



April 2015

# Washington Newsline

## AFOP Participates in National Farmworker Awareness Week

Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) was proud to once again participate in the annual National Farmworker Awareness Week, March 22-28, 2015. The week of recognition afforded all of us the opportunity

to reflect on the truly vital contributions farmworkers make to our society.

In the United States, an estimated two to three million men, women, and children live and work in our country's fields, suffering in deplorable conditions, largely shielded from view. They perform backbreaking and exceedingly dangerous work for low pay with very few protections. Our nation should recognize the honorable work our farmworkers perform – to our very own benefit – and act to ensure farmworkers get fair treatment under the law.

### This Issue...

1 AFOP Participates in National Farmworker Awareness Week

4 Department of Labor Taking Action for Child Tobacco Workers

7 Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus Selects Clevon Young

8 Health & Safety Programs: Call-to-Action

10 NFJP: The One Thing that Shouldn't Go Missing in the Story of Food

11 Understanding National Farmworker Awareness Week

14 Success Stories

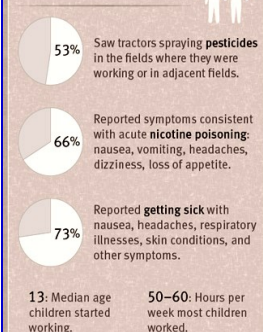
### A HAZARDOUS HARVEST CHILD LABOR IN US TOBACCO FARMING

The US is the 4th largest producer of tobacco worldwide, behind China, Brazil, and India.

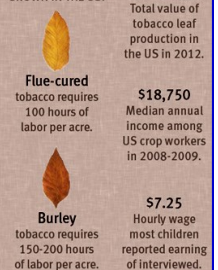
90% of US tobacco is grown in four states: North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. In 2007, a total of 13,240 tobacco farms operated in these four states.



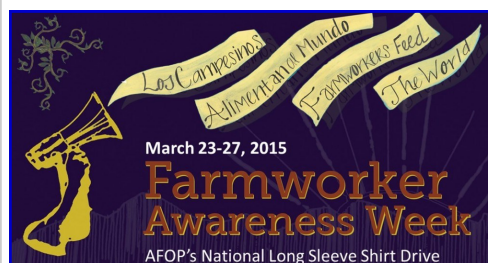
OF 133 CHILDREN INTERVIEWED BY HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH\*



MOST COMMON TYPES OF TOBACCO GROWN IN THE US:



Child labor in U.S. tobacco farming.  
Source: Human Rights Watch



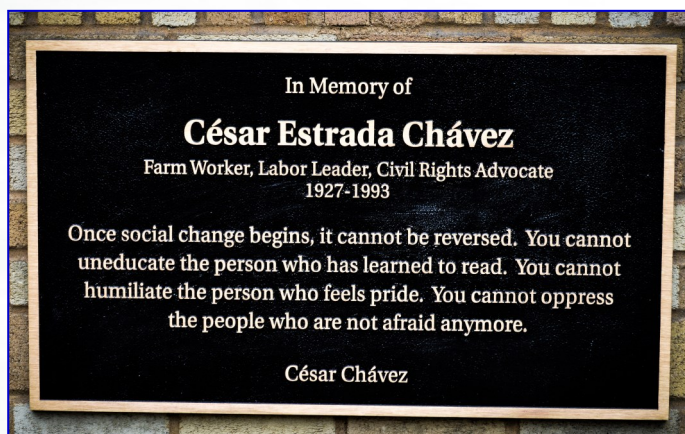
To help better protect farmworkers from heat stress and pesticide exposure, AFOP's Health & Safety Programs again sponsored its farmworker long sleeve shirt collection, bringing in more than 7,500 long sleeve shirts during the week, breaking last year's record number.

In addition, AFOP's *Children in the Fields Campaign* director participated in a high-level meeting with United States Department of Labor Secretary

Tom Perez, White House officials, representatives of Big Tobacco, and the Child Labor Coalition, among others, to find commonsense ways to prevent children from working in tobacco. At the meeting, Labor Department officials announced new health guidance to help prevent green tobacco sickness. I am exceedingly proud of AFOP's work in this regard.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently honored the farmworker's greatest advocate, César Chávez, on the occasion of what would have been his 88th birthday by naming its south building

Continued on page 2



Plaque in USDA's south building courtyard. Source : USDA

courtyard for him. Chávez, who died in 1993, was a tireless advocate for farmworkers and farmworker rights. A true American hero, César is one of the most beloved and electrifying figures in labor history, rising from fruit and vegetable picker to co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America. A spiritual man, he employed the philosophy of non-violence to confound his opponents and assure eventual



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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success in his efforts to bring recognition, dignity and a better life to countless migrant and seasonal farm workers following years of impoverishment and discrimination. The late Senator Robert F. Kennedy described Chávez as "one of the heroic figures of our time."



