



February 2014

## Washington Newsline

### AFOP Participates in National Farmworker Alliance Meeting in the White House

By Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs and the rest of the National Farmworker Alliance (NFA) met in December with senior administration officials in the White House's Eisenhower Executive Office Building to discuss farmworker issues. An impressive list of individuals from the administration met with the group, including, among others, Gina McCarthy, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator; Jim Jones, EPA Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention; Amy Young, Unit Chief for National Programs for the United States Department of

Labor's Employment and Training Administration; Felicia Escobar, Director of Immigration Policy at the White House Domestic Policy Council; and Julie Chavez-Rodriguez, Deputy Director of Public Engagement in the White House.



is having difficulties reaching migrant and seasonal farmworkers to make them aware of the benefits and requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The department's Health Resources and Services Administration has provided funding to clinics and other health facilities in states to help disseminate ACA information, but those entities do not have the statewide reach of Section 167 grantees. In response, AFOP has since written HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to describe its members' close work with migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their ability to serve as a resource to the department.

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For more than three hours, NFA members engaged with these individuals in a wide-ranging discussion, covering topics from the National Farmworker Jobs Program to farmworker housing, from immigration reform to the Affordable Care Act, and from EPA revisions to its Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides to migrant education, and others. More than just a briefing, the session allowed for a true back-and-forth sharing of ideas that brought to light many important points.

For example, we learned that the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Also concerning the ACA rollout, Deputy Director of Public Engagement Julie Chavez-Rodriguez told the group that the Spanish language version of the ACA website - [www.CuidaddeSalud.org](http://www.CuidaddeSalud.org) - would soon soft launch, and invited groups to participate in pilot testing over the next few weeks, saying the White House wants to work initially with control groups to be sure everything works as designed. AFOP Health & Safety Director Melanie Forti immediately contacted Julie to express AFOP's interest in playing a role in this process, hoping to raise the association's visibility with the

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administration. Ms. Chavez-Rodriguez thanked AFOP for its interest and indicated she is excited about the opportunity to have the association more involved.

EPA Administrator McCarthy highlighted AFOP in her prepared keynote remarks, touting our partnership with the agency on pesticides safety training. Following her remarks we had the opportunity, in open session, to thank her for the partnership and to let her know that AFOP's members could do a lot more with additional funding, if she could find it. She stated that her senior staff are currently working on finding ways to leverage resources and that she would welcome AFOP's input. Both she and Assistant Administrator Jones also spoke at length about the WPS revisions, asking the group to consider providing written comments to the agency once the revisions are open for public comment. They hope to see them published and open for comment by early February.

Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration's Amy Young said in her presentation that NFJP "really works," and is "one of the most successful programs at ETA."

In the open session, we asked if she had any news about the department's pending decision on the permissibility of the provision of Workforce Investment Act services to DACA applicants. She indicated that the DOL Office of the Solicitor is still considering that possibility. At a later opportunity, we informed her of AFOP's intention to prepare a letter to DOL Secretary Tom Perez expressing our views on the matter. Also, DOL and OSHA officials talked at length about their much-welcomed increase in enforcement activities.

In closing, I would like to make the personal observation that the dozen or so high-ranking administration officials who met with our group spent a remarkable amount of time with us discussing farmworker issues. Hardly a perfunctory, check-the-box kind of meeting, our session with the administration was substantive and frank, touching on both the positive and on matters in which our group feels improvement may be needed. For that, I personally would like to thank UMOS President and Chief Executive Officer Lupe Martinez and his team for arranging this quality meeting. ♦

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

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**Managing Editor:** Daniel Sheehan

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# Staff Changes at AFOP

By Robert Crumley, Director of Communications, AFOP



Katy Nelson, Director of Workforce Development

Join us in welcoming Katy Nelson as our newest staff member. Katy works closely with colleagues at the US Department of Labor to provide technical assistance and other support to NFJP grantees. Prior to joining AFOP, Katy worked as a contract analyst for several workforce development projects across multiple agencies, including a stint at the Labor Department working directly on NFJP. She also has experience in privacy and technology policy and advocacy. Katy earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Congratulations to Melanie Forti who moved up within AFOP. Prior to becoming Director of Health & Safety Programs, Melanie was program manager for this same department. In her current position she manages the Farmworker Occupation Health & Safety Training Program, Pesticide Exposure & Pregnancy Pilot, and LEAF Certification Program. She oversees staff, develops programs, writes and monitors multiple grants, as well as maintains



Melanie Forti, Director of Health & Safety Programs

funder relations. As director, Melanie represents AFOP within the farmworker advocacy community and is managing editor of Health & Safety publications. A native of Puerto Rico, Melanie has been a member of Health & Safety Programs Department since 2009, bringing over ten years of pesticide safety knowledge and management skills with her. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the Sacred Heart University of Puerto Rico.

