



April 2011

Washington Newsline

Providing Energy Savings & Training for Farmworker Families

By Erica Mireles, Proteus Inc.

Proteus, Inc. is a non-profit, community-based organization with over 44 years of experience serving farmworkers and other low-income residents in the Central Valley counties of Fresno, Kings, Kern, and Tulare. Proteus operates a grant through the U.S. Department of Labor's National Farmworker Jobs Program and is a member of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs. The organization is dedicated to pursuing innovative ways to help residents who are most in need through academic courses, vocational training opportunities, supportive service assistance, and energy efficiency education.

In accordance with its pursuit of



innovation, Proteus recently acquired a "green" mobile unit in order to extend green job learning opportunities. The Green Mobile Unit will be primarily utilized in

rural communities. It will promote sustainable energy, green sector employment opportunities, and deliver information on energy

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Photo courtesy of Proteus Inc.

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Fiscal Responsibility and the NFJP

By David Strauss, Executive Director, AFOP

We are in the midst of a great debate about how to reduce the federal deficit, and, ultimately, how to avoid increasing the national debt. Currently, the 2011 deficit is estimated to be at least \$1.1 trillion and the national debt stands at around \$14 trillion.

It is nearly impossible to visualize the meaning of these massive numbers. The nation's gross domestic product is around \$14.12 trillion, so while the deficit is very high, it is less than the amount of goods and

services produced by all of us each year. Still, it is a worrisome figure, and the biggest worry is that unless something is done, it will continue to grow. That is an unsustainable outcome. At some point, unchecked deficit growth can cause investors in America to reconsider where to put their money, resulting in a domino effect of dangerous economic outcomes.

The new Congress is grappling with this in several ways. The

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Newsline Briefs:

AFOP Welcomes Valentina Stackl

Valentina Stackl is a Program Associate for the Health and Safety Programs at AFOP. In this capacity, she focuses on publications and communications, including writing, editing, and designing Health and Safety Programs' quarterly newsletter Salud, as well as its annual publication. Additionally, she manages the Health and Safety Programs' social media presence on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Valentina also works conducting outreach and assisting in designing trainings for Project Sol, Project HOPE, Project LEAF, and SAFE AmeriCorps. Prior to joining AFOP in 2011, Valentina helped create a health and nutrition program for underserved children in Washington, D.C. at a bilingual non-profit and in the communications department at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health. She holds a B.A. in Creative Writing and Political Science and a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Michigan with a focus on Latino Health, Health Disparities, and how migration affects health.

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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 agencies serving 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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From Harvest to Harvard

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

The *Children in the Fields Campaign* Youth Council at the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) is leading the way to success through their advocacy for post-secondary education for farmworker children. On February 16, the UTPA Youth Council held a student-led academic and leadership conference, "From Harvest to Harvard," for migrant farmworker students. The conference took place at the UTPA campus in Edinburg, Texas, and was attended by more than 200 migrant students from the Rio Grande Valley.

"From Harvest to Harvard" was an interactive conference with sessions focused on the migrant experience, decision-making and responsibility. Students were encouraged to create a college-going culture at home, taught how to set goals and how to carefully plan their education and career path.

The *Children in the Fields Campaign* UTPA Youth Council members, which are all college students from migrant farmworker families, designed the one-day conference for migrant students in 8th and 9th grade to show them that post-secondary education is the gateway to success. Many times, it is determined at this grade level if the students are graduating from high school or dropping out. Factors such as mobility, insufficient credits, and the difficult transition to credit-bearing courses can discourage migrant students from obtaining their high school diploma.

As former migrant students, the youth council members shared the same struggles and successes the conference participants face today, which is why it is important for them to inspire a college-bound mentality in these migrant students.

Migrant students were invited to participate from school districts across the Rio Grande Valley: Donna Independent School District (ISD), Edcouch Elsa ISD, Edinburg ISD, La Joya ISD, and Pharr-San-Juan-Alamo ISD. Conference participants included students that are passing all their classes, and also students that are at risk of not graduating from high school.

