ART WINNERS

AGES 10 – 13
1st Place: Camila Figueroa, CA
2nd Place: Aaron Cruz, CA
3rd Place: Griselda Espinoza, CA
3rd Place: Navaeh Nya Leon, CA

AGES 14-18
1st Place: Norman Gonzales, Bakersfield, CA
2nd Place: Lizbeth Lopez, Rocky Point, NC
3rd Place: Kayla Campos, Ellendale, DE

ESSAY WINNERS

AGES 10 – 13
1st Place: Emily Campos, Quincy, WA
2nd Place: Jesus Reyes, Bakersfield, CA
3rd Place: Joel Santos, Bakersfield, CA

AGES 14-18
1st Place: Lizeth Caballero, Bakersfield, CA
2nd Place: Kayla Campos, Ellendale, DE
3rd Place: Diana Caballero, Bakersfield, CA

PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD
Lizbeth Lopez, Rocky Point, NC
Dear Reader,

As many as 500,000 children work in agriculture in the United States, yet their voices are rarely heard and their struggles poorly understood. The annual Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program (AFOP) Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Children Essay & Art Contests are a concerted effort by the AFOP Children in the Fields Campaign to help farmworker children share their stories and document what it is like for young people to labor in the fields.

This booklet features the first, second, and third place winning submissions for the 2018 contest year. This year’s theme was “Flourishing in the Fields”. Winning submissions were selected by members of the Child Labor Coalition and will appear in AFOP’s Washington Newsline and be presented to key members of Congress. These images and words illuminate the struggles and hopes of our nation’s most marginalized population and demonstrate the potential that exists for young people who are given the opportunity to work hard in the classroom rather than in the fields.

You can find more information, including all of our winning entries, by visiting our website: www.afop.org/cif.

Sincerely,

Melanie Forti
Health & Safety Programs Director
Children In the Fields Campaign Director
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Program
ART: AGES 10-13

1st Place Winner
Camila Figueroa
Age: 13
Location: Bakersfield, CA
2nd Place Winner
AARON CRUZ
Age: 11
Location: Bakersfield, CA

3rd Place Winner
GRISELDA ESPINOZA
Age: 11
Location: Bakersfield, CA

3rd Place Winner
NAVAEH NYA LEON
Age: 11
Location: Coachella, CA
1st Place Winner

NORMAN GONZALEZ

Age: 17
Location: Bakersfield, CA
2nd Place Winner
LIZBETH LOPEZ SANTIAGO
Age: 15
Location: Rocky Point, NC

3rd Place Winner
KAYLA RENEE CAMPOS
Age: 18
Location: Ellendale, DE
Hi my name is Emily Camacho, I live in Quincy in the state of Washington. I am a farmworker child. My sisters are farmworkers. My parents are farmworkers. And their parents were farmworkers. I am a third generation farmworker. I was 3 weeks old laying in the back seat of my parents’ car getting my diaper changed by my 8 year old sister while my mom and dad were inside the apple orchard thinning apple trees.

I was born into this life from the beginning and have been a part of it since, as if it’s stuck with me and a part of who I am that will always identify me. Being a farmworker child is working alongside your parents and watching them age but still have to keep up with pace as the years and labor hardships reflect upon their appearance. It’s being able to accept getting told “no” more often than not when you ask for something and not because your parents do not want to buy you what you are asking for but because you actually can’t afford it. Being a part of a farmworking family is learning to accept what you do have rather than wishing for what you don’t. It is getting your electricity shut off because harvest is bad. It’s a family of 5 co-sleeping and piling on layers of clothing because you can’t afford to have the heater on during the winter months when neither of your parents work. It’s some how learning how to hustle the struggle but never realizing it because your struggle is actually your normal, a normal that is not normal for everyone else.

At the age of 10 I take pride in being able to pack my entire life into a duffle bag and take it with me while we travel to follow the different harvests, while most of my summer is spent in a car or in a field working alongside my parents spending so much time together brings our family close. Being able to travel with my family and work picking blueberries and cleaning bean fields, thinning apple trees, and picking apples I get to hear my mom and dad say “this is why you have to go to school because we don’t want you to be here forever like us we want you to be able to have a nice house and not worry about money, we can’t leave you an inheritance because we don’t have money but we can leave you with an education.”

When I grow up I want to be a doctor. I want to help everyone who needs healthcare and can’t afford it like my parents couldn’t. I want to be a doctor and I want to be able to tell my parents that I did it for them so they know that coming to this country, being undocumented for many years, not knowing the language and working so hard was worth it.
2nd Place Winner

JESUS REYES

Age: 12
Location: Bakersfield, CA

Flourishing in The fields
By Jesus Reyes

Have you ever wondered how the city of Bakersfield has bloomed from a town to a city, from a population as low as 1,000 went up to 376,380 people living here. But what Bakersfield is famous for is its fields and country singers. Bakersfield has a reputation for planting on desert plains. Although the temperature can be as high as 100 degrees I love Bakersfield because of the fields, rivers and people here. When I moved and saw Bakersfield for the first time I had a birds eye view and knew this was the place for me.

