



February 2015

## Washington Newsline

### AFOP Welcomes the New 114<sup>th</sup> Congress

Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

After a convincing win in November federal elections, the Republicans' Party of Lincoln now controls both chambers of the United States Congress. Pledging to "reach across the aisle" and find areas "of common understanding and agreement," the new Republican majority will embark on an agenda significantly different from that of Democrats and their party leader, President Barack Obama.



Source: Politico.com

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Despite the good intentions many Republicans have heading into the new Congress, those lawmakers will find these intentions sorely tested as they turn to actual legislating in the days and weeks ahead.

Here are where things stand, at the time of this writing, in Congress and with AFOP as we work to be ready for the new congressional term.

*New Congress Sits; Boehner Quells Rebellion and Secures Third Term as House Speaker*

The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress convened January 6, installing Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) as the new Senate Majority Leader and Representative John Boehner (R-Ohio) as the Speaker of the House. Before re-assuming the

gavel, however, Speaker Boehner had to fight back a rebellion from the more conservative elements of the House Republican caucus who are unhappy with his tenure as the top Republican in the House. Boehner immediately stripped two opponents of their Republican seats on the powerful Rules Committee, but is reportedly rethinking that move in the hopes of bringing his detractors back into the fold.



Source: Amanpour.blogs.cnn.com

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### *House Will Pass Bill to Undo President's Executive Action on Immigration Relief*

House leadership plans to soon move legislation to override President Obama's executive actions to protect millions of undocumented immigrants from deportations. That move is likely to be paired with spending for the Department of Homeland Security, which received only short-term funding under the December "CRomnibus." Now in total control of Congress, Republican lawmakers are following through on their promise last year to strike back against the president's action on immigration. The president would likely veto the measure should the Senate follow suit and pass the measure.

### *President Proposes Two Years of Free Community College*

President Obama unveiled a plan to make two years of community college free, but the cost

of the proposal – other than "significant" – has not yet been made public. According to the White House, if all 50 states participate, the proposal could benefit nine million students each year and save them an average of \$3,800 in tuition. Federal funding would cover three-quarters of the average cost of community college, and the president is asking states to pick up the rest of the tab – assuming Congress agrees to the plan in the first place.

### *Budget Submission February 2*

On February 2 the president plans to release his budget request for the next fiscal year, one day before the AFOP mini-conference and board meeting. If he does so, he would meet the statutory deadline for this submission for the first time since 2010. An Office of Management and Budget (OMB) spokesperson said the White House looks forward to returning to regular order in the annual budget process.

### *AFOP Co-Signs Letter by the Coalition to Invest in America's Workforce (CIAW) to White House in Support of Workforce Development and WIOA Implementation Funding*

AFOP joined CIAW in asking the White House's OMB to ensure that the administration's fiscal year 2016 budget proposes adequate investments in job training and adult education programs, including those under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Opportunity Act). The letter also stressed the need for sufficient support for the Pell Grant program, "so that U.S. workers and employers may access the skills they need to build and grow our economy." Specifically, the letter requests that the nation: (1) reinvest in the skills of America's workforce, including fully funding the Opportunity Act; (2) fully restore "ability-to-benefit" under the Pell grant program; (3) invest in proven and promising job-driven strategies; and (4) provide necessary funding to implement the Opportunity Act. The letter closes by saying it is critical that we continue to invest in the skills of our nation's workforce so that workers



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can support themselves and their families, and that employers have access to the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. "We urge the Administration to support the workforce development system with the resources necessary to continue to meet this vital need."

*AFOP Also Co-Signs NDD United Letter Defending Non-Defense Discretionary Funding to Congress*

Stating that the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 provides only partial, temporary relief from sequestration, the NDD United letter urges congress to act quickly to stop sequestration from taking effect in fiscal year 2016, and to replace it with a balanced approach to deficit reduction. In making that case, the letter states that: (1) non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs have already been cut too much; (2) NDD cuts have real consequences;

and (3) NDD programs make America strong. NDD United plans to send the letter



AFOP Mini-Conference, February 3-5 at The Liaison Capitol Hill. See AFOP.org for additional details.