Christine Chávez, Farmworker Coordinator at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and granddaughter of civil rights leader César Chávez, was the conference keynote speaker.



UTPA Youth Council with Children in the Fields Campaign Texas Regional Coordinator Noemi Ochoa and USDA Farmworker Coordinator Christine Chávez

Other conference speakers included Yvonne Gonzalez, a Harvard graduate serving as Workforce Solutions' Chief Executive Officer, and Erika Prosper, a former migrant student who rose to be a top administrator for H-E-B, the largest food chain store in Texas. The conference speakers shared their personal experiences with the participants and incorporated creative student activities, such as the Spaghetti Tower, which required competencies like team work, communication, problem solving, and leadership.

Memorial Middle School conference participants in La Joya, Texas, shared their thoughts of the conference afterwards with Jerry de la Garza, their school's migrant strategist. "'We all come from similar backgrounds' was the consensus from all our students. Our students were inspired by all speakers and how they too can make a difference in the future, but planning needs to start now," noted Garza.

The conference participants have started to inspire other kids to do the same. Garza added, "In the after school tutoring program, our 8th grade students were talking to our 6th and 7th graders that now is the time to change and do better for themselves and their families."

Beatriz Medina, one of the Youth Council member leading the conference planning, shared her experience on AFOP's blog in a post titled *From Harvest to Harvard*. Medina wrote, "We hope we can let all the students know that college and higher education are for everyone, regardless of race, migrating status, and economic difficulties."

2011 AFOP National Conference

SAVE THE DATE



***Advocating, Educating, and
Training America's
Farmworkers***

Join the Association of Farmworker
Opportunity Programs

September 21-23, 2011

at the Crystal Gateway Marriott
in Arlington, VA

*Contact Meriel Shire at shire@afop.org with
any questions.*

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of César Chávez

By David Strauss, Executive Director, AFOP

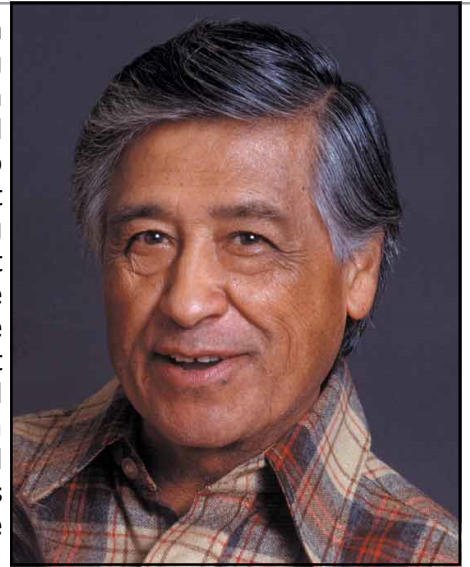
I had the privilege of attending a celebration of the life and legacy of César Chávez at the White House on March 30, 2011. Ernie Flores, AFOP President, and Hermelinda Sapien, AFOP Executive Committee member, accompanied me to this invitation-only event at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building here in Washington, D.C. As we honored the life of this American hero, we were reminded of how far we have come, but also how far we have to go.

The headline speakers included Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. Christine Chávez, one of César's granddaughters and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmworker Coordinator, also spoke on behalf of the Chávez family. More than 120 people were in attendance, representing nearly every phase of farmworker service and history, including several high-ranking Latino members of the Administration such as Oscar Gonzalez, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Intergovernmental and Congressional Affairs.

After introductory remarks by the esteemed speakers, a film depicting the life and activities of César Chávez was shown. Narrated by Martin Sheen, it included footage from the earliest days of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), and reminded us all of the harsh conditions and dangers to farmworkers who risked their livelihoods and their lives in their struggle to attain dignity and a decent wage for themselves and their families.