The first day I started working in the fields I said “how exciting it would be to pick onions and three hours later it was 100 degrees and I was already tired since I wasn’t used to it. But my dad said “cuando estas jugando en tu juego tu no dices que estas cansado so mas bien te pones a trabajar.” He was telling me that I wasn’t complaining when I was playing video games and so I had to keep working. I got up and started again and when the day was over I was happy that I had accomplished something. As we drove back home I thought how do people do this for more than six or seven hours a day. Yet I was still excited to go the next day but then I woke up with pain and soreness. I felt happy that I pushed my body to the limit and I would always say “nothing is impossible unless you think it is.”

A few weeks later as my dad and I went to work we started to notice that mostly every plant was getting harvested and getting ready to take off into our local groceries. I said “where do they take them” he replies, “to get them ready for us to eat them.” Further on we saw that one of our pivotal tires was losing air and we saw the tire vastly decrease. We headed for the nearest gas station to fill up the wheel but it was 30 minutes away from where the field was. Ten minutes passes and the car started to slope. Twenty minutes passed and the tire was as flat as an eraser. We started to worry if we were going to make it or not and the bad part was that we had no spare time. We made it to the gas station filled up the tire and looked for a tire shop, good thing it was next to the gas station or we would have been stranded. It took an hour and a half to replace the tire due to how damaged the tire and the rims were. We headed home but due to the fact that there was no time left to work I got sad and wished I could have stayed. Dr. Seuss once said, “don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.”

Although some people believe that Bakersfield is a horrid place, maybe it’s because they just haven’t opened their eyes wide enough to see how beautiful Kern County is. I loved Bakersfield and yet my eyes seem to open more when I talk about it. In conclusion it has been an exciting journey though it all and everything that has happened and I don’t want it to end.

Part of a farm worker family
by : Joel Sanchez

Hello, my name is Joel Santos. I have three sisters and one brother. One of my sister goes to college, second one goes to high school, the third one goes to elementary and my brother goes to elementary too. My parents work in the orange fields. Let me tell you about the challenges farm workers families face.

Being a part of a farm worker family has many challenges. One of my challenges is to wake up early every day. I always needed to wake early to wake up my brother and sister to go to school. Another challenge is that we didn’t have enough money growing up and therefore I always needed stuff for school, but my mom always told me we didn’t have enough money. I understand how hard my parents work and therefore sometimes I don’t ask for materials or stuff I need because I know there is not enough money.

I am proud to be part of a farm worker family but another challenge is that I need to take care of my little brother and sister. It hard for me to take care of them because if they get hungry I have to make food for them, then I need to be responsible if they get lost. It is a lot of responsibility for me to take care of them but I have to do it either way since I know my parents have to work.

Another one of my challenges is that I have to practice music. I need to practice music so I could play for my family members, also so I could get a little bit of money. But every time I try my little brother and sister interrupts and tell me that they’re hungry, so I need to go make them food. So I never get to practice my music, then my music teacher get mad at me. This is another example of the challenges I face on a daily basis. In addition, another one of my challenges is to help my parents when they’re tired. I always need to help my mom every time she comes from work because she is so tired. I help her take care of the kids, or I broom the house, also I sometimes clean the dishes. Another challenge I face is that I don’t see my parents that much. When my parents go to work in Winter they come home late so I never get to see them until night. These are some of my challenges that I face by living with a farm worker family. I am Joel, I’m 11 years old and I hope you enjoy my essay.

3rd Place Winner

JOEL SANTOS

Age: 11
Location: Bakersfield, CA
Flourishing is a word that is defined as growth and development. But what exactly comes to mind when combining the act of flourishing with working in the fields? I never understood how anyone could flourish from working in the fields until I became a field worker myself. Before, I could only picture the negative aspects of such a demanding job, but three years ago, my mindset towards working in the fields completely changed. Now I can firmly say that through the fields I have flourished into a person determined to achieve success for myself and for the image of field workers.

For the past 8 years, my parents have worked year-round in the grape fields across California. Before I joined them, I didn’t understand the commitment that it took to work in such a laborious job. It wasn’t until I stood in their place, that I could relate to the pain my parents went through during a single day in the fields. Waking up extremely early, working long hours under the scorching sun, short breaks, heavy duties, and constantly changing positions based on the growth of the grape, are all very challenging day to day tasks for field workers. Although a regular work day only consists of eight hours, the pain and fatigue still linger throughout the day. A normal work day for me consists of multiple scars and deep cuts from scissors used to pick grapes; in addition to huge blisters under my feet, nonstop pain running up and down my back, and frequently sneezing due to the pollen in the air.

However the pain I endure while I work has taught me that I am strong and I can achieve anything I dedicate myself to. The daily struggles that get thrown my way have shaped me into a stronger, more determined, and understanding person. Not only do I recognize my parents’ hard work, but I have also matured as a daughter through working in the fields. I now see the world with a new level of maturity that will keep me sustainable for my future goals.