We are also excited to announce Vashti Kelly, previously of our Children in the Fields Campaign, as the new Program Manager for AFOP's Health & Safety Programs. She organizes education projects by developing low-literacy, bilingual curriculum and training materials related to pesticide safety and other relevant topics for farmworkers. Vashti is responsible for recruiting trainers and training sites, organizing Train-the-Trainer events and courses. Vashti is also in charge of AFOP's newest publication, *Sazón para la Salud*. Vashti has a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami, FL and holds a master's of International Relations from Florida International University. ♦



Vashti Kelly, Program Manager of Health & Safety Programs

# Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Visit to Michigan

By Robert Crumley, Director of Communications, AFOP

The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) conducts occasional technical assistance and training activities (TA&T) with individual grantees of the National Farmworker Jobs Training Program (NFJP), authorized at Title I, Section 167 of the Workforce Investment act of 1998. The TA&T activities include, but are not limited to, assuring conformity with reporting requirements imposed by the United States Department of

Labor (DOL) and improving activities of grantees to increase their performance, particularly as they relate to the Common Measures.

In order to help everyone's performance measures be as high as possible, DOL and AFOP developed a Peer-to-Peer program to address opportunities for growth of our grantees.

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The inaugural Peer-to-Peer visit was held December 3-5 and was triggered by an email invitation sent to all AFOP member NFJP grantees. Telamon, Michigan responded and was first to be scheduled.

We thank the leadership and staff of Telamon, Michigan for their extraordinary enthusiasm, cooperation and candor. They both identified challenge areas and possible solutions. State Director, Don Kuchnicki, was generous in providing file materials, as well as requesting sample materials from both Mentoring, Education & Training, Inc., (MET), Minnesota and Rocky Mountain SER (RMSER), the two entities providing peer assistance. Both staff and leadership exhibited a high level of passion for the work they do and the people they serve: key factors that should contribute to a successful implementation of changes aimed at maximizing program measures.

Mr. Kuchnicki became the State Director for Telamon, Michigan three years ago and assumed the responsibility of correcting previously existing challenges. In addition to the great advances Don effected, he was first to volunteer to participate in this program of discovery.

Ana Narvaez of MET, Minnesota and Leon Ortega of RMSER agreed to be peer consultants for this visit, organized and facilitated by AFOP staff. The first full day was in Sparta meeting with leadership and staff to gain a basic understanding of issues and processes. The following day was spent at their Holland site talking with different staff and engaging in more in-depth discussions. The final morning discussion was a frank review of earlier conversations and final thoughts.

Together, Ana, Leon, Don, and staff partnered in identifying and discussing challenges to continued success, as well as next steps. The consultants engaged in active listening while asking both specific and leading questions to help staff self-discover. They also brainstormed and provided examples of what works and does not work for their agencies.

The conversations spanned many topics including: policies and procedures; outreach; case management; staff development; customer demographics and center locations; community partnerships and branding; employer recruitment and development of new training opportunities; diversification of Individual Employment Plans (IEP) goals to include more direct placements, on-the-job training, and short term trainings.

One week after the visit, everyone participated in a brief phone call to recap and share any additional thoughts that may have percolated. The visit had confirmed many of Don's pre-visit thoughts, revealed new opportunities, and unexpectedly ignited a flame of enthusiasm.

Leon and Ana did an excellent job reinforcing the importance of developing relationships with employers and branding Telamon as "The" provider of skilled applicants for employment opportunities. Don reports the visit had a strong and genuine impact on staff as they increased awareness of, and responsibility for, their successes by developing a marketing plan, creating action plans for themselves, continuing to question and look for opportunities for growth, and by strategically communicating with more employers and researching community resources. Additionally, support services will be more strategically utilized as an avenue to complete employment and training objectives.

The intended value of this program is specific to grantees requesting Peer-to-Peer support, however, the value also extends to the consulting grantees as they too receive feedback, question their practices, and discover new opportunities for growth. Additionally, the relationships developed are active lifelines for sharing ever-evolving Best Practices.

This inaugural visit brought great value to all grantees involved as they continually strive for Best Practices, AFOP as we work on behalf of our member agencies, and the Department of Labor as it works toward improved program measures helping migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. ◆

# New Year, Healthy Start

By: Melanie Forti, Health & Safety Programs Director, AFOP

2013 saw many accomplishments and challenges, including launching a new program for farmworkers while dealing with a complete staff change. We will miss the direction and leadership of Levy Schroeder, while simultaneously celebrating the new possibilities that come with fresh leadership and staff. In light of the challenges, we are proud to say that we exceeded our own expectations by providing a seamless transition while continuing to positively impact a large number of farmworkers.



Workers picking strawberries in Florida.  
Photo by Melanie Forti, AFOP

The new Training Program (Farmworker Occupational Health & Safety Training Program) was very successful in 2013 and was well received by all 14 participating membership organizations. We trained and built a network of 104 participating trainers throughout 14 states who effectively trained over 25,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers on pesticide safety and heat stress.