I was reminded of the reality that the struggle was not won. There were victories, and they should not be minimized. The reviled short handle hoe was outlawed, health and safety requirements were enacted, and in California a number of protections including occupational safety and wage laws have enhanced the economic capacity and well-being of farmworkers. But they are still, nationally, the lowest-paid, least empowered, and most insecure workers in the American workforce. Even in California, workers still get sick and die from pesticide poisonings and heat stress. The unions, including the UFW, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, PCUN, and groups such as the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, continue an uphill battle to get migrant and seasonal

farmworkers a just and living wage with benefits, and attempt to insure decent working conditions. But agriculture continues to be one of the least regulated industries in America, and farmworkers continue to be robbed of their dignity on a daily basis.



César E. Chávez

So it was good to see evidence of a time when farmworkers, at least in California, were truly empowered in a way that made a difference for themselves and future workers. It must inspire all of us to work ever harder for the people we serve.

It was also good to hear from these extraordinary leaders of key departments (Agriculture, Labor), which mean so much to the daily lives of the people working in the fields. Secretaries Solis and Vilsack explained the concrete ways that they are moving their agencies in the direction of farmworkers. It was good to hear among those ways are the programs AFOP fights so hard to protect and grow: the National Farmworker Jobs Program and the new USDA program of training and services for farmworkers.

These developments are excellent beginnings. It is amazing to have these two cabinet secretaries identifying with the legacy of the great leader of the American farm labor movement, César Chávez. With their help, we in the AFOP community can weather this current crisis threatening every program represented in the auditorium that day. I believe César's battle cry will continue to inspire us as we move ahead: ¡Sí se puede!

This article was also shared on the AFOP Blog.

Triangle Echoes

By Ayrianne Parks, Communications Director, AFOP

March 25, 2011 marked the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York City. In remembrance of the tragic event that took the lives of 146 people, most of whom were immigrant women and children, the National Consumers League (NCL) hosted an event in the Rayburn House Office Building. AFOP's *Children in the Fields Campaign* Director Norma Flores López joined with other labor experts, union leaders, a survivor of the Massey Mine Collapse, and the brother of a Deepwater Horizon victim.

The fire is often seen as the impetus to change the abusive labor practices that were rampant in America until the late 1930s. Historians at the event shared the story of Francis Perkins, a witness to the fire who went on to become the first female Secretary of Labor, who dedicated her life to

bettering working conditions in America. She used the horrific experience of watching helplessly as the women leapt from the flaming upper stories of the factory to their deaths to bring about meaningful changes in the law to better protect workers.

While most industries have come a long way as a result of laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, changes in agriculture remain stunted.

To this day, farmworker children remain exempt from the protective regulations governing child labor, despite the fact that it is one of the three most dangerous industries in the U.S. according to the Department of Labor. Farmworkers are also excluded from the provisions requiring overtime pay and are often paid by piece rate, just as factory workers were so many years ago.

The event seemed to energize the advocates, academicians, government, and public in attendance. As moves to strip hard-won workers' rights proliferate, the need for reminders of past mistakes arises. As one panelist noted, we must make these tragedies teachable moments. All workers deserve to know that they will return from work safely. They also deserve to be treated with respect and earn a living wage.

Be sure to check out NCL's video, "TRIANGLE'S ECHOES: The Unfinished Struggle for Worker Protection, Safety and Health," which can be found in their blog post on March 22 at:

www.savvyconsumer.wordpress.com.

2011 AFOP Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Children's Essay & Art Contest

Contest Theme: Sowing the Seeds of Change

Deadline: August 1, 2011

All farmworker children between 10 and 18 years old are invited to send in essay and art entries. Each winner gets a cash prize, national recognition and a trip to the 2011 AFOP National Conference in Washington, DC for our 40th Anniversary celebration.

For more information please contact:

Norma Flores López

Children in the Fields Project Director

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

(202) 828-6006 ext. 106

flores@afop.org



AFOP Executive Director David Strauss with previous contest winners.

Leading By Example

By Amanda Jordan, Health & Safety Programs Program Associate, AFOP

Maria Isavel Vazquez Jimenez died on May 16, 2008, two days after collapsing from heat illness in a vineyard near Stockton, California. After her collapse, she was placed in the confines of a hot, metal car as temperatures reached over 95 degrees. Finally, she was taken to a clinic, but it was already too late. Since then, her family, friends, and coworkers have been asking, who had the authority to prevent Maria Isavel's death on that scorching day in 2008?

