

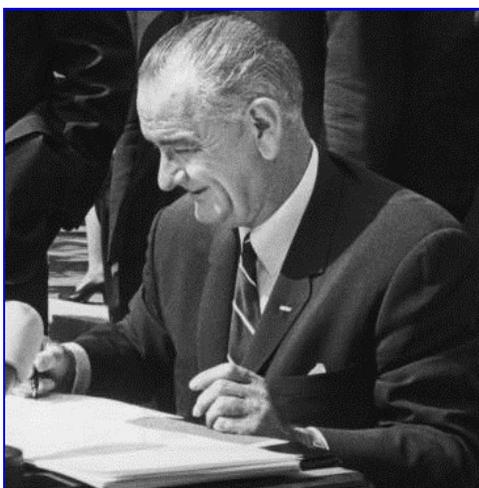


## 50 Years On: The Laudable Legacy of the War on Poverty

By Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

**F**ifty years ago, in January of 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a “War on Poverty” and introduced initiatives designed to improve the education, health, skills, jobs, and access to economic resources of those struggling to make ends meet, including, notably, the nation’s farmworkers. To mark that occasion and to provide some perspective 50 years on, President Obama’s Council of Economic Advisors issued a report earlier this year that makes the unequivocal case that, while work remains undone, these programs over the last five decades have had significant success in reducing poverty by expanding economic

opportunity and rewarding hard work. The Council’s report asserts the following:



LBJ signs Economic Opportunity Act of 1964

poverty line, including 13.4 million children.

- While the United States is often seen as the land of economic opportunity, only about half of low-income Americans make it out of the lowest income distribution quintile over a 20-year period. Studies also point to strong lingering effects from growing up in poverty.

*This significant decline in poverty is largely due to programs that have historically enjoyed bipartisan support and increase economic security and opportunity.*

- A measure of “market poverty,” that reflects what the poverty rate would be without any tax credits or other benefits, rose from 27.0 percent to 28.7 percent on the one hand, and inequality, wage stagnation, and a declining minimum wage on the other resulted in “market poverty” increasing slightly over this period. However, poverty measured taking antipoverty and social insurance programs into account fell by more than a third, highlighting the essential role that these programs have played in fighting poverty.

### This Issue...

- 1 50 Years On: The Laudable Legacy of the War on Poverty
- 5 Benefits of Having Health & Safety Programs
- 6 National Farmworker Jobs Program: Then and Now
- 6 2014 Art and Essay Contest Winners
- 14 Success Stories

*Poverty has declined by more than one-third since 1967.*

- The percent of the population in poverty, when measured to include tax credits and other benefits, has declined from 25.8 percent in 1967 to 16.0 percent in 2012.

*Despite real progress in the War on Poverty, there is more work to do.*

- In 2012, there were 49.7 million Americans grappling with the economic and social hardships of living below the

- Programs designed to increase economic security and opportunity lifted over 45 million people from poverty in 2012, and led to an average of 27 million people lifted out of poverty per year for 45 years between 1968 and 2012. Cumulatively, these efforts prevented 1.2 billion “person years” of poverty over this period.
- Social Security has played a crucial role in lowering poverty among the elderly. Poverty among those aged 65 and older was 35 percent in 1960. Following rapid expansions in Social Security in the 1960s and 1970s, poverty among the elderly fell to 14.8 percent in 2012.
- These programs are especially important in mitigating poverty during recessions. Despite an increase in “market poverty” of 4.5 percentage points between 2007 and 2010, the poverty rate, appropriately measured, rose only 0.5 percentage points



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.

The publication is funded by subscriptions and the members of AFOP. The *Washington Newsline* receives no financial support from the federal government.

**Managing Editor:** Daniel Sheehan

**Editor/Lead Reporter:** Robert J. Crumley

Staff may be reached by calling (202) 828-6006

due to both existing programs and immediate actions taken by President Obama when he took office in response to last decade’s financial crisis.

- “Deep poverty” – defined as the fraction of individuals living below 50 percent of the poverty line – has declined as a result of these programs. Without government tax credits or other benefits, 19.2 percent of the U.S. population would have been in deep poverty in 2012, but when these benefits are factored in, only 5.3 percent were in deep poverty.

*Programs that strengthen economic security and increase opportunity continue to be essential in keeping millions of Americans out of poverty and helping them work their way into the middle class.*

- Social Security benefits reduced the 2012 poverty rate by 8.5 percentage points among all individuals, and by 39.9 percentage points among those aged 65 or older.
- Tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) reduced the 2012 poverty rate by 3.0 percentage among children.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly known as the Food Stamp Program – reduced poverty in 2012 by 1.6 percentage points among all individuals, and by 3.0 percentage among children.
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) reduced poverty by 0.8 percentage points in 2012.

*Antipoverty programs have been increasingly oriented around rewarding and encouraging work, and are an important source of opportunity for low-income working families.*

- Both the EITC and the partially refundable component of the CTC increase the reward to work, offsetting payroll taxes and providing a supplement to labor market earnings. Research has shown this increases work and earnings, and increases

participation in the workforce, particularly for single parents.

- Some traditional antipoverty programs have been redesigned to encourage and promote work. The vast majority of Americans receiving nutrition assistance have a job, are either too young to work or over age 65, or are disabled. Meanwhile, bipartisan welfare reform signed by President Clinton in 1996 strengthened work requirements and put a greater emphasis on employment.