*Looking Ahead to AFOP Mini-Conference and Board Meeting*

AFOP members will come to Washington, D.C. February 3-5 for a board meeting and high-level training to be provided in conjunction with the United States Department of Labor and AFOP professional staff. Training will include topics such as Opportunity Act implementation; the special needs of, and challenges in adequately serving farmworker women; jobs-driven training and workforce system partnerships; as well as permanent and emergency farmworker housing. AFOP is excited



*lawmakers in mid-January. AFOP Seeks to Participate in the 2015 Combined Federal Campaign*

AFOP has asked the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to allow AFOP to participate in the 2015 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The CFC helps the nation's federal employees make charitable contributions by identifying and vetting worthy causes. AFOP should know by June if OPM has approved its request.



to have its directors and senior staff

# New Year's Resolution: Let's Quit Child Labor in Tobacco

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

Quitting smoking is one of the most common New Year's resolutions for Americans. According to the Center for Disease Control, smoking is the number one cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, and nearly seven of 10 current U.S. smokers want to quit the dangerous habit.

Many Americans do not realize that smokers are not the only ones put at risk by tobacco. Current U.S. child labor law allows children as young as 12 years old to work on tobacco farms, where they are exposed to high levels of dangerous chemicals and nicotine poisoning with few protections. At 16, child farmworkers can do jobs deemed hazardous by the United States Department of Labor. Children in all other sectors must be 18 to do hazardous work. Through its *Children in the Fields Campaign*, the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) has long sought to equalize protections under the law for children employed in agriculture, and in tobacco production, in particular.

In May 2014, Human Rights Watch published the report, "Tobacco's Hidden Children." The 138-page report documents conditions for children working on tobacco farms in four states where 90 percent of US tobacco is grown: North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Children reported vomiting, nausea, headaches, and dizziness

while working on tobacco farms, all symptoms consistent with acute nicotine poisoning. Many also said they worked long hours without overtime pay, often in extreme heat without shade or sufficient breaks, and wore no or inadequate, protective gear.



Following this critical report, the tobacco industry voluntarily restricted child labor on tobacco farms. In July 2014, the Council for Burley Tobacco, which represents over 5,000 tobacco growers across four states, approved a resolution adopting the position that "workers under 16 years old should not be employed in tobacco production not only in the U.S. but worldwide."

A few months later, the Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina, which represents 2,300 tobacco growers in North Carolina and neighboring states, showed their support for raising the age limit. On October 1, 2014, the association issued a policy stating that it "does not condone the use of child labor" and that children under 16 should not be hired to work on tobacco farms, even with parental permission.

The growing support among tobacco growers for the elimination of child labor in their industry became the catalyst for broader policy changes at a larger scale. In November 2014, Philip Morris International (PMI) announced a new leaf purchasing policy. Universal and Alliance One, PMI's main tobacco leaf suppliers, agreed to apply PMI's detailed child labor policy — currently the most robust in the industry — to all of the tobacco growers in their supply chains worldwide. The new purchasing model will require more tobacco companies to ban children under 18 from performing some of the most hazardous tasks, such as pulling the tops off tobacco plants harvesting, working at heights to dry leaves, handling pesticides, or working with sharp tools.

"While we are changing our approach to buying tobacco in the U.S., PMI's commitment to improving farm labor conditions on the farms from which we source tobacco has not changed. We require our suppliers to adhere to our practices, principles and standards,





Child working on an American tobacco farm. *Source: Human Rights Watch*

including our leading Agricultural Labor Practices (ALP) program.... With these new U.S. supply agreements, even more U.S. tobacco growers will come under PMI's ALP standards," said Nicolas Denis, Vice-President Leaf, PMI.

The month of December ushered in major changes in the child labor policies among the other tobacco company giants. Members of the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation (ECLT) — which include seven of the world's 10 largest tobacco companies — issued a joint pledge on December 10, 2014, to eliminate child labor in their supply chains in accordance with international labor law, adopt due diligence measures, and cooperate in remedial processes. The next day, December 11, 2014, the Altria Group — parent to three U.S. tobacco companies, including Philip Morris USA, the largest cigarette company in the U.S. — announced that it will ban the hiring of children under 16 to work on tobacco farms in its supply chain beginning in 2015. Following suit, on December 12, 2014, Reynolds

American, parent company of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company (the second-largest US tobacco company), confirmed that its 2015 contracts with growers will prohibit the employment of children under age 16, and require safety training and protective equipment for children age 16 and 17.

