck their country. "We were among some of the lucky ones not only to survive, but also to migrate in search of a better life," said Max. He also said he would like to go to school and someday return to his country and start an organization that would allow him to help

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Nothing But the Best for Farmworkers *continued from page 1*

months' average earnings. From the self-reported data, the grantees cumulative outcomes exceeded the goals set for them by DOL. The news the Assistant Secretary brought: when those results were combined with the official totals from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system, the outcomes were even better.

Specifically, the self-reported data revealed a national EER of 82.8%, an employment retention rate of 79.9%, and six month average earnings of \$9,757. These all exceeded the national goals of 75% for the EER, 72% for retention, and \$9,050 for average earnings.

When the UI data was added, the figures became 88% EER, 82% retention and \$10,340 for average earnings.

These are excellent results considering the barriers farmworkers face in meeting the challenges of entering a new career. These barriers include low English language proficiency, low reading and math levels, and extreme poverty. Here's what makes these figures even more remarkable: in many rural counties where AFOP members operate their programs, the economic recovery has yet to happen. For example, in Fresno County, California (in the heart

of the Central San Joaquin Valley) the unemployment rate at the end of 2011 was 14.9%. Yet, the outcomes shown by Proteus, California (the NFJP grantee for that area) were 93.5% for EER, 84.4% for retention, and \$9,087 for average earnings. In south Texas, Maverick County's most recent unemployment rate was 12.9% while Hidalgo County showed a rate of 11.2%. Yet, Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. (MET), the grantee for that state, had astounding outcomes at December 31, 2011: 94.1% EER, 95.4% for retention and average earnings of \$11,041!

Of course, not all programs showed these amazing results. But the Proteus and MET outcomes prove that a well-designed and implemented program of job training aimed at low-wage rural workers can be extremely successful even amidst a lingering economic recession. And these outcomes are strong indicators as to why, as the Administration and Congress examine alternative methods of providing federally-funded job training services, this program needs to remain a **national program** targeting the farm labor population. As Assistant Secretary Oates said as she launched the day of training on February 10, "We are all after the same thing—we want the best for the people we serve." And the AFOP member community of grantees appear to be providing just that.

AFOP Member Recognized for Excellence

By Ayrienne Parks, Communications Director, AFOP

Kari Hogan, AFOP Treasurer and board member, was recognized by the Rocky Mountain Hi (RMHI) Board for her commitment and contributions to the coalition. She has served as the President of RMHI for three terms and is the Chief Administrative Officer for AFOP member agency, Portable Practical Educational Preparation (PPEP) Inc. in Arizona.

Kari has been with PPEP for the last 19 years, devoting much of her energy to making a difference in the lives of America's migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

"She has done an excellent job as a president of Rocky Mountain Hi. She had been in charge of organizing the yearly conference and it has been a success every year," says Rita Garcia-McManus, an AFOP and RMHI board member from HELP-New Mexico.

A big thank you to her as well from AFOP for all of her hard work and very generous support of the association throughout her tenure as President of RMHI.



Photo courtesy of RMHI

Dangerous Even at a Low Dose

By Valentina Stackl, Health & Safety Programs Program Associate, AFOP

Even small doses of endocrine disrupting chemicals can have lasting health effects, according to a new study in the scientific journal *Endocrine Reviews*. A team of 12 scientists spent over three years looking at studies about hormone-altering substances, which can be found in plastic materials, cosmetics, and pesticides. The report calls for "fundamental changes in chemical testing to protect human health." According to the article, endocrine disrupting chemicals need to be further tested at very low doses, to mimic human interaction in daily life. Low-dose effects, as defined by the National Toxicology Program, are those that occur in the range of normal human exposure below those used in normal toxicology studies in laboratories.

Endocrinologists, or scientists who study hormones, have known for a long time that even the tiniest amounts of hormones such as estrogen, testosterone, and thyroid hormones, can have big health effects, particularly on growing fetuses. It comes to no surprise that man made substances that mimic hormones, such as many pesticides, would also have big health effects. Even low doses can affect anyone from fetuses, to aging adults. It has been linked to diseases such as infertility, cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer, and other disorders.

