

Telamon—Virginia

May 2011

Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

Message from the State Director Sharon Saldarriaga

With spring in the air, staff working with farmworkers are preparing for a busy season when thousands of farmworkers come to Virginia to plant and harvest a variety of crops. Staff will direct their efforts to conducting outreach, explaining the education, training, and support services available through the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), and partnering with other agencies to not only provide services to migrant workers, but also to secure employment for many of our customers who are completing training. This is also the time when our Pesticide Safety Trainer begins setting his schedule with growers to provide pesticide safety training. We also are busy submitting a number of proposals and researching new funding opportunities. If successful, the pro-

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Earth Day Celebration

Jessica Garcia
Case Manager



Kelly Addison, Apartment Manager of William Hughes Apartments, invited Telamon Corporation to be a part of their Earth Day Celebration. The complex is funded by the USDA and used for seasonal and migrant farmworker housing. Nick Zetts, Pesticide Trainer, came from Richmond to be a part of this celebration. While promoting pesticide safety, he also taught residents about container gardening and handed out seeds and plants purchased by the Department Rural Ministries. Containers were donated by Tankard Nursery for the event. Dianne Arenas, Telamon Regional Manager, was able to hand out books, purchased through The Theodore H. Barth Foundation,

Inc. to the children. They were excited to receive new books. Jessica Bonniwell, Case Manager, gave Heat Stress training to many of the parents. She was able to answer questions and concerns of those who attended. Several other community agencies who work with local agricultural workers attended. Accomack Health Department offered free blood pressure checks and handed out educational pamphlets about different health issues. Northampton County Extension promoted their health and nutrition program. Refreshments were served, including an “Earthworm” cake that used crushed Oreos for dirt and gummy worms. Afterwards, there were games for the children. A good time was had by all.



Entering a High Growth and Demand Career Path



Sara Lopez, Case Manager, and Sonia Lopez

Sara Lopez
Case Manager, Montross, VA

Sonia Lopez was enrolled into the NFJP program at our Montross, VA office in March of 2010. She was a seasonal farmworker and single mother. Attending college part time in a business management curriculum via help from Pell Grants, she was having difficulty with transportation due to the distance between her home and the college. We were able to solve that problem for her by providing gas assistance for the rest of the semester. Though in the business management curriculum, we sensed that Sonia wanted something else.

During the summer and fall, she had several family setbacks and ended up having to go to Mexico. Upon her return, she completed her CareerScope assessment. The results showed that Sonia had the strongest inter-

est and aptitude in the Nursing field, which per her, had always spiked an interest.

During a visit with Sonia, we realized that she had many family members pushing her to stay within the same family paradigm. One day soon after, Sonia came into the office and sat down with the staff and let us know that she told her family that she loved them dearly, but she had to do what she had to do. She figured out who she was, what she wanted out of life, and how she was going to get there.

She chose to start her nursing career path as a CNA. In spring of 2011, she was busy applying for Nurse Aid Programs in the surrounding counties. She soon got a call from Riverside Health, the program she was most interested in for acceptance. The day after her interview with them, the instructor emailed and informed us that Sonia, “thoroughly impressed the socks off” of her.

Sonia was so excited about being accepted into the Riverside program and felt very proud that she had earned the opportunity. This program would last four weeks. It turned out to be 180 miles round trip per day for her. Sonia had the drive and determination to reach her goal and she welcomed the challenge.

Sonia had been participating in “Women Self Awareness” classes and from them, she figured out that no matter where

you are from, how you grew up, or what your parents were like, you can change your life, and you can do anything you want. Sonia received a \$25.00 VISA gift card for class participation, which used to buy her CNA uniform.

During her program, which started on March 21, 2011, Sonia would call the office during her lunch breaks to fill us in with all the details. We could tell that she was truly enjoying herself. Sonia brought all she had and gave it her ultimate best. She graduated from the program on April 15, 2011. She is set to take her certified test on May 18th.

A week after completing the program, Sonia was offered a labor pool CNA position. She looks forward to her upcoming events and successes. Sonia has been a great team player. We wish for all her dreams and aspirations to continue coming true. Congratulations, CNA Sonia!



Weatherization Crew Leader, Anthony Davis, from our South Hill office, putting final touches on insulation under a mobile home .

