



October 2012

Washington Newsline

Building Upon Success

By Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

I am very happy to be joining the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs as its new executive director. Outgoing Executive Director David Strauss leaves some very big shoes to fill, but I am committed to working to continue the success Dave helped the association achieve over the last 12 years. He has spent countless hours with me helping to make the transition as smooth as it can be and for that I am most grateful.

I want to thank AFOP members and their staff for their attendance at and participation in our annual conference that took place this year from September 19-21 in Boston, Massachusetts. As someone new to the organization, I was impressed and pleased to see the substantive nature of the conference, and the serious work being done there. From the plenary and board meetings to the AFOP Training Institute breakout sessions, participants were engaged in lively discussions, learning from each other, and making our association all the stronger for it. I commend these

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Photo by Ayrienne Parks, AFOP
New AFOP Executive Director Daniel Sheehan with Jesús Gamboa of Proteus, who was elected as AFOP President during the 2012 National Conference.

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- **Farm Safety and Health Week**
- **Connecting with Businesses Ensures Success for Clients**
- **2012 AFOP Essay & Art Contest**

Cultivating New Opportunities in Maine

By Ayrienne Parks, Director of Communications, AFOP

National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees are no strangers to thinking creatively when it comes to finding funds to help their migrant and seasonal farmworker clients. At Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), NFJP career advisor Wendy Lord is no exception. Two years ago, while attending a conference hosted by the Aroostook Training and Education Coalition, she discovered a potential grant

opportunity. That grant would allow her to secure books for her clients and their children.

The purpose of the Aroostook Training and Education Coalition grant Lord discovered is to assist non-profits in purchasing and providing free new books for low-income children. Despite the fact that the amount of the grant was not a large sum, Lord saw

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NEWSLINE BRIEFS

AFOP Welcomes Daniel Sheehan

Daniel Sheehan is the new executive director for the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs. He joined the association in this capacity September 10, 2012. Daniel brings 25 years of public policy experience to the association, with a particular focus on improving communities. He previously worked as a professional registered lobbyist representing a wide variety of public-sector clients, including local governments, transit systems, airports, and universities. Prior to becoming a lobbyist, Daniel served as a professional staff member for a United States senator, United States representative, and a committee of the United States House of Representatives. Daniel holds a bachelor's degree in history and macro-economics from the College of William & Mary in Virginia.



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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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A Letter from David Strauss

AFOP's Retiring Executive Director

I was pleased to participate the 2012 conference of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs in historic and beautiful Boston, Massachusetts. It was the 12th and final AFOP national conference I was a part of. October marks my retirement from full time work. This is a major life transition for me and my family, and a significant transition for the AFOP community.

Transitions present both challenges and opportunities. In this case, I see mostly great opportunity ahead for our terrific community. That is partly because AFOP has a terrific national staff, representing all phases of the work we do on its member organizations' behalf. It is partly because AFOP has an excellent set of Board leaders, including the new national President Jesús Gamboa to follow the path that Ernie Flores has led us on over the past four years. It is partly because of the excellent policy leadership that Lee Foley affords. And it is partly due to the coming of Daniel Sheehan as the organization's new executive director. He has vast government relations experience in Washington, D.C. and is very well positioned to guide the community through the rough waters that will need to be navigated during this troubling era.

But the work AFOP members and their staff do every day to bring a measure of hope and success to the migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families, is the main reason I know all challenges will be overcome and opportunities realized. I have often remarked that the foundation members provide through their passionate and expert work under the National Farmworker Jobs Program is the reason our house is still standing today after weathering the storms of the Bush Administration from 2002-2009. That foundation will be essential as Daniel and President Gamboa lead the association into the next phase.

