

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
CHILDREN IN THE FIELDS CAMPAIGN

National Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Children

ESSAY & ART CONTEST

2019 Winners Booklet



2019 THEME

MY STORY FROM THE FIELDS: GROWING MY DREAMS



ART WINNERS

AGES 10 – 13

- 1st Place: JOSHUA SIMON
2nd Place: ANDRA C. DE DIOS GARCIA
3rd Place: YAZMIN FARIAS SANCHEZ

AGES 14-18

- 1st Place: JULIETA CRUZ FLORES
2nd Place: BRISSA J. PIMENTEL
3rd Place: PEDRO GOMEZ
3rd Place: ARGIMIRO JIMENEZ

ESSAY WINNERS

AGES 10 – 13

- 1st Place: EMILY CAMACHO
2nd Place: JOEL SANTOS
3rd Place: LAURA G. GOMEZ

AGES 14-18

- 1st Place: ROSE C. MARTINEZ
2nd Place: JESUS CARRILLO
3rd Place: ANNAHI GARZA

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's 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 2019 contest year. This year's theme was "**My Story from The Fields: Growing My Dreams**".

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

Category 10-13



1st Place

JOSHUA SIMON

Age: 11

Location: California

The person in the fields represents me. I am planting my dreams. The fruit in the fields represents my dreams growing. The tree represents my dream fully grown and are happening. The sun represents the challenges of working in the fields.





2nd Place

ANDREA C. DE DIOS GARCIA

Age: 11

Location: California



My mom and dad did not have the opportunity to study, and I who have the opportunity I will achieve my dreams of being someone in life so my parents feel very proud of me because those are also their dreams. I know that by studying I can achieve what I want to be in the future. I could work for less and grab more money, but the reality of my mom is that she works too much and grab less money. She faces a lot of things by working in the fields. In the mornings she has to wake up too early every single day, she also doesn't have a lot of time to be with us. In conclusion, I want to be someone important in my future and that my dad and mom feel so proud of me of what I did and made all my effort and also the effort of them.



3rd Place

YAZMIN FARIAS SANCHEZ

Age: 11

Location: North Carolina



My mom works in the fields, picking up squash and putting it into the bucket until she fills it up. Then she gives it to the lady to wash the squash with soap and water and then pack it in a box. While the squash is being cleaned and packed, my mom continues on picking squash and putting it into the bucket until the bucket is full. Then starts the whole process again and again until there is a lot the boxes stacked on each other then delivered to the store. Then my mom is done with work and then comes home tired, sweaty and dirty. To help my mom from being even more tired, my two little brothers, my grandma and me do all the chores so then my mom would rest for another work day.