Late Senator Edward M. Kennedy is inducted into the Hall of Honor. Source: DOL

The federal government also honored RFK's brother, the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Labor Secretary Perez recently inducted Senator Kennedy into the department's Hall of Honor. Calling Kennedy "passionate, principled, progressive, and pragmatic," the secretary said at the induction ceremony that the former senator changed the lives of millions of people he never met: "the workers who needed a raise, the children who needed a first-class education, the seniors seeking retirement with dignity, the immigrants striving for the American Dream, the LGBT Americans seeking equality, the men and women with disabilities demanding their civil rights, and so many more." You can add farmworkers to that list. No one in Congress has ever done more to help farmworkers than Senator Kennedy, and, for that, we applaud the department for recognizing him and his work. While it has been more than five and a half years since Senator Kennedy's death, to quote his most famous speech, "The work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die." Thank you, Senator Kennedy.



At the time of this writing, though, much of what Senator Kennedy fought for is under attack in Washington. The new Congress is forwarding budget resolutions proposing to gut so many of the critical programs that the least among us rely on to survive and improve their lives. Opponents say this budget approach is wrongheaded and mean-spirited, that it favors the rich at the expense of the poor and middle class, and that it takes away the tools that allow people to climb the ladder of opportunity. Instead, they argue, the nation should ensure that all people who work hard and play by the rules are rewarded with a fair share of a growing economic pie.

America's farmworkers are working harder than ever but are running in place or falling behind. Yet, through their labor are we provided the very food we eat. Through their sweat are we at ease to live healthier, more productive lives. Through their toil are we

able to be the great nation we are. In such a great nation, shouldn't the farmworker have access to the very bounty of their work? Shouldn't those digging in the fields have a shot at improving themselves, at lifting up their families, and at earning their own part of the American Dream? Aren't they deserving, too? I argue that they are. I hope you will, too.

"It's ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves."

--- César Chávez

For more important information on farmworkers, please see [www.afop.org](http://www.afop.org). For a description of the successful and high-performing migrant and seasonal farmworker job training program in which AFOP's members participate, please see [doleta.gov/Farmworker/html/](http://doleta.gov/Farmworker/html/) ♦



## AFOP's 2015 Farmworker Children Essay & Art Contests

This year's theme:

**"Planting Hope for Our Future Blooms"**

**Cash prizes** for winning entries

First prize winners also win a trip to AFOP's  
National Conference in **Las Vegas!**

**DEADLINE: AUGUST 3, 2015**

For full contest guidelines, visit:  
[www.afop.org/connect-with-cif](http://www.afop.org/connect-with-cif)



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AFOP's  
Children in the Fields  
Campaign



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of Teachers

# Department of Labor Taking Action for Child Tobacco Workers in the United States

Norma Flores López, Director, *Children in the Fields Campaign*, AFOP

**A**griculture is consistently ranked one of the most dangerous industries, along with construction and mining. However, under current U.S. labor law, children as young as 12 years old are allowed to work performing dangerous tasks in agriculture with few restrictions. Among the most dangerous tasks allowed by the government for young children is tobacco work. Through its *Children in the Fields Campaign*, AFOP has long sought to equalize protections under the law for children employed in agriculture, and in tobacco production, in particular. The *Children in the Fields Campaign* has been working tirelessly over the past year with advocates of the Child Labor Coalition to close the loopholes that put our children at risk in tobacco farms.

Human Rights Watch published a report in May 2014 in which 141 child tobacco workers from North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia were interviewed about their working conditions. According to their testimonies, children were exposed to high levels of pesticides and nicotine while working long hours for low wages. They described nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, dizziness, lightheadedness, headaches, and sleeplessness while working on tobacco farms – all symptoms consistent with acute nicotine poisoning.

Youth do not belong in tobacco farms where their health and future are placed in danger by adults. A child is especially vulnerable because their bodies and brains are still developing. Their testimonies reveal a harsh reality in which children will push themselves to their



Tobacco drying barn. Source: AFOP



limits and are willing to sacrifice anything for their families. Without the protections and support from the government, they are destined to a lifetime of living in poverty with mounting health issues developed from years of farm work.