The work I have done with AFOP these past 12 years has been the most glorious work of my lengthy professional life. Doing work I love, with people I care about, serving the cause of

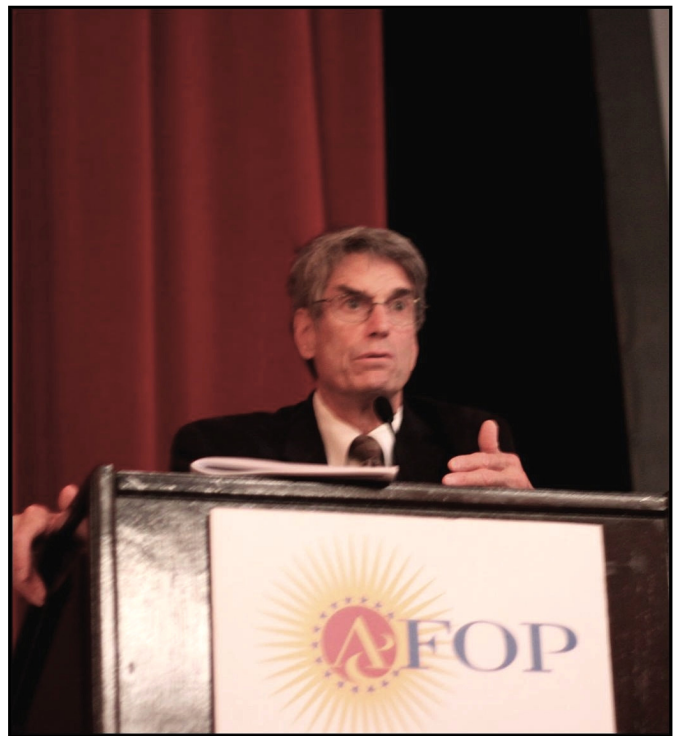


Photo by Ayrienne Parks, AFOP
David Strauss addressing the attendees of the 2012 AFOP National Conference.

migrant and seasonal farmworkers, is an incredible honor and privilege. I will stay involved in ways that will become clearer as time unfolds. I am so pleased AFOP is in a strong position with its staff and new leadership to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities to elevate the cause of farmworkers higher and higher in coming years.

Farm Safety and Health Week

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

As the harvest season comes to a close in many states, farmworkers hustle to finish the last work that needs to be done. It is during this time we are reminded of the importance of keeping America's farmworkers safe. In a presidential proclamation commemorating Farm Safety and Health Week, which took place September 16-22, President Barack Obama noted, "We celebrate agricultural workers' vital contributions and reaffirm our commitment to keeping them safe on the job."

This year's theme, "Agricultural Safety and Health ... A Family Affair," focuses on the family farm. According to NIOSH, an average of 113 people under the age of 20 dies annually from farm-related injuries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 16,000 children were injured on farms in 2009.

Agriculture is ranked as the most dangerous industry in America, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Every 17 hours a farmworker dies as a result of pesticide poisoning, heat stress, dangerous machinery, or other hazardous farm equipment. In 2010, the most recent year for which numbers are available, 596 deaths and 70,000 disabling injuries occurred in agriculture, according to the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety.

AFOP's Health & Safety Programs is committed to spreading information on how to stay safe on the farm. Through our multiple community based health trainings, we have been able to reach thousands of farmworkers with lifesaving information this year alone. These trainings vary from pesticide safety to heat stress prevention and how to keep your family safe around pesticides.

In the closing of the proclamation President Obama said, "Our nation's rural communities give America its heartbeat. They are home to producers who rise before the dawn, entrepreneurs who bring ideas to market, and working men and women who build the American dream with their bare hands. This week, we honor their tireless efforts and



Photo by Valentina Stackl, AFOP

Farmworkers are advised to wear long sleeves and pants to protect themselves from pesticides.

rededicate ourselves to equipping our next generation with the knowledge and training they need to stay safe and healthy."

This summer, many farmworkers suffered the consequences of working under the hot, unrelenting sun with little or no relief through access to shade or water breaks. While the hottest months of the year are behind us for now, it is important to remember that farmworkers work in agriculture year-round in many states. Even though the dangers of heat stress have subsided for the most part, many other dangers remain as workers continue to harvest crops in those states. As we reflect on the close of the bustling summer harvest, let us not forget that we should stay vigilant about safety year round to prevent unnecessary injuries and deaths.