ART

Category 14-18

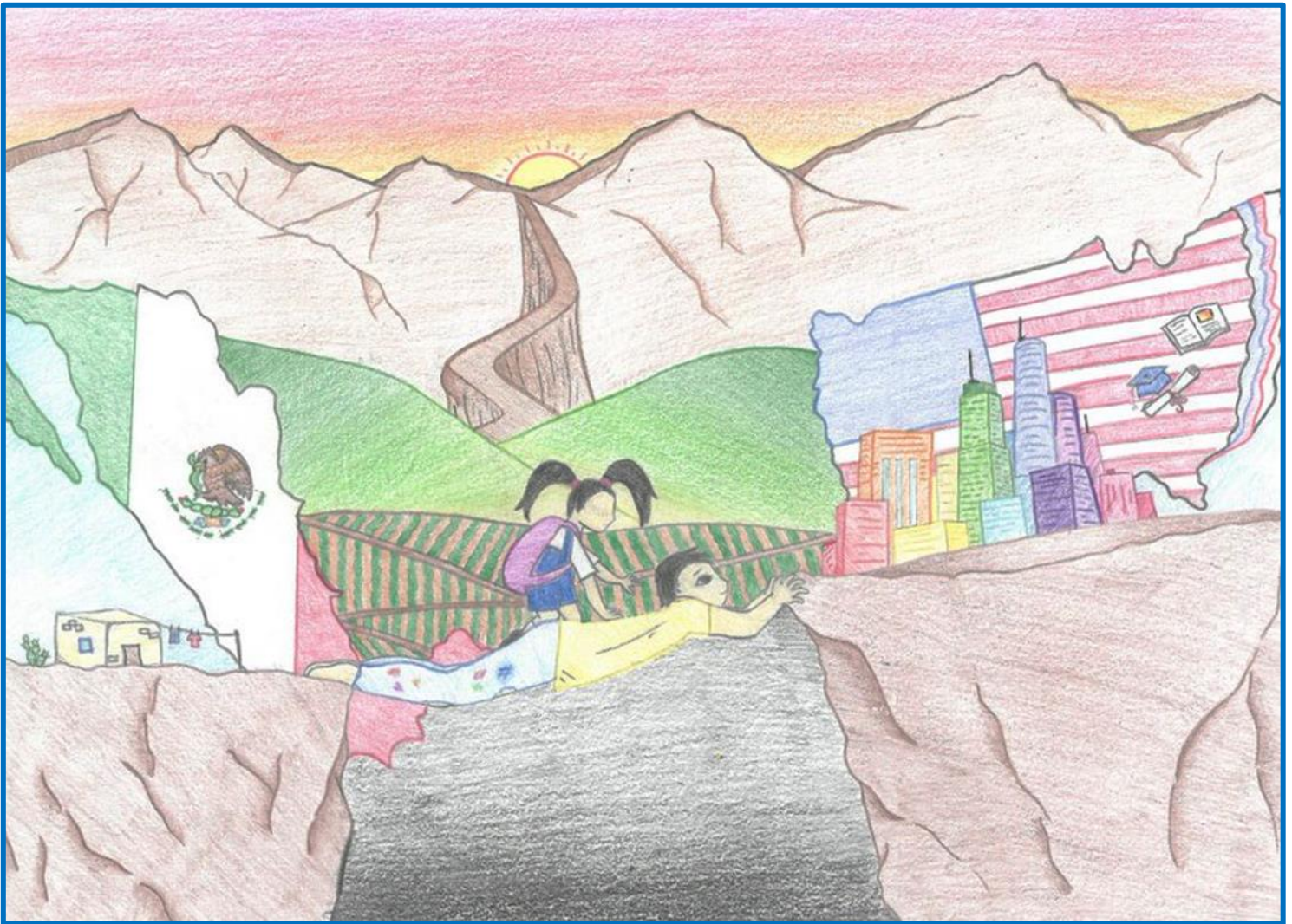


1st Place

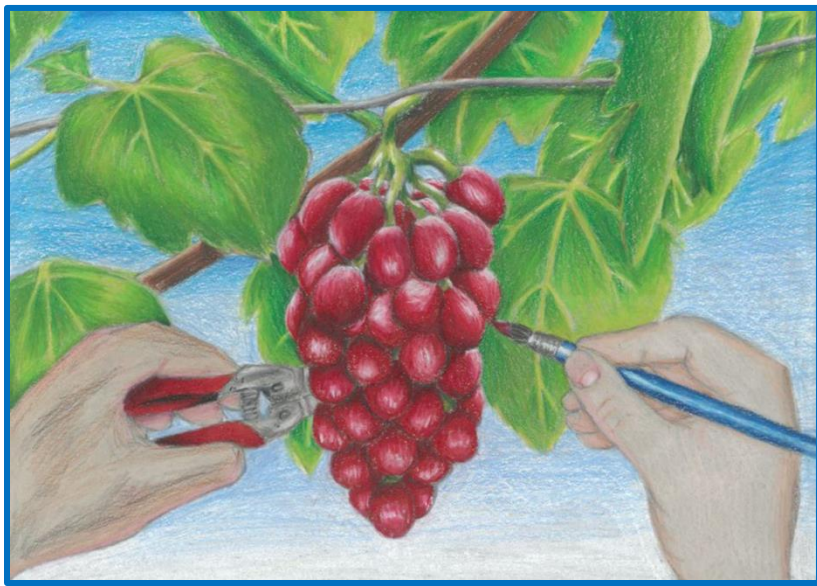
JULIETA J. CRUZ FLORES

Age: 15

Location: California



This picture represents my life. The father of the girl in this drawing is trying and risking his life, all as long as her little girl reaches the other side where she can find better opportunities to achieve her dreams. I drew this because my parents come from afar alone, leaving everything and not looking back, and killing themselves at work and doing everything for me. It's amazing how big a father's love is.



2nd Place

BRISSA JAZMIN PIMENTEL

Age: 17

Location: California



The piece shows my story in the fields. The right hand is painting the grape, the left dirty hand is cutting the grape. I love to make art and my parents love to support my dreams. Unfortunately, my parents won't always be there to help and we have to come to a stop because they can't financially help me with my dream. My parents had always told me to do whatever I can to be happy and successful, but it can always mean I will have to work very hard for it. Working in the grape fields is pretty stressful, tiring and painful at some times. However, I come home even more motivated to make a new piece.