The safety of farmworkers is a two-tiered responsibility. In a country that values—and demands—speaking up for yourself, safety in the field is partially in the hands of those who labor. Nevertheless, there was a shared accountability between the crew leaders, contractors, and other employers in responding appropriately to Maria Isavel's symptoms when she collapsed in the vineyard that day. Two farm supervisors were initially charged with involuntary manslaughter in the criminal case involving the heat-related death the farmworker, according to the United Farmworkers Union. The employers instead reached a plea deal, resulting in community service time and \$370 and \$1,000 fines, respectively.

As an occupational illness, heat stress is among



*Photo by Jessica Werder
Nicholas Zetts, Telamon Virginia and Celama Gerard,
Telamon Maryland. Practicing the employer training*

the most easily avoided. In addition, proper attention to symptoms and risk factors is guaranteed to prevent deaths from heat exposure. AFOP's Health & Safety team and other farmworker organizations have historically focused on training workers on ways to protect themselves in the field. For the first time on a national level, AFOP has focused training employers on the importance of using their authority to respond appropriately to heat dangers affecting both themselves and their workers. If workers were given sufficient water (at least 32 ounces per hour), regular breaks, and shade, then the majority of deaths from heat stroke in the fields could be avoided. Employers trained on the symptoms, risk factors, response procedures, and resources needed for prevention have the capacity to save lives like that of young Maria Isavel.

On March 24th, Proyecto Sol (AFOP Health & Safety Programs' "Project Sun") trainers from member organizations in Maryland, Puerto Rico, Iowa, Illinois, Florida, Virginia, New Mexico, and Texas gathered for a Train the Trainer session in Baltimore, Maryland. Proyecto Sol was instituted as a result of the Susan Harwood Training grant through the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. This time, the

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*Photo by Martha Beltrán
SAFE AmeriCorps member provides heat-stress training
to farmworkers in Arizona*

Providing Energy Savings & Training

continued from page 1

assistance programs to the Central Valley's low-income residents, including the many farmworkers and their families who live in the area. Proteus staff will also be on the unit to schedule home assessment appointments to show these families what can be done around the home to increase efficiency.

The 38-foot mobile unit was customized to meet current energy efficiency standards. It has the ability to run on biodiesel, power generated by a four-panel solar system on the roof, and a hybrid electrical/biodiesel quiet generator. The unit is also equipped with two flat screen televisions with remote web conferencing capabilities, seven 22-inch touch screen computer stations, Verizon 3G WIFI network capabilities, a fax machine, an interview area, and portable classrooms with distance learning capabilities. It features interactive and visual displays created by Proteus' own solar class students and Proteus' Energy Division staff. The Green Mobile Unit will complement Proteus' existing Mobile Employment Center (MEC), which is certified by Tulare County and Fresno County Workforce Investment Boards as a One-Stop location to provide Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services to eligible participants. Funding for the new Green Mobile Unit was received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in coordination with the California Department of Community Services and Development.

Helping farmworkers and other low-income individuals create a more energy efficient home means savings, which is crucial for these struggling families. As an energy partner with Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company, and Pacific Gas & Electric, Proteus' energy programs offer services, such as refrigerator replacement, evaporative cooler installation, weatherization, CFL installation, attic insulation, CARE/FERA application assistance, and more, to eligible customers throughout the region. It is estimated that the savings per family average about \$700 annually. The overall annual goal is to reach and serve 6,000 low-income, farmworker families, providing them with services that will reduce their homes' use of electricity.

In order to better assist low-income areas in overcoming difficult barriers to receiving vital services, the organization incorporates its programs with existing community resources and,

to the extent possible, Proteus goes into communities to fill in the gaps in critical services. The Green Mobile Unit is a good example of this integrated approach since it is a collaborative effort between public and private industries, but it is just one part of the Proteus strategy to serve these predominantly rural families.