These new industry policies are not backed by U.S. law, which continues to leave our children unprotected. In the last Congress, U.S. Representative David Cicilline (D-RI) introduced a bill to amend the current child labor law to prohibit children from working in tobacco (H.R. 5327); however, with only nine co-sponsors, the bill did not make much progress through Congress. Similar bills are expected to be introduced in the new Congress, including the Children's Act for Responsible Employment (CARE Act) — a bill that would remove exemptions for child labor in all agricultural sectors — authored by U.S. Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA).

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Congress and President Obama have the responsibility to ensure all children have a healthy childhood and access to quality educational opportunities — both now robbed from child tobacco workers. While tobacco companies have taken steps in the right direction, U.S. child labor laws continue to fall short of protecting farmworker children from

hazardous work. Legislative and regulatory backing is needed to ensure compliance to the tobacco companies' new policies and protections for workers.

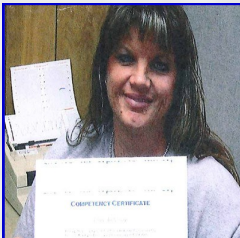
Let's make 2015 the year the United States kicks the habit and quits the use of child labor on American tobacco farms. ♦

## Highlighted Success Story: From \$6 per hour to \$500,000

Submitted by: ORO Development Corporation, OK

**M**rs. Anita Clinesmith was only making \$6.00 per hour doing farm work. One life-changing day she met Gene Burden, owner of a trucking company. He told her that if she would get her Commercial Driver's License (CDL), he would hire her. That is when she took control over her life and traded farmworking for truck driving.

She found a school in Ft. Cobb, Oklahoma that told her about the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). On September 15, 2010, Mrs. Clinesmith called the Clinton ORO office and inquired about services she might be qualified to receive. When asked about her skills, she hesitantly replied, "farm work is all I can do."



Mrs Clinesmith with CDL.  
Source: Mrs Clinesmith

On October 25, 2010, she was accepted into the CDL training program. Later, while driving to Ft. Cobb for school, she was in an accident, rushed to the hospital, had surgery, and had to put further training on hold. Clinesmith's case manager, Olivia Tovar, stayed in touch with her and the school while she was incapacitated. When asked if she planned on completing her schooling, Mrs. Clinesmith adamantly stated, "I am getting better, and I am finishing my training so I can take care of my children."

Mrs. Clinesmith completed her truck driving training course in 2011. As promised, Gene Burden then offered her a full-time,

permanent job. Clinesmith stated, "I am extremely happy someone told me about NFJP. Thanks to ORO, I went from making \$6.00 per hour to earning \$25.00 driving a big truck."

She stayed with Gene Burden Trucking for 1.5 years. Since 2011, she and her new husband



have been extremely busy building their own trucking business. As of February, 2015, she and her

husband manage their own truck driving business that consists of two trucks, one truck driving employee, a regular trailer, and a specialized trailer used for hauling frac sand

(crush-resistant sand of a specific particle size that is used by the petroleum industry in the hydraulic fracturing process).



She reports spending most of her time running the operation from her office. A & W Trucking reported making \$500,000 in 2014.

Anita said, "I am so glad that I called ORO and talked to Olivia, it changed my life!" ♦

# Meet the New NFJP Appropriations Chairmen

Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

Both the House and Senate Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS)-Education Appropriations Subcommittees will see new leadership in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. Of critical importance to AFOP, these subcommittees create the legislation each year that funds the United States Department of Labor and its many programs, including the National Farmworker Jobs Program. The following lawmakers now head that important panel:



United States Representative  
Tom Cole (R-Oklahoma-4)  
Source: cole.house.gov

Congressman Cole wields the gavel of the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee in Congress. In his seventh term in Congress, Chairman Cole has served on the House Appropriations Committee since 2009.

He also sits on the House Budget Committee in one of three seats reserved for appropriators, and serves on the House Rules Committee.

A former college instructor in history and politics, Chairman Cole holds a B.A. from Grinnell College, an M.A. from Yale University and a Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma. Mr. Cole has been a Thomas Watson Fellow and a Fulbright Fellow at the University of London. He serves on the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents, as well as the national board of the Fulbright Association. He is also a member of the Congressional Advisory Board to the Aspen Institute.

