



June 2012

## Washington Newsline

### Conversations from America's Fields Inspire Hope

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

The *Children in the Fields Campaign* youth councils' members hosted a conference entitled "Youth Voices in Action: Conversations from America's Fields" in Washington, D.C. on April 26 and 27. This national youth-led conference centered on U.S. child labor in agriculture and gave the youth from Texas and North Carolina a platform to bring their stories from the fields to the nation's capital to educate the public on the plight of farmworker children.

This interactive conference included panel discussion topics developed by the young leaders on relevant issues that affect their everyday lives. Topics focused on health, education, labor, housing, and additional barriers that exacerbate some of



Photo by Ayrienne Parks, AFOP

**Youth council members from Texas and North Carolina listen as Congresswoman Roybal-Allard offers some words of inspiration.**

the aforementioned issues. The farmworker children were able to share their personal testimonies

as they facilitated and led the panel discussions, and answered

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### Inside...

- **Summer Vacation? Not for Farmworker Children**
- **NFJP Training and Technical Assistance Update**
- **World Day Against Child Labor**

### House WIA Reauthorization: A Clear and Present Danger to Farmworkers

By David Strauss, Executive Director, AFOP

The member agencies of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) administer federal job training funds targeted to eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers. This program (the National Farmworker Jobs Program or NFJP) is a national program because farmworkers are often a mobile population

that cannot be served by a specific state workforce program. Plus, the special needs of this low wage sector of the workforce are best served by organizations that can respond to the cultural and language requirements of this mostly Hispanic labor force.

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# NEWSLINE BRIEFS

## AFOP Welcomes Justin Feldman

Justin Feldman is the newest addition to the AFOP team. As the Program Associate for the Health & Safety Program at AFOP, he will develop, deliver, and evaluate occupational health and safety trainings for farmworkers. Prior to joining AFOP, Justin worked as an advocate for stronger worker health and safety policies at the national watchdog group Public Citizen. Justin has worked with immigrants and low-wage workers at several community organizations both in the United States and in Mexico. He is bilingual in Spanish and English and holds master's degrees in public health and social work from Boston University.

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The AFOP Washington *Newsline* (ISSN# 1056-8565) is produced by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP), a national federation of nonprofit and public agencies that provide training and employment services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. AFOP's mission is to improve the quality of life for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families by providing advocacy for the member organizations that serve them.

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# Summer Vacation? Not for Farmworker Children

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

*"For outdoor workers, water, rest and shade are three words that can make the difference between life and death. If employers take reasonable precautions, and look out for their workers, we can beat the heat." -Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis.*

As we are approaching summer, many children in the U.S. are looking forward to summer vacation. Unfortunately, for many farmworker children who live and work around the nation, not being in school means longer hours working in the sweltering agricultural fields. Not only are they in danger of suffering from heat stroke, but they are also exposed to dangerous equipment and hazardous pesticides as they work. The Obama administration announced at the end of April that it was withdrawing the proposed updates to the Hazardous Orders that would have protected farmworker children under the age of 16, who are employed on farms not owned by their parents, from doing especially dangerous work. These summer months will likely have perilous consequences for farmworker youth and their families.

Heat stress is a serious danger for farmworker youth and their parents. They experience physically intense labor, hours in the sun without shade, and little time to stay hydrated on a daily basis. In fact, agricultural workers have a heat-related death rate 20 times greater than the general American workforce, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Between 1992-2006, 102 agricultural workers died in the U.S. as a result of heat-related illnesses. Even worse, the numbers are increasing: heat-related fatalities of farmworkers in the U.S. have tripled since the 1990s, according to the CDC. Children who work in the fields are not exempt from the consequences of high temperatures.

Last year AFOP was able to showcase Proyecto Sol, Health & Safety Programs' heat stress prevention training, at Help-NM for Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. The event took place during the Department of Labor's summer

campaign to prevent fatalities related to heat among outdoor workers. The trainers at Help-NM, Roni Spetalnick, Victor Cabrera, and Debi Lopez, did a fantastic job showcasing Proyecto Sol. Help-NM Director of Workforce Development Division Rita Garcia McManus and Executive Director John Martinez also talked about the importance of heat stress prevention. Secretary Solis described her experience at Help-NM as a "shining moment," and emphasized the Department of Labor's heat stress prevention campaign slogan: "water, rest, shade."