Connecting with Businesses Ensures Success for Clients

By Jeanna Vaughn, Director of Workforce Development, AFOP

With the recent economic difficulties, nearly every community in America is struggling with unemployment and a lack of jobs. Rural America, however, has been particularly hard hit during this time period. Rates of poverty and unemployment in rural areas are consistently higher than in metropolitan areas, and often there are fewer resources available to help families cope with the poor economic conditions. Levels of poverty are particularly high for minorities, children, and the elderly in rural counties. In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau noted the poverty rate for African Americans in rural areas was 32.8 percent and 29.1 percent for Hispanics. Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that unemployment rates for African Americans and Hispanics, 14.1 percent and 10.2 percent respectively, are also consistently higher than the rate for whites, 7.2 percent. Additionally, Hispanics in rural areas experienced the highest increase in poverty rates from the previous year versus any other ethnic group. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers, the majority of whom are Hispanic, are among the poorest in our society with 61 percent living in poverty, according to the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS).

Last year the Obama Administration took a step towards addressing rural poverty with the creation of the White House Rural Council. The Rural Council's objectives are to increase job development and economic growth throughout rural America. In its August 2011 report, Jobs and Economic Security for Rural America, the Rural Council describes the various ways the Obama Administration has contributed to economic growth, including providing billions of dollars to finance rural businesses, expanding U.S. agricultural exports, training entrepreneurs and small business owners, and creating jobs through energy development and hydropower in rural areas, amongst others.

New and expanding industries require skilled workers. The Rural Council recognizes that job training, education, and employment assistance are key factors in creating a competitive workforce in rural areas. The report notes that

in 2010, the administration provided \$78.4 million to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) 167 program, also known as the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), to "counter the impact of chronic unemployment and underemployment experienced by migrant and seasonal farmworkers," as well as \$65 million in training dollars for Native American adults and youth through the Native American WIA 166 program. The Department of Labor (DOL) also provides funding to community colleges under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants program, which improves the institutions' ability to deliver education and training programs that can be completed in two years or less, many of which are in rural areas.

With the emphasis on creating more economic opportunities and jobs in rural areas, the NFJP plays a critical role in training and serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers who benefit by becoming more financially secure in other occupations and industries. With the support and funding in place, NFJP staff is charged with doing the hard work of preparing farmworkers for jobs in competitive and growing industries. After the training, education, and employment counseling is finished, the next step is to find a job in which the former farmworker can make use of all of his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities. Despite the recent push to revive economies in rural America, well-paying jobs are still scarce. Therefore, NFJP staff spend many hours each week seeking to develop jobs, meet employers, and contact businesses to assess their needs in order to assist the participants in obtaining employment.

In 2009, the AFOP Training Institute held a year long Job Development Certification training program that taught NFJP staff how to engage businesses, strengthen employer relationships, and better market their successful clients with the goal of helping more participants obtain employment in competitive job markets. Sylvia Murphy, a Client Service Representative with Motivation, Education & Training (MET), Inc. **Connecting with Businesses** continued from

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individuals for their engagement and support.

As I mentioned in my remarks in Boston, the association faces difficult challenges ahead. Looming federal budget cuts pose a serious threat, not only to Workforce Investment Act Section 167/National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) funding, but to all of the other non-defense discretionary “safety net” spending, upon which so many of our nation’s most vulnerable so heavily depend.

As an organization, AFOP must redouble efforts to educate lawmakers and community leaders about the critically important work we do, about how successful we are in doing it, and why the program must remain a national program. We also need to be persistent in reminding federal officials of the pivotal role we play in improving farmworker health and safety, and the attention we bring to the plight of young farmworker children working in our fields. In this work, we must not let up.

While we were in Boston, and over that weekend, Congress considered and approved a stopgap funding bill averting a government shutdown before leaving town until after November’s federal elections. With the October 1 start of the new fiscal year looming, lawmakers cleared this “continuing resolution” (CR) that will extend spending through March 27 and increase funding for most programs and agencies by about 0.6 percent over fiscal year 2012 levels. Passage had been expected as House and Senate leaders had signed off on the deal in August, but procedural maneuvering on unrelated measures forced the Senate to work into the early morning hours that weekend to send it to the president’s desk. President Obama signed the legislation into law September 28, 2012.

November’s federal election results will determine how and when Congress will complete its work on fiscal 2013 spending. Congress has essentially three options before it.