As reported in the February issue of *Newsline*, the world's top tobacco companies formally acknowledged the issue and updated their child labor policies, including raising the minimum age limit to 16 years. These actions were voluntary, however, and not the result of a change in federal regulations, meaning U.S. law continues to leave young children across the country unprotected.

On March 26, *Children in the Fields Campaign* Director Norma Flores López participated in a high-level meeting at the U.S. Department of Labor with the Child Labor Coalition and representatives of the tobacco industry to talk about the steps that have been taken by the tobacco companies to address child labor in U.S. tobacco, and jointly encourage the Obama Administration to do more to protect child tobacco workers. Also in attendance was Cecilia Muñoz, Director of the Domestic Policy Council for the White House, and U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez.

At the meeting, Secretary Perez announced the release of a recommended practices bulletin through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health with guidance on reducing the hazards for tobacco workers. In the press release, Secretary Perez says, "The best way to protect people from on-the-job hazards is to prevent those hazards in the first place, and this bulletin outlines common sense steps to reduce nicotine exposure and prevent heat illness. It is important that we continue to work with a wide array of stakeholders in order to find solutions that protect all workers."

Along with the bulletin, the Department of Labor took further steps to address the health risks tobacco workers are exposed to in agriculture, especially children. Both OSHA and the federal Wage and Hour Division conducted outreach and education in

tobacco-producing states to highlight agricultural health and safety risks. These efforts include training sessions, grants, online and print publications, and an extensive outreach and compliance assistance program.

The Department of Labor is committed to working with the tobacco industry and advocates, including AFOP's *Children in the Fields Campaign*, in the coming months to provide farmworker children with alternatives to working in tobacco farms. In particular, the Department of Labor will be exploring ways to use workforce development tools to provide alternative education, training and employment options for children and their families in tobacco communities. Additionally, there will be discussions on better enforcement strategies and effective implementation of monitoring programs.

There is also growing momentum in Congress calling for stronger protections for child tobacco workers. In the coming days, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (IL) and U.S. Representative David Cicilline (RI) will be introducing companion bills (Children Don't Belong in Tobacco Fields Act) to prohibit children from work involving direct contact with tobacco, citing concerns about health risks. Congressman Cicilline, who introduced the bill last session, had also sent a letter with Congressman Matt Cartwright (PA) to urge the Department of Labor to implement stronger protections for child tobacco workers.

"Children working in tobacco are among the nation's most vulnerable and we must do more to protect them," they wrote.

Child labor advocates are hopeful that historic advances can be made to improve the lives of our farmworker children in the coming months. But in order to sustain the momentum, Congress and the Obama Administration need to receive support from our advocacy community. To become a part of the movement, or to learn more about the plight of farmworker children, please visit our website: **[afop.org/children-in-the-fields](http://afop.org/children-in-the-fields)**. ♦

# 2015 AFOP NATIONAL CONFERENCE September 22-24, 2015

## Enhancing Farmworker Success through Training, Education and Support

- DOL-sponsored training for NFJP staff
- Learn about WIOA
- Training and certifications
- Special guest speakers
- Explore the Las Vegas area
- Email [conference@afop.org](mailto:conference@afop.org) for info
- Health & Safety track
- WPS regulations and implementation

Tropicana Las Vegas, Nevada  
\$96 single/double plus applicable  
taxes + Conference Resort Fee

Registration: \$495  
Late reservation (August 1 or  
later): \$545

Reservations (800) 739-2222 or  
[resweb.passkey.com/go/AFOP15](http://resweb.passkey.com/go/AFOP15)

[Afop.org/about/events](http://Afop.org/about/events)

Room block closes Aug 28, 2015

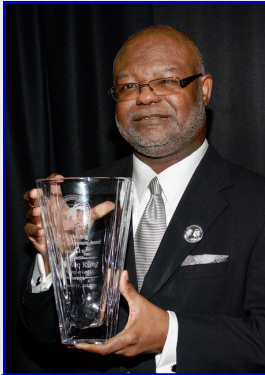
A daily Conference Resort Fee of \$9.99 plus the current Clark County tax of 12% will be charged. This fee includes high-speed wireless internet access in your guestroom; two (2) bottles of Tropicana water; unlimited fitness center access; 2-for-1 show tickets to Laugh Factory; 2-for-1 cocktails in the Tropicana Lounge from 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm; local calls; 800 calls; incoming faxes (up to 10 per day); outgoing faxes (up to 10 per day) and printing of boarding pass.



# Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus Honors Clevon Young

Bobette Davenport, Administrative Assistant, Arkansas Human Development Corporation

**C**levon Young, Executive Director of the Arkansas Human Development Corporation, received the Calvin King Economic Development Award at the Annual King-Kennedy Dinner on March 17, 2015.



Clevon Young receives leadership award. Source: Arkansas Human Development Corporation

Under the leadership of Mr. Young, the Arkansas Human Development Corporation continues to be a dynamic organization seeking to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities through collaborative initiatives. It produces services that effectively empower and enable needy families and communities to improve their standards of living. The organization is highly visible on a statewide basis and has a local presence in key areas of the state. It possesses the trust and confidence of its customers and partners, and is positioned to address the critical issues facing Arkansas.

"I am so honored to receive this special award," states Young. "I always pride myself in making a difference in my community and giving back to those in need. It is such a great feeling to be nominated for something of this stature and an even better feeling to actually receive the recognition."

The King-Kennedy Dinner was established by the Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus in 2005 to honor a person of color who demonstrates a commitment to economic empowerment in African American and poor communities in Arkansas.

This event is a fundraiser to provide scholarships to students in Arkansas pursuing careers in public service at historically black colleges and universities and to provide resources for the statewide organization to maintain operations.

The Arkansas Democratic Black Caucus promotes the election of black Americans to all levels of office within the Democratic Party as well as to public office. They also serve as a voice within the Democratic Party of Arkansas to address the special needs and concerns of black Democrats. ♦

## DOL Issues TEGL on PY15 Grant Plans

Please visit [wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=7007](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=7007) for the recently released TEGL 24-14: Program Year 2015 Planning Guidance for National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) Employment and Training and Housing Grantees publication.

The document provides instructions for NFJP grantees on preparing and submitting program plans for Program Year (PY) 2015, establishing PY 2015 performance goals, and conveys the grant fund allocations for the program year. Of note:

- Funding remained flat
- A quick turnaround—plans need to be submitted by May 15
- Performance goals are the same as PY14; if you wish to request renegotiation, you will need to contact your RPO by May 15

Be sure to check that your Indirect Cost Rate agreements are valid and up-to-date. ♦

# Health & Safety Programs: Call-To-Action

Melanie Forti, Director, Health & Safety Programs, AFOP

Sixteen years ago this March, Student Action with Farmworkers created the National Farmworker Awareness Week (NFAW) to bring attention to farmworker issues across our nation. As well as raising awareness of working conditions, NFAW honors the important contributions farmworkers make to our daily lives. Doing our part, the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs' (AFOP) Health & Safety Programs organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Long Sleeve Shirt Drive.



Ben Browkaw, founder of the Long Sleeve Shirt Drive. Source: AFOP

## History of AFOP's Health & Safety National Long Sleeve-Shirt Drive

In 1964, as part of his War on Poverty, President Johnson created the Commission on National Community Service that then evolved into the AmeriCorps Program. In 2010, AFOP member agency Telamon Corporation in Maryland hosted Ben Brokaw, an AmeriCorp staff. To support SAFE (Serving America's Farmworkers Everywhere), Ben suggested holding a long sleeve shirt drive for Farmworker Awareness Week and collected over 1,000 long sleeve shirts.

"Every year, thousands of seasonal and migrant agricultural workers go into pesticide-treated fields without long sleeved shirts and long pants," said Ben at the time. "This clothing is their first line of defense against pesticide exposure that can lead to cancer, birth defects, blindness, serious damage to vital organs and death."

During the creation of the Farmworker Occupational Health & Safety Training Program in 2013, AFOP formalized and incorporated the Long Sleeve Shirt Drive as part of our grant deliverables. Keeping to our mission, AFOP wanted to have a direct impact in the lives of farmworkers. This led to AFOP taking leadership of the logistics for NFAW and the national expansion of Ben's project.

With a collection of 6,044 shirts, the meager goal of 1,000 shirts for 2014 was surpassed by an unprecedented show of support. The in-kind value of those donations was estimated to be over \$31,000.



Results of AFOP's 2015 Long Sleeve Shirt Drive

2015 brought increased participation from AFOP's membership, partner organizations, universities, and volunteers. Over 100 drop-off sites were scattered in 21 states across the U.S. Once again, our goal was to collect 1,000 shirts, but we collected 7,504 worth an estimated \$38,000.



## Why Long Sleeve Shirts?

Farm work ranks as the third most dangerous job in the United States. The people who plant and harvest our fruits and vegetables suffer from the highest rate of toxic chemical injuries over any workers in the nation and have higher incidences of heat stress, dermatitis, urinary tract infections, parasitic infections, and tuberculosis than any other wage-earners.

