

Second Place

Essay Contest Winner, Ages 14-18

Jose Pablo Borja Ramirez, 17

Guthrie, KY

It is not easy

Starting my life here was a bit difficult. Starting school in the middle of second grade and knowing nothing of the English language complicated things, such as when I had to do homework and to communicate with the teacher. I was fortunate enough to be put in a class with another Hispanic student that knew a bit of English. I was a bit frightened and frustrated because they could not get the idea that I did not speak English. Then, the other Hispanic student intervened and told them my situation. During the next couple of months I focused on learning English. A couple of months later, the student that was translating told me that he was moving. I went home that day and cried, telling my mom that I did not want to go back to school since nobody would be able to help me now. She told me that I needed to be strong and to keep progressing, that things would only get better. I listened to her and I kept on fighting. Another month later, a new student came to our school. He did not know English. He was in the same situation I had once been in when I had just gotten here. This time, it was my turn to help him. This is how I found out that I like helping and teaching people. I have decided that I want to become a Spanish teacher, an ESL instructor, or be in the migrant program. I have concentrated on learning English and thriving in school. It took me a year and a half to learn English in a way that I could communicate with other people and that those people understood me.

Field work is not easy. I started working in it when I was around fifteen. Ever since then I have worked in the fields during summer vacation to at least earn some money for my school needs. I have mainly worked in tobacco doing a little bit of everything. It wasn't until this year that I tried something different. This year I worked in the strawberry fields. Just writing about this makes me remember so many things about working. The feeling of the sun shining on your face, on your arms, making your skin darker. The sweat, the result of the sun shining bright and the hard work that one is doing. The ache on your lower back when you are picking strawberries. The smell of the strawberries when they're ripe, the sweet taste of them when you try them every once in a while. The stickiness of the tobacco gum when it gets on your hands or arms, the bitter taste of it when you eat something and the taste from your hand gets in your mouth. The awful smell of the chemicals when it is being sprayed, the way it sometimes makes you feel sick or gives you a headache. The smell of tobacco when it is brought down from the barn and when it's being stripped, the crunching of the leaves as you are doing this. The sound of the other workers talking and joking, making everybody feel hopeful that today is going to be a good day and making the hours pass by even faster. All of this leads to a day of hard work. A day full of dedication. A day to earn a bit more money. It is not very easy for a farm worker. Their day is very hard. They have to wake up early to eat breakfast and get everything ready for their day. They work for five straight hours, until their lunch time, usually at twelve. After that, they work for another three or four hours to complete their day. When they get home, some still have things to do there as well, like mowing the lawn, fixing things, and helping out with the children. Some don't really rest until they go to sleep. Many people have to do hard work to succeed in this country and to accomplish their dreams. It is not as easy as people think, but the only thing one can do is to keep moving forward.