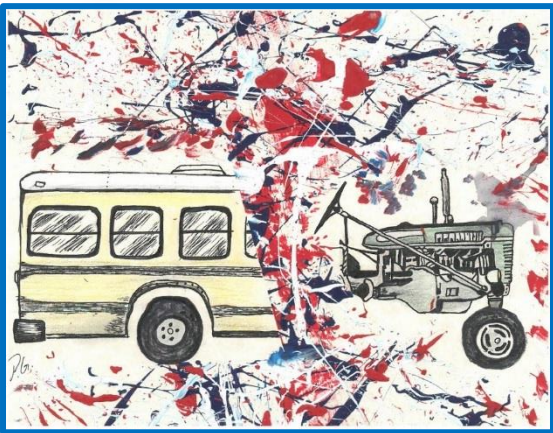


3rd Place

PEDRO GOMEZ

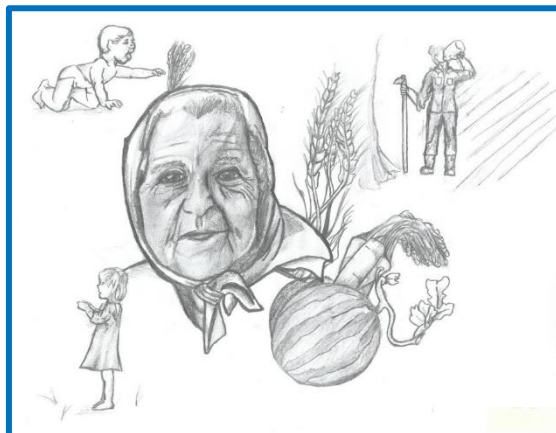
Age: 18

Location: Texas



The art represents itself by showing symbolic views on how migrant workers are enormously impacted in today's society within their daily lives. On the path for success, looking upon education to further grow as members of society is symbolized as the traditional school bus. As most students go about their daily lives not realizing the burden classmates carry, the life of a migrant worker. Balancing this out like a comic book tale Students by daylight, workers by dusk. The tractor symbolizing the enormous workflow they overtake as most modern machineries try to obtain their livelihoods. Dividing these two are the colors RED, White and Blue representing America. A country where we hold more freedom to express ourselves although influenced by our past generations inherit their inequalities social institutions like the government, education and religious groups help overcome some unfortunate wounds but are influenced by Americans who are bias with migrant workers.

This drawing may not make much sense when you first look at it, but let me explain. I drew my mom, but not technically. I drew the older version of my mom, and if you really stare at it, you can form a smile on her face. This is because my dream is simple, I want my mother to be happy. She works all day, comes home tired and somehow provides for a family of three children.



3rd Place

ARGIMIRO JIMENEZ

Age: 15

Location: Texas



ESSAY

Category 10-13

1st Place

EMILY CAMACHO

Age: 11

Location: Washington



My name is Emily Camacho and my story began on May 28th, 2008. From the day I was born my trajectory would be marked by the farms and fields around me, my mom went back to thinning apple trees before I was 1 month old with my 11 year old and 8 year old sisters taking care of me either in an apple bin inside the orchard or in the back of our SUV. That summer I was in apple orchards, cherry orchards and blue berry fields. I wasn't just there that summer, I have since been there my entire life. I've worked with my parents and sisters in heat over 100 degrees and I've learned to pack very little, very quick because when you're moving so much you quickly learn what the essentials are. Some would say I have so little but I would say I have so much. I have strength, good work ethic, gratitude to appreciate my parents sacrifices, the beauty of the sunrise and a warm burrito in a thermos for lunch. I have perseverance to work hard and become someone in life. As I am working I imagine what it will be like to go to college, to be a doctor and to see my parents proud and smile because their sacrifices and work in the fields turned into their daughters degree. My parents have worked hard all their life and we have watched everything they have sacrificed, saying they aren't hungry so my sisters and I can have the food we have left, saying they aren't cold so us kids can have the blankets winter months when there's no work and our power shuts off. I once heard the words "we must go through pain and sacrifice to obtain freedom" and I can now say yes, my parents like many other immigrants sacrificed leaving their families and native countries to endure the pain of crossing the border in hopes of gaining freedom. As I work on accomplishing my dreams while working in the fields I daydream of the day I become a doctor and reach the freedom my parents have so long sacrificed for in the fields. I know the day will come where I will turn back in my white coat and admire the fields around me knowing I am a product of those fields.

2nd Place

JOEL SANTOS

Age: 13

Location: California



Young Dreams of the Farmworkers Son

My experience as a migrant student begin like this. I don't like to see my parents wake up at four in the morning to go to work, it is still dark out when they leave. When they come back from work they are dirty, exhausted, sweaty, and with bloodshot eyes. Their hands are calloused and bruised, their bodies are broken and sore. Field work is not tiring, it is exhausting and arduous, it is not meant for white folks, we do jobs they do not want. My parents work ten hours or more. I understand why they go to sleep when there is still light out.