Democratic appropriators would like to see lawmakers clear a massive catch-all spending bill in the post-election “lame-duck” session, using the pending fiscal 2013 appropriations

bills as a framework. Senate Republican appropriators also support moving such an “omnibus” measure, but are pushing for lawmakers to have a chance to propose changes first. (Historically, omnibus measures provide little opportunity for debate and amendment, given the late-hour nature in which they are most often employed.) Conservative lawmakers, however, would likely oppose an omnibus in the lame duck in order to allow a potentially more conservative Congress and new administration to impose deeper cuts in federal spending early next year. A third option would be for Congress to maintain the status quo by extending the current CR through the entire fiscal year. Doing so would buy lawmakers some time to consider a comprehensive agreement on reducing the deficit and overhauling the tax code. While it is anybody’s guess as to what Congress will do, this third option could turn out to be the path lawmakers take: the path of least resistance.

Hanging over the lame duck will be the threat of the so-called “fiscal cliff” should Congress fail to take decisive action before January 2, 2013. Steep automatic across-the-board cuts in federal spending, set in place by last year’s Budget Control Act, will go into effect on that date. Additionally, Bush-era tax cuts and other significant tax breaks will expire December 31, 2012 unless Congress acts to extend them. Although both parties say they want to avoid the fiscal cliff, compromise is seen as being difficult to achieve. Because of that difficulty, Congress will very likely put off definitive action until the last minute. Stay tuned.

In closing, I want to say again how honored and privileged I am to have the chance to serve AFOP and its membership as the new executive director. I am indebted to Dave for all his hard work in helping to make AFOP into what it is today. I also want to congratulate AFOP President Jesús Gamboa, Vice President Franklin Montgomery, Secretary Velma Smith, and Treasurer Ron Hauge on their recent election to AFOP office. I look forward to working with them in the days and weeks ahead as we continue to move AFOP forward.

It's almost that time...



AFOP's Spring Board
Meeting and Mini-Conference
will be held

February 13-15, 2013

at The Liaison Capitol Hill in
Washington, D.C.

SAVE THE DATE



Photo courtesy of EMDC

Books purchased by EMDC through their grant will provide farmworker children in Maine with their very own books. Staff believe it may also help other family members work on their literacy and English language skills too, creating a “ripple effect.”

Cultivating New Opportunities *continued from page 1*

tremendous potential and seized the opportunity.

“I knew this would be a great opportunity for us to help provide books for our clients and their children, many of whom have limited English abilities,” said Lord. “Since all NFJP participants have to have earnings below the federal poverty line, this grant opportunity was a good fit.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual income for a farmworker family of four is just \$17,500, well below the \$22,000 poverty mark.

EMDC was successful in their grant application. This year’s grant was for \$500. FirstBook

Marketplace online offered the organization a discounted rate on the purchase of the books, which made it possible for staff to purchase almost 200 books with the grant money. The organization also received a donation of reusable bags to deliver the books to the children from Houlton Higher Education Center.

Migrant farmworkers in Northern Maine generally travel to the state in April and stay through October. These workers come to prepare the fields, plant, and work harvesting broccoli. Migrant children usually transfer to local schools for those months when school is still in session. Since school curricula are state run, this can have serious repercussions for farmworker children. For example, by leaving early or starting late, children may miss a required class in their home state that is not offered at their new school, or was offered prior

to their arrival. Students often become discouraged by falling behind and well over half of migrant farmworker children drop out by high school. As a result, those children are not able to acquire the skills necessary to go on to college or participate in post-secondary training programs.

Frequent migration and pervasive poverty play a large role in the lack of basic literacy amongst farmworkers, a requirement necessary for most job training programs and post-secondary education. Nationally, migrant and seasonal farmworkers have an average education level of just 7th to 8th grade. These factors, including non-traditional work hours, migration from state to state, language, and cultural barriers, make it impossible to serve most farmworkers effectively using a traditional employment and training model. Clients of the federal job training program must also be U.S. citizens or otherwise legally authorized to work in the country.

Migrant Education Programs strive to help many children catch up with their peers, but the program only serves individuals up to age 22. Adult Basic Education (ABE) is another avenue Lord and her colleagues help enroll clients in, but some workers are not able to make the time commitment required due to family and economic commitments. Lord believes these books could help those workers who do not yet have the available time for ABE, yet want to work on their English skills.

EMDC's goal for the books purchased through the grant is to get them to end up in the hands of the children of the farmworkers they serve, as well as nieces, nephews and other youth in the farmworker community. EMDC has marked the books with the organization's information, which it hopes will continue to keep these families connected.