Each year, an estimated one billion pounds of pesticides are applied to U.S. farms, forests, lawns and golf courses. Pesticide applicators, farmers and farmworkers, and communities near farms are often most at risk for pesticide exposure and heat related illnesses.

An estimated 70% of U.S. farmworkers have never received training on pesticide exposure or the risks associated with it.



Farmworkers receiving free long sleeve shirts in New York. Source: AFOP

## AFOP's Exposure

There are many benefits to participating in Health & Safety's Long Sleeve Shirt Drive.

- Collecting long sleeve shirts help keep farmworkers safer!
- 585 media published our press release with potential readership of 454 million.
- 105,068 headline impressions.
- 110,000 people read the release (on-line tracking).
- Mentioned on National Public Radio.

- ABC 30 interviewed Proteus, Inc. in California.
- NBC News featured AFOP and Long Sleeve Shirt Drive.
- Telemundo pursued an interview.
- A minimum of 10 newspapers wrote about AFOP and the Long Sleeve Shirt Drive.
- People engaging with our Facebook increased 59%.
- Engagement with Twitter increased 46%.

## Call-to-Action

This year we collected an amazing number of long sleeve shirts that will be distributed among the farmworker community. What will you do next year for NFAW? Please consider joining AFOP's Health & Safety Programs to be part of our national effort to help save the lives of farmworkers and their families.

By joining us in 2016, your organization may:

- Increase exposure in your community.
- Increase your number of partnerships.
- Develop community relationships.
- Increase/gain media exposure.
- Increase the number of farmworker lives you impact.

Make your commitment now to be part of next year's National Long Sleeve Shirt Drive by contacting Melanie Forti, Director of Health & Safety Programs, at [forti@afop.org](mailto:forti@afop.org). ♦



# NFJP: The One Thing that Shouldn't Go Missing in the Story of Food

By Katy Nelson, Director, Workforce Development, AFOP

I am currently blessed with a very inquisitive four-and-a-half-year-old spitfire full of questions about the world.

This year in his preschool class, the children spent the autumn learning about food and nutrition. They learned about healthy eating, and what kinds of foods are 'anytime foods' like fruits and vegetables and what kinds of foods should be eaten 'only once in a while' like cookies and cakes. (That lesson may have only slightly taken—"Once in a while means once every day after dinner, right?" he sweetly asks.) They visited supermarkets, gardens, and a farm, and they talked about how fruits and veggies are grown, where their cheeseburgers come from, and what goes into their bread – and what happens when that food goes into their bodies. They're developing critical thinking skills, ("Mommy, do you need glasses because you never ate enough carrots?") and asking great questions.



Child learning about food. Source: Steve Rietzke

Crucially, my son learned that farmers grow and pick our food. Then, trains and trucks bring the food to markets and grocers where we can buy it. While this simplified narrative about our food was mostly perfect for his

preschool class, we must make sure that our farmworkers aren't missing from the story we tell ourselves and our children. The vital role farmworkers play in our nation's harvests, nourishing our bodies and the economy, should be honored and celebrated. It is also critical that we don't allow these workers to be left in the dark. Without visibility, this community of people is vulnerable to exploitation that would never be allowed to stand in any other industry — there are children working in the field, there's exposure to dangerous pesticides and chemicals, and the workers all too often earn unfair wages. I am happy to report that my little guy does not leave this vital community out of the story anymore, and that I share with him how proud I am to work with AFOP and our member organizations who touch the lives of so many farmworkers.

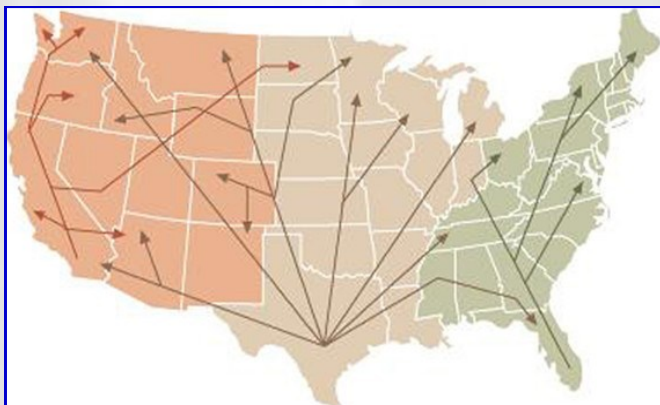
The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) shines an essential light on farmworkers in the United States. The amazing work that NFJP grantees do through community outreach and partnerships with growers and other employers ensures that communities of farmworkers across the country are not left behind or forgotten. NFJP grantees are leading the way for trainings on pesticide and workplace safety to improve conditions of people working in the fields. They are helping field workers upgrade their skills in the agriculture industry to become even more vital to the growers who rely on them. They are also helping farmworkers and their families gain the skills and training they need to be successful anywhere. NFJP is indispensable to community hubs that connect farmworkers to vital services. ♦



# Understanding National Farmworker Awareness Week

By Robert Crumley, Director of Communications, AFOP

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) is an association with 52 member agencies working with migrant and seasonal farmworkers who crisscross the U.S.