We are proud to report that we distributed \$74,000, among participating agencies, for training allowances. In 2014, we have planned to increase that amount to \$130,000 among the member organizations for the same purpose.

As the New Year begins, AFOP's Health & Safety Programs department gets stronger and

prepares to tackle new tasks for 2014. This year, Health & Safety will be extremely busy continuing to implement farmworker training programs in 16 states; publishing a monthly, low-literacy newsletter for farmworkers called *Sazón para la Salud!* (*Seasoning for your Health*); and a cookbook with farmworkers' authentic recipes and tips.

We will also translate our training curricula and materials into Haitian-Creole, which will be distributed mainly in Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey. Additionally, together with the Environmental Protection Agency Region 4, we will review our current take-home exposure curriculum, known as Limiting Exposures Around Families (LEAF), and will add a small section on how to avoid pesticide exposure during pregnancy.

AFOP's Health & Safety Programs Committee and staff also work hard to provide a strong and valuable training track at AFOP's 2014 National Conference in San Diego.

We are very pleased with the interest our members show as they get ready to participate in the new Training Program. The inaugural ten-month program began January 6<sup>th</sup> and will end October 31<sup>st</sup>. The program's goal is to generate awareness of the dangers of pesticide exposure and heat stress among farmworkers, as well as to provide farmworkers with the most effective and easily accessible way of protecting themselves against pesticide and heat exposure.

For more information contact Melanie Forti at [forti@afop.org](mailto:forti@afop.org). ♦

# Congress Approves Fiscal Year 2014 Appropriations

By: Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP



Congressman Ryan (R-Wisconsin) and Senator Murray (D-Washington)

Congress gave its approval in January to omnibus legislation providing appropriations for fiscal year 2014. The House moved the catch-all spending measure January 15 by a surprisingly large

bipartisan vote of 359 to 67. The next day, after a tense period when it appeared the bill's opponents might attempt to slow its consideration, the Senate cleared the legislation for the president's signature by another solidly bipartisan vote of 72 to 26.

The measure is good news for the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), increasing its

fiscal year 2014 appropriations by 2.5 percent to \$81,896,000 from the sequestration-reduced amount of \$79,897,000 in fiscal year 2013. While that boost in spending is most welcome, the 2014 amount falls short of the \$84,291,000 Congress appropriated for the program in fiscal year 2012. The 2014 dollars become available for program year 2014 beginning July 1.

The budget framework Congress adopted in December made the omnibus spending bill possible. That budget plan, however, did not put a permanent end to sequestration. The framework only provides government programs temporary relief from sequestration in fiscal years 2014 and 2015 – considerably less in 2015, in fact – but does nothing to prevent future sequestration in fiscal year 2016 and beyond. Lawmakers have seemingly left that challenge to a future Congress. ♦

## Increase of Unaccompanied Minors Entering US

By Reid Maki, Director of Child Labor Advocacy and Coordinator, Child Labor Coalition, and Norma Flores López, Director of Children in the Fields Campaign, AFOP

60,000 unaccompanied minors are expected to cross into the United States in 2014 according to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This represents nearly a tenfold increase in just three years.

Many of these children are running away from life-threatening situations in countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as gangs increasingly spread, and attempt to extort money from families. The kids are scared to death and clinging to a desperate hope: escape their tormentors, get to the US, find work, and send money back to help and protect their families.

According to a fact-finding delegation led by the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services, there is a "perfect storm" of contributing factors pushing teens to leave their homes and attempt a perilous journey to the US. In addition to the fear of violence from gangs, these "push" factors include the:

- Absence of economic opportunity.
- Inability of individuals and families to support themselves.
- Lack of access to quality education.
- Desire to reunite with family members already in the US.

The journey is particularly dangerous for migrating teens, who are vulnerable to becoming trafficking victims. Teen girls are especially vulnerable to the dangers of traveling alone. Advocates believe 60 percent of girls are assaulted or raped during their trip and nearly one in four become pregnant. Additionally, children are losing limbs as they attempt to board trains.

Migrating teens often make multiple attempts till they make it into the US. USCCB believes

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# 2014 Brings a Focus on Peer-to-Peer T&TA

By: Kathleen Nelson, AFOP Director of Workforce Development



Katy Nelson, Director of Workforce Development, AFOP

I'm pleased to join the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) as Director of Workforce Development. I gained intimate knowledge of the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) through my time as an on-site analyst under NFJP Program Director, Amy Young.

During my time at DOL, I worked to develop Technical Assistance (TA) materials and webinars targeted to meet the specific needs and challenges faced by NFJP grantees. I also spent time redesigning NFJP's presence on the larger doleta.gov site. A significant portion of my time at Labor was spent writing an updated version of the NFJP WIA §167 Reference Guide, that many of you may be familiar with, originally written more than a decade ago. I bring an in-depth understanding of the NFJP rules, regulations, and data, and am ready to apply that knowledge with you on the ground. Together we will continue improving the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) across the country.