The report demonstrates the concept that 'the dose makes the person' or the amount of a harmful toxin or chemical makes it unhealthy or dangerous, might not apply to endocrine disruptors. Traditionally, these types of chemicals are tested by exposing lab rodents to high doses and then extrapolating down for real-life human exposures. According to the report, this might not translate into real human-chemical interaction. How chemicals interact with each other, how often as well as how much a person is exposed, all make a difference in the health outcome.

The American Chemistry Council, however, which represents chemical companies, immediately issued a statement regarding the new study, saying it "has committed substantial resources to advancing science to better

understand any potential effects of chemical substances on the endocrine system. While we have not had an opportunity to fully review this paper, Michael Kamrin, emeritus professor of Michigan State University, has concluded 'low dose' effects have not been proven, and therefore should not be applied to real-world conditions and human exposures."

A study like this can be very valuable for future decisions about safe levels (or unsafe levels) of certain chemical compounds. Farmworkers, like others, are exposed to low levels of endocrine disruptors in their daily lives through the food they eat and air they breathe. It should not be forgotten, however, that farmworkers are also exposed to much higher doses than the general public by working in the fields and living in agricultural areas.



Photo by Martha Beltran, SAFE AmeriCorps, AFOP
Farmworker in Arizona eating lunch by the field. Farmworkers are exposed to pesticides as they eat by the fields when there are no hand washing facilities around

Many pesticides that farmworkers deal with on a daily basis have been linked to disrupting hormones, such as ortho-phenylphenol (used on pears and citrus), ketoconazole (used to combat fungi), amitrole (used to combat poison ivy, but is no longer legal to use on food crops), ioxynil (used on cereals and sugar cane), causing

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Bill Puts America's Workforce First

By Ayrienne Parks, Communications Director, AFOP

On March 20, 2012, the Democrats on the House Education and Workforce Committee introduced a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act, which funds federal job training programs such as the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). The bill was introduced by Ranking Member George Miller (D-CA), Congressman Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX), and Congressman John Tierney (D-MA).

"This bill takes a positive step forward by encouraging partnerships between businesses, job training providers, and community colleges with increased investments that will allow rural residents to receive training in high-demand, high-growth employment sectors," notes David Strauss, Executive Director of AFOP. "We laud Mr. Miller, Mr. Hinojosa, and Mr. Tierney for their effort to ensure Americans, like our nation's farmworkers, have access to the education and training they need to attain good, family-sustaining jobs."

Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA), and Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV) also introduced a bill on March 29. Their bill, The Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012 (H.R. 4297), consolidates the job training system into one funding stream called the Workforce Investment Fund. It would eliminate targeted, federally operated programs, such as the NFJP, aimed at serving the special needs of hard-to-serve populations. While the bill notes that states would be asked how they would serve different workers, it appears there is no required level of service for vulnerable populations.

"Due to the unique barriers faced by farmworkers and the nature of farm work, it is imperative that bills seeking to reauthorize or update the Workforce Investment Act preserve the NFJP as a national program," says Ernie Flores, President of AFOP and Executive Director of Central Valley Opportunity Center.

The NFJP, is a proven-effective federal job training program operated by 52 non-profit and



Photo courtesy of AFOP

Farmworkers laboring in North Carolina, work grueling hours in the hot sun, but often have little to show for it. Significant barriers such as language, education, and lack of transportation prohibit farmworkers from accessing services through traditional job training models.

public agencies that specialize in providing education and training to eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers. AFOP's member agencies that are awarded the competitive grants provided by the U.S. Department of Labor typically place over 80% of job-training farmworker customers into good jobs with benefits.

"Farmworkers are an extremely mobile population. It is unrealistic for Congress to expect governors to serve people who only work briefly in their state and then move elsewhere," notes Strauss. "These efforts to maintain this effective national program, focus on hard-to-serve populations, and expand adult basic education will help farmworkers gain the skills they need to compete for jobs in this difficult economy."