"Our hope is that the books might also continue to be passed along throughout the community, creating a lasting ripple effect," notes Lord. "And, some of these children may be eligible for the NFJP in the future; this helps maintain a connection with the children and their families."

Despite declining funding and a bleak employment market, especially in the rural



Photo courtesy of EMDC

A young girl in Maine reads her new book provided by NFJP grantee EMDC.

locations where most programs are located, NFJP providers continue to think creatively and get results for their farmworker clients. NFJP grantees also continue to exceed the Department of Labor's common measures year after year. Overall, the NFJP is the most successful federal job training program, with an entered employment rate of 82.6% and an employment retention rate of 80.9%.

NFJP experts like Wendy Lord often keep long, non-traditional office hours in order to reach out to these workers and help them overcome considerable barriers. Sometimes this means meeting them in the fields or even at the migrant housing camps before or after work hours. EMDC's work to secure funding to provide books for farmworkers and their children to improve their literacy is just another example of NFJP staff willing to do whatever it takes to help their clients succeed.

The books provided to grantees such as EMDC are primarily donated by publishers to FirstBook Marketplace. To learn more about the organization and their mission to help low-income children get new books, please visit www.first-book.org.

NFJP in Harlingen, Texas, participated in the training program. She has since been able to implement those tactics she learned from program to promote her clients. She explains that when engaging with new employers, using a "Tie Down" at the end of a sentence encourages a positive response. For example, "We all want motivated employees, don't we?" While this is a small thing, Murphy has been able to use this in conversations and she states it usually elicits agreement, which is helpful when trying to form relationships or market the benefits of your program.

The NFJP in Texas has consistently had high performance outcomes. When asked about how the program has remained successful in job development in rural areas, Murphy said she learned to always be prepared to talk to people she meets about her clients and the NFJP, regardless of where she is. There is always the potential to make new connections with employers in any situation. She emphasized engaging large amounts of employers because many companies may only be able to hire one or two employees, so it is necessary to have many contacts.

Another method that has worked for Murphy is going out to businesses and asking for some of their time to tell them about the program, versus cold calling over the phone. She finds the employers are much more willing to listen if she is already there with her information in hand. An additional tactic proven to be beneficial is to ask potential employers, "What are you looking for in an employee and how can I help my clients get a job with you?" This allows the employer to give feedback on their needs and it also shows the program is serious about providing companies with qualified workers. Once a company has learned that workers from the NFJP are well trained, motivated, and have strong work ethics, they will be likely to hire NFJP participants in the future.

California Human Development Corporation's NFJP has also been successful at developing jobs in rural areas, where most of their participants live. Blanca Barba, a regional coordinator at that organization, attributes her



Photo by Ayrianne Parks, AFOP
NFJP staff participating in a workshop at this year's AFOP National Conference.

success to networking and developing relationships with employers over many years. She regularly attends Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and Chamber of Commerce meetings to connect with new employers and reconnect with those she already knows. She also emphasizes the point that if one participant is hired and shows the type of worker he or she is, the company is very likely to hire more participants in the future. Barba underscored that point by stating that a trucking company she works with exclusively hires her NFJP participants because it knows the caliber of those workers.

Obtaining employment in rural areas comes with unique challenges. With poverty and unemployment rates as high as they are, the NFJP is needed more than ever. The programs must assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers in overcoming obstacles other job seekers in their community do not necessarily face, such as serious education and literacy deficits, language barriers, lack of transportation, and many other hurdles in order to find sustainable employment. Ensuring participants are well trained and work ready is a must because they represent the quality of work that the NFJP does. Successful programs continually meet and establish relationships with employers, finding ways to network and market the high quality of the NFJP clients.

2012 AFOP Essay & Art Contest

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

On Thursday, September 20, AFOP proudly announced the winners of our 2012 Essay and Art Contest to more than 400 participants at AFOP's National Conference. It just so happened that this year's winners were all young ladies. In the age category 10-13, our first prize winner for the essay contest is Jacqueline Cruz from Fort Pierce, Florida; in the age category 10-13, our first prize winner for the art contest is Jaqueline Vargas from San Luis, Arizona. For our first place winner for the essay and art contests in the age category 14-18, both titles went to one very talented young lady, Neftali Cuello from Pink Hill, North Carolina. Neftali is also a member of NC FIELD's *Poder Juvenil Campesino* youth council founded by the *Children in the Fields Campaign*. To view the second and third prize entries, please visit <http://afop.org/children-in-the-fields/connect-with-cif/>.



