



Blanca Barba, Veteran Case Worker, Celebrates 40 Years with California Human Development AFOP

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Growing up in the orchards and vineyards of California, Blanca learned the importance of hard work and respect early on from her farmworker parents. “At a very young age, my parents taught us to be very humble and to treat everyone with respect,” she said. “Whether you’re a doctor or a farmworker, everyone receives the same respect.”

Blanca has incorporated these values into her work with CHD, instructing her staff in Yolo County, California, to treat every farmworker who walks in their door as if they were their own father or grandfather. “All they need is five minutes of your time to listen,” she insisted. “It's really gonna make a difference.”

To treat someone like her own father is to treat them as a special person, indeed. Eladio Guzman was Blanca’s hero and pillar of strength. So important is Eladio’s memory to Blanca, that, when we asked Blanca for her story, she instead told us his: that of a lifelong farmworker devoted to his family and to the land. Her father had such a strong work ethic, Blanca said, that when a local school offered him a janitorial job with higher pay and benefits, he refused to leave the farm and instead worked out a schedule between his two employers so that he could do both: 5am to 2:30pm at the school, and 2:30pm to sundown for the farmer. Eladio maintained this schedule for decades and did not stop working until he was 89.

If you think janitor and farmworker are two different jobs, think again. Eladio not only cleaned the school; he transformed the school grounds. “The football field was lush green,” Blanca laughed, and “there were flowers everywhere. When you have a farmworker go in, you know that he's gonna do amazing things to the landscaping, right?”

Blanca’s parents pushed their kids to excel in school, and Blanca did exactly that – earning her bachelor’s degree at UC Davis. But Blanca said her father would have been just as happy if she’d joined him in farmwork after graduating. He truly believed it was “the best job anybody could have.”

Today, Blanca follows in her father’s footsteps by doing both. She and her husband have their own vineyard, *and* she continues to work hard at California Human Development and treat everyone she meets with the utmost respect. And, though she is now Regional Manager, Blanca still insists on providing direct services.

“I need to have that human contact with my farmworkers,” she said. And the beautiful thing about her work, Blanca said, is that clients always ask God to bless her so she can keep on going. “Where else can you work, where you go home with a blessing every day?” Blanca asked.

Of course, some of the farmworkers ask God to bless Blanca so that she can keep doing this work forever. And that might be a little too much blessing, even for Blanca.

Congratulations to Blanca on your 40+ year legacy, and counting!