Get Ready for AFOP's 2012 Conference!

This year's annual conference will be held in beautiful

Boston, Massachusetts



**At the Boston Park Plaza Hotel
September 19-21, 2012**

See you in Boston!



developed by the youth on relevant issues that affect their everyday lives. The youth will share their personal testimonies as they facilitate and lead the panel discussions, and answer questions from the audience members. Topics will focus on health, education, labor, housing, and additional barriers that exacerbate some of the aforementioned issues.

The conference is more than an opportunity for the youth to share what it is like to grow up as farmworker in America; this conference will invite attendees to become a part of the conversation as youth deconstruct the dominant narrative of American children in agriculture today. The youth council leaders will also share what their communities are doing to combat the negative effects of child labor in agriculture.

While in Washington, D.C., the youth will have an opportunity to meet with our nation's leaders to share their experiences and discuss how to break down barriers that keep them from finishing school. Seven farmworker youth leaders will be representing their fellow farmworker youth council members at the conference. The youth will be bringing back home the strategies developed at the conference to activate their local youth councils.

The *Children in the Fields Campaign* youth councils are no strangers to using the power of voice and storytelling to effect change in their communities. They have organized community events to address some of the challenges they face, such as "YouthSpeak 2011: A Forum of

Young Minds" in North Carolina this past November, and "From Harvest to Harvard," a leadership conference in Texas last March hosted again this year.

AFOP invites those interested in discussing the effects of the discriminatory U.S. child labor laws to join us as we break down the stereotypes that keep migrant and seasonal farmworker youth from escaping the generational cycle of poverty. For more details, be sure to check out AFOP's events page on our website.

Photos courtesy of AFOP

Photo in upper right corner:

Children in the Fields Campaign staff and youth council members meeting with Secretary Solis during a leadership training in the summer of 2010.

Photo below:

Farmworker youth from the NC FIELD coalition march during a civil rights rally in North Carolina.



The Future Brightens *continued from page 3*

others. Gary stated, "Behind us was our family and our country left in darkness, destruction, and hunger." After coming to the U.S., they had been working on farms. When they learned about Telamon services, they decided it was a chance for them to improve their lives and establish roots in one place.

This is where their dreams began. But before the dreams could become reality, Telamon's team of dedicated workers had to help them resettle into the Harrisonburg area. The task was not an easy one. They had no steady address, no credit cards, and no bank accounts. This made it difficult for them to get an apartment. With the help of Michael Hendricksen from Matchbox Realty, we were able to get them an apartment. Then, we also helped them get necessary household items, such as warm clothing, beds, and food. To garner local resources, we contacted Seli Perry from Mercy House who suggested we go to their Thrift Store and talk to the manager for a special discount. The manager, Tim Forloines, gave us a 25% discount and free delivery. In conjunction with all of this, we contacted Esteban Nieto, the HR Director at Pilgrim's Pride, to see if he had any openings; he said he would see if he could help us. We also recognized that they were going to need transportation to get to work, so we contacted an old friend of Telamon's, Jose, who owns Escrow Motor I & II. He was able to sell them a car he had listed for \$3,000 for just \$1,500, and he agreed to let the guys pay him after they had started working.

Today, they know that they still have a long way to go but Gary, Max, Junior, and Willem now have a job with benefits making \$9.50 with an increase of \$1.00 on the way. They have opened bank accounts and are currently attending an English as a Second Language program at the Massanutten Technical Center. They still miss Haiti and are still struggling to adapt to American culture, but they are happy knowing that finally they have a place they can call home. Equally uplifting is the knowledge that they have begun classes that will enable them to obtain the necessary education and training for higher-skilled jobs.