- Despite concerns that antipoverty programs may discourage employment, the best research suggests that work disincentive effects are small or nonexistent for most programs.

*Programs that help fight poverty and provide economic security touch a wide swath of Americans at some point in their lives.*

- Programs that fight poverty help a broad range of Americans get back on their feet after economic misfortune. For example, about half of taxpayers with children used the EITC at some point between 1979 and 2006, and over two-thirds of Americans aged 14 to 22 in 1979 received income from SNAP, AFDC/TANF, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or UI at some point between 1978 and 2010.

- Social Security Old Age and Survivors' Insurance, Social Security Disability Insurance, and UI are available to all Americans with a steady work history. These social insurance programs play an important role in keeping out of poverty those who retire, experience a work-limiting disability, lose a parent or spouse, or lose a job through no fault of their own.

*The economic and social benefits from these programs go beyond just helping reduce poverty in the current generation.*

- Increased access to SNAP for children has been found to lead to better health and greater economic self-sufficiency in adulthood.
- Increased family income in childhood from the EITC and CTC leads to higher student achievement.
- The long-term effects of Head Start and other high-quality early childhood programs include higher educational attainment, employment and earnings, and lower rates of teen pregnancy and crime, as beneficiary children become teenagers and young adults.

*More recent initiatives are helping in the War on Poverty.*

- The Affordable Care Act ensures all Americans have access to health insurance, by providing the resources and flexibility states need to expand their Medicaid programs to all people who are in or near poverty, as well as financial help so people can find health plans that fit their needs and their budgets.
- The administration expanded the "refundability" of the Child Tax Credit, making it available to millions of working parents who were previously ineligible. It also expanded the EITC for larger families, who face disproportionately high poverty rates, and for low-income married couples. Together, these expansions benefit

*50 Years ON—continued from page 4*

approximately 15 million families by an average of \$800 per year.

- The White House has proposed increased employment and training opportunities for adults who are low-income or long-term unemployed. It also proposed summer and year-round opportunities for youth along with reforms to our unemployment system to make it more of a re-employment system, and community college initiatives to reform our higher education system and support training partnerships with business in high-demand industries.



Obama signing the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act of 2014

- Other achievements include making college more affordable by reforming student loan programs, raising the maximum Pell Grant, and establishing the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which is the first partially refundable tax credit for college; placing 372,000 low-income youth into summer and year-round employment in 2009 and 2010; improving access to school meal programs that help children learn and thrive; and extending minimum wage and overtime protections to nearly all home care workers to help make their jobs more financially rewarding.

- The fundamental lesson of the past 50 years, the report claims, is that the nation has made progress in the War on Poverty largely through bipartisan efforts to strengthen economic security and increase opportunity. As the

economy improves, rather than cut these programs and risk leaving hardworking Americans behind, the report says we need to build on the progress we have made to strengthen and reform them. Going forward, we should not lose sight of the positive part government can continue to play in reducing economic hardship and ensuring access to economic opportunity for all citizens. At the same time, sustainable improvements are only possible if we create jobs and speed the economic recovery in the short run, raise economic growth in the long run, and work to ensure that the benefits of a growing economy reach all Americans.

While AFOP and its member organizations are justifiably proud of the tremendous difference they have made in the lives of farmworkers over these past 50 years, they know all too well what the Council's report states in no uncertain terms: so much work remains to be done. Earlier this summer, Congress took an important step in allowing our good work to continue by passing bipartisan legislation reauthorizing important federal workforce development activities, including the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). President Obama signed that legislation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), into law on July 22. AFOP has written to the United States Department of Labor offering to assist the department in its drafting of the new WIOA regulations. The Association looks forward to a close collaboration with the agency in this important work, and to embarking on the next 50 years of helping farmworkers make better lives for themselves and their families.

The Council's report can be found in its entirety here:

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/50th\\_anniversary\\_cea\\_report\\_-\\_final\\_post\\_embargo.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/50th_anniversary_cea_report_-_final_post_embargo.pdf) ◆

# Benefits of Having a Health & Safety Program

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

Since inception of the Health & Safety division of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) in 1995, its member agencies have impacted over 400,000 farmworkers through trainings, direct services and referrals. The nature of farmwork is dangerous and harmful to the health of farmworkers and their family members.

Through our programs, a network of over 130 trainers focus on the potentially dangerous effects of pesticides, highlighting symptoms associated with acute pesticide poisoning, the importance of seeking medical attention, and raising awareness about the chronic effects of pesticide exposure.

We recognize the many obstacles farmworkers face to improving their lives and the effort they invest to create a viable future for themselves. Throughout the last two years, the AFOP Health & Safety has combined and consolidated all of our programs and funding opportunities to create a more viable and successful training program. The new structure benefits both the farmworker community and AFOP's membership while continuing to comply with funders' requirements.

In 2013, our network of trainers impacted over 27,000 farmworkers through pesticide safety and heat stress prevention trainings. During the first nine months of 2014 our network trained over 23,000. With another three months of trainings to go, we anticipate surpassing last year's tally.