Some of the challenges that my family and I face is always money, we never have enough to get by, we have enough to survive. When I was little I thought my parents had a lot of money. Now that I am older I know how hard it is to get what little money they earn. I have gone to the fields before with them. The first time I went, I could not believe how hard people worked for the little pay they received. When we got there I thought it was going to be easy. When we finished, I was so tired that when I got home, I passed out from exhaustion. I slept until the next day. The following day when I woke up I was so sore that I could not even get up from my bed and then sat in the sofa, I struggled to sit up. Yet, my parents do it everyday, from dusk till dawn. They never complain, they just do it. Nike should have a commercial for farmworkers.

If someone says that working in the fields is easy, then they are wrong because they don't know how hellishly hot it is in the summers, and how violently cold it is in the winters. They don't know how being exposed to nature can take a toll on your body. They don't know how hard and hurt you can get. Sometimes, when I feel down, I remember, I have my family there to help me and bring me

My Story in the Fields: Growing My Dreams

In today's society, migrants are often confused with immigrants from other countries, but our reality as migrant farmworkers is very different. As children of migrant farmworkers, many students have to move throughout the year to different states, changing schools which makes them have trouble with their grades. As farmworkers, parents work very hard outside in the sun all day long. Being part of this type of family is not easy and comes with many challenges, but there are also many good things that we can get out of this way of life.

As the second youngest daughter in a family that has migrated for over twenty years, I have had to leave my home and move across the country when my dad is laid off for the winter. My dad works at a farm that grows many crops including sweet corn, alfalfa hay, wheat, and safflower. Since these crops do no grow during the winter, there is nothing for my dad to do and we have to move to find another job. When moving, it is very difficult because we have to pack up everything in our house into our truck and travel for many days until we reach our next stop. When we arrive, my dad has to find a new temporary job while my mom enrolls my siblings and I into a new school. Being the new girl in a class where I do not know anyone is very difficult, but it is even harder to try to catch up to what the teacher is teaching since I was at another school not even a week before.

Since I am still young, I have never officially "worked" alongside my dad, but I have gone with him many times to help. My family usually leaves to work before six in the morning and they do not come back until late in the afternoon. Because I cannot really help in the fields, my job is to help my older brother to take care of our little brother while my parents and older siblings are at work all day. Once they arrive, I have to be extra careful so that I do not wake them up since they are very tired from working all day in the sun. Because I see how hard they work so that we can have everything we need, my wish for my family is for them to reach their life goals and stop working as migrant farmworkers.

Living as a migrant student has taught me many things, especially that I cannot give up when things seem difficult. Being part of this farmworker community has taught me to dream big and work hard for that dream. Seeing my two older siblings overcome the difficulties of being migrant students and go to college motivates me to finish school and get a degree so that one day I can make a difference not only for my family, but for other migrant students and families that struggle every day.

3rd Place

LAURA G. GOMEZ

Age: 11

Location: Nevada



ESSAY

Category 14-18

1st Place

ROSE C. MARTINEZ

Age: 16

Location: Texas



Growing My Dreams

My parents and siblings stood beside me. The blazing summer sun was shining down on us as I looked out across the rows and rows of growing cotton plants. I took a deep breath, wiped sweat off my forehead, and began my day of hoeing weeds that were taller than I was.

I have a younger brother, an older brother who hopes to start college soon, and an older sister. I am the third of four children, and we all still live at home with my mother. She is the main breadwinner for our family, and she works as a hairstylist to support us. Unfortunately, my parents divorced not long ago. Until then, we were a Hispanic, migratory family. When I was younger, we would travel from Harlingen to Arkansas in the summer to work in the cotton fields. When I was older, we moved to Pearsall to work in the peanuts.

The work in the fields was hot and dirty. My older brother, sister and I worked with my parents to remove the weeds from the rows of cotton. It was rough work, but we had to do it to help with our family budget. I am not ashamed of my parents, nor of being called a migrant. I am proud of my family for venturing out for work. They saw an opportunity and seized it. Watching my parents working hard helped me gain respect for them. Fieldwork shaped me into the independent person I am today and also taught me to attack my struggles head on and not avoid them.

I have always been a little shy at first (due to moving often), and it takes some time for me to get comfortable before joining in. Despite this, I have had the opportunity to work with my local police and participate in Cops for Kids and National Night Out. Through these volunteer events, I helped wrap Christmas gifts for low-income children, took pictures with children, and shared important information about safety tips. I liked helping our local police and being part of something that benefits my community.