Chairman Cole is a fifth generation Oklahoman and an enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation. He is currently one of the only Native Americans serving in Congress.

Appropriations Committee Democrats have not yet announced who will serve as their House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations ranking minority member.



United States Senator  
Roy Blunt (R-Missouri)  
Source: wikipedia.org

Senator Roy Blunt has assumed leadership of the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Elected to the United States Senate in 2010, the former congressman also serves on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, and the Senate Rules Committee.

Less than one year after he was sworn into the Senate, Chairman Blunt was chosen by his colleagues to serve as a member of the Senate leadership as the vice chairman of the Senate Republican Conference. Mr. Blunt also serves as a member of the Senate Republican Whip team.

From 1996 to 2008, Mr. Blunt served seven terms in the United States House of Representatives, serving southwest Missouri. During that time, he served as House Majority Whip, and Republican Whip three times.

Before serving in Congress, he was a history teacher, a county official, and in 1984 became the first Republican in more than 50 years to be elected as Missouri's Secretary of State. Senator Blunt also served four years as the president of his *alma mater*, Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. He is also a member of the Smithsonian Council for American Art, and is a trustee of the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Senator Patty Murray (D-Washington) will serve as the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee's top Democrat. Senator Murray was a principal author of last year's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and is a longtime supporter of robust funding for the National Farmworker Jobs Program. ♦



# OUTREACH: Connecting With the Farmworker Community through Health & Safety Education

Melanie Forti, Director, Health & Safety Programs, AFOP

Since 1995, AFOP's Health & Safety Program has demonstrated its ability and commitment to merge and integrate itself within the farmworker community. Easy task? No. Learning how to connect with a farmworker community takes time, preparation and plenty of dedication.

Farmworkers may be slow to trust someone from outside of their community. This may be due to the exploitation they have experienced, or they may assume it might be Immigration and they fear for their legal status.

To gain trust of the farmworker community, especially leaders within the community, one must first know and understand the targeted community. For example: What is their origin? Main language? Level of education? Average age? Are they migrants or seasonal workers? These answers should be known prior to going into the field so that one has some credibility and can communicate effectively.

Once you have the basic knowledge of who the farmworkers in your area are, one should try to learn the work terminologies, colloquialisms and slang terms farmworkers use on a daily basis. For example, the Spanish translation of "fields" is "campo," but farmworkers normally use the Spanglish word "fil." Taking small steps to learn about the people in the farmworker community is essential to effective communication and interaction with them.

After getting to know the culture of the people you are trying to reach, one should put together an outreach plan by setting goals and objectives that are aligned with one's organization or partnerships mission. Be cognizant to locate partners that will not duplicate work, but will instead ease the work load and spread responsibility.

When beginning to implement your outreach plan, the most vital concept to keep in mind is flexibility. Remember to always maintain the essence of your plan, regardless of how much it may change through the process. Once the plan is in action, following up is imperative to success. If there is no follow through, you lose credibility, trust, and the value of all the hard work invested at the beginning.

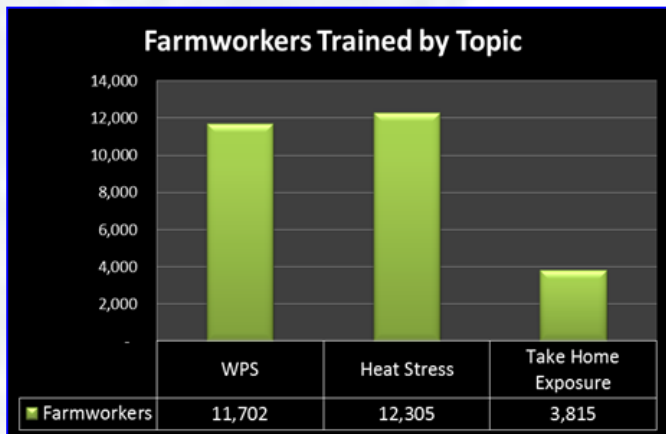
In 2013, AFOP's Health & Safety Program began a national effort called the *Farmworker Health & Safety Training Program*. AFOP now provides pesticide safety and heat prevention education directly to the farmworker community. To ensure transfer of knowledge and behavior change, highly customized, multilingual, interactive training techniques are used for workers and employers. Again, follow-up is used to track the impact of the trainings for our use, and that of our funders.