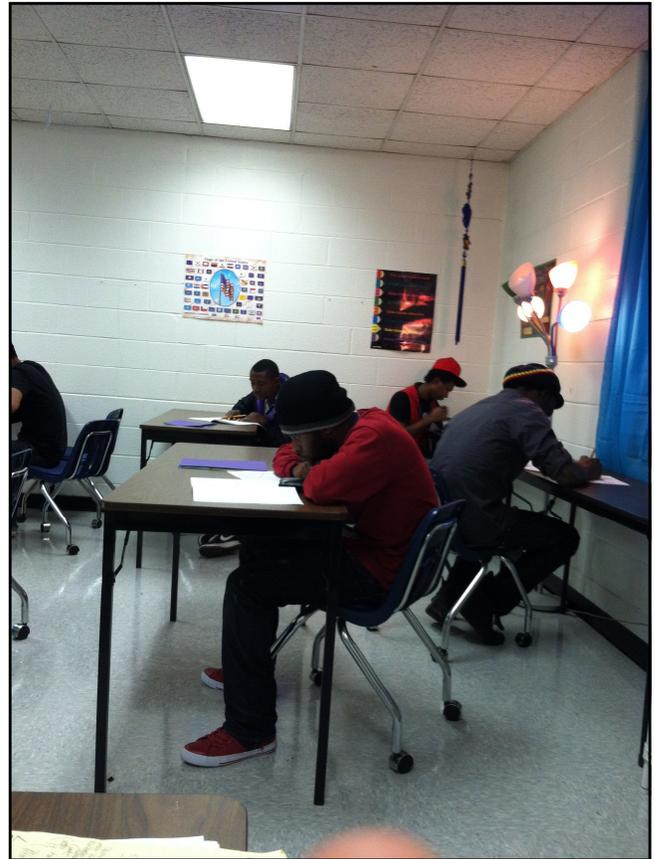


Photo courtesy of Telamon Virginia
Telamon Virginia NFJP clients taking a test.

Resettlement is never an easy process. Telamon's State Director and I put in many 12-14 hour days to make their transition successful. As for me, I just continue walking, thinking about, and looking back to all the time, energy, and effort we spent helping to make a difference, feeling grateful to be alive. As I look at the sky, I say to myself "...un beau jour pour aider quelqu'un." (It's a beautiful day to help someone.)

It is inspiring to hear about the efforts of organizations like Telamon that are working to help Haitian survivors like Gary, Max, Junior, and Willem improve their skills and earning capacity in order to secure a more stable and brighter future. While efforts like Telamon's offer an essential hand up for all who are touched by their hard work, much remains to be done for people who remain in Haiti, as well as those who sought a better life here in the U.S.

Dangerous Even at a Low Dose *continued*
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Photo by Melanie Forti, AFOP

Farmworker housing is often right next to agricultural fields. Clothes that are hanging to dry are contaminated with pesticides from the fields nearby.

severe birth defects and other health problems. We must not forget that while all of us are at risk for health issues related to endocrine disruptors, the men, women, and children, who work in America's fields are exposed to higher doses, more concentrated chemicals, more often, and more directly.

For more information about the health effects of pesticides in farmworkers visit AFOP's Health & Safety Programs on www.afop.org and check us out through Twitter (@AFOPHEALTH) and Facebook (AFOP Health & Safety).

Success Stories

Achieving Goals Through Training

Anita Anderson Clinesmith is from the Leedy, Oklahoma area. She has three beautiful children: Codi, Laramie and Lariat. She has worked on the farm most of her adult life. She has performed many different kinds of agricultural work, including hauling hay, taking care of cattle, and driving a tractor.

Despite her experience working in agriculture, Anita was only making \$6.00 per hour doing farm work. One day, Gene Burden, owner of a trucking company, told her that if she would get her commercial drivers license (CDL), he would hire her. That's when she decided to find a truck driving school to provide her the training. Due to her financial constraints though she found she would need help to accomplish her goal of obtaining a CDL.