We asked a few participating agencies to provide feedback on the value they receive from partnering with Health & Safety Programs. These are just a few of the benefits mentioned by our trainers and coordinators:

- Outreach with dual purpose (training program and recruitment for NFJP)
- Building strong relationships with growers and the local farmworker community
- New funding opportunities

- Trainers become community leaders
- Staff engagement
- Community presence and involvement
- Expand the capacity of the organization by actually having a health & safety program
- Gaining access into difficult-to-enter corporations
- Multiple partnerships with other organizations, government agencies, community leaders, service providers, among others
- Free staff professional development
- Maintain an active relationship with AFOP
- Flexibility of program accommodates needs of each site
- Unrestricted funding for participating sites
- Free exposure to local media (radio, news, newspaper)

Most importantly, together we are helping farmworkers and their families to have a safer and healthier lives by providing valuable information and the necessary tools to make better informed decisions for themselves and their loved ones.

Look for us at AFOP's upcoming National Conference in San Diego where we will be providing more details of our training program. Visit us near the conference registration table and ask how AFOP Health & Safety Programs can benefit your agency.

With our new program year beginning January 2015, this is a great time to begin thinking about including new programs.

You can also contact me for additional information at [forti@afop.org](mailto:forti@afop.org). ♦



# National Farmworker Jobs Program: Then and Now

By Katy Nelson, Director NFJP, AFOP

In May of 1984 following an AFOP Board meeting, the United States Department of Labor and AFOP partnered to host a Peer-Exchange Conference. This year AFOP was excited to re-launch the peer-exchange program 30 years later with hosted site visits and opportunities for sharing and exchange at regional and national conferences. At this year's national conference, attendees are invited to participate in round-table discussions on a wide variety of topics. Studying the topics of the past and looking at where we are now, one thing is clear: AFOP's members remain just as committed to improving their programs as they are to improving the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers across the country.

Back then, attendees discussed the transition from manual to automated information systems. This year people will be gathering at our national conference to discuss what it is like to go paperless!

Just like folks gathered to discuss counseling techniques, testing and evaluation in the past, this year, case managers attending the national conference will have roundtables on case management strategies for hard-to-serve participants, continuous assessments, and developing individual employment plans.

In 1984, conference attendees were invited to submit topic ideas by snail mail; this year for the national conference topic discussions over email and conference calls have made for a diverse, customized program, and an opportunity for wonderful best-practices exchange and review.

The Program Operations Sub-work Group, along with the Department, have planned specific training for the Executive Directors and for mid to upper level management staff. The following identifies the topic areas to be covered:

<u>Executive Directors</u>	<u>Peer-Exchange Conference</u>
Electronic Fund Transfer System	<u>Job Development/Counseling</u>
Audit Compliance Supplement	Testing and Evaluation
ETA Staffing & Re-organization	Employability Development
Grant Negotiations	Planning
*****	Counseling Techniques
* Sheraton National Hotel *	Job Development
* Columbia Pike & Washington Blvd. *	<u>Planning</u>
* Arlington, Virginia *	Training Mix
* \$5/Single, \$70/Double *	Customized Training
* (Free Sheraton Limousine *	Youth Planning
* Service from National Airport) *	<u>Management Information Systems</u>
* (For your information) *	Transition: Manual to Automated
*****	Integration with other Dept.
	Regulations/Reporting

## 2014 Art and Essay Contest Winners

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

As many as 500,000 children are currently working in agriculture in the United States, yet their voices are rarely heard and their struggles are rarely understood. AFOP's annual Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Children Essay & Art Contests are a concerted effort by the *Children in the Fields Campaign* to help farmworker children share their stories and document their experiences.

Children ages 10-18 from farmworker families were invited to participate in the contests to share their personal stories. This year's contest made possible through the generosity of the American Federation of Teachers.

The 2014 theme, selected by this year's sponsor, was "From our Hands to Your Table." It drew entries depicting the daily lives and

hardships farmworkers in America endure to put the fruits and vegetables we eat each day on our tables. Entries came from throughout the United States, with the winning submissions selected by the Child Labor Coalition.

The winners of this year's contest will receive cash prizes to support their education. The prize money allows the contest winners to purchase needed school supplies such as backpacks, school clothes and books. First-prize winners are also invited to present their winning entries at AFOP's 2014 National Conference, September 23-25 in San Diego, California.

In addition to appearing in *AFOP's Washington Newslines*, the winning essays and artwork will be compiled, along with other selected entries, in educational materials that will be presented

to members of Congress. These images and words illuminate the struggles and hopes of our nation's most marginalized population. They demonstrate the potential that exists for every young child when given the opportunity to work hard in the classroom and not in the fields.

To maintain the voices of the farmworker children, none of the following essays were edited. The essays are printed as they were received, with no changes to spelling, punctuation, or grammar.

You can find more information, including all of our winning entries and the guidelines for next year's contest, by visiting our website:

[www.afop.org/children-in-the-fields/connect-with-cif/](http://www.afop.org/children-in-the-fields/connect-with-cif/).

## **La Vida en El Campo**

Lizeth Caballero, 13

Bakersfield, CA

1st place - Essay Contest Winner

Ages 10-13

**F**arm working, field work, agricultural people, what is the first idea that comes to you when hearing these words? When these words come to me, I think...“farmworking”, is a place where crops are being grown and people are under the scorching sun, picking crops. “Field work”, is my idea of getting up every morning, working in faraway fields. “Agricultural people”, comes to me as Hispanic people, undocumented workers, humans who desire a better future for their future generations. All these farming words, ideas, and expressions, are my family.