Flow of migrant farmworkers.  
Source: Iowaworkforce.org

During National Farmworker Awareness Week, March 22-28, AFOP staff brought to light information, and highlighted some of the various efforts we put forth to help improve the lives of people who plant, tend, and harvest the foods that feed the world.

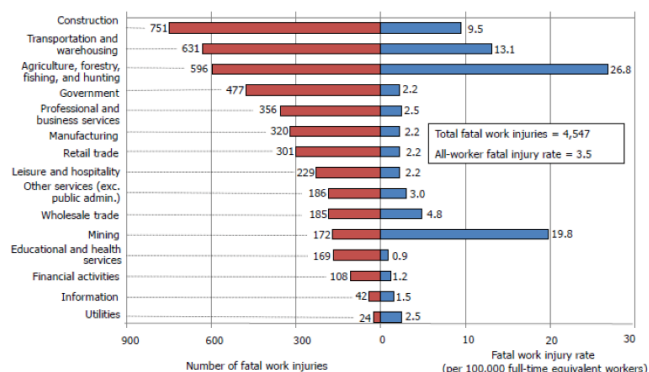
An estimated three million men, women, and children work crops in the United States, earning on average between \$7,000 and \$16,000 annually. Some of the workers are born-and-bred American citizens. Others have recently immigrated and received citizenship. Still others are victims of human trafficking or are not in the United States legally and are risking deportation, crime, exploitation, and various other forms of abuse resulting from living in the shadows.

For the 1.2 million (42%) migrant, and 1.8 million (58%) seasonal farmworkers, the toll is tremendous. For example, families that follow crops often remove their children from public school early in the spring and return them long after other students have returned. This results in many students taking roughly

three years to advance one grade, and a dropout rate higher than 60% for students grade one through nine. (Only 28% completed grades 10, 11, or 12.)

Even though agriculture is consistently rated in the top three most dangerous jobs, it is estimated that only 10% of employees receive employer-provided health insurance. The other 2.7 million farmworkers access clinics but face a myriad of barriers to social services or cost-effective health care. Frequent mobility, low literacy, language and cultural barriers, limited transportation, prejudice due to migratory lifestyle, lack of time-efficient healthcare delivery methods, and the medical referral system, among others, contribute to the overall poor healthcare received by farmworkers.

Chart 2. Number and rate of fatal occupational injuries, by industry sector, 2010\*



\*Data for 2010 are preliminary.  
NOTE: All industries shown are private with the exception of government, which includes fatalities to workers employed by governmental organizations regardless of industry. Fatal injury rates exclude workers under the age of 16 years, volunteers, and resident military. The number of fatal work injuries represents total published fatal injuries before the exclusions. For additional information on the fatal work injury rate methodology changes please see <https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/os/fatalinjuryrate.pdf>.  
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2011.

Department of Labor Statistics.

Source: [bls.gov/iif/oshnotice10.htm](https://bls.gov/iif/oshnotice10.htm)

Few consumers know that watermelons, cantaloupes, and honeydew are all flipped, rotated, and turned by hand in the fields so they mature into marketable produce with no flat or yellow areas; or that apple blossoms are thinned by hand to no more than three per cluster, then manually harvested by people on 30 foot ladders; or that strawberry harvesters spend 40-60 hours per week on their knees or hunched over picking fruit from the low-growing plants.

*Continued on page 12*



Source: Peter Eversoll, Human Rights Watch

AFOP's member agencies provide assistance and alternatives to help improve the lives of farmworkers.

The Association's Health & Safety Programs sponsored the Second Annual National Long Sleeve Shirt Drive to help diminish pesticide exposure and reduce heat stress in farmworkers. In excess of 7,000 shirts were donated and will be distributed directly to farmworkers during outreach and trainings; in addition, staff will discuss the dangers of pesticides and how they end up on clothes, skin, or even in homes and on children. Education on the importance of proper hydration and what farmworkers can do to prevent dehydration and heat stress will also occur.



