

## My New Dream Thanks to Farm Work By Jesus Carrillo



Working in the fields is one of the hardest, yet most rewarding things I have ever done in my life. I come from a family of farmworkers and I myself have worked 3 seasons since I was 15 years old. I began working in the fields after I dropped out of high school due to an illness.

I remember my first day working in the corn fields thinking de-tasseling was extremely easy. Then a few hours later as the day progressed, and the sun was at its peak, I wanted to get out of there immediately. The only thing that kept me going was the money I was earning. Thirteen dollars an hour happens to be a lot of money for a 15-year-old kid with no work experience. I only lasted about 2 weeks during my first season and it was a **rough** two weeks. My whole body was sore, but my legs seemed to be worse than anything else. I had to tread around the mud all day which put a lot of strain on my legs. Now I have a lot of respect and appreciation for my 62-year-old father who has done this type of work every day for the last 46 years.

Being out there and seeing the impact of hard labor on my father made me realize that working in the fields is not something I want to spend the rest of my life doing. The physical demand from working in the fields impacted my dad's health and his family life. My dad had no time to enjoy his family because he worked 13+ hours each day and only had 1 day off each week. I missed out on quality father-son time because of his job. I wish we could have gone fishing together or go on family trips. He only had time to rest and recuperate for the next day. I don't want that for my future.

During my third season of working in the fields I had gotten so used to the physical labor that I considered the work easy at that point. Then I got a really bad shoulder injury while working in cherries and I almost lost my arm. I knew that if I kept working in the fields, there would be many more injuries and I didn't want to put my body through that. If it weren't for that injury, I would still be working in the fields today. I look at that injury like a wake-up call to myself.

After my shoulder surgery, my family encouraged me to sign up for the GED program through Community Council of Idaho (CC Idaho) taught at Boise State University. My initial thoughts were "eh, what would I gain from it?" Then I began thinking that I had nothing to lose. So, I joined in February 2019 and earned my GED within 2 months. I learned all my junior and senior year curriculum within that time period. While in the National Farmworkers Job Program (NFJP) through CC Idaho I not only received GED services, but was also enrolled in their Work Experience Program (WEX) where I work on computer engineering with their IT Director. I've always had a passion for technology, but it wasn't my first choice. Thanks to this experience and the help of CC Idaho, I was able to find the love I knew I had deep down for technology.

At first when I was considering what career I wanted to pursue, I thought of becoming a brain surgeon. The staff at CC Idaho were there to listen and help me find a career path that would help shape my future. As they asked probing questions, we all realized that being a brain surgeon was not something that I was passionate about. I just liked the idea of how much money they earned. With the help of the CC Idaho team, I dove deeper into conversations about my interests and passions. Technology was a reoccurring thought in my head. Because of this, a CC Idaho Manager asked if I would be interested in touring the headquarters of Hewlett Packard (HP). With pure excitement, I said yes! As I walked around the HP building, I realized I was in love with the idea of working in that environment and the picture of myself working in that field versus the corn field had come into reality.

Thanks to the help from Community Council of Idaho, I have a new plan and path in my life. Once my internship is over with the IT Department, I will start at the College of Western Idaho to get through my core curriculum classes. After I finish my core classes, I will transfer to Boise State University where the real fun begins. At BSU I plan to enroll in classes that focus on learning all about technology that will help set me on a path to becoming a computer engineer. From working in the fields, to my shoulder injury, to obtaining my GED – farm work led me to a career path that I am passionate about. Working in the fields was one of the hardest yet most rewarding things I have ever done in my life and I will always be thankful. I might not be performing surgery on brains, but one day I hope to be the inspiration for a child just like me in the corn fields and show them that even just an ordinary farmworker can pursue his or her dreams and make them true. I plan on making up a lot of lost time with my father now and fishing is definitely in our future together.