To start off, my parents work in the fields dealing with the grapes. They set up, plant, pick, and pack grapes. A typical work day for these farm workers is hard. It's getting up in the early morning; for example, my mother gets up at 4:00 a.m. to make lunch and prepare for the busy day. They drive about 45 minutes to an hour to reach the destination. From getting to work, to working in the extreme heat where there's hardly shade. After, they travel in their own transportation or carpool home. Exhausted, their duty is to come home and attend the family.

Not only do parents go through this difficult work, but their children go through lots of challenges. Younger children with farm working parents stay alone, when the parent or parents leave to work. Others have to wake up to be babysat in another home. My experience with this has not been easy. I was to wake up at 4:30 a.m., prepare all my belongings I'd need for that day. My parents would take us to the babysitter.

My future dreams are to live a successful life. I want to become a Gynecologist, Architectural Engineer, or FBI agent. I will reach these goals by achieving positive grades. I will study at one of the best universities. I know I will achieve these goals.

Farm workers are suffering every single day! Thanks to them, we have fruit on our tables and can transport fruits all over the world. This helps the economic needs and helps sustain life. I have had a difficult experience with being a child of a farm worker, but I always remember my parents my parents, and all other farm workers just want the best for their kids and future family. Thank you farm workers! Without you our future would not be preserved.

## **I Now Have Dreams**

Zulema Lopez, 17

Laredo, TX

1st place - Essay Contest Winner

Ages 14-18

**I**t's a summer day, the sun is rising, and the sound of my mother's cooking awakes me. Her meal will be enough to get us through the day that awaits us. One would think this was about a child that awakes to her mother's cooking to go to school like any other ordinary child, but that isn't the case here. My life is much more complex, even to this day. I live day by day struggling to get past each month with my family. Working in the fields is all we know, it's all we think we're good at, it's what we do to survive.

My family has been working in the fields for many generations; I as a fourth generation

*Art and Essays—continued on page 8*

farm worker still continue this cycle. We travel from Texas, Michigan, Florida, North Carolina, and even Tennessee. A typical summer for our family is going to Michigan and starting to work right away. While most families are on summer vacations, we are working. We have no days off. "Our ordinary lifestyle" is what we call it. We must work the fields, because we know that's the only source of income our family will get and we know the struggle it takes to support ourselves.

Our summer starts off with asparagus season for about four weeks. We work about ten to twelve hours every day. Then followed by the strawberry season, which is about 5 to 6 weeks, depending on how it grew. As soon as the strawberry season ends, it gets tougher. Cucumber season begins, which involves working fifteen to sixteen hours a day. We work from sunrise to sundown. At this point, we work in the hottest time of the summer. As much as I would like for our farm work to end there, it doesn't. Harvesting apples in my opinion is not the easiest, but it's the nicest. I always say this is my favorite crop to pick, only because it's in the winter. Due to the time change, it gets darker and we get to go home earlier. This is just a glimpse into my family's summer and early winter.

Falling behind in my studies is the main problem that I face every time I move from state to state to work in the fields. For example, during my freshmen year I attended four high schools. I was devastated when my counselor advised me that I was lacking credits and that I was going to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> year freshmen. Luckily my counselor arranged for me to attend summer school. I dedicated my summer to my studies and managed to gain two credits and catch up in school; though not going to work in the summer set me back financially. I usually struggle when I change schools, because all of my classes are all very advanced by the time I arrive in the middle of the school year. I get very stressed out about my grades dropping while continuing to work on the side. Not many individuals understand my lifestyle, but I must do what is needed in order to provide for my family.

When asked about my dreams four years ago, I said I didn't have any dreams. Today I'm proud to say that I do have dreams. My migrant counselor has helped me greatly to get ahead in school with the help of the migrant program at United Independent School District. As migrant students, we get support from everyone in the district and it drives me to succeed in life. My dream is to break my family's cycle of poverty and working in the fields. I want to go to a university and be a role model to my brother and sisters; to show my siblings that if I'm able to succeed and achieve my dreams, they can as well.

## **We Don't Always Go Together**

Evelyn Arroyo, 10

Livermore, CA

2nd place - Essay Contest Winner

Ages 10-13

*Translated from Spanish*

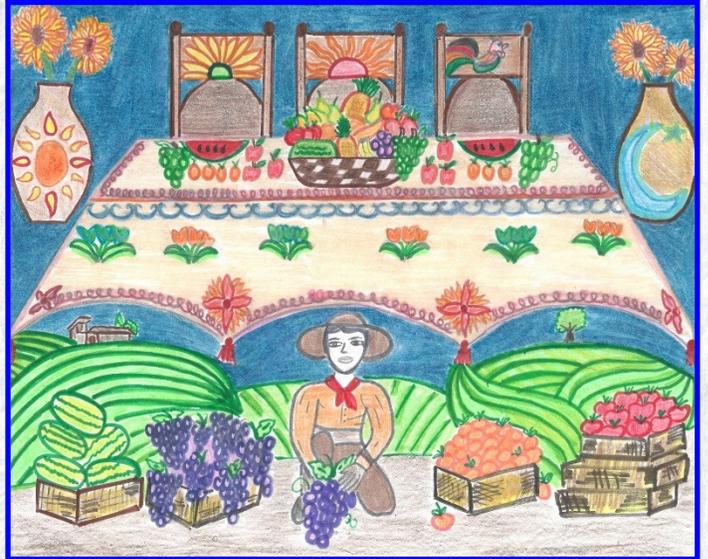
I have challenges. I remember the time when I was 4 years old. My mom, Mamá Leonor and Papá Jose Luis would wake up very early. It seemed like it was night when they were preparing their food and their tools for work. My mom carried me in her arms, blanketing me and my head leaned on her shoulder. This is how she carried me to the car and fastened me to my seat. Later, she carried me with covers and did the same with my brother for us to go.