Aurelio G., a middle school farmworker youth said, "The first time I worked in the fields, I remember it being extremely hot. The rows and rows of corn plants were taller than me. I stood at the beginning of the row and thought about how long it was going to take to get to the other side and then back again. I never made it to the end. Before I knew it, I collapsed in the middle of the field from dehydration. I woke up in the truck with my parents encouraging me drink water."

Our National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) is one of the highest performing job skills development programs funded through the Department of Labor (DOL). Staff work with eligible farmworkers to improve their skills whether that be an agricultural upgrade, welding, truck driving, certified nursing assistant, etc. NFJP staff partner with both employers and farmworkers to identify goals then remove as many obstacles to success as possible.

According to the DOL website, "In Program Year 2012 (the most recent statistics available), over 21,000 migrant or seasonal farmworkers received services through the NFJP. The program exceeded the performance targets for Program Year 2012 with the following outcomes: entered employment rate of 85.5%, employment retention rate of 83.1%, and a six month average earnings of \$10,533."

NFJP Exceeded  
Performance  
targets  
in 2012!

AFOP's *Children in the Fields Campaign* strives to change child labor laws in the United States. In a report done by Human Rights Watch, a 16-year-old child tobacco worker states, "I didn't feel well, but I still kept working. I started throwing up. I was throwing up for like 10 minutes, just what I ate. I took a break for a few hours and then I went back to work." He was suffering from Green Tobacco Sickness, an easily preventable illness.

Tobacco is water soluble and absorbed through the skin of workers who are topping the plants by hand, or climbing high beams to hang and dry the leaves. Green Tobacco Sickness, as described above, is a common illness of both young and old people who work the tobacco fields. The U.S. allows children as young as 12 to work with few restrictions to the number of hours or the types of tasks they are allowed to perform - including working with tobacco.





15-year-old girl works on a tobacco farm in the US, July 2013. Source: Human Rights Watch.

According to the North Carolina Farmworkers Project:

- **High rates of illness:** Farmworkers face higher incidences than other wage-earners of heat stress, dermatitis, urinary tract infections, parasitic infections, pesticide-related illnesses and tuberculosis. Eight out of ten North Carolina farmworkers surveyed had skin disease.
- **Limited access to care:** Barriers to receiving health care include lack of transportation, limited hours of clinic operation, cost of health care, limited interpreter services, and frequent relocation in order to seek farm work.
- **Hard work, low pay:** At 40¢ per bucket (5/8 bushel), a farmworker must pick and haul two tons of sweet potatoes to earn \$50.
- **Few wage protections:** Most farmworkers are exempt from minimum wage laws, and all are exempt from overtime provisions, despite long work days during peak harvest.
- **Few benefits:** Despite pervasive poverty, less than one percent of farmworkers collect general assistance welfare nationwide. Only ten percent of farmworkers report

having health insurance through an employer health plan. Fewer than four out of ten workers interviewed said that they would receive unemployment benefits if out of work.

- **Hunger:** Nearly five out of ten North Carolina farmworkers cannot afford enough food for themselves and their families.
- **Poor housing:** Research suggests that the health of farmworker families is at risk due to substandard housing. State regulations require only one wash tub for every 30 workers, one shower for every 10 workers, one toilet for every 15 workers, and do not require telephone access in case of emergency.
- **Overcrowding:** Seven out of ten farmworkers on the East Coast live in crowded conditions.
- **Pesticide exposure:** Up to 44% of farmworker families live in housing directly adjacent to agricultural fields, increasing likelihood of pesticide exposure. A 2006 study in Eastern North Carolina showed that most farmworker children are routinely exposed to pesticides.
- **Limited Workers' Compensation:** In North Carolina, very few farmworkers are covered by workers' compensation. Only farmers employing ten or more year-round workers or any H2A worker are required to carry workers' compensation insurance.

Although National Farmworker Awareness Week happens once a year, the struggle to improve one's life is ongoing and the work is tireless. Please consider expanding your support of farmworkers to all 52 weeks. ♦

## Success Stories

### Bolivian Teacher-to US Farmworker-to US Teacher

Submitted by: Heather Cruz, Pathstone



Candelaria and son  
Source: Pathstone Ohio

Candelaria (Candy) immigrated to the United States with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and over 15 years of teaching experience in Bolivia. When she arrived in the U.S., because of her language skills, she ended up working in agriculture. However, she never lost sight of her dream to continue her education and become a teacher again.