This year, AFOP's Health & Safety Programs decided to embark on a new campaign: the Heat Stress Training Marathon. AFOP trainers across the nation embarked on training 800 farmworkers in heat stress prevention in just five days. The outcome was incredible! By the end of the week, 2,200 farmworkers were trained, almost tripling our goal. Small groups of farmworkers were trained in labor camps and large groups in the middle of agricultural fields. Some trainers trained one person at a time inside membership offices, others participated in community events, reaching dozens of farmworkers and their families. New materials, designed by AFOP's Health & Safety Programs, such as bandanas with tips on how to prevent heat stress, posters, brochures, and other handouts, reached farmworkers from California to Illinois. Greene County Health Care in North Carolina, the site that did the most trainings, single handedly beat the goal we set out nationally by training 809 farmworkers. In California, Proteus, Inc. was close behind, training 515 farmworkers in just five days.

While the upcoming months will be difficult for farmworkers and their families, it is a relief to know that at the very least over 2,000 agricultural workers are now trained in heat stress prevention. Their knowledge about preventing, recognizing, and mitigating heat stress will allow them to help themselves, their colleagues, and their children who must work alongside them.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of Labor  
**AFOP's Children in the Fields Campaign Program  
 Director Norma Flores López and Executive  
 Director David Strauss present Secretary Solis  
 with the award.**

On April 26, 2012, the *Children in the Fields Campaign* youth council members chose to give Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis an award for her leadership and advocacy on behalf of farmworker children. In September, the Secretary took a historical step in proposing the first changes to the hazardous order for children employed in agriculture in more than 40 years. Disappointingly, the administration withdrew the common sense rules on the eve of April 26, as a result of a large outcry from agribusiness and the farm lobby.

A strident champion of farmworkers, Secretary Solis has pledged that the Department of Labor will continue to ensure current health and safety rules in the workplace are enforced despite the withdrawal of the safety rules she proposed last fall. The Secretary, who was unable to attend the Youth Voices in Action event [see "Conversations from America's Fields Inspire Hope" on page 1] held on April 26, received the award on behalf of the youth on May 31, 2012. Below you will find the press release issued by the U.S. Department of Labor:

### **Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis receives award from Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs**

**WASHINGTON** — Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis today was honored by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, which presented her with the Champion for the Futures of Farmworker Children Award for her commitment to improving the lives of farmworkers around the country through education and training.

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs promotes better living and working conditions for farmworkers by providing job training, supportive services and housing assistance to more than 20,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers each year. The association's efforts include the "Children in the Fields Campaign," an initiative that aims to better protect America's youth working in agricultural fields.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Labor announced more than \$80 million in grants through the National Farmworker Jobs Program that many organizations – including AFOP – are using to combat chronic unemployment that plagues those who harvest in our fields. The AFOP uses funding from the National Farmworker Jobs Program to help farmworkers upgrade their agricultural job skills or acquire new skills that enable them to earn higher wages and find more stable employment.

"The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs and the Department of Labor share an interest in helping migrant and seasonal farmworkers earn a living with dignity and respect," said Secretary Solis. "I am honored to receive this award and commend the AFOP on its good work."

AFOP Executive Director David A. Strauss, joined by other AFOP staff, presented Secretary Solis with the award at Labor Department headquarters in Washington.



# By the Numbers

Jeanna Vaughn, Director of Workforce Development

The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) is the most successful job training program operated by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)<sup>1</sup>. This is in no small part due to the work and determination of the NFJP staff. They often work long days, not just sitting at a desk, but out in the community, building relationships with partners, recruiting new program participants, and developing jobs and resources.

Farmworkers are among the lowest paid workers in the country, earning an average of just \$17,500 per year for a family of four, well below the national poverty line. Finding higher paying positions is difficult due to a lack of training and education (farmworkers have a median 8<sup>th</sup> grade education level), transportation, work history, and access to other industries in rural locations. Consequently, the NFJP is an essential service to many farmworkers who, without it, may not be able to access the resources and opportunities it provides.