In the nursery, after lunch, we played with toys and did an activity with the teacher. On the patio the kids and my brothers were playing but I took care of the plants and watched the bugs walk. After we were given a meal to eat and went to sleep again. My aunt Pina picked us up because my mom was working. Among other things, my mom works in the melon harvest. She brought me my favorite fruit, the melon. My mom would pack the melons. Each box weighed up to 30 pounds and fit 9, 12 or 15 melons. At night my mom had cramps on her fingers and they hurt, they swelled in a way that her hand could not make a fist.

# Congratulations



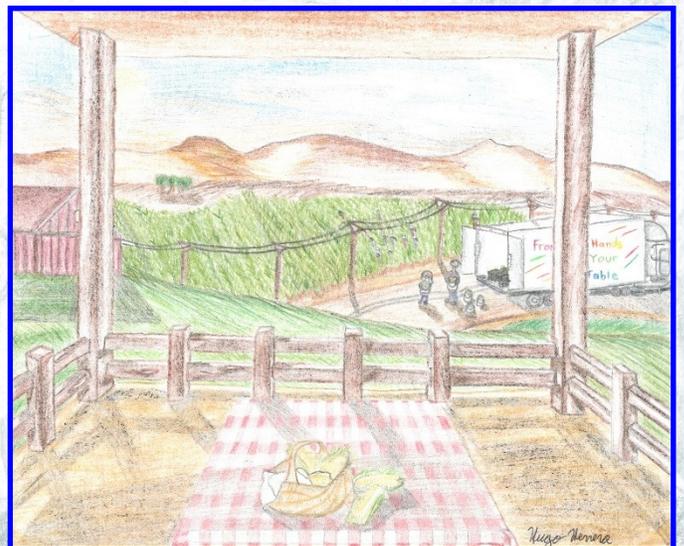
N. Gonzalez-Carmona, 1st Place Winner of AFOP's art contest for ages 10-13 youth



J. Soto-Gonzalez, 1st Place Winner of AFOP's art contest for ages 14-18 year old youth



J. Herrera, 2nd Place Winner of AFOP's art contest for 10-13 year old youth.



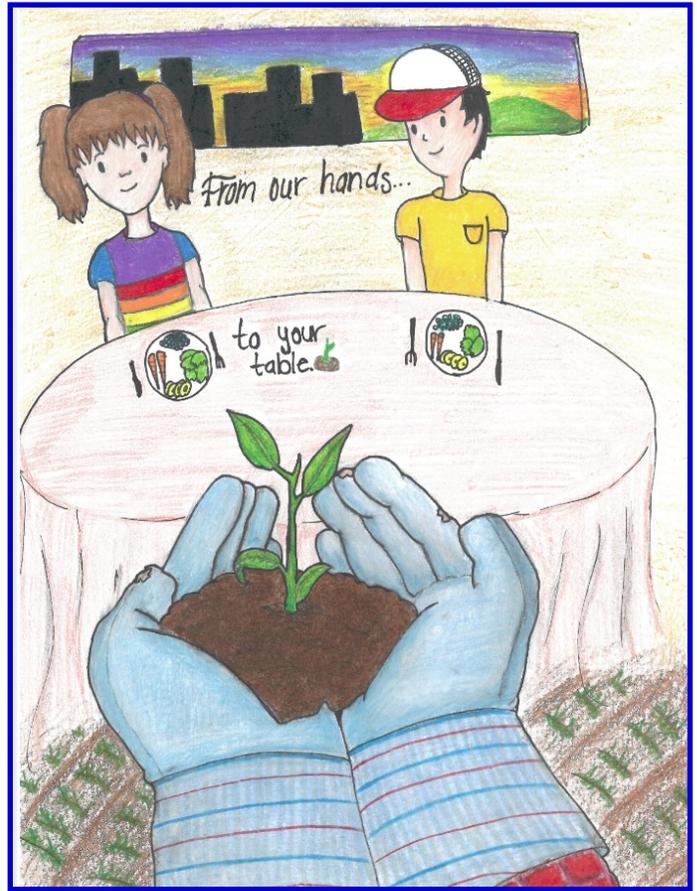
H. Herrera, 2nd Place Winner of AFOP's art contest for ages 14-18 old youth



J. Mendoza, 3rd Place Winner of AFOP's art contest for 14-18 year old youth.

My mom tells me about the dangers of the field. One is the temperature. Sometimes it is up to 105 degrees. You can have heart attacks, headaches, or faint of dehydration. The fertilizers are chemicals that are also dangerous. The most used fertilizer is called "Sulfur". They help the plants to grow more and produce fruits, beans, and vegetables quicker, but they hurt the little bugs so that they don't eat the plants. The worst is also that it affects the health of the workers. It causes irritation in the eyes and skin and can get in the lungs.

We do not always go together to follow the seasons. Sometimes only my brothers, my mom and I stay. I cannot see my father when he goes for cotton, alfalfa, or for grapes. He works very hard. My parents inspire me to study hard at school and I know that I will achieve what I want to.