I also have a strong background in advocacy and expertise in a lot of the issues that affect many in the MSFW community, and their families. I worked for four years at the American Civil Liberties Union focused mainly on privacy and security policy, including identification policy, border security policy, and e-verify.

I anticipate contributing to the continued successes of all NFJP grantees and the migrant seasonal farmworkers they support. ♦

## 2014: Increased Focus on Peer-to-Peer

As I continue to facilitate the Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance project that my predecessor helped launch in 2013, it is my hope that 2014 will be a year of increased sharing among NFJP organization and staff.

This year, our space on Workforce3One will be redesigned to be a more dynamic resource center and become easier to navigate. The familiar tool kits and conference materials will still be there, additionally we will develop an on-line community to discuss challenges and issues both common and unique across programs.

I will also be creating more opportunities to have small group sessions at our conferences and webinars. The upcoming AFOP mini-conference will include a series of small group roundtables to discuss special topics where you can share experiences, challenges, and successes directly with one another.

I'm so pleased to join the AFOP family. While I worked on NFJP TA at the Labor Department, I got to know many member organizations by the numbers. I've read grant plans, analyzed participant records, and outcomes data. I couldn't be happier to put your voices and faces to the names I know so well.

Let's get to work! ♦



that 30 percent eventually make it in, but they often incur significant debts to pay smugglers, often times between \$5,000 and \$8,000. Farms and homes are frequently mortgaged to pay for these “coyote” fees that are seen by the family as a form of investment in their futures. When, and if, the teens arrive in the US, they are often in a rough physical and emotional state, and desperate to find work so they can afford to eat and repay the loans.

One of the few industries where young children find work, with few protections, is agriculture.



Youth harvesting sweet potatoes.  
Photo by AFOP

Unaccompanied youth look for work where detection is difficult, inspections are few, and the language barrier is not an issue. Agricultural work offers these young teens a double-edge cloak of anonymity. Unfortunately, the same conditions that offer them invisibility also leave

them vulnerable to exploitation such as wage theft, sexual harassment, and forced labor.

Unaccompanied youth have no safety net or support system to help them when they are in danger. In the US, nonprofits are struggling to provide these children with the services they desperately need. The Child Labor Coalition, of which AFOP is a member, is working to strengthen protections for these unaccompanied youth that may end up performing hand harvest work in agriculture—a difficult, dangerous job. Most of these children will not make it into a school system. Their futures are very uncertain.

During trips to the agricultural fields of North Carolina, Texas and California, the *Children in the Fields Campaign* staff interviewed unaccompanied teenagers working on America’s farms. These children were left vulnerable to the dangers of agricultural work, often times abused and taken advantage of. A 17-year-old

teenager interviewed in 2011 shared how he had entered the U.S. four years earlier to meet up with an uncle who later abandoned him. While working in North Carolina, he had experienced threats and wage theft; he didn’t know when the next time he would see his family would be. Another 14-year-old teenage boy interviewed last year shared a similar account of the harsh conditions he was working in. He had been robbed of all of his savings just months before by the other farmworkers he was sharing housing with. He was hoping to collect enough money to see his mother soon. School was out of the question for both of these young teenagers, who desperately needed to work to feed their families back home.

The USCCB delegation to the four source countries came up with several recommendations to help the incredibly vulnerable children trying to flee violence and dire poverty in their homelands, which include: providing legal representation to the migrants; considering asylum for those children whose fear of gang violence is credible; having child welfare experts help assess the migrants when they are captured by border agents; and investing in prevention programs in the sending countries. The complete list of recommendations will be found at USCCB’s Refugee and Migration Service publications page soon.

The large influx of unaccompanied youth will have a great impact on the numbers of farmworker children working on American farms. With fewer child labor inspections being conducted by agricultural state governments, an expected rise in exploitation is also likely for our most vulnerable workers. In order to ensure a safe and healthy childhood for all children, better protections are needed for children working in the agriculture – especially for those with no support in this country.

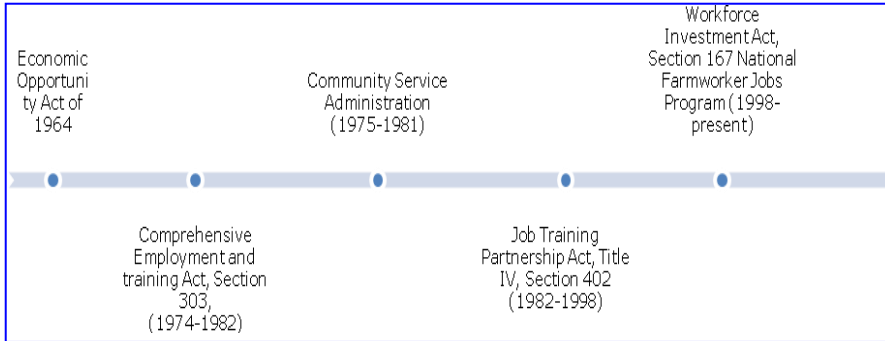
To learn more about the inequities in federal law for farmworker children and how you can get involved, you can visit AFOP’s Children in the Fields Campaign page ([afop.org/children-in-the-fields](http://afop.org/children-in-the-fields)) or the Child Labor Coalition’s website ([stopchildlabor.org](http://stopchildlabor.org)). ♦