Success is not just based on hard work and effort, but also by the numbers. Established by DOL, the NFJP program goals—employment rate, retention rate, and average earnings—are the most important way to communicate that the NFJP is working and making a difference around the country for low-income farmworkers. And, there is good news in the numbers.

The data for the last six quarters shows that positive program outcomes have steadily increased. The NFJP continues to exceed all three DOL common measures standards, achieving a national entered employment rate of 80.1% and an Employment Retention Rate of 76.4% with annual earnings of \$19,248.

AFOP's training and technical assistance initiatives are aimed at assisting these programs in performing even better. For PY 2012, the program outcome goals will increase to: Entered Employment – 80.5%, Employment Retention – 76.5%, Average Earnings – \$10,049.

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## RETURN ON INVESTMENT CALCULATIONS

<b>1 Total Costs (National Program)</b>	<b>\$78,253,180</b>
<b>2 Direct Tax Gains</b>	<b>\$18,966,422</b>
<b>3 Induced Tax Gains</b>	<b>\$31,763,791</b>
<b>4 Cost Savings to Government</b>	<b>\$33,275,690</b>
<b>5 Total Income to Farmworkers from Wages</b>	<b>\$89,098,992</b>
<b>6 Net Additional Income to Clients</b>	<b>\$41,423,512</b>
<b>7 Net Additional Income to Community</b>	<b>\$57,335,201</b>

## FOR EACH \$1.00 THE TAXPAYERS INVESTED IN THE NFJP

THE GOVERNMENT'S DIRECT TAX GAINS, INDUCED TAX GAINS AND COST SAVINGS (2+3+4) IS	\$1.07
FARMWORKERS PLACED IN JOBS (5) EARN	\$1.14
THE NET ADDITIONAL INCOME TO RURAL COMMUNITIES FROM THESE EARNINGS (7) IS	\$0.73
THE TOTAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) FOR THE FUNDS EXPENDED IS	\$2.94

questions from the audience members. Children's rights activists, educators, and member of the media attended this event.

Juan, a farmworker youth from Texas, saw this conference as a way to make the lives of farmworker families better by raising awareness on their plight. Juan said, "This is such a great and rare opportunity, where we can all come and share our stories with people who want to hear them."

The youth discussed what it is like to grow up as farmworker children in America and deconstructed the dominant narrative of American youth in agriculture today. Each farmworker child gave first-hand accounts of the struggles they have had to face every day: the trials of growing up faster than their peers, having to bear the burden of contributing to the financial security of their family, and the harsh conditions they endured while working in the fields.

Gerardo and his younger sister, Alejandra, are both farmworker youth from Texas. They described working long hours in the cotton and corn fields as they migrated with their families as dangerous and very hard. While Gerardo was out in the fields, Alejandra would take her family water, but would spend the rest of the day waiting in their car. "It was too dangerous, so I had to stay in the truck. But I was still there; I was still in the sun," said Alejandra. "I was still going through all of the things my brother was going through."

A 17-year-old farmworker from North Carolina, Mildre, shared two separate accounts of sexual assault she experienced by contractors. "[As a result] my whole family has been fired twice," shared Mildre. "The second time I got fired was pretty sad. I grew up knowing him [the contractor]." Describing the experience she noted, "Everything he would tell me to do didn't have anything to do with the job."

While in Washington, D.C., the youth were able to meet with Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, sponsor of H.R. 2234, entitled the Children's Act for Responsible Employment



*Photo by Ayrianne Parks*  
**Perla Sanchez, Juan Flores, and Yessenia Cuello**  
participating in one of the panels.

(CARE Act). The bill, championed by Roybal-Allard since 2001, seeks to equalize child labor protections for children working in agriculture. The young farmworkers shared their experiences and discussed how to break down barriers that keep them from finishing school. Congresswoman Roybal-Allard shared her own personal struggle with discrimination and gave advice to the farmworker children about bullying: "Don't let anyone put you down; there is nothing wrong with you. Remember that it is them [those who put you down] that are wrong."

When asked why he shares his farmworker experience, Gerardo said, "People can say anything; they lie. People who haven't experienced it don't know what's going on. People should know what we go through, good or bad, so something can change and things could get better for migrant workers, including kids."