J. Mendoza, 3rd Place Winner of AFOP's art contest for 14-18 year old youth.

I will study and achieve my dream. I am going to be an engineer. For now I work making scarves with two needles and a hook to sell. I have saved some 200 dollars. My new project is to embroider blouses by cross stitching in order to sell them and this way to save more. With effort, I will realize my dreams.

### **It is Not Easy**

Jose Pablo Borja Ramirez, 17  
Guthrie, KY  
2nd place - Essay Contest Winner  
Ages 14-18

**S**tarting my life here was a bit difficult. Starting school in the middle of second grade and knowing nothing of the English language complicated things, such as when I had to do homework and to

communicate with the teacher. I was fortunate enough to be put in a class with another Hispanic student that knew a bit of English. I was a bit frightened and frustrated because they

could not get the idea that I did not speak English. Then, the other Hispanic student intervened and told them my situation. During the next couple of months I focused on learning English. A couple of months later, the student that was translating told me that he was moving. I went home that day and cried, telling my mom that I did not want to go back to school since nobody would be able to help me now. She told me that I needed to be strong and to keep progressing, that things would only get better. I listened to her and I kept on fighting. Another month later, a new student came to our school. He did not know English. He was in the same situation I had once been in when I had just gotten here. This time, it was my turn to help him. This is how I found out that I like helping and teaching people. I have decided that I want to become a Spanish teacher, an ESL instructor, or be in the migrant program. I have concentrated on learning English and thriving in school. It took me a year and a half to learn English in a way that I could communicate with other people and that those people understood me.

Field work is not easy. I started working in it when I was around fifteen. Ever since then I have worked in the fields during summer vacation to at least earn some money for my school needs. I have mainly worked in tobacco doing a little bit of everything. It wasn't until this year that I tried something different. This year I worked in the strawberry fields. Just writing about this makes me remember so many things about working. The feeling of the sun shining on your face, on your arms, making your skin darker. The sweat, the result of the sun shining bright and the hard work that one is doing. The ache on your lower back when you are picking strawberries. The smell of the strawberries when they're ripe, the sweet taste of them when you try them every once in a while. The stickiness of the tobacco gum when it gets on your hands or arms, the bitter taste of it when you eat something and the taste

from your hand gets in your mouth. The awful smell of the chemicals when it is being sprayed, the way it sometimes makes you feel sick or gives you a headache. The smell of tobacco when it is brought down from the barn and when it's being stripped, the crunching of the leaves as you are doing this. The sound of the other workers talking and joking, making everybody feel hopeful that today is going to be a good day and making the hours pass by even faster. All of this leads to a day of hard work. A day full of dedication. A day to earn a bit more money. It is not very easy for a farm worker. Their day is very hard. They have to wake up early to eat breakfast and get everything ready for their day. They work for five straight hours, until their lunch time, usually at twelve. After that, they work for another three or four hours to complete their day. When they get home, some still have things to do there as well, like mowing the lawn, fixing things, and helping out with the children. Some don't really rest until they go to sleep. Many people have to do hard work to succeed in this country and to accomplish their dreams. It is not as easy as people think, but the only thing one can do is to keep moving forward.

## **Use All Your Strength**

Alondra Macario, 12

Bakersfield, CA

3rd place - Essay Contest Winner

Ages 10-13

How hard is the work in the fields? Have you ever stopped to wonder? The days in the fields are very heavy. They last through the hot, the cold, and the midweather. Imagine being out in those temperatures as you use all your strength. Are you still wondering what a typical field day looks like for a field worker?

A day in the fields is no easy job. My mother says the work in the fields is very difficult, and working eight to nine hours in the heat is heavy. She told me a little about how the work in the field is. When the days are cold, my mom wakes up very early to go to work. She takes big scissors, and she says she cuts branches

*Art and Essays—continued on page 12*

*Art and Essays—continued from page 11*

from the trees so the fruit can grow separated, and so it can give more fruit in the spring.

When the days are hot, she says she works from eight to nine hours daily. In that kind of temperature, my mother takes off the leaves around the fruit so it can be ready to cut and eat. In the fields the managers want the workers to do their jobs good and fast.

My mother told me a story about a man named Cesar Chavez; well, what she knows of him. She told me he fought for the rights of all the farm workers like my mom and all the other people who work in the fields. Now, thanks to him, the farm workers have cold water, shade, breaks, and first aid, what before the fields didn't provide.

She keeps working in the fields so she can give me a better education. I have learned how I am lucky to have an education, because with an education I can become a doctor and not have to work in the fields.

I have also learned that working in the fields is very rough because you work in both hot and cold temperatures. Being a farm worker, you must be able to pick things up, requiring you to be strong. At the end of the day, working in the fields can make you feel like a fish out of water; out of breath and tired. You can also end up with bruises, cuts, and other kinds of scares.

In conclusion, a typical day for a farm worker is hard, heavy, and difficult work to do.



## **From Our Hands to Your Table**

Maribel Corona, 16

Florida City, FL

3rd place - Essay Contest Winner

Ages 14-18

**I**t's Tuesday, 10:30 p.m. I'm exhausted. However, I refuse to allow drowsiness to take control over me, at least not until my mother gets home from work. It's mid-April, at this time of the year, demand for plants increases dramatically, forcing nursery workers to work later hours and arrive earlier to work than the norm. It's 10:53p.m. and my eyes widen as I hear the humming noise from my mom's car engine, pulling up in our drive way. I open the door and greet her. She's worn out, drenched in her own sweat, and I can tell she'd been on her knees most of the day, the brown muddy color on her pants speak for themselves. Looking at her come home cover in mud and see the pain on her face makes me teary because she deserves a better life. We only spoke for five minutes that day; at least I know she got home safe.