Photo by Ayrienne Parks, AFOP
Winners of the contest with AFOP Executive Director David Strauss and Norma Flores López, Director of the *Children in the Fields*

As the farmworker youth took their places on stage to present their work to the audience—two of the girls barely able to see over the podium—past nervousness turned to poise as they read their essays and described their artwork. A ballroom of migrant and seasonal farmworker advocates, case workers, former farmworkers, and staff sat captivated as they listened to the struggles these girls and their farmworker families have experienced. There was no denying their experiences had helped shape them, but it was clear through their messages they are determined to change their futures. They accepted their certificates before the large crowd, recognizing their loved ones' support and thanking AFOP for the opportunity to share their stories.

This year's theme of "Rhythm of the Harvest" elicited entries from farmworker youth from across the United States. The winning entries featured have not been edited to maintain the voice of the farmworker youth.

ESSAY CONTEST 1st Place – Age 10-13

Jacqueline Cruz



Rhythm of the Harvest

Do you want to know what it is like to be a field worker? Being a field worker is hard because you have to work in the crops where it is really hot. My dad is a field worker, he picks oranges and grapefruit. Field

workers have to face a lot of difficult

challenges; even their typical work day is stressful. They have to move each season to find work. There is also always a chance they could get in an accident.

I'm going to tell you why a field worker's typical day is stressful. They have to wake up early in the morning get dressed and make themselves something to eat. Next, the van picks them up to go to work. When they get there, they get on a ladder and start picking grapefruit as fast as they can because the more boxes they fill the more money they earn. At the same time the field workers have to be careful because bees, mosquitoes, snakes, and ants could bite them. When they are done filling the boxes, they

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Jaqueline Cruz's Essay *continued from page 11*

neatly pack the boxes in a trailer. At last, the trailer takes the boxes to the packing house where the people who work there pour the grapefruits into a machine. The machine cleans the dirt off the grapefruits by using wax, bleach, and water. After the machine cleans the grapefruit, it is placed on a long table where a machine separates the grapefruit by size. Next, the women who work in the packing house have to be really careful not to put rotten grapefruit in the boxes. The grapefruit that are rotten are sent to the juice plant.

When the season is over a lot of the field workers' families have to move to a different state where they have to find a new place to live and a new job. Some field workers move to other states to pick blueberries, peaches, apples, tomatoes, and strawberries. My dad went to South Carolina to pick peaches, and tomatoes; he went to North Carolina to pick apples and strawberries; he picked watermelons in Georgia and picked apples in Virginia.

There are a lot of difficult challenges field workers have to face. When working they could fall off a ladder and even break their necks, poke out their eye, or get bitten by insects and snakes. They also have to face the heat of the sun, which can cause them to become dehydrated. When it is cold they could get sick.

Being a field worker is really dangerous, especially when you are driving a trailer full of oranges or grapefruit. One time there were nine people on a trailer full of oranges and they crashed. Everyone died except one person he was in the hospital for four months. The doctors had to teach him how to walk, eat, and talk again. Over the years many field workers have died going and coming from the field.

Field workers are really hard workers because they face difficult challenges, have to move each year, and their typical work day is stressful. Field workers have an important job that affects all of us, if it was not for them we would not have the fruits and vegetables we need to stay healthy. I am so proud of my dad because he loves us enough to face these challenges each day.

ART CONTEST

1st Place – Age 10-13

Jaqueline Vargas



ESSAY & ART CONTEST

1st Place – Age 14-18

Neftali Cuello



Rhythm of the Harvest

Can you hear it? The cricket's chirping. Can you smell it? The fresh, dewy, smell of water dripping off minty, green plants. Can you feel it? Can you? It's the beat of the night!

Everything is perfect, in the night. There is a windy, cool breeze in the air, making the blades of lime-green grass sway back and forth. It was kind of like playing a guitar.

Now it's five in the morning, when I wake up. I look in the mirror. I'm exhausted... sleepy, from the baby boy waking up at one-thirty in the morning. "I'm thirsty sis" is what he says.

