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**Farmworker Students to Intern in D.C.**

Migrant or seasonal farmworker college students chosen for a highly intensive professional mentorship sponsored by the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association.

Washington D.C. April 24, 2015 – “Since the age of 13 I worked every summer in the orchards picking apples, cherries, and pears, and doing other demanding physical jobs that helped me develop a great work ethic. It takes a lot of determination to stick with these jobs, but I have always taken pride in completing my work, contributing to my family’s income, even when the work was grueling. A crucial element that is needed to be successful is taking risks in the right way. When I tell myself I can do something, I go out and accomplish it, pushing my boundaries and not being afraid of failure. We will all fail at something, the key is to learn from it and become more confident in ourselves.” shares Armando, a 21 year old former farmworker college student from Bridgeport, Washington.

“Four migrant/seasonal farmworker college students have been selected for an intensive eight week professional internship and mentoring program sponsored by the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association in Washington D.C. The goal is to provide life altering experiences and networks to help students make the sometimes overwhelming transition from agricultural life to that of a professional,” says Robert Crumley, a volunteer communications expert working with the program and youth.

“At the age of 16, due to a drive by shooting, I was struck by two bullets in my back. With the help of time, I let go of the hurt and found an outlet through education – the one thing no one can ever take away from me. Growing up I was expected to graduate, get a job, then get married and have babies. Going against the norm of my family, my community, and my social circles, I went to college. It has been an exciting and lonely experience being challenged both academically and socially. Because of my education, my mental capacity now allows me to view every risk not as a fearful situation, but as an opportunity to continue being who I am, and who I am yet to become – no matter the circumstances.” states Lionor, a 20 year old student from Sunnyside, Washington.

Instead of youth working in the fields harvesting fruits or vegetables in the sweltering summer heat, they will live with host families, expand their perspective of the world, and be guided into future lives they never dreamed possible. Students will be placed in diverse positions working for agencies such as the: Hispanic Communication Network, Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, Farmworker Justice, and the U.S. Department of Education. All interns will be managed by Ivon Garcia, a NMSHSA staff, and herself a graduate of the inaugural internship program of 2012.

Ilda, a 19 year old student from Mulberry, Florida shares: “I am proud of being the first in my family to graduate high school and attend college. Having a migrant background and being separated from my family has been a difficult journey. (Upon both her parents moving back to Mexico, she remained in the U.S., moved in with her aunt and helped raise her two younger siblings before heading off to college.) However, I have become a stronger person because of it. A positive attitude plays an important role, because without it, you can’t stay firm when obstacles come into play.”

The goal of Migrant/Seasonal Head Start Programs is to prepare children from farmworker/agricultural backgrounds, ages zero – five, to enter school ready to learn. 50 years ago this May, to remove as many obstacles to academic success as possible, President Johnson created Head Start in 1965 as part of his War on Poverty.

“Four years into the program we have eye-opening stories, and trajectory-altering experiences to share. When students join us, they are intentionally choosing to change their futures. One former student now has his sights set on running for political office, yet two more are applying to law schools” states Cleo Rodriguez, Jr., Executive Director of NMSHSA. “We are proud to continue extending our hand to former migrant/seasonal Head Start students from across our great nation. We hope our investment will impact the lives, goals, and dreams of our interns, and in turn we hope these young professionals will impact the lives of countless other migrant and seasonal youth in years to come!”

All selected farmworker students are former Migrant/Seasonal Head Start children currently enrolled in college, and come from a family that is, or has, worked in agriculture. The 2015 class includes: Ms. Stefany Tule of Western Michigan University (representing the Head Start grantee Telemon Michigan); Mr. Armando Garcia of Spokane Falls Community College (Enterprise for Progress); Ms. Lionor Galindo of Washington State University (Inspire); and Ms. Ilda Martinez from the University of South Florida (Redlands Migrant Christian Association). Current majors of the 2015 cohort include Environmental Studies, Psychology, Education, and Human Development.

This paid internship also offers: housing, stipends for professional clothing and transportation, on-the-job training, networking opportunities, professional skills development, leadership development and personal/professional mentoring from consummate D.C. professionals, many of whom are also former farmworkers.

**About National Migrant Seasonal Head Start Association:**

The National Migrant Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA) consists of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Directors, Staff, Parents, and Friends who work on issues unique to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start children and their families. By advocating for resources, creating partnerships, and affecting public policy, we help member agencies provide quality comprehensive services.

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Follow our interns at <http://nmshsainternblog.blogspot.com/> as they blog about their self-discoveries and experiences.