It all began with a dream. A dream my father had since he was a teenager in Mexico. It was April 1996, my parents decided to risk it all and migrate illegally into the United States. They took a gamble and swam across the "Rio Grande" not knowing how to swim well but they had to give it a try. By the grace of God my parents made it safely into Texas. Others have not been as luck as they were. Many have lost their live crossing the "Rio Grande". A week later, they were in Orangeville, South Carolina picking an assorted of fruits and vegetables. They picked strawberries, watermelons, corn, green peppers, green beans, and tomatoes. Once the crop season began to die off, my parents packed the few used clothing they owned and decided to migrant to Homestead, Florida. They were able to rent a one bedroom house in Redland Labor Camp, a housing community for migrant/labor workers. It was tough for them to say the least, for the first six months. They only ate canned foods that wouldn't spoil because they didn't own a

refrigerator because they didn't have enough money to buy one. The house did not come with air conditioner; they had to sleep with the windows open to make the house a little bit cooler. But that wouldn't help much; the temperatures would reach up to 90° degrees. The heat in the house was so unbearable that we ran the risk of someone coming into the house with our window open for ventilation. It is unimaginable to say the least but, I lived there the first nine years of my life.

Thankfully, my parents don't have to migrate in search of agriculture work because the plant nurseries are not seasonal in Florida, for the most part, is constant. When the crop dies off, my parents relocate to another field that is thriving from its harvest. However, my parents do still have to work under excruciating high temperatures, heavy rain, and the exposure to all kinds of life threatening pesticides. Working under these conditions I can see that they are beginning to affect my parent's physical appearance and health. I constantly rub aloe body lotion to cure my dad's skin that is throbbing and peeling from a bad sun burn. My mother suffers from a bladder and sleeping disorder, massive headaches on a daily basis due to the extreme heat exposure. Overtime, she has developed itchy sun spots on her face and arms that are a result from too much sun exposure. My parents also have spinal, eye and ear issues. These are the reasons why my parents don't allow my sisters and I to work in the fields anymore. They don't want to see us suffering the way they are.

The typical work day begins at 5:00 a.m. every morning. Everyone is out of the house by 6:30 a.m. My mom drops me off at my bus stop and my sister's at school. While my dad car pools with five other people. My mom's job begins at 8:00 a.m. She only gets two breaks per day, the first at 10:30 am and the last one at 2:30pm, which last only 30 minutes. Since she's been working in the fields for so long she has accustomed her bladder to hold her urine until her break time. The supervisors don't allow people going to the bathrooms any other time because they feel it slows down the production line. This rule also discourages

workers to drink less water in order not to have to need to use the bathroom, which increases the chance of someone having a heat stroke. But no one complains, because everyone needs their jobs.

My motivation to do well in school is my parents. No matter how tired I may be, or how hard my school work is, I cannot begin to compare it to my parents work. The dedication and sacrifices my parents have done and still do for me will never be forgotten. It's heart breaking for me to see my parents come home in pain and exhausted from work. My goal in life is to free my parents from this type of hard life. Don't get me wrong, working in the fields is an honest day of work, but there's no room for advancement. It's a dead end routine. However, I want to be the reason why my parent's daily struggles come to an end. I plan to be the first in my family to graduate from high school and attend college to further my education. I am working hard to get accepted into the University of Central Florida. Frankly, I'm still undecided on my major. Nevertheless, I do know that I want to dedicate my life in assisting others whether it's education, medicine, or physical assistance. Through volunteering, I've learned that I absolutely enjoy helping others. Unfortunately, due to my parent's financial and social circumstances, my sister's and I don't vacation like other families. That is why when an opportunity comes along my way and it has to do with travel or to learn, I take it. I want to expand my horizons because I know there is more out there than just Homestead, Florida.

I am willing to make a lot of sacrifices in order to reach my goal in life. My parent's hope for a better future is what keeps me motivated and striving to be the very best and I have no intentions in disappointing them. ♦

# Success Stories

## The Sun Does Shine

Story by: Proteus, Inc., California



Lupe Pasos Jr. at work as a Solar Technician. Photo by Proteus.

Success can be measured by how high a person has risen. A further measure of success is how far and how hard the person had to travel to get to that next level. The second measure will include efforts of the person –

and the efforts of the staff who assisted him on his journey.