When Candy arrived at PathStone, staff immediately saw her motivation and potential for success. During her intake, her English speaking abilities were identified as a main inhibiting factor. Candy and her son were immediately referred to Pathstone's family strengthening program to help clear the path for success and a renewed life.

PathStone provided assistance in getting her Bolivian transcripts evaluated and translated by a professional, provided Job Readiness Training, Occupational Skills Training, and supportive services for gas/lunch, and car repairs so that she could continue working.

She eventually came out of her shell and began exhibiting confidence in her English language abilities.

After Candy's credentials were evaluated, she received U.S. college credit for the classes she had previously passed. This small step had huge consequences and allowed her to start work as a teacher's assistant.

Candy was pleased to be back in the classroom, but motivated to do more. She wanted to take online classes because it would allow her time to process the information she was learning in her second language. Staff thought that was a good idea and found someone to donate a computer and printer. In addition, PathStone navigated the academic system and worked with her through the first couple of courses until she became more confident in her abilities. She soon gained confidence and, as she had done in Bolivia, excelled at her studies. Candy soon earned her Early Childhood Credential, became a teacher, and doubled her income.

She continued her academics and again earned her Teaching Certificate and is now putting her education and abilities to good use.

After graduation, PathStone assisted her in applying for, and receiving, a job with Teaching & Mentoring Communities Migrant Head Start.

"I am grateful to PathStone, and National Farmworker Jobs Program, for the opportunity that I never thought was possible," says Candy. ♦



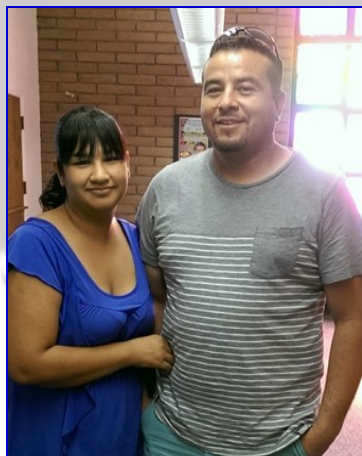
# Success Stories

## Path to Home Ownership

Submitted by: Martha Combs, PPEP

N

orberto Paco and his wife, Maria, visited PPEP's office in San Luis, Arizona last spring to see what services were available to help with housing and training opportunities. For many years, Maria



Maria and Norberto Paco.  
Source: PPEP

and Norberto's only income was from packing lettuce for local growers. The Pacos have three girls at home and reside in a three-bedroom house with Maria's parents. They were so crowded that their two youngest daughters slept in the living room.

Martha Combs, PPEP staff, identified the

Microbusiness and Housing Development Corporation and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) as great fits. After attending credit counseling, learning how to manage credit payments, and developing a financial plan, Maria paid down their debt. In November 2013 they applied for a USDA Rural Development/Section 502 direct loan that may help make their dreams of home ownership come true.

Due to the federal government's partial shutdown in 2013, their application evaluation was delayed six months. In the meantime, Norberto worked full time for a construction company but, due to language barriers, lost his job and returned to the fields where both he and Maria worked the long winter vegetable season. In the spring, Norberto was referred to NFJP where he began working on an employment plan with Letty Beltran, his Workforce Development Specialist.

Norberto was painfully aware that the \$16,000 he made in farm work the previous

year was about half as much as his family needed just to reach the poverty level. Having only a 9th grade education, Norberto fully realized his need to learn English and earn his GED in order to get work outside of agriculture and to improve the lives of his family and children. While continuing to wait for an answer on his housing application, Norberto entered PPEP's ESL Class.

Norberto demonstrates commitment and dedication to his studies, according to Adriana Valladares, his ESL Instructor. She says, "Norberto is a good student – he tries his best and works well with his classmates. He is working hard, both in class and at home."

In May 2014, the Paco family received their official USDA Rural Development award letter stating that they would receive a \$143,000 loan with a 3.75% interest rate. With the resources, Norberto and Maria decided to build a new home. In June 2014, in collaboration with the NFJP Housing Program staff, they met with five different local building contractors to discuss home sites and design options.

Samana Home Builders who offered the best option in their desired location won the bid. Maria and Norberto's new home will be over 1,400 square feet, have four bedrooms and two baths - enough room for the family of five to live comfortably. Currently, they are waiting for the lot purchase agreement to be signed so the construction of their brand new home in the City of San Luis, Arizona can begin.

Norberto says, "We are grateful to PPEP for the amazing opportunity to own our very first home. And, at the same time, I am learning English, which is a necessity. Little by little, I will master it." Those of us at PPEP who know Norberto are sure that he will! ♦

## 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