Anita called the Kiowa Caddo Technology Center in Fort Cobb, Oklahoma. There she was told about ORO Development Corporation, which provides job training services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. On October 15, 2010, she called the Clinton ORO office and inquired about the services provided. When Anita met

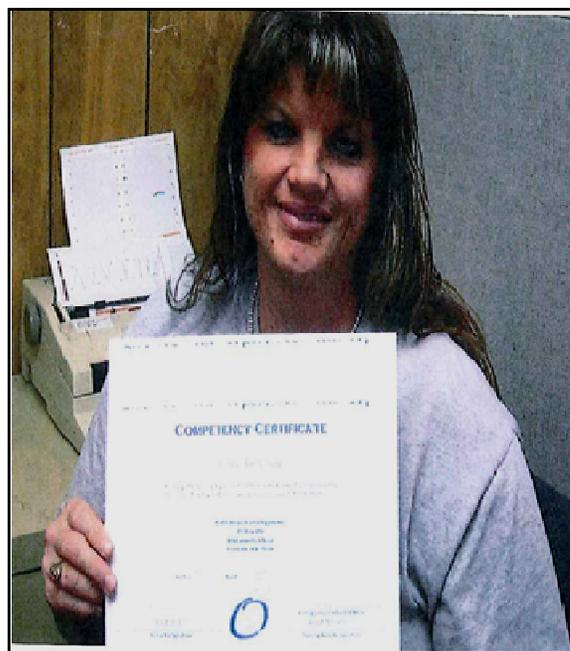


Photo courtesy of ORO Development Corporation

with the ORO NFJP staff, she stated "farm work is all I can do".

Success Stories

While attending school, she had a bad accident. Anita was driving to Fort Cobb for class when it happened. She was rushed to the hospital. There she found that she would need to have surgery. As a result, she would have to remain out of school until she got better. ORO's case manager, Olivia Tovar, stayed in touch with her and the school while she was out. Anita told the case manager, "I am getting better and I am finishing my training so I can take care of my children."

Eventually, Anita was able to return to school and completed her truck driving training course on January 18, 2011. After her graduation from

school, Anita started working for Gene Burden Trucking Company. Concerning her new family-sustaining career, she stated, "I am very happy someone told me about the ORO program. I went from making \$6.00 per hour doing farm work to now making \$25.00 dollars per hour driving a big truck, thanks to ORO."

*Submitted by: Minnie Castillo, ORO
Development Corporation*

Clients Dreams Now Within Reach

Lisa is no stranger to adversity. Five and a half years ago, she was diagnosed with chiari malformation, a structural defect in the cerebellum, which is the part of the brain that controls balance. She underwent surgery to correct the problem and, subsequently, had to relearn certain motions. Fortunately, this no longer impedes her normal function.

In June of 2011, Lisa came to Transition Resources Corporation (TRC) of Indiana. She had been working seasonally on the same farm for several years and was looking to get into something more reliable. A single mother of an eight-year-old girl, Lisa entered the program earning just \$7,884 over the last year. She was determined to obtain a better job and earn money for her daughter's future.

Lisa informed staff that she really loved working with animals and would miss that about working on the farm. With that in mind, TRC staff worked with Lisa to enroll her at the Animal Arts Academy in Carmel, IN. Lisa earned her Pet Grooming Certificate in January 2012. After she obtained her certificate, TRC staff worked to help Lisa find a job. Wiggle Butz pet groomers in Fort Wayne hired her.

Lisa notes, "I had to groom a yorkie for my interview, but it must have gone well because the owner called me right away and asked me



Photo courtesy of Transition Resource Corporation

to start work on Friday! I think it will be a great place for me to learn the business. I think the sky will be the limit of what I can do in this business!" Lisa is currently earning \$10/hour. Lisa is even hopeful that one day she might even start her own pet grooming shop, but right now she is happy to be gaining experience at a reliable job.

*Submitted by: Elizabeth Burress, Transition
Resources Corporation*

AFOP Washington Newsline

Once social change begins,
it cannot be reversed.
You cannot uneducate the person
who has learned to read,
humiliate the person who feels pride,
and you cannot oppress people
who are not afraid anymore.

—César Chávez