He looks at me with those big, beautiful, brown eyes that show innocence, and smiles. I can't help myself, I smile back. "I'll give you water, is that okay?"

I put him back to bed and he says "I'm not sleepy; I want to stay up with you."

"How about I tell you a story," I say.

"Is it good? What is this story called?"

"It's really good. You'll love it. It's called the Rhythm of Harvest. Once upon a time..." I begin to tell the story.

He's finally tired again. He goes back to sleep. No matter how sleepy I am, because of that boy. I'm not mad, I'm pretty much glad. He just brings me so much joy. Then I realize it's three in the morning, and outside it's pouring.

It's still dark outside. I glance out the window and see as frogs hop away, as the crickets chirping dies down, as all the nocturnal animals, insects, reptiles and any other kind of creepy crawlers hide away, knowing it's going to be a sunny afternoon today.

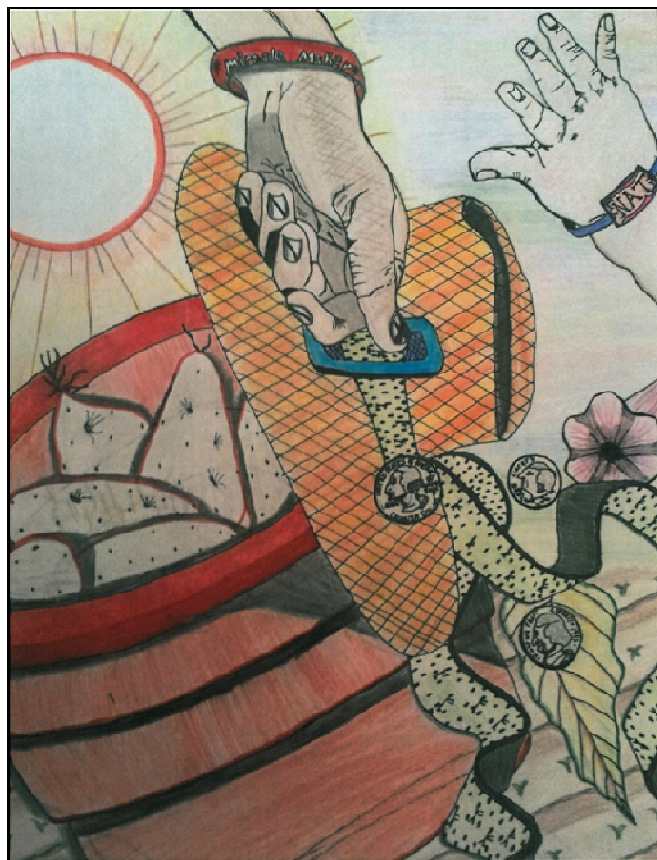
It is like a never ending orchestra. The crickets chirped, the frogs croaked, the insects buzzed, the snakes hissed, the wolves howled, the rabbits bounced, and the owls, bats, and other flying birds flapped their wings as they soared through the night, looking for the squeaking mice.

Chirp, chirp, I hear. Chirp, chirp, chirp, I hear another bird call back. I smile this is an entirely new song.

We arrive at one of the fields I will be working in today, and wince as the tires screech to a stop. I look at my mom there is determination in her eyes as we look forward and see no end to the rows of tobacco. I look back and smile at the boy, with the big, brown eyes.

I still remember the song of the night, but I like this song too. You hear a squish as our shoes connect with the moist dirt. We line up like marchers next to the row of tobacco we will be working in. I look at my mom and see as her eyes water, making her look vulnerable and small. There is little to no noise as we work now.

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Neftali Cuello's Essay *continued from page 13*

You hear a baby boy cry and pound his tiny, fragile, fists against a car window, as he watches his mother disappear into a long field of tobacco.

A man closes his eyes as he feels sweat roll from his head and down his face. He wipes it away. It's kind of like playing a violin. The hand goes up and the sweat slowly rolls back down.

I look up and the sun blinds me with its light, so I look back down and feel as it beats on my back. I look at the uneven dirt path that tries to unbalance me, but I have a role to play, so I

keep on marching forward.