Conference keynote speaker Dr. Juan Andrade Jr., President of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute and a former farmworker child, focused on a message of hope aimed at the farmworker participants. "The Latino population is transforming the complexion of America in a very dramatic fashion," shares Dr. Andrade. "As a boy, my parents would tell me to go to school and behave. That's not enough anymore. As Latinos, we need to make sure we are well-educated."

The youth council leaders concluded the conference by discussing what their communities are doing to combat the negative effects of child labor in agriculture through the

*Continued on page 10*

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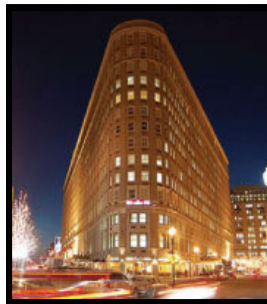
# 2012 AFOP National Conference



***Empowering America's Farmworkers:  
Providing Education, Training, and  
Advocacy***

Join the Association of Farmworker  
Opportunity Programs

**September 19-21, 2012**



at the Boston Park Plaza  
in Boston, MA

Contact Meriel Shire at [shire@afop.org](mailto:shire@afop.org) with any  
questions.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**House WIA Reauthorization** *continued from page 1*

All of the services the AFOP member agencies provide to farmworkers are severely threatened by the current version of H.R. 4297. First, some brief background.

In early 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report documenting the over 47 programs across 13 federal agencies that make up the federal effort to provide job training to America's workforce. The GAO pointed out that to the extent there were overlaps and duplications, savings could be realized from better aligning programs or, in some cases, combining them.

The report unleashed a substantial attack on the entire workforce development system, especially the programs under the auspices of the United States Department of Labor. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) went so far as to call for the elimination of the entire federally-funded effort, maintaining that businesses and workers, left to their own needs and understandings, would make the proper match of skills needed for worker training without any federally-run program.

Since then, many Members of Congress have expressed their desire to deal with these issues. Most federal job training funds flow through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which was supposed to be reauthorized in 2003, but as of this date has not been. The U.S. House of Representatives first sought to address the issues brought up by GAO via appropriations and then, more recently, through the reauthorization of the WIA. The Senate has held listening sessions leading to a bipartisan draft that makes some changes to the current structure of state and local workforce investment boards, but keeps the fundamentals in place, in recognizing the value of NFJP and other national programs. However, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) has not introduced a bill, and it is not clear when that might happen.

In the meantime, five bills were introduced in the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. One was a bill sponsored by Reps. Tierney, Hinojosa, and Miller for the minority

Democrats, and four by majority Republican members. The original Foxx bill contained four funding streams including a separate fund for special populations such as farmworkers. Three of the majority's bills were consolidated into one bill sponsored by Reps. Foxx, Heck and McKeon with the approval of Committee Chair Kline. That bill is H.R. 4297, entitled The Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012. The remainder of this article will deal only with H.R. 4297, since it is sponsored by the majority, and therefore has the better chance of receiving a majority committee and House vote.

H.R. 4297 creates one workforce development account to be granted to the states on a formula basis. There would no longer be a separate, targeted fund for dislocated workers, adult, and youth programs, or nearly any other. It consolidates virtually everything in Title I of the WIA and eliminates over a score of programs, including the NFJP, the Senior Community Services Employment Program, the national Job Corps, Youth Build, the Indian and Native American Program, and others. While encouraging local action through One Stops and WIBs, it only mandates a state board that would consist of 2/3 business leaders and no other mandated members. Others would be appointed at the discretion of the governor.

A quick read of the bill indicates that governors would have almost complete discretion on how to deliver workforce services.

There is a 1% set aside nationally for Native American services. Other "special populations," such as farmworkers, are to be served with a 2% amount from each state grant. However, there is no mandate as to how the 2% should be spent. That is, a governor could choose to spend it all on one or another of the special populations in any way he/she sees fit. While the Job Corps would still be funded, it would be controlled by the governor of each state that has a center. How the centers would be managed and their funding for maintenance and construction guaranteed is unclear.

It is also unclear what the funding levels would be. While consolidations of the type required by this bill would likely result in some savings initially, the history of block grants (which this,

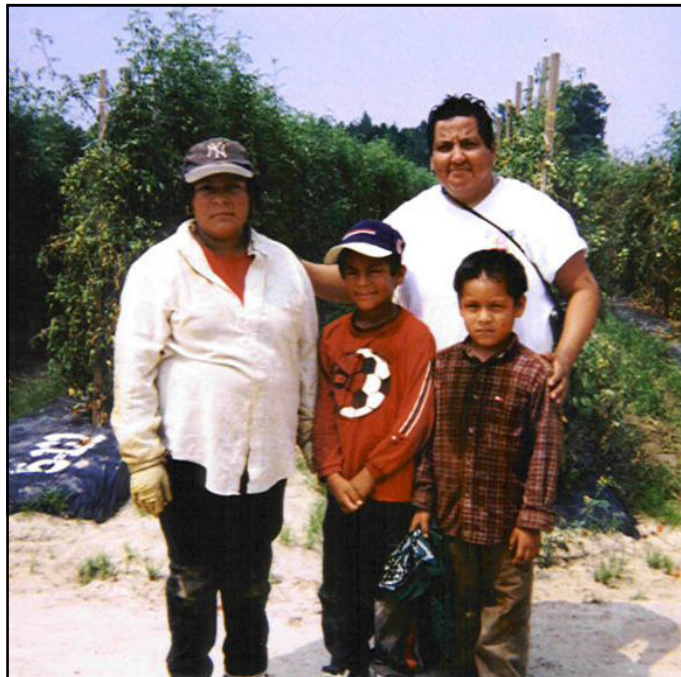


in effect, becomes) is that they are often vehicles for annual or periodic funding reductions. This is especially troubling in the current climate relating to federal programs. There are spending caps in place for Federal Fiscal Year 2013 due to the Budget Control Act. That law's new mandatory cuts start in January 2013 as a result of last summer's failure of the Super Committee to agree on a future spending reduction plan. This all will create a lot of pressure to reduce this unitary workforce development fund to adhere to these cost-cutting requirements. This is exactly counter to what many workforce professionals believe will assist the re-employment of the millions of people thrown out of work by the recent intense recession. A number of leaders of national workforce development advocacy groups, organized in the Coalition for the Investment in America's Workforce, have urged the House to abandon the block grant notion and reinstate the national programs.

Whatever the problems and positive features of H.R. 4297, passage would create enormous and insurmountable hurdles for eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers who seek to improve their economic lives by accessing better careers. The mobility of many farmworkers would make it nearly impossible to get state-specific services: why should a governor mandate job training expenditures for people that might only reside in their state for two or three months a year? Additionally, who would assist migrant workers stranded due to lack of work, needing a few dollars to get back to their home state when the job they thought they had dries up? And how will a population in need of special outreach and services in a language they understand get served without a program targeted to their needs?

Ironically, in the case of the NFJP, a critical factor would be lost even in states where a governor might choose to allocate funds to farmworkers: the efficiencies created by competition would be lost. Currently, grantees of the NFJP must compete for their grants every two years. This creates an incentive for excellent performance. There is no such requirement in this bill.

Currently, farmworkers do receive such specialized and culturally appropriate services,



*Photo courtesy of AFOP*

**A farmworker family working to harvest tomatoes. According to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "average piece rate today is 50 cents for every 32-lbs of tomatoes they pick, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged since 1980."**

with outstanding results. Each quarter, the NFJP shows the best results of any program in the Department of Labor's array in at least two of the three common measures that nearly all such programs use. How will those thousands of agricultural workers who enter better careers each year do so under a block grant program with virtually no requirement that this sector of the workforce be served?

At AFOP, we believe there is not a good answer to this and other questions. While there could be value in a certain amount of streamlining of the WIA, the method adopted by H.R. 4297 will simply not meet the needs of the migrant and seasonal farmworkers who strive to achieve their part of the American Dream through this national program known as the National Farmworker Jobs Program. Abandoning this hard-working, low-wage sector of the workforce simply cannot be permitted.



*Photo by Ayrienne Parks, AFOP*

**Youth council members received certificates for their participation in the two-day conference they planned and led. From Left to right: Yessenia Cuello, Mildre Lima, Neftali Cuello, Alejandra Flores, Gerardo Flores, Perla Sanchez, and Juan Flores.**

**Conversations from America's Fields** *continued from page 6*

*Children in the Fields Campaign.* Youth described how their involvement helps keep them motivated to improve their grades and give back to their communities.

"We're advocating. Through the youth group, we are able to reach more people," shares Yessenia, a farmworker youth from North Carolina. "We are getting leadership skills and [participating in the youth council] builds our character."

Perla, a young farmworker from Texas featured in the documentary "The Harvest/La Cosecha,"

was glad to be part of a campaign that advocates for farmworker youth. "We can show the reality of what being a migrant is. [Farmworkers] have such poor knowledge of how things should be and how we should be treated. It makes me happy to know that there are people letting others know that this is happening."

Perla adds, "There are just so many barriers for us."

**By the Numbers** *continued from page 5*

With a proven track record of success, the NFJP must continue to strive to meet these outcomes in order to communicate the program's benefits to migrant and seasonal farmworkers, their families, communities, and to our nation's economy. AFOP is committed to working with the NFJP to continue to improve performance through our upcoming training and technical assistance endeavors (see the *Training and*

*Technical Assistance for the NFJP* article on the following page for details).

*<sup>1</sup> NFJP exceeds all other programs' Entered Employment Rate and all but one program on Retention according to DOL evaluations using combined Unemployment Insurance data and the grantee reported data.*

# NFJP Training and Technical Assistance Update

Jeanna Vaughn, Director of Workforce Development

At the end of April, AFOP sent out a survey to National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees asking them and their staff to give their input on their training and technical assistance (T.A.) needs. We had significant participation from the community with 136 respondents and will be using the data to drive the training and T.A. offerings for the upcoming months. A majority of respondents reported they would like to participate in webinars and also indicated what topics they would like covered.

The topics with the most interest include Case Management for Higher Performance, Developing Relationships and Partnerships, Case Management for the Hard to Employ, Assessing Your Farmworker Participant for Employability, and Preparing a Farmworker Participant for Change. The highest rated program management topics are Performance Reporting for the NFJP, Strategies for Exiting, Communication Management, and Meeting Outcomes. Other technical assistance methods which received a high amount of interest include an online forum with the capability for chats and posting resources, video conferencing, and a document sharing site.

The survey also inquired about relationships between the NFJP and partners and agencies. Over two-thirds of respondents felt they had strong existing relationships with their Wagner-Peyser/State Workforce Agency, WIA Title I Programs, migrant education, and area community colleges. Two-thirds also indicated they would like assistance strengthening relationships with the US Department of Agriculture and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). DOL and AFOP will be looking into ways stronger partnerships can be built as well as helping the NFJP maintain existing relationships.

One of the main vehicles to provide training and T.A. will be through the online webspace, Workforce<sup>3</sup> One, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and

Training Administration. Workforce<sup>3</sup> One hosts online communities which provide a venue for a variety of resources including learning events (such as webinars), posting areas for documents, toolkits, and podcasts, and forums for chats and discussions.

The site currently has thirteen communities with focuses on workforce topics and diverse populations, including Disability and Employment, Older Workers, and Reintegration of Ex-offenders. DOL and AFOP are in the beginnings stages of developing a resource site for the NFJP and the Monitor Advocate system.

This type of site will be helpful by creating greater dialogue and sharing of resources nationally. AFOP is also in the process of creating an NFJP employee database. The goal is to be able to contact staff directly with news on trainings, webinars, and resources they can access to assist their work in the field. This information will also be useful to see how programs are staffed and positions are utilized. Stay tuned for information on the database as well as upcoming webinars, training events, and the launch of the Workforce<sup>3</sup> One community.



**[www.workforce3one.org](http://www.workforce3one.org)**



## Success Stories

### Telamon Helps Son of Migrant Farmworkers Succeed

As a child, I grew up in the migrant worker life. My family moved with the seasons of vegetables as both of my parents worked in the fields picking vegetables for companies such as Six L's and Pacific Growers. I was very young when we migrated so I don't remember the states we lived in seasonally but I do remember the camps and the other migrant children I played with every summer. At the end of each summer it was hard to leave my friends behind because I knew I would never see them again. Every summer was the same for years; I look back and wonder how each of them is doing today. My parents and five older sisters worked in the fields from sun up to sun down, but since my brother and I were much younger, we would stay in the truck and just wait for the day to be over. As I moved into my early teen years, my mother stopped working in the fields and started cooking meals for the single farm workers. Selling food in the field helped our family financially and the workers would get a nice home cooked meal as well. This worked out for everyone for a while until it was forbidden by the crew leaders to sell food in the fields.

As a teen, I thought higher education wasn't an option for me. When your family is on the move all the time, there is no time to think about the future because you have to get through today. If it weren't for teachers and coaches putting the idea in my head, I never would have thought about college. Although I did move around a lot, I got excellent grades in school so I knew I could get into college. That was the easy part! Finding the college I wanted to attend was not so hard either; it was hands down Wesleyan College in Virginia Beach. The question was: How was I going to pay for it? I knew financial aid would help. I planned on working part time and I knew about getting loans, but it wasn't going to be enough to cover my tuition to gain my Bachelor's degree in Communications/Spanish.

After mentioning my situation to some friends and family, they suggested I call Telamon, an



*Photo courtesy of Telamon VA*

**Roberto Maldonado, NFJP participant and author of the story.**

agency that helps farm workers and their families obtain education. So I visited Telamon's Exmore office to learn more. The enrollment process was simple. Dianne Arenas explained the whole program and told me my options. Dianne did a wonderful job getting me started. Jessica Bonniwell became my Case Manager and she really kept me in check. Because of Telamon, I was even given the opportunity to become an AmeriCorps volunteer, working directly with Telamon and farmworkers to gain actual work experience in the Communications field during the time I attended college.

Working together with these two ladies kept me busy. It was so worth the time I spent with them because of the opportunities I experienced and what my future now holds. Because of the opportunity that Telamon gave me, I graduated and immediately obtained employment in the Marketing Department for a well-known Virginia Beach corporation. And the best part is: this is just the beginning!

*Continued on page 14*



# What Are You Doing On June 12?

On June 12, 2012, organizations around the world will be joining together to raise awareness about child labor. Most of the focus will be on child labor abroad, but let's not forget the children who labor under extremely dangerous conditions right here at home. They are using dangerous tools, operating heavy machinery, and working with and around toxic pesticides for unlimited hours outside of school.

In the U.S., children as young as 12 are legally allowed to work under these dangerous and often deadly conditions—a clear violation of the International Labour Organization Conventions, of which the U.S. is a signatory.

"Concerning child labour, the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) requires States to specify in law a minimum age for admission to employment not less than the age of finishing compulsory education, and which in any case, should not be less than 15 years. A member country whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may under certain conditions initially specify a minimum age of 14 years.

The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) calls for "immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency". The worst forms are defined as:

- All forms of slavery, or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced labour, including forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- The use, procurement or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.
- The use, procurement or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties.
- Work which, by its nature or circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, such harmful work to be determined by national authorities."

Make sure to check out AFOP's blog, our Facebook page, and Twitter account to stay up-to-date and learn about how you can advocate on behalf of the children working in America's fields. Find out how to connect by visiting [www.afop.org](http://www.afop.org).



International  
Labour  
Organization

Organisation  
Internationale  
du Travail

Organización  
Internacional  
del Trabajo

**12 JUNE 2012**

**12 JUIN 2012**

**12 DE JUNIO DE 2012**

**HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**DROITS DE L'HOMME  
ET JUSTICE SOCIALE**

**DERECHOS HUMANOS  
Y JUSTICIA SOCIAL**



**LET'S END  
CHILD LABOUR**



**ÉLIMINONS LE  
TRAVAIL DES ENFANTS**

**ERRADIQUEMOS  
EL TRABAJO INFANTIL**

## Success Stories

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Sometimes I catch myself thinking about how things could have turned out if it had not been for the Telamon program and their great Case Managers. The biggest struggle for me had been the financial part of the college experience. I had the motivation and I had the intelligence, but in life sometimes we need that extra hand to get us over the hump.

For me, Telamon feels like an older brother that takes your own motivation and helps get you to where you are going. The Telamon staff was vital to my success. They made every effort possible to help me along and kept me in line in

order to accomplish my goals. They set me up for life and really helped me to believe in myself. I am a 22-year-old graduate of Wesleyan College with a Bachelor's degree. Today, I am working as a Bi-Lingual Outreach Worker for Eastern Shore Community Health Center in Nassawadox, VA. I give assistance and resources available to migrant farm workers who are living the life I lived as a child. I look forward to seeing the next dependent of a migrant farm worker see life as I do. I not only *think* of my future now, I can see *it* thanks to this wonderful program!

*Submitted by: Jessica Bonniwell, Telamon VA*

## From Farm Work to Small Business Entrepreneur

José Realzola came to the United States from Durango, Mexico with his parents when he was a child. He now owns several businesses in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

José moved from Florida to Oklahoma City when he was 21-years-old and started working North of Yukon, OK cleaning cotton fields. There he worked diligently, chopping weeds with a hoe, from cotton row to cotton row in order to keep the cotton free of weeds. José had other plans for his future though. One of his dreams was to start his own business.

José's passion for small business started in his youth. He began his first business endeavor as a child selling ice cream on the streets. When he learned about the ORO Development Corporation's farmworker program, he visited the Oklahoma City Office and spoke to a case manager.

The case manager offered to enroll him as a trainee in ORO's On-The-Job Training (OJT) component at a local transmission supply shop, and offered him housing assistance. He completed the On-The-Job Training (OJT), and was hired permanently as a transmission repairman.

José was a good employee. Often, he would work eight hours a day at the transmission



*Photo courtesy of ORO Development Corporation*  
**Jose Realzola holds a plaque documenting his success at his auto transmission parts store.**

supply shop. Then, in the evenings and on the weekends, he would do side jobs at his own home repairing transmissions.

After several years of hard work and determination, he managed to save up enough

## Success Stories

money to open a transmission repair shop of his own. Since then, his business has grown tremendously.

He now owns an auto transmission parts store, used car lot, a Mexican Restaurant and two soccer complex centers. José has trained other young men through ORO's OJT program to become trained and successful transmission repairman.

Mr. Realzola came from the cotton fields in Oklahoma from making \$110.00 to \$120.00 dollars a week, to now owning a successful transmission repair shop and two other businesses in the Oklahoma City area to making over \$50,000 thousand a year.

*Submitted by: Herminia Castillo, ORO*

## CVOC Client Secures His American Dream

José M. Rico was born & raised in Zamora, Michoacán, Mexico in the mid 1970's. At the young age of 17, he relocated with relatives to California, where he was employed as a migrant laborer. His goal was to work hard and become a productive member of society. A few years later, José became a US Citizen, married and began a family. His desire to provide for his family grew, as did his ambition to succeed both personally and professionally. He and his wife are raising their daughters in the rural foothill community of Don Pedro.

José first learned about the Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC) via a former member. José immediately researched CVOC and was enrolled into the welding program. The six month program earned him a Welding and Electrical Certificate, which in turn offered several opportunities for him. He was immediately employed after program completion in February 2000, and has dedicated the past 12 years to the Welding/Fabricating Industry. CVOC's role in José's success was the foundation to his future as a successful Hispanic business owner.

On November 15, 2008, José and his wife launched their family-owned business, JR Fabricating & Repair, which specializes in sanitary stainless steel design, processing and fabricating. JR Fab takes pride in providing its customers with the highest level of on-site services, while increasing their profitability and lowering production costs. JR Fab travels throughout the United States providing top quality services to large dairy corporations. Approximately 75% of its customers are located



*Photo courtesy of Central Valley Opportunity Center*

in the Mid-East portion of the U.S.

José's goal is to continue expanding their business, retain family-owned operations and prosper into other countries and provide them with high quality sanitary stainless steel products and services being offered in the US. José overcame many barriers on his road to achievement, both as a child and adult. His resolve and perseverance proved successful. The undivided support from his family coupled with his positivity and diligence has made him a thriving Hispanic entrepreneur and a positive role model for migrant workers aspiring success.

On Friday, May 25, 2012, José was honored by CVOC at their scholarship fundraiser banquet. He was awarded the "Spirit of Independence" Award, as Alumni of the Year.

*Submitted by: Ernie Flores, CVOC*

## 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