While developing this program, AFOP worked to ensure that an outreach component was included. To that end, during our train-the-trainer workshops, we teach participants the importance of having more than a superficial understanding of their community and where the farmworkers gather outside of work. Additionally, we invest time and effort in teaching them how to develop a customized and efficient plan to maximize their reach. This includes understanding the program goals and expectations, as well as their organization's mission in order to seamlessly merge them together.

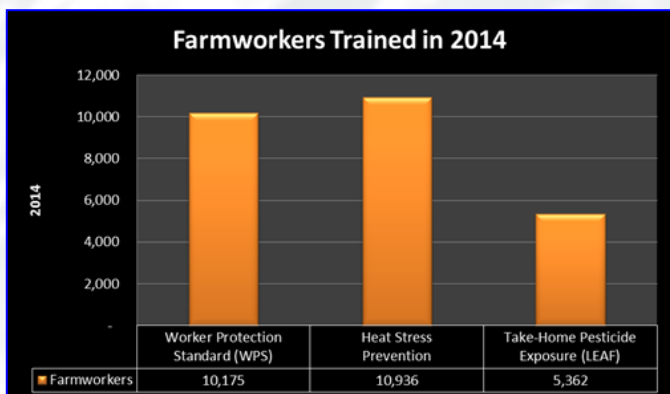
Outreach is one of the most important components of the *Farmworker Health & Safety Training Program*. As part of its success, trainers must establish an effective outreach plan in order to communicate efficiently with the farmworker community, as well as with agricultural growers, contractors, and crew leaders. As a result, we are proud to announce that during our first year, 12 of



AFOP's member organizations participated in this program and affected a total of 27,822 farmworkers and 712 employers.



After the success of the first year, we expanded our reach from 12 of AFOP's participating agencies in 2013, to 16 in 2014. Our network of trainers also grew from 99 to 136. During 2014, we had an impact on 26,468 farmworkers and 487 employers.



In 2015, with participation of 28 AFOP member organizations, we project increasing our trainers to 161, affecting 30,000 farmworkers.

Competent outreach is an effective tool in marketing your services and trainings to a targeted community or audience.

#### Tips for your own outreach plan:

- ◆ Meet people where they are.
- ◆ Be respectful.
- ◆ Listen to your community.
- ◆ Build trust and relationships.

- ◆ Get the word out in a non-stigmatizing manner.
- ◆ Offer service and information in a variety of locations (including home visits) and non-traditional times (especially after work hours).
- ◆ Make written information friendly and easy to understand.
- ◆ Provide information in the primary language of those who will use the service.
- ◆ Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up!

#### Principles of an Effective Outreach Plan:

- ◆ Clearly identify the people you are trying to reach.
- ◆ One size does not fit all - Tailor your outreach strategy, message and your materials according to your target audience.
- ◆ Think from the client/community perspective and include information about your services that may be helpful to hear/read.
- ◆ Enlist key community leaders to be your ambassadors.
- ◆ Outreach = Material + Personal Contact in multiple ways and multiple times.
- ◆ Build trust and become a familiar face.
- ◆ Be a conversationalist, not a preacher.
- ◆ Create a system and schedule for providing outreach.
- ◆ Take your outreach to social media/social network.
- ◆ Track who is coming and adjust your strategy as needed.
- ◆ Consider where you have done outreach and think about who is missing.

For information on receiving an intensive training on Outreach, or to learn more about AFOP's *Farmworker Health & Safety Training Program* visit: <http://afop.org/health-safety/hs-training-program/> or contact Melanie Forti, Director of Health & Safety Programs, at [forti@afop.org](mailto:forti@afop.org) ◆

## NFJP: Serving Women

By Katy Nelson, Director, Workforce Development, AFOP

In addition to the backbreaking labor, poverty wages, and unsafe conditions faced by farmworkers everywhere, many women who work in the fields face additional danger and hardships. It is not unusual for farmworker women to face sexual harassment, coercion, and assault; fears over loss of wages, or even deportation, often keep victims silent.

According to the Farmworker Health & Safety Training Program, pesticide exposure during pregnancy may lead to miscarriages, preterm births, low birth weight, birth defects, or learning problems in children. Many farmworkers are unaware of the risks associated with handling pesticides and other potentially hazardous materials, often learning how to protect themselves and their families from the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees that provide health and safety training.