Another Success Story

Teresa Anderson, Case Manager
Danville, VA

While doing outreach in Danville, Virginia, I met Catina Ingram working tagging tobacco. Catina's first job was working in tobacco. Farm work was her family's only source of income. I gave Catina information about the National Farmworker Jobs Program and asked her to give our office a call. She later came into the office. After her eligibility was verified, we began testing and career inventories. Catina decided she wanted to go into the health care field. We assisted her with enrolling at Danville Community College in the CNA curriculum. Faithfully attending her classes every day, Catina was excited about this opportunity. Since there is no financial aid available for the CNA classes, Catina could not afford to go on her own without Telamon's help. We assisted with tuition, books, uniform, shoes and a second-hand watch, all mandatory for successful completion. We also provided her with weekly payments to help with gas to get back and forth to her classes.

After six weeks, Catina completed her course and took her state board test. Telamon paid her state board fees. Catina returned to our office and we helped her with her resume and job search. I called Roman Eagle Memorial Home, the largest

nursing facility here in Danville, Virginia, to see if there was an opening for a CNA.

Our office has worked with Roman Eagle Memorial Home for many years on job placements, not only for CNA, but also for other positions as well. Occasionally, we get calls from Mrs. Doris Head, Human Resources Manager, asking if we have any qualified customers for the job she is trying to fill. Mrs. Head immediately set up an interview with Catina. Catina was so excited that she came into our office for two days and we practiced interviewing with her. This was Catina's first real interview. The day of the interview, I took her to Roman Eagle and she was hired on the spot. Catina's starting wage was \$10.60 an hour, full time with benefits. Whenever I speak to Catina and ask her about her job she says, "I love it." We are very thankful for our wonderful working relationship with Roman Eagle and hope to share many more successes with them.

Moved

Our housing services office in Pittsylvania County, has moved to Chatham, VA. The new contact info is:

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 287

Physical Address:
61 North Main Street
Chatham, VA 24531

434-688-4640
434-432-0126 fax

National Finals

A team from the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School has placed first in the nation in the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution National Finals, which took place in Washington, DC. We the People team members study a broad range of topics related to American government and constitutionalism and prepare for simulated congressional hearings, during which judges ask questions and score units based on knowledge and articulation. The state office's intern, Rosa Waters, is pictured below (first row, second from right) with her team.



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grams will complement our existing employment and training, housing, and youth programs.

We continue to hope for comprehensive immigration reform and particularly for passage of the Agricultural Jobs Opportunity Act (AgJOBS). Either of these would enable many more farmworkers to qualify for the NFJP and provide them with the training and employment opportunities they need to access jobs leading to self sufficiency, either inside or outside of agriculture.

Barrier Island Center

Jessica Garcia
Case Manager



Barrier Island Center Education Director, Sally Dickinson, wanted to invite children of seasonal farmworkers to a Music and Art Workshop at the center's mu-



seum in Machipongo. She called Telamon Corporation's Belle Haven office for help in finding participants. The staff was happy to help in this educational/cultural



event. The theme of the art activities was focused around living on the coast. Ms. Dickinson talked about the islands that surround us and gave some history on the people who used to live there. Afterwards, the children, ranging from 4 to 13 years of age, painted a beach with the ocean.

The children also enjoyed music with musician, Martha Giles, from Virginia Beach. She introduced the children to many musical instruments from around the world. Everyone got a chance to experiment with the instruments as well as sing.



Order for Two Certified Private Pesticide Applicators—Delivered!

Nick Zetts
Pesticide Safety Trainer

American Color requested the support of our Pesticide Safety Program to help train two non-native English speakers to pass the private pesticide applicator exam. Both employees had taken the exam previously but failed. The greenhouse owner

offered incentives for those who pass the exam, in order to improve his day to day operation by having certified employees conduct the spraying of pesticides.

Migrant and seasonal workers are the norm for most agricultural operations, and at times, it can be a challenge for the employer to comply with all the regulations since many in this workforce lack the English skills necessary to take the required certification exams. Lack of proper training poses human and environmental health risks.

Working with Extension Agent, Steve Hopkins, a review session was planned to help two young men pass the exam. Both possess conversational English but the wording and technical questions on the exam were the challenging part. Our job was to review the questions they did not understand and to translate where needed. Understanding of the rationale behind the questions was learned, not only to pass the exam but also to help them understand their daily duties so they can assume leadership roles in the future.

The following day, both took the exam and both scored in the nineties. A passing score is in the seventies, so these two young men took proper advantage of the opportunity of an Extension Agent and Telamon's Pesticide Safety Program working together. Hat's off to these studious farmworkers!