Growing up with the fields of California has given me the opportunity of recognizing the importance of showing gratitude and being appreciative of my everyday life. This lesson was dawnted on me through tragedy. About two years ago, my mother was diagnosed with valley fever. Seeing the woman that birthed and inspires me be in such a vulnerable and fragile state, was a traumatic experience that affected me mentally and emotionally. The risks that farm workers take, not just for their families but for the entire country, are simply baffling to me. Families like mine struggle day to day for the well being of the country. For this reason, I am determined to continue my journey flourishing into a successful person, so I can one day graduate from a University of California and carry on a profession as a family attorney. Reaching for grapes is only preparing me to reach for the stars.
2nd Place Winner  
**KAYLA RENEE CAMPOS**  
Age: 18  
Location: Ellendale, DE

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3rd Place Winner  
**DIANA CABALLERO**  
Age: 11  
Location: Bakersfield, CA

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Diana Caballero  
Bakersfield, CA  
**Changing the Soil for Greatness**

The nature of the human being and the fields relate to each other more than they differ. The grape fields, in particular, go hand in hand with the life of a farmworker. Both occasions have a distant and undefined journey ahead of them in terms of growing and giving opportunity. My journey with flourishing in the fields begins when I realized the tough job my parents took on everyday. My mother and father have harvest grapes throughout Kern County for about eight years, two years ago my older sister, Lizeth, joined them.

A typical work day for my sister and parents begins around 4 am. My mother prepares lunch for the family and settles the necessary essentials that my twin sister and I need in her absence. My mother’s goal is to always leave our home before traffic causes her to be late.

I have learned that in life there are many objectives that simply cannot be accomplished, but with happiness and faith there is always a possibility. About a year in a half ago my mom caught a disease known as valley fever. She was exposed to valley fever from the pollen in the air that roams in the fields. I clearly remember every minute from which she was admitted into the hospital. It was very hard to watch her go through the symptoms of it.

My mother made eyes water when she said “Diana tú puedes hacer lo que tú quieras cuando seas una adulta, pero prométeme que vas a estudiar.” She has set the bar high for me as she never fails to remind me that a college education is important. She has set this goal for me because she would never want me to through the pain she is living with right now. There are times in which she comes home not being able to feel her own weight, she will not eat, and have no energy due to her illness. My mom is my hero that is helping my flourish.

I am greatly aware of how lucky I am to have parents who work through insanely hard jobs just to make my dreams come true. My parents never think of themselves, they take on these tasks to better the future of my sisters and I. It is my priority to payback my parents one day for all their dedication and hard work. I am gradually flourishing with the fields and will use this development to excel in life. I dream of getting accepted into the University of California Santa Barbara to pursue a career as a physical therapist. I have a goal ahead of me and I am determined to reach it, all due to the roots that helped me grow into the person I am today. I am a product of the fields as I have flourished along its side. Like Cesar Chavez once said, “Sí Se Puede!”
PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD

People’s Choice Award Winner

LIZBETH LOPEZ SANTIAGO

Age: 15
Location: Rocky Point, NC
HONORABLE MENTIONS

ART: AGES 10-13

• Jessy Estefania Rivas Nuñez (Bakersfield, CA)
• Dalilah Rivera (Indio, CA)
• Dalia M. Ortiz (Indio, CA)
• Ann Peña Garcia (Coachella, CA)
• William Santiago Hernandez (Faison, NC)
• Jorge Luna Cruz (Autryville, NC)

ART: AGES 14-18

• Julieta Judith Cruz Flores (Bakersfield, CA)
• Soledad Espinoza Gonzalez (Mount Airy, NC)
• Maria Espinoza Gonzalez (Mount Airy, NC)
• Vianney Verdin Maldonado (Oneonta, AL)
• Roider Azmitia Garcia (Cynthiana, KY)
• Siclali Antonio Garcia (Autryville, NC)
• Felisha M. Cantu (Lehigh Acres, FL)

ESSAYS: AGES 10-13

• Paulina G. Gonzalez Garcia (Bakersfield, CA)
• Jose Manuel Cano (Bakersfield, CA)
• Ana Peña Garcia (Coachella, CA)
• Raymundo Martinez (Indio, CA)
• Odalis Garcia Hernandez (Hendersonville, NC)
• Jessica Gonzalez Huapilla (Hendersonville, NC)
• Alexandra Hernandez (Flat Rock, NC)

ESSAYS: AGES 14-18

• Sofia Jaramillo (Miles, TX)
• Vianney Verdin Maldonado (Oneonta, AL)
• Paola Caballero (Bakersfield, CA)
• Magdalia Lopez Garcia (Clinton, NC)
• Maria Celeste Carbajal (Newton Grove, NC)
• Gladis Giovanna Paz (Clinton, NC)
• Felisha M. Cantu (Lehigh Acres, FL)
Thank You!!!

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Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
CHILDREN IN THE FIELDS CAMPAIGN
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