From July 2013 to June 2014, NFJP grantees provided employment and training services to 2,987 women. More than 85% of those women were placed in new jobs! Among the women served, NFJP grantees reported an average earnings gain of more than \$6,800. (Earnings gains for NFJP participants are computed by calculating the difference between the earnings in the six months prior to enrollment, to the earnings of participants in the second and third quarter after exiting the program.)

In his January 20<sup>th</sup> State of the Union Address, President Obama said, "Today, women make up about half our workforce. But they still make 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is wrong, and in 2014, it's an embarrassment."

That is an average that includes all American women. The picture painted for Hispanic women is even more shocking. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2013, Hispanic women earned approximately 61 cents for every \$1.00 earned by their white male counterparts. The majority of farmworkers in the United States are Hispanic or Latino, and, NFJP grantees are uniquely positioned to provide the counseling, skills training, and mentoring to women who have to leap the largest wage gap.

NFJP grantees help women like Anita Clinesmith, whose life was changed when she chose to enter the decidedly male dominated field of commercial truck driving. With the training and support she received from ORO, the NFJP grantee in Oklahoma, Anita raised her income from \$6 per hour to an annual income of \$500,000. For more on her story, please see page 6.

Below are two states with excellent outcomes for women in 2013:

Where? *Pennsylvania*

Who? *PathStone*

Number of Women Exiting Employment and Training Program: 50

Entered Employment Rate: 98%

Employment Retention Rate: 89.7%

Average 6-month Earnings<sup>ii</sup>: \$13,015

Where? *North Dakota*

Who? *Motivation, Education & Training*

Number of Women Exiting Employment and Training Program: 37

Entered Employment Rate<sup>i</sup>: 100%

Employment Retention Rate<sup>ii</sup>: 93.9

Average 6-month Earnings<sup>ii</sup>: \$13,332

<sup>i</sup> Exiters between July 2013 and June 2014

<sup>ii</sup> Exiters between January 2013 and December 2013





# Success Stories

## Welding his Way to the Top

Submitted by: UMOS



Javier Garcia, Jr.  
Source: UMOS

Javier Garcia, Jr. is the oldest of four children born to a migrant farmworker family whose home base is in Texas. He grew up traveling every summer to other states in search of work with his parents, but not this year. This year, he began work at Gulf Copper as a professional welder.

In June 2013, the Garcia family came to our office in Kennett, MO requesting assistance for lodging. An intake was completed and services were provided through the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). During the process of completing the intake, a more detailed overview of the program was given to the family. This is when Javier revealed to the case manager that he had applied, and been accepted, to attend the Tulsa Welding School and was in need of tuition assistance.

Javier just turned 18 years old and graduated from high school and, therefore, did not have the agricultural income to qualify for the NFJP program. After returning to the fields and working several weeks chopping cotton in the hot summer sun of Southeast Missouri, he earned enough income to qualify as a first time migrant worker. Upon Javier's return, he was immediately enrolled into the program and completed an employment development plan. In the meantime, the case manager contacted the welding school to verify that they were WIA certified and would accept our voucher. Upon completion and verifications of paperwork, the state director approved tuition assistance for vocational school.

Javier began in late July and obtained excellent grades while keeping a part-time job to help with personal expenses. During the seven month course, his case manager

periodically followed up to monitor attendance, grades, and progress. Javier did a fantastic job in all his classes, graduated on February 21, 2014 and received a professional welder diploma. His certifications include Structural Welding I and II, MIG & Fluxcore Welding, Basic and Advance Pipe Welding and H.F. TIG Pipeline Welding.



Soon after graduation Javier returned to his home base in Texas and began searching for employment. Javier knew that getting hired without any experience would be challenging, but with the assistance of his case manager he was confident. He heard about an opening in the Galveston, Texas area and immediately applied.

Within days he received an interview call from Gulf Copper. As a major company that strives to be the preferred provider of marine and industrial fabrication and repair in the market, they hire talented people with skills in various trades including welders, fitters, machinists, electricians and laborers.

Javier successfully obtained the job at Gulf Copper as Plate Welder, 1st Class. He started work on May 12, 2014 with a starting pay of \$20 an hour and working an average of 50 hours per week. Javier is on his 210<sup>th</sup> follow-up and continues to happily enjoy his new career.