Another objective Proteus is pursuing with the help of the unit is to use it as a means to provide education and training to individuals, particularly in the area of green jobs. Jobs in renewable energy are expected to increase in the Central Valley, however, due to the limited availability of opportunities to further their education and job skills, farmworkers are at an extreme disadvantage when it comes to entering these high demand occupations in growth industries. To address this issue, the Green Mobile Unit will be utilized to recruit and enroll students into the Solar and Weatherization Career and Technical Education classes. Renewable energy training helps develop highly trained workforce with the critical skills required for employment in clean technology industries. Proteus' Solar Photovoltaic Training is a six week, 210 hour course of hands on instruction. It teaches students to perform basic construction, perform basic electrical, and prepares them for the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Entry Level Certification Exam. Volunteer work with solar firms is also a component of the course that provides the students with networking opportunities of potential employers. The weatherization training program is a four week, 160 hour course that focuses on gaining the working knowledge of weatherization basics such as building evaluations, installing weatherization measuring equipment for proper analysis, and performing inspections and measurements.

Proteus plans to maximize the community benefits from the green mobile unit by deploying it in areas where the need for programs to be offered is great. The organization will continue using partnerships with public and private entities to expand training and employment opportunities in green jobs through the unit and provide rural families with help and information on ways to increase energy efficiency.

40 years



Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs



Advocating, Educating, and Training America's Farmworkers

Please join us for AFOP's 40th Anniversary Gala
September 22, 2011

Crystal Gateway Marriott
1700 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, VA 22202

6:00 PM
Reception

7:00 PM
Dinner

For sponsorship opportunities please email Suzanne Morrell at morrell@afop.org or visit <http://afop.org/afop-40th-anniversary-gala/>

SAVE THE DATE



Photo by Jessica Werder

Dina Gonzalez, AmeriCorps member from Telamon Maryland. Practicing the employer training with Judith Quiñones, PathStone Puerto Rico

Leading By Example *continued from page 8*

training was kicked up a notch to address educating employers on heat stress. The new curriculum is complimented by discussion on the best ways to convince crew leaders, supervisors, contractors, and growers why they should receive the training and how they can protect the workers for whom they are responsible. During one activity, trainers came up with responses to hypothetical statements by skeptical employers:

We have water. We have shade. Why do I need a training?

-Both you and the workers need to know the effects and damage heat stress causes just in case a friend or coworker is experiencing symptoms.

I DO want to protect my workers, but how is a flipchart going to help?

-The flipchart provides a visual for people who may not be able to read or may not listen well.

Is this training mandatory? Do I have to do it, legally?

-This training is not mandatory; however, it could save the life of your workers and avoid trips to the hospital

I'm just the crew leader. I don't have power.

-Lead by example.

Trainers will collectively reach 500 employers by the end of the summer. With employers and workers prepared to mitigate heat symptoms and emergencies, there is no telling how many lives will be saved through these trainers' efforts across the nation.

Fiscal Responsibility and the NFJP *continued from page 1*

most publicized is the path chosen by the House of Representatives. That body passed HR 1 in response to the perceived need to reduce spending immediately coupled with the problem of operating the government for 2011 on a continuing resolution. In that legislation, I am pleased to report that the House left undisturbed the funding level for the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) that was contained in the first continuing resolution. That essentially funds the program at the same level in 2011 as we had in 2010.

While that may not seem reason to celebrate, in this current environment it is spectacular. It demonstrates the bipartisan support for this important job training program, and is testimony to the fine work that AFOP's member agencies do every day to help our nation's farmworkers realize their piece of the American Dream.

The job training and placement services our members provide often result in life-changing, family sustaining incomes in careers that have four things that are almost impossible to get in the fields: 1) decent wages, 2) continuous employment, 3) job-related benefits, and 4) a career ladder.

The NFJP program results are, collectively, responsible for a terrific return on investment to the government and the communities in which they work. Our analysis shows that

for every dollar invested in the NFJP the government gets about \$1.07 back in direct tax gains, induced tax gains and cost savings IN THE FIRST YEAR! The community gets an estimated return of \$2.90. We think that is pretty good for workers who start out with lots of barriers to success, such as low literacy and numeracy, and a language other than English as their first line of communication.

