

Staying Focused Results in Reality

By Roberta Pianalto, NFJP Client Service Agent

Growing up, Ernan Mendoza traveled and worked the harvest across Oklahoma, Colorado, and Kansas (KS). The work was hard, and it was often very hot. He enjoyed working the harvest but realized if he continued in this line of work, he would always be earning low wages. Ernan decided to seek a career where he could work year-round and earn a livable wage.

Ernan has always been intrigued with motors especially farm equipment engines. He began searching for training programs where he could fulfill his passion. One of his friends told him about the John Deere Agriculture Technician program at Garden City Community College. He researched the program and found he could attend training while also working part time. He also started researching ways to pay for college. Ernan was introduced to Roberta Pianalto, a Client Service Agent for SER Corporation's, National Farmworker Jobs Training Program (NFJP) in Kansas. Ernan's background as a seasonal farm worker qualified him for the NFJP and he received tuition and housing assistance and paid On-the-Job Training (OJT).

Whenever Ernan struggled during his training, he remembered his goal and stayed focused on that target. Roberta met with Ernan monthly and offered tips on ways to stay focused. She also assisted him with interview skills and other career services to prepare him with securing a job and becoming a great employee.

Ernan finished his training in May 2021. When he received his degree, American Implement in Ulysses, KS, hired him for a full-time permanent position. American Implement signed an OJT contract with SER Corporation. After finishing the OJT Ernan was offered a technician position at \$18.00 per hour with full benefits and the potential for a raise after 90 days. The pay and benefits were better than he could have imagined. Ernan's supervisor told Ernan they were thrilled to have him join their team.

Ernan cherishes the life skills he learned while working the harvest fields as it taught him to work hard and to stay focused. He is also thankful for the help and encouragement SER Corporation gave him while going through training specifically the financial help and guidance. He is very appreciative for all the support he received from the NFJP.