Javier and his parents state they are sincerely grateful to his case manager and UMOS for their support through the National Farmworker Jobs Program. ♦

## Success Stories

### From Receiving Assistance to Giving Assistance

Submitted by: HELP-New Mexico, Inc.

V

eronica Ortiz was born in Deming, New Mexico and spent a few years as a young child in Palomas, Mexico.

Her family returned to the U.S. and after a couple of years at Deming High School, she



Veronica Ortiz  
Photo by: HELP-New Mexico, Inc.

chose to drop out and begin her adult life. Veronica later married and had two children. Years later her world was shattered by tragedy when her husband suddenly died, leaving her to support and raise their two children as a single parent.

She turned to agriculture and supported her family by working the harvest fields in Columbus and Deming, New Mexico. This is where she looked back and realized that she needed to return to school and obtain her GED. With her GED now in hand, she continued picking chilis and earning 60-62 cents per every five gallons picked. With a new sense of pride, she acknowledged that having her GED and continuing to work in the scorching sun while harvesting crops was not enough to make ends meet, or to satisfy her desire for learning. She sought other small jobs to support her family and looked for opportunities that might open other avenues.

Veronica's children attended HELP-New Mexico's Head Start Center where parental involvement is instrumental. Despite her limited time, she saw this as an opportunity for learning and decided to volunteer.

As a volunteer for the Head Start Center, Veronica thrived. She enjoyed the environment, work, children, parents, and community, and yearned to be even more engaged and connected. It was this opportunity

that ignited a burning desire to further her education and seek better employment.

One of the center employees referred her to HELP-New Mexico's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) to assist her with gaining training and experience. With her farmworker history, Veronica was interviewed and accepted into the NFJP. She expressed that she believed her calling in life was to serve her community, to help the less fortunate and to give them a glimmer of hope. After additional discussion, Veronica was determined to be a perfect candidate for the Work Experience Program. Through HELP-New Mexico's NFJP, she experienced serving her community as a Work Experience participant at City Hall in Columbus, NM.

Currently, she resides in Phoenix, Arizona where she is employed by the Department of Economic Security as a Program Service Evaluator earning \$13.50 an hour. She is also attending classes at a post-secondary institution.

"I am extremely grateful to HELP-NM for the wonderful opportunity that allowed me to gain experience and confidence in myself. I now interview and determine eligibility for clients who are applying for food stamps, cash assistance, and other benefits - something I remember seeking for the sake of my own family. It is a joy to see the benefits that would help carry us through the year, helping another family instead."

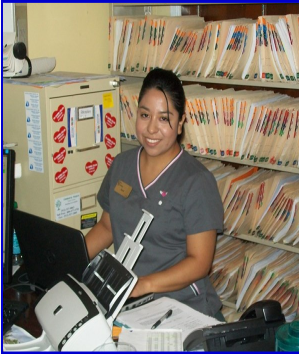
"There is stability in my life and thanks to HELP-New Mexico for helping me become self-sufficient and for giving me the opportunity to strengthen and better support my family. I attribute my beautiful home and successes to the rough times I experienced, and HELP-NM who was with me through them. ♦



## Success Stories

### From Exhaustion in Fields, to Time with Family

Submitted by: Telamon



Sarai Bernardino at her new job  
Source: Telamon

**H**er parents have been seasonal farmworkers for many years so Sarai Bernardino is no stranger to the fields or the hardships they can bring. Upon graduating high school, she was unsure of her future but did know she did not want to spend her life working the fields.

She was raising a toddler on her own, working in the fields, and was exhausted. She came to the realization that she could no longer continue on the path she was on and wanted to stop working in the fields.

After unsuccessfully searching for a job outside of farm work, she eventually decided to return to agriculture and work for Sunbelt Greenhouses Inc. She was hired as a grower, earning a total of \$1,953 from January 2013 to March 2013. Growing consisted of watering flower and vegetable plants and standing on your feet for many hours inside the hot greenhouses. Some evenings when she returned home she would be so tired that she didn't have time or energy to give her son. Sarai knew she had to learn the skills of a new occupation and find a different type of employment so that she could support her family and still have energy left at the end of the day.