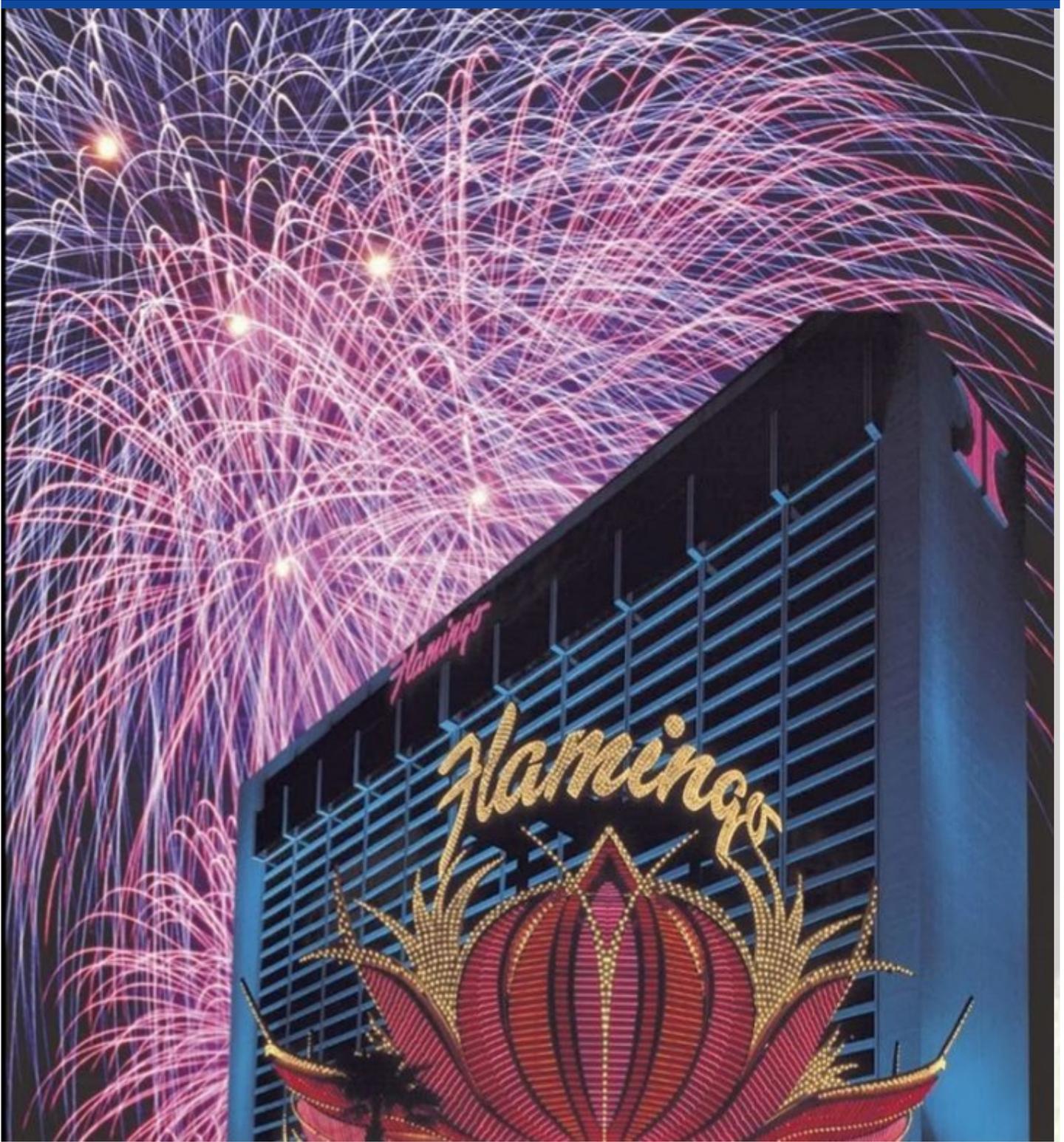
By both measures, Lupe Pasos, Jr. has been a success story. Lupe came to Proteus impoverished, desperate and frightened. He faced multiple barriers and lacked the confidence to resolve them. He was barely surviving, having earned \$2,398 doing field work in the past year. His driver's license had been suspended. Lupe could not pay his rent, turn on his utilities, fix his car, or provide for his girlfriend. He literally wore a blanket for warmth.

Lupe had a burning desire to change his life and leave poverty, field work and his unhealthy life style behind. He convinced Proteus staff of the strength and sincerity of his motivation. He said he would follow through if given the chance – and he did. Lupe's counselor, Ivan Pagan, began to work with Lupe to resolve each issue, one by one. Lupe was able to stop his self-defeating behaviors and confront the challenges in front of him. Through patient counseling and support, Lupe began to move forward.

Lupe was unclear on his goals. During assessment he learned of career opportunities in the solar field. He decided to enroll in Proteus' EERE program, combining Solar Photovoltaic and Weatherization trainings. Because he could not legally drive, his counselor worked with him to arrange a ride to training. Proteus was able to provide vital support services to assist Lupe to handle barriers to training and employment, such as food, transportation for his ride, utilities and work supplies – and the emotional support sufficient to get through the class. His two trainings and support services were funded by a combination of the NFJP WIA 167, Title I Dislocated Worker, and Title I Energy Dislocated Worker grant programs.

Lupe continued to work hard and completed his trainings in February 2013. Following a month of active job development Lupe obtained a job at Aerotek working as a Solar Technician. He began his employment at \$12.00 per hour and earned as much in five weeks as he had earned the 12 months before working in the fields. Lupe's success began when he decided to work closely with Proteus staff to overcome multiple barriers and it continues as he moves forward in his new Solar Career.

Lupe has now worked at Aerotek for over a year. Recent follow-ups show Lupe earning \$2,500 per month which is equivalent to \$14.42 per hour! Lupe's life has changed because Lupe chose to work with Proteus staff to change his life. This teamwork has led him to success. Lupe's story measures how far he had to come in order to succeed. ♦



Watch for details on the 2015 AFOP  
National Conference in  
Las Vegas, Nevada



## 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