So we are thrilled that amidst all the strong conversation in Washington, D.C. about the need to cut government spending, lawmakers realize the value of this program.

We are concerned, however, that the rest of the workforce development system may be slated for significant cuts for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011. The cuts that have been proposed could jeopardize access to critical job training and placement services operated through the network of One Stop Career Centers.

Fortunately, many national workforce organizations have banded together to educate lawmakers about the value of these programs to the people most in need: the millions of unemployed, underemployed and discouraged workers in this country. We are a proud member of this new coalition, and we are hopeful that once Senators and House Members fully appreciate the services provided through this system, they will make sure that there continues to be a robust workforce development system in America.

We at AFOP will continue to showcase the fine work that our member agencies do for the migrant and seasonal farmworkers that prepare and harvest the food that we eat every day.

AFOP Makes Big Strides In March

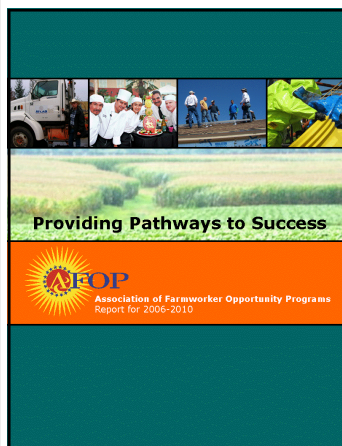
By Ayrianne Parks, Communications Director, AFOP

This March proved to be quite a busy month for AFOP and its staff. Congress continued 2011 budget debates, passing two Continuing Resolutions; AFOP launched its "Year of the Farmworker Child" webpage, published two reports, and organized a host of events around National Farmworker Awareness Week; and the month ended with a tribute to American hero, César Chávez. Wrapping up from a productive and successful AFOP Board Meeting and Mini-Conference, held in Washington, D.C. February 16 to 18, the organization moved full-steam ahead.

As Congress battled on the budget, threatening to eliminate many of the Workforce Investment Act employment and training programs, AFOP took part in planning sessions to educate the public and our leaders on the importance of these services. Together with organizations such as the Jobs for the Future, National Skills Coalition, National Council of La Raza, National Association of Workforce Development Professionals, National Association of Workforce Boards, and many other leaders in the Workforce Community, a National Workforce Day of Action was held on March 24, to educate Congress, states, and individual communities on the effectiveness of job training programs.

In January, AFOP announced the dedication of 2011 as its "Year of the Farmworker Child." The initiative aims to bring attention to the many hardships faced by migrant and seasonal farmworker children and their families. On March 2, AFOP launched a webpage on its website to serve as a resource for supporters and provide more information for people interested in helping raise public awareness. The site lists ideas for people to create their own activities and events, shares other supporters' plans, and provides resources for more information. "Year of the Farmworker Child" currently has 15 Supporting Organizations that have agreed to make donations to support raising awareness or plan or actively participate in an event or activity. There is also an option for people to sign-on as individual supporters and many have chosen this option. AFOP is asking all of its members and friends to continue to visit the events page for more updates and help spread the word.

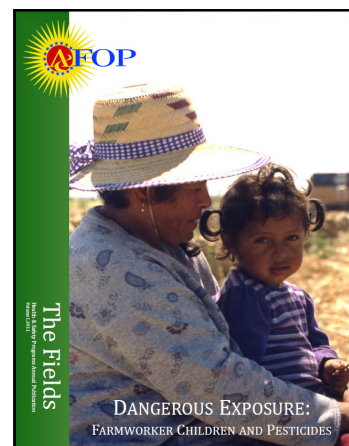
AFOP also released its Report for 2006 to 2010,



entitled, *Providing Pathways to Success*, on March 25. The report highlighted the ability of the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) community to rise to the challenges of the Great Recession. Despite the difficult employment environment, the NFJP continued to educate and train farmworkers into family-sustaining jobs at an exceptional level. It also presented significant achievements by its Health & Safety Programs and Children in the Fields Campaign, which have expanded their reach in order to better serve and advocate on behalf of America's Farmworkers.