Sarai wanted to work in the medical field but saw many road blocks. Word of mouth led her to understand that Telamon could possibly help, so she proudly walked into our offices and inquired about services. After determining her eligibility, she was successfully enrolled into the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP).

Sarai's barriers to employment included a lack of work history, being single with a dependent, and long-term agricultural work history. Sarai shared with her workforce development specialist (WDS) of her short-term goal: obtaining additional education to make her more marketable. She expressed her interest in the medical field and it was decided she would be an excellent candidate to attend Patient Care Technician (PCT) training. After a short eight weeks of training, Sarai earned her state certification.

Together, we created her resume with Patient Care Technician in mind with hopes of finding employment. After job searching for almost two months together, Sarai finally found full-time employment as a Medical Assistant with Dr. Darrel Collins Cardiology office.

She now earns \$12.00 an hour and works 40 hours a week - leaving plenty of time to spend with her son. This is in stark contrast to the \$8.25/hour earned working in a greenhouse. Sarai stated that she uses her PCT training to carry out job responsibilities such as venipuncture procedures.

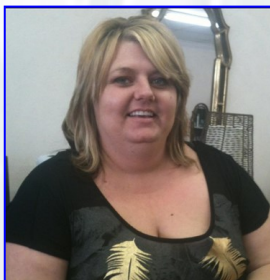
"I can finally sleep at night knowing I will be able to provide a better future for my son. I want to thank Telamon and my WDS, Gabby, for helping me accomplish my dream" states Sarai. ♦



## Success Stories

### Business Owner

Submitted by: Ruthie Wright



Ruthie in her salon  
Source:  
Ruthie Wright

**I**n the fall of 2011 I was struggling financially and working on a farm. My husband and I were on the verge of eviction, buying groceries was a challenge, and we had no extra money. I had always wanted to earn my cosmetology instructor license and teach. Although

I had no idea how I was going to make it happen, now seemed like the time to chase my dream. This is when I met Celso, an ORO case worker who was at the school I wanted to attend.

Through the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), ORO helped pay my tuition and gas to and from school, caught us up on rent, bought some groceries, and helped purchase uniforms

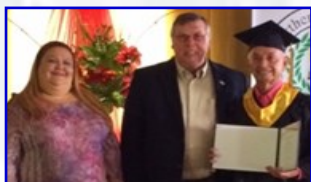
for school. Everything ORO helped with made it easier for me to pursue my education.

After graduation, I was employed at the same school I attended. I taught there for 1 ½ years and continued learning cosmetology and how to run a business. In January 2013, I opened my own salon. To support my fledgling business, I continued teaching while I built a steady clientele. August 15, 2013, I transitioned into working full-time at my shop. In February 2014, I expanded my business to meet demand. I now have, on average, 100 clients a month. My salon is the only one within 20 miles and benefits both me and my community.

My short-term goals are to add more services and have employees. My long-term goal is to open my own cosmetology school. I truly believe that if I had not been introduced to the ORO program, I may not have been successful. ♦

### Young at Heart at 77

Submitted by: Pathstone



Galo at graduation  
Source: Telamon

**E**very once in a while there is a person who truly touches lives: Galo Rios Colón is one of those people.

Laid off from farmwork, at 77 he immediately began his quest to make his new dreams come true. One of those dreams was to earn his high school diploma, and he came to our office seeking assistance in achieving that goal. Colón had a great attitude towards life as well as a contagious happiness that spread to other participants and the staff of Pathstone.

We developed his client transition plan and began making his goal a reality. We started with English as a Second Language, and then provided job readiness training to help develop marketable skills. A testament to Galo's

commitment was his perfect attendance record. As a benefit to both Pathstone and our other clients, he mentored the younger participants in life lessons, and they responded with a new-found zest for their own goals.

Once Galo completed his trainings, we enrolled him in a GED program at Northern Research and Training Institute. Mr. Colón continued to be enthusiastic and again completed all modules and classes with a perfect attendance. After 77 years, and with great scores for his work, Galo received his high school diploma and graduated on December 15, 2014.

Mr. Colón is a great example of what anyone can achieve. With a serious commitment and a dream, you can attain your goals. It was truly an honor to provide assistance to Galo and all the staff of Pathstone wish him the best. ♦





Watch for details regarding the  
2015 AFOP National Conference in  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
September 22-24, 2015



## 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