Now I work in the sweetness of potato, but there is nothing sweet about it. I carry a forty pound bucket for forty-five cents. There are no benefits, if I get hurt im useless. When I get older I will have problems with my back and arthritis, but its all part of a role I play so I go on.

I don't like this song I've heard it over and over again and it brings me no peace. Its just like the story I once told my brother, who is now working in tobacco. It's a sad song and now I know the role I played. It was the Rhythm of Harvest.

Success Stories

NFJP Helps Farmworker Dependent Achieve Her Goals

In 2006, Amanda Hedgecough and her husband T.J., a seasonal farmworker, had twins; both babies were diagnosed with Non-Ketotic Hyperglycinemia, a rare genetic mutation that both parents shared. One child died and the remaining twin was critically ill, requiring constant care. While caring for the infant, Amanda found that she was pregnant and was told after prenatal testing that this baby suffered from the same disease as the twins. That baby lived just 42 hours and died at home in his mother's arms.

Amanda and her husband focused on taking care of the remaining child, who ultimately lost her battle with the disease in 2009.

Amanda had a strong desire to become a Licensed practical nurse (LPN). High medical bills and years of part-time income resulted in a staggering financial burden, which prevented her from fulfilling that dream. The farmer for whom T.J. had worked, told the family that Tennessee Opportunity Programs, Inc. (TOPS) may be able to help them. She applied for assistance through the TN Career Center and TOPS. She received assistance with testing fees through the One Stop and a stipend for classroom time, encouragement, support and job placement from TOPS case manager, Leecia Walker, through the National Farmworker Jobs Program.



Photo courtesy of TOPS

Leecia Walker, TOPS; Don Sadler, director of TN Technology Center at Crossville; Tammy Brown, Dr. Earnest Mak's office; Amanda Hedgecough; Gaila Fletcher, TOPS; Kathy Kleinsmith, practical nursing coordinator at TTCC; Evann Freeman, U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander's staff; and Carol Caruthers, TN Career Center.

An honor student, Amanda's instructor described her as one of the most caring nurses he has ever taught. She completed the program, passed her exams, and has found employment with OB/GYN Dr. Eathan Mak in Crossville, TN.

After the loss of their three children, they decided not to have any more children of their own, but they have since adopted T.J.'s niece,

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Success Stories

who is 14 months old. Amanda is also considering going back to school to obtain her bachelor's degree in nursing, and would like to work with children with special needs.

In September, Amanda received the DARI Farmworker Achievement award for her dedication and continuous drive to not only

better her life, but to help those around her.

Submitted by: Gaila Fletcher, TOPS

Training Provides Tools for Success

Sara Corado lives in Lorenzo, Texas. She contacted Motivation, Education & Training (MET), Inc. by phone to inquire about information on the truck driving program the NFJP grantee operates. Sara is 29 years old and divorced with two daughters. She told MET staff that she dropped out of the 7th grade to get married. Since she married so young and took care of her husband and two children, she had not thought of her education.

Sara worked in agricultural work for 15 years as a farm labor contractor in the onion fields. She also worked as a cotton ginner and hoed cotton and squash. Sara told MET staff that she would like to obtain a commercial driver's license to have a better future for her daughters, realizing that it is a high demand and high paying occupation. Her pre-program earnings were just \$2,982 for six months.

After eligibility was determined for the National Farmworker Jobs Program, Sara was enrolled on July 5, 2011 into the truck driving class at South Plains College in Lubbock, Texas for four weeks. Sara completed training and obtained her commercial driver's license.

By the end of August, Sara was employed with Sunburst Farms as a truck driver earning \$9 per hour and working 40 hours per week, hauling squash and zucchini. Sara was only employed by Sunburst for one month due to the end of the season. She then found a job driving a cotton module truck for McCoy's Gin in Lorenzo. There, she was paid \$8.25 an hour, working 70 hours per week and receiving overtime. After the seasonal cotton ginning season ended, MET staff referred her to Lone Star Dirt Pavement in Lubbock, Texas, where she began hauling dirt.



Photo courtesy of MET, Inc.

Sara Corado working after receiving training to be a truck driver through the NFJP in Texas.

She continues to work with Lone Star Dirt Pavement 40 hours per week and is making \$12.50 per hour. Sara is happy that she completed training and has employment to provide for her daughters.

Submitted by: Irene Favila, MET, Inc.

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