On March 31, AFOP's Health & Safety Programs released its first annual publications dedicated to farmworker health and safety issues. This year's publication, *The Fields, Volume 1, 2011, Dangerous Exposure: Farmworker Children and Pesticides* centers on farmworker children, examining birth defects, neurological and behavior disorders, respiratory disease, as well as leukemia and other childhood cancers and their connections to pesticides.

AFOP also celebrated National Farmworker Awareness Week, as well as the celebration of the birthday and legacy of César Chávez. From March 27 through April 2, students, community members, congregations, and organizations across the country worked to raise awareness about farmworker issues through events, blogs, media pieces, videos, and a variety of activities. AFOP helped in this effort to educate the public on the many obstacles faced by farmworkers with special blog posts throughout the week from our team, including our Health & Safety Programs and *Children in the Fields Campaign*



experts on a variety of current farmworker issues.

AFOP and its staff also staged events and activities across the country in recognition of the special week. *Children in the Fields Campaign* staff hosted and participated in events in California, North Carolina, and Texas. The Health & Safety Programs' SAFE AmeriCorps members also held events in California, Arizona, North Carolina, Maryland, Idaho, New Mexico, Arkansas, Maine, and New York. AFOP's D.C. staff also participated in a variety of events including a special White House event attended by Executive Director David Strauss (*Celebrating the Life and Legacy of César Chávez* on page 5) and an event at Hope College in Holland,

Michigan where *Children in the Fields Campaign* Director Norma Flores López was a special guest speaker.

As March came to a close, AFOP prepared for yet another busy and successful month. Congress will continue to debate the budget for 2011 and, even though that very difficult task has not yet come to a close, the newest battle for the 2012 budget is already underway. Make sure to visit the AFOP for updates on the happenings in the farmworker world as we enter the month of April and prepare for a busy summer.

Both publications can be found on the AFOP website in the Publications section under the dropdown Newsroom menu.

Success Stories

Training Women for Non-Traditional Occupations

Janice Wells came to the Telamon office in Danville, Virginia in August of 2007, a seasonal farmworker with no other work experience. She had worked in the tobacco fields all of her life, but decided she wanted to go to college. Janice enrolled herself in classes at Danville Community College in the Registered Nurse (RN) program, but began having financial difficulties. Although she had financial aid, Janice was having a hard time paying for transportation because of the distance she had to travel every day from her home to classes. Janice's brother had previously been enrolled in the NFJP program with Telamon and she decided to see if they could help her.

After her eligibility verification, assessment and testing were completed, Telamon was able to assist Janice with the only thing that would hinder her from completing her classes and that was gas assistance. Janice completed 2 semesters in the RN curriculum and found that nursing was not for her. In the fall of 2008, she changed her studies to Precision Machining in order to become a machinist.

According to the United States Department of Labor, precision machining is considered a non-traditional occupation for a woman. Janice said she was inspired by her brother Matthew who had previously gone through the program and is working at B & W Nuclear Operations Group in Lynchburg, Virginia as a machinist.

There were many tools mandatory for the completion of the precision machining class, but



Telamon Corporation was able to assist her with that expense. Janice completed the Precision Machining Technology program in May 2010 and applied at B&W Nuclear Operations Group. After numerous security clearances and lots of paperwork, Janice was offered a job as a machinist and started work in October 2010 with full benefits and a starting wage of \$21.53 an hour. She has even joined the fitness program offered by the company.

Janice has been a star client and Telamon is so proud we could assist her with making her dream a reality!

Submitted By: Sharon L. Saldarriaga, Telamon Virginia

Success Stories

HELP-New Mexico's Shining Success

Maria Trejo was a seasonal grape harvester in Deming, New Mexico earning a minimum wage of \$7.50 per hour with no benefits. She applied for a job at HELP-NM as an Employment Community Specialist but, was not chosen for the position. However, during the interview she found out about the HELP-NM NFJP program. She realized that she qualified as a farmworker to become a part of the program.