This May I will complete my high school diploma after only three years, and then I plan to attend college this fall to pursue a doctorate degree. I would be the first among my family to attend college. I want to become an OB/GYN because I feel I can encourage women to not be afraid of their health needs, and I feel I can increase sex education awareness among my community. This subject is often not discussed, but it is a critical conversation.

Because of my family circumstances and my parents' divorce, we do not have the money to afford my college education. Also, since my brother plans to start college as well, this puts more of a financial burden on us. That is why I am applying for scholarships to help with college expenses. I know that one way or another, I will find a way to graduate.

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.

2nd Place

JESUS CARRILLO

Age: 17

Location: Idaho





3rd Place

ANNAHI GARZA

Age: 15

Location: North Dakota

Growing my Dreams

My name is Annahi Garza and I am a daughter of migrant farm working parents. My two older sisters, my parents, and I have struggled throughout our whole lives being a farm labor worker. Thankfully, we have gotten through it together. Our whole life has consisted of many challenges for myself and my family.

Being a migrant high school student was never easy. The high school I attended in North Dakota and the one in Texas had different degree plans interfering with my education. As a migrant, summer school has been a great impact for me. Summer school would allow my sisters and I to recover from credit loss. There were days that I couldn't attend summer school, because I had to work in the fields. One of my dreams as a kid was to play in a team, I've never had the opportunity to play sports because of migrating to and from North Dakota. I wish children of farm workers like myself didn't have to go through this. We have worked many crops from Sugar Beets, Beans, Potato, and Wheat fields. Summer days meant waking up at the crack of dawn, working in the fields and having to withstand the mosquitoes and sun in our faces. All the pain and aches from walking and bending was and will always be the worst days of my life. What makes working in the fields "bearable" is knowing that I am financially helping with all of our family expenses. My mother always tells me, "Get an education so you will never have to work in the fields again!" She is my motivation for wanting to get educated and fulfill my dreams to have a true career. My parents will always be my motivation, because they work so hard to give us what we need. My mother is the strongest person I know, in November 2017 she was diagnosed with Colorectal Cancer. When it was time to migrate to North Dakota, she had to stay in Texas because she was receiving chemotherapy. I still had to work in the fields with my Aunt, while my mom was fighting for her life.

Being a child of a farmworker is not easy. Sometimes I feel discriminated because I work so hard, not only in school, but in anything I do. I feel people judge me for what I look like and not for what I know. Migrating is something we don't choose to do but must do to survive financially. I hope I can be a role model to the younger generation and hope that one day my story will be heard. My wish for my family is to be stable enough for us not to be migrating every year.

I want to thank my parents for encouraging me in everyday life. My biggest dream is to one day be a great scientist. After graduation, I want to say with my head held high, "I did it, I don't have to work farm work anymore!"



HONORABLE MENTIONS

ART: AGES 10-13

- Aaron Cruz Flores
- Brenda Molina
- Eleazar Gonzalez
- Evelyn Govea
- Jessy Rivas Núñez
- Kelly Galindo
- Nayely Ortiz-Espinoza

ART: AGES 14-18

- Caitlin Ruiz
- Estefani Ponce
- Leslie Naranjo
- Sarahi Gonzalez

ESSAY: AGES 10-13

- Brayan Encarnacion
- Emanuel Mendez
- Guadalupe Leon Hurtado
- Joshua Muniz Lopez
- Kelly Galindo
- Lizbet Gaspar Hernández
- María Alejandra Angeles

ESSAY: AGES 14-18

- Alondra García-Huizache
- Arianna Danielle Diaz
- Grecia Lomeli Barajas
- Jose Lopez
- Magdali Lopez Garcia
- Oscar Sánchez
- Paola Caballero



Thank You!!!

*The Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Children
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**National Consumers League,
and Earth Justice.***

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CAN SUPPORT AFOP'S EFFORTS

to fight for farmworker children's rights, for a safe and healthy life, for education, and for a better quality of life overall by making a generous contribution to AFOP's Children In the Fields Campaign.

YES! I would like to make a contribution for the Children In the Fields Campaign efforts to fight for farmworker children.

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Email: _____ Telephone #: _____

Donation Form: ☐ Cash ☐ Check Amount: \$ _____

Please make check to: AFOP and write in Memo: CIFIC

THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!!!



**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT**

MELANIE FORTI

Health & Safety Programs Director

Children In the Fields Director

Tel: (202) 384-1771

Email: forti@afop.org



**ASSOCIATION OF FARMWORKER
OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS**

1120 20th St. NW, Suite 300 South

Washington, DC 20036

Tel: (202) 384-1754

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