# 50 Years of Farmworker Jobs Programs

By Katy Nelson, Director of Workforce Development, AFOP

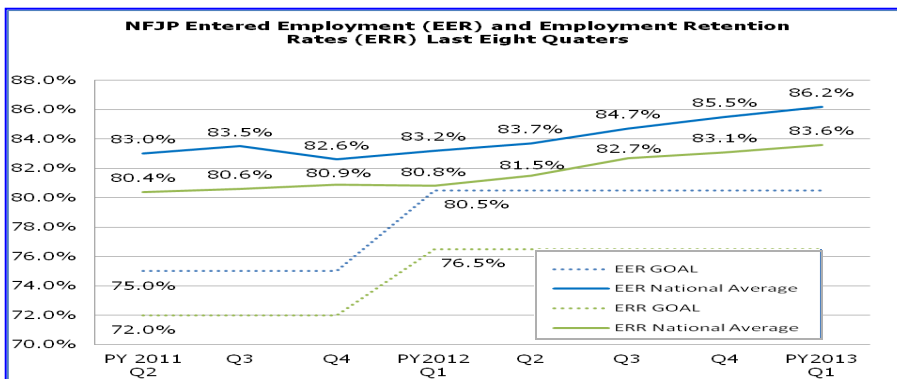
2014 marks fifty years since President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA), establishing many of the features of our current workforce development approach for migrant and seasonal farmworker programs, evolving into the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) we know today.



A 1969 U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity document (<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED028877>) discusses the need of a “program for unskilled, under-educated migrant and seasonal farm workers.” It emphasizes that these programs should have their major thrust in preparing breadwinners for upgraded jobs and in preparing entire farmworker families for

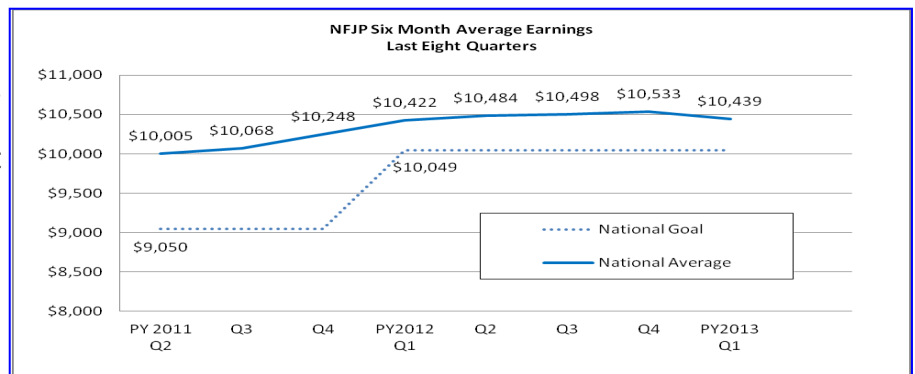
adjustment to the way of life that new jobs will bring. “Projects outlined emphasize basic literacy skills, pre-vocational training, family rehabilitation, day care, and housing programs. Unique approaches devised by individuals and agencies to meet the problems of rapid job displacement and poverty of the farm worker are also briefly described.

It is not surprising that a program with such a long history continually exceeds the rigorous common measure performance goals set by the US Department of Labor (DOL). Over the last 24 months, NFJP grantees have served more than 20,000 MSFWs and their dependants providing a range of services, from ESL and GED classes, to vocational and on-the-job training. Each quarter the program has exceeded the performance goals for employment placement, retention rates and average earnings, even as the national goals were increased in program year 2012.



The Entered Employment Rate (EER) is the percentage of participants who are employed in the first quarter after they exit the program. Employment Retention Rate (ERR) is the percentage of participants who are employed three and six months after program exit.

The six month average earnings are calculated based on the amount individuals earn in the first six months after program exit. ♦



# Developing Relationships with Employers

by Vicki Lumpkins, SER, Kansas

The following is a testament to the value of NFJP grantees developing long-term relationships with local employers.



Paul-Wertenberger Construction Inc.  
Photo submitted by SER, Kansas

SER Corporation Inc. (SER) is the Kansas grantee for the Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act, Section 167, otherwise known as the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), a training and employment program aimed at improving the livelihood of migrant or seasonal farmworkers in the United States.

Paul-Wertenberger Construction Inc., is a general design and building contractor business based in Kansas. Steve Paul and Bob Wertenberger specialize in custom residential homes, commercial constructions, custom cabinet, metal buildings, and remodel projects. Paul-Wertenberger is the recipient of several Associated General Contracts of Kansas awards for their construction projects. It also has been voted #1 home builder of the year seven times and was a finalist in 2010 Reader's Choice Awards.

Paul-Wertenberger Construction Inc. and Vicki Lumpkins of SER work together to assist individuals while guiding them into construction careers.

During the last seventeen years, the construction company has utilized SER's On-the-Job Training (OJT) service 25 times! This NFJP service helps seasonal and migrant farm workers develop marketable skills leading to steady, year-round, permanent employment.

SER clients have been trained as general construction laborers, framers, concrete layers, and cabinet makers. Paul-Wertenberger treats their employees well by offering good pay and benefits. This is not something many farm workers are accustomed to from past employers. Through its participation in the SER OJT service, Paul-Wertenberger Construction Inc., has saved, and been reimbursed for, more than \$21,000.

Not only has SER helped its clientele secure full-time permanent positions with benefits, but when needed, it has helped with purchasing professional tools and gas to get to and from work until their first paycheck arrived. Additionally, some clients received help with rent and/or groceries until that first paycheck was cashed and they began realizing the rewards of their efforts.

SER clients not only earn job stability, but gain pride in their work knowing they are employed by a prominent company that prides itself on quality workmanship. Throughout the years some NFJP graduates have even advanced into management positions within this company.

"SER Corporation Inc. has been very helpful in standing along side their clients, helping them through the training process and change-over from the farming industry into construction." says Sher Maska of Paul-Wertenberger.

Maska also shared that, as a company that sincerely cares about its workforce, management is proud to have played a positive roll in the lives of several previous employees who left Paul-Wertenberger Construction Inc. and are still making a good living working construction. Recently, one employee left our company to go back to farming then decided for the second time that farm work is not for him, and is now working for Paul-Wertenberger Inc, again!

SER and Paul-Wertenberger Construction Inc. look forward to many more years of productive partnering. ♦



# Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

## Success Story Basics

- Include a clear, high resolution picture (.jpeg). (Be sure to have a signed release form.)
- Describe the length of time and type of farm work your client performed.
- Define his/her earnings/benefits both before and after participating in the NFJP.
- Explain how he/she learned about the NFJP and why they enrolled.
- How has this transformed his/her life and family? What are his/her current goals? How will this training help him/her achieve future goals?
- Be sure to emphasize the role and impact of NFJP.

### Additional Tips:

- Clients hired by new employers are more compelling than ones hired by a training organization.
- Use active voice to make your story more dynamic.
- Describe the individual hardships. Details help your reader gain a clear and compelling picture of the great successes achieved through NFJP training.

Maria, a single mother of three, worked for the last six years tying vines in California's vineyards, stooping to fill pails with delicate blueberries, and harvesting asparagus. Despite starting work at 4:00a.m. in the dark and damp mornings; the threat of heat exhaustion during the sweltering summer days; and a sore body when she left the fields after dark; Maria was supporting herself and children on just \$10,000 per year.

- Include a quote:

"Thinking I could ease my parents' financial burden, I dropped out of high school to also work in the fields. I didn't know it at the time, but that was the worst decision I ever made. The best decision I ever made was to participate with NFJP and return to school!"

- Specific dollar amounts are KEY as they speak to the NFJP Common Measures.

"Maria went from \$7/hr. with no benefits to \$14/hr. with insurance, leave, and vacation."

- Remember, most people are blind to the manual labor and human cost involved in getting safe and affordable food to their tables. It is up to you to paint the picture.

# Success Stories

## Kandy Ruiz

Story by: Leon Ortega, Rocky Mountain-SER



Graduation day from Colorado State University, Pueblo. Photo courtesy of Ms Ruiz.

As a child, Kandy Ruiz and her family migrated from Arizona to Colorado each summer to work in the onion fields of the Arkansas Valley in Southeast Colorado.

At eight years old she began working alongside her parents and siblings harvesting onions, at \$1 per sack, to help the family earn a living. As you can

imagine, the family had difficulty making ends meet. Each summer, Kandy worked long hours in the local fields surrounding Rocky Ford, Colorado where temperatures often reach 110 degrees or higher during the summer.

She also migrated with her family to Florida where she would climb ladders to harvest oranges and grapefruit in the orchards of the great "Sunshine State."

As the daughter of migrant farmworkers, her journey in learning office work began with Rocky Mountain SER (RMSER) at the age of 16. Kandy met Linda Pantoya, Field Representative of the Rocky Ford office, and enrolled into the WIA 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). Kandy entered a Work Experience in the RMSER office where she gained work experience during her sophomore and senior years of high school. Her senior year was particularly difficult as she worked, attended three different schools, and for most year was homeless with her family.

The NFJP provided supportive services to assist the migrant family when they arrived in Colorado to work. College seemed far from her reach, but with persistence she graduated high school and started attending college in the fall of 2007 at Colorado State University-Pueblo. Kandy stated "my freshman year was overwhelming, as I was still overcoming a language barrier."

While attending college in 2011, Kandy earned a scholarship to attend school in Italy while continuing her studies. Soon after, she received an invitation from the University of Hermosillo, in Sonora, Mexico, to present her research during a conference. In 2012 she attended two conferences and was offered an opportunity to travel to Atlanta, Georgia for the Hispanic Scholarship Conference, and the Hispanic Association of Universities Conference in Washington D.C.

Although working three jobs and attending school was a challenge, she graduated in May 2013 with a bachelor's of arts in Spanish with a minor in Italian, and a bachelor's of science in sociology with an emphasis in criminology.

Kandy states, "I am blessed to say that my life experiences and my parents have motivated me to continue with my education. My goal is to attend graduate school and obtain a Ph.D. in Spanish. Education is hard, but not impossible."

Kandy is now employed full-time at CSU-Pueblo as a program assistant in the Student Support Center where she helps college students who are pursuing their own college educations. She is proud of her accomplishments and has dreams of becoming a university professor.

Kandy is just one example of how the WIA 167 NFJP can assist our migrant youth farmworkers understand the importance of work and education in their pursuit of the American Dream. ♦

# Success Stories

## Adam Wood

Story by: Tia Baker, ORO Development Corp.



Mr. Wood  
Photo courtesy of ORO  
Development Corp.

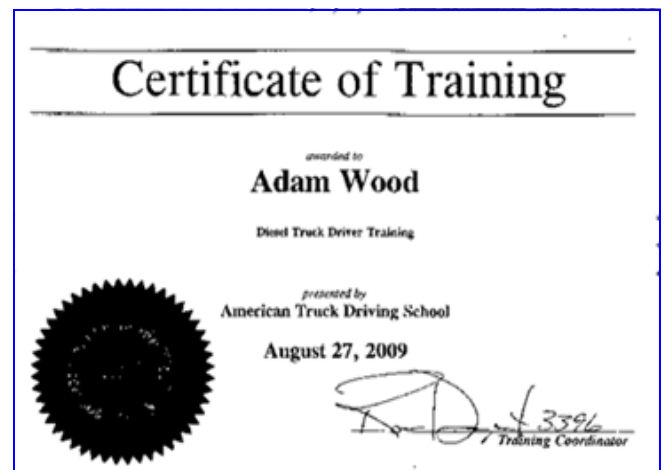
Adam Wood contacted the Altus ORO field office to inquire about training. He had heard about ORO from Mickey Pierce, at the American Truck Driving School in Lawton, Oklahoma. Mr. Wood had worked for several farmers over the years. He tried to work at other places, but due to a past felony, he was

rejected, sending him back to the farm fields. Mr. Wood wanted to attend CDL School. With CDL training, Mr. Wood knew he would always have a job and be in demand.

Mr. Wood didn't mind hard work, as he was used to building fences in 110 degree temps. Since Round-Up Ready Cotton, Mr. Wood said there wasn't much cotton chopping to do. So to keep working, he would pick up and haul stumps, drive tractors and run irrigation. Mr. Wood worked long hard hours and made minimum pay. His hourly rates ranged from \$5.00 to \$7.00 an hour, depending on the farmer and the type of job his was doing. This amount still averaged less than \$5,000.00 for a whole year. When the work was out, Mr. Wood would get back on food stamps and make payout payments for his rent; usually getting evicted before finding another place to work.

Mr. Wood was ready to overcome the barrier of not having the training to better his life. He attended CDL training in Lawton, Oklahoma,

and learned his skill very quickly. Mr. Wood was very pleased when he learned that there were additional supportive services to help him while he attended CDL training. With ORO paying just one month's rent, Mr. Wood was able to study without worrying about being evicted again. Mr. Wood completed his CDL training and got his new license. He used his ORO stipend to pay for additional driving endorsements. Mr. Wood quickly became employed. After his first month follow-up Mr. Wood stated, "I cannot thank you enough. I can pay my rent, buy food, and know that at the end of the day I will still have a job."



Mr. Wood is still employed as a commercial truck driver. He makes \$16.00 an hour; averaging more that \$35,000 per year. He is now married and proud of his ability to support both his wonderful wife and beautiful daughter.

Mr. Wood is just one of many underemployed people who have come through ORO's doors with little hope for a financially stable future, but who successfully participated with the NFJP and left with valuable skills that allowed them to pursue a better life. ♦

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## Success Stories

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### Daughter and Mother Earn Degrees

Story by: Danielle Briggs and Christie Mata, Oregon Human Development Corporation



Rebeca at work. Photo Courtesy of Oregon Human Development Corporation

Rebeca entered the Oregon Human Development Corporation's (OHDC) employment and training program in February 2011. It was clear from the start that Rebeca was a highly motivated individual, but that didn't prepare us for all that she would accomplish while in the program. Nor did we know when she began

how she would go on to directly influence and inspire other clients to excel through motivating themselves and recognizing that they had it within themselves to achieve whatever they set their mind to.

Rebeca grew up in a very impoverished area in Oaxaca, Mexico and was raised by her parents alongside her eleven siblings. When interviewed last year regarding her story, she spoke of the suffering she faced from a very early age and recounted having to start working by the age of five. She spoke of how she helped her mother make tortillas as early as four in the morning, would then attend school, and would come home to continue working. The family's home had no running water and the children had to do their part to transport buckets of water from a nearby creek daily in order to bathe and cook.

When Rebeca first began with OHDC, she knew her goal was to become a teaching assistant and was already working on completing her GED through another agency. She eventually graduated and went on to inspire other female clients to complete their GED. Additionally, she earned a Child Development Associate Certification through OHDC's partner agency,

Community Action; completed her CPR and 1st Aid certification; obtained her Oregon Food Handler's Card; and eventually completed 160 hours of training. She also had the opportunity to complete a Work Experience with another partner agency, El Centro Cultural, where she worked in its child care facility for three months to gain more experience. In addition to the paid training, she signed herself up as a volunteer with another Head Start program with another partner agency, The Oregon Child Development Coalition. During this time, she went on to receive her United States Citizenship and attended English as a Second Language courses at Portland Community College, all while raising her five children.

Her efforts eventually paid off when she was offered a part-time Spanish teaching position with a local pre-school called Wildwood Nature School last year. Once she completed her year with the Wildwood Nature School, she was forced back into farm work temporarily, which pushed her to work even harder to gain full-time employment as a teaching assistant. Once again, her determination paid off and she was offered a full-time position in a licensed facility starting at \$10 per hour.

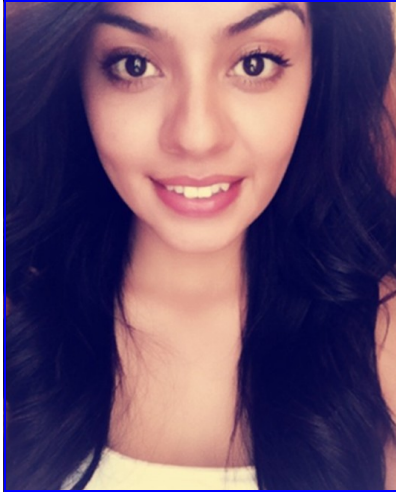
Rebeca will complete, and receive, her CDA credentials this month. She is excited to be gainfully employed and plans to continue improving her English and working with her children to help them excel. Rebeca's daughter, Odalis, joined OHDC in the fall and has completed her certified nursing assistant 1 training, is attending school full-time in preparation for a nursing degree, and is a recipient of the Hope Scholarship for the C.N.A. 2 training this spring.

Rebeca's drive and determination has not only effected her family, but many others who both work at, and work with, the Oregon Human Development Corporation. ♦

## Success Stories

### Working to Become a Physician

Story by: Roni Spetalnick, HELP-New Mexico Inc.



Maritza Sanchez  
Photo courtesy of Telamon

**M**aritza has been working in the fields since she was thirteen. It was then that her father was hurt while working in the construction industry and as a result was unable to support the family. As Maritza's mother stated, she became responsible for

"bringing home the bacon." So along side their mother, she and her siblings began working the fields during the summers and after school in order to put food on the table and pay the bills. Maritza tells of the long days in the heat of the New Mexico sun and how those experiences gave her an appreciation of family and education.

Maritza was raised in Hatch, New Mexico. Hatch is a small town in the southwestern part of the state. It was there that Maritza learned what hard work was all about. While other thirteen year olds were enjoying their summers travelling with their families, off to camp, or just hanging out with their friends, she was working eight hours a day in searing heat picking those world renowned Hatch chilies and sweet onions. While other kids were learning how to swim, play softball or learn new sports, Maritza was learning how to protect herself from the poison of the pesticide sprays, how to prevent her hands from burning as she picked the hot chilies, and how to stay cool and comfortable in heat that often rose to well over 100 degrees. It was from these experiences that she committed herself to furthering her

education so that the story she told her own children would be of her work as a youth in the fields, not a story of how the fields became her life's work.

Following her graduation from Hatch High School, Maritza attended Kaplan College where she received a certificate as a Medical Assistant. For some this would have been the end of the journey, but not for Maritza. She then decided she could do better. She enrolled in Dona Ana Community College where she became a Certified Nursing Assistant. For some THIS would be the end of the journey, but again, not for Maritza. That brings us to today where HELP-New Mexico met Maritza through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) that is also helping her upgrade her skills in order to enter the nursing program at New Mexico State University. HELP-NM is providing her with some assistance to buy books and pay for gas so she can travel the 70 miles a day to and from school, and, if there is anything left over, the money even helps to offset some of the very expensive tuition costs associated with the program.

Maritza is a model of what a person, with limited resources, can accomplish with a lot of determination, and a little assistance from the NFJP and HELP-New Mexico. There is no doubt that she has proven her commitment and thirst for learning. In fact, she is even thinking about fulfilling her ultimate dream of becoming a physician.

Maritza, you can and you will achieve your dreams. Way To Go! ♦

## 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