Maria was interested in finding full time work that would be sustainable over time, so she decided to enroll in the HELP-NM program. In January of 2009, Maria entered the program and was placed as a receptionist at Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation. She commuted from Deming to Anthony, New Mexico on a daily basis, a commute of approximately 165 miles per day to train in office work.

It quickly became evident to Tierra Del Sol that the abilities and the skills Maria would bring to the job made her an excellent candidate for a position with the company. She participated in the work experience component of the program and completed it with a stellar review. Tierra Del Sol hired her as a receptionist. In this position, Maria was earning \$8.00 per hour with benefits, Health care insurance, vacation, unemployment insurance, worker compensation, and sick leave.

Shortly after she was hired, the company promoted her to work together with the Home Economic Developer Coordinator as her right hand person. She assisted the coordinator in job development and organizing trainings and opportunities for the people within the Anthony community. When she was promoted, her wage was raised to \$12.00 per hour with benefits. However, her success was truly recognized when the coordinator left Tierra Del Sol. Maria was asked if she was interested in the coordinator's position. As coordinator, Maria received a raise to \$12.50 per hour. Maria was thrilled. She stated, "It is a great day—I have my very own computer and a key



Maria Trejo, standing in the center wearing a visor, at a solar panel installation.

to the office."

The picture of Maria on the roof of a farmworker's home learning to install solar panels is testament to her enthusiasm and commitment to her job. HELP-NM arranged training for farmworkers in the southwestern area of New Mexico to learn about the design and installation of photovoltaic systems. HELP-NM worked together with Maria who recruited participants for the project. What you see here is Maria learning alongside the participants as they installed a PV system.

Maria is currently at home raising her infant child. She intends to return to work as soon as possible. Tierra Del Sol would be pleased to have her back.

Submitted By: Roni Spetalnick, HELP-New Mexico

Success Stories

Achieving Sustainability

Every year from May to October, Juan worked in the fields in the Midwestern States as a seasonal farmworker. Over the years he became used to the same routine of working the fields during the summer months, and then living off of food stamps and tax returns for the rest of the year. Last year, however, Juan's employer updated all of his equipment with better machines, which replaced most the seasonal employees. Because of this, Juan became unemployed and realized that he had to move to another community to look for work.

Juan decided on Sioux Falls, South Dakota, thinking that he might be able to find a job with John Morrell and Company. He came to the South Dakota Department of Labor to complete an application and the receptionist referred him to Jesus Ramirez, a Case Manager with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee and AFOP member in South Dakota. During the application process Juan told Jesus that he was tired of the same routine every year and would like to have a full-time job.

When Juan entered the program his annual earnings from farm work amounted to just \$14,060 for his family of four. Jesus worked with him on developing an "Individual Employment Plan" and they discussed several job options even though Juan did not have any work experience other than farm work. Jesus felt that Juan's English was good enough to be able to apply for nearly any job, and he contacted Service Master, a local cleaning service, to see if they were willing to hire Juan without any cleaning experience. The On-The-Job training contract was reviewed with Service Master's Human Resources Director and the company decided to hire him with reimbursement assistance.

Juan started working at Service Master as maintenance personnel and was able to work on various accounts because he had a driver's license. Three months later he was placed in



Case Manager Jesus Ramirez (left) with NFJP participant

charge of several accounts, and soon after that he was promoted to Supervisor of more than 40 employees, increasing his annual income to \$29,120, double his earnings prior to his enrollment in the NFJP.

Juan qualified for a home loan and was able to purchase his own residence. He and his family have continued to learn more English, and his children are very happy to finally be in the same school all year round. They plan on attending college, so they will be able to achieve their dreams.

Juan has said that the farmworker program helped him to succeed and he doesn't know where he would be now without it. He sees a much brighter future for himself and his family, and is very thankful for the assistance given to him by the National Farmworker Jobs Program.

Submitted By: Kathy Reisenweber, Black Hills Special Services Coop.

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

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs is the national federation of nonprofit and public agencies that provide training and employment services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers.