

Telamon—Virginia

November 2011

Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

Message from the State Director Sharon Saldarriaga

With the recently passed legislation aimed at undocumented people in Alabama, immigration continues to be a topic that ignites passionate responses on both sides of the issue. While most everyone agrees that our system is broken and that we must secure our borders, the kind of punitive and unproductive laws that states are enacting are counterproductive and represent a retreat from the hope and promise our nation has offered to millions of immigrants throughout our history. On October 24th, the 2nd Annual Virginia Immigrant Advocates Summit 2011 was held in Arlington. Sponsored by the Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans of VA, Centreville Immigration Forum, Jews United for Justice, Legal Aid Justice Center's Immigrant Advocacy Program, Social

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Virginia Does Care!

By Teresa Anderson
Case Manager, Danville

Telamon Corporation in Danville Virginia is proud to collaborate with Virginia Cares, one of the many programs under Pittsylvania County Community Action. Virginia Cares assists ex-offenders in becoming productive citizens. The program focuses on the community perspective in order to help prevent further criminal activity and therefore restore both the fabric of the family and the community in crisis. Virginia Cares assists with housing, basic essentials, utilities, clothing, transportation, representation in court, support groups, and employment career counseling. Barry Mayo, Case Manager, has been a great asset to Virginia Cares and Telamon.

Although Barry works with the general population, we refer our ex-offender clients to Virginia Cares

for various reasons. We have joined forces to leverage dollars in helping our co-enrolled ex-offender clients with utility assistance, clothing for interviews, rent, and other necessities. Those clients who may be time eligible and meet necessary criteria are being co-enrolled for restoration of rights and pardons. Telamon and Virginia Cares are working together to provide guidance and prepare our clients for a successful transition back into the workforce.

Since there is a high rate of ex-offenders working in farmwork, our plan for the future is to form partnership forums with other agencies and companies to find out which employers are felony-friendly and which charges are acceptable for employment. Right now, with our nation's unemployment rate at an all-time high, it is very difficult placing ex-offenders in the work place, especially those that are convicted of violent crimes or theft.

It is our pleasure to work with Barry at Virginia Cares in making a difference in the lives of our ex-offender clients and helping them achieve long-term goals for a brighter future.

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Youth Attend 4-H Camp

By Sara Lopez
Case Manager, Montross

This year, with The Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc. funding, our Montross office was able to send seven youth, ages 9-13, to 4-H Jr. Camp. We learned about the camp from the Extension Agent for 4-H youth development, Wendy Herdman. It was held at the Jamestown 4-H Center in Williamsburg and lasted five days and four nights. The purpose of the 4-H program is to assist with the positive development of youth. The program has standards such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.



At camp, the youth participated in activities such as: archery, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, robotics, and many more. During their time at the camp, they were able to improve their awareness and appreciation for the natural world.

A few days after their return, Sara called the participants to see how

their trip went. All of them excitedly told her about their adventures and many asked if they could go again next year. They really enjoyed their time and one youth said it was an “awesome experience.”

For many, this was the first time the children had ever been away from home overnight without their families. Afterwards, the parents observed how the children behaved and realized it was a positive experience. They could see improvement in their children’s level of responsibility and ability to make decisions.



Reaching Out

By Jessica Bonniwell
Case Manager, Tidewater

On October 17, 2011, Jessica Bonniwell from Telamon’s Tidewater office went to St. Brides Correctional Facility to conduct a presentation for inmates that would be re-entering the community in the next 1-4 months. The inmates were pre-screened by the Employment Specialist for the correctional facility to determine eligibility for Telamon’s program. During the presentation, inmates received information about Telamon’s education



and training program, and all of their many questions were answered.

To engage interest and participation, Jessica led an activity for the inmates. She asked them to think back to when they were kids and asked, “What did you want to be when you grew up?” Some of the inmates had not thought about their childhood dreams for years and years. Many found the activity inspiring and it clearly helped them get in touch with themselves and their aspirations.

Throughout the visit, the inmates were very attentive. These

gentlemen began to see how Telamon’s programs could help to provide tools needed for achieving their goals once they returned to their communities. Jessica shared more than simple information; she shared her belief that Telamon is willing and able to help them get their lives back on track.

DeAngelo White, Employment Specialist at St. Brides, was very impressed with the presentation and said, “The guys cannot stop talking about your program; they never knew such programs existed.” He also stated, “Re-entry is either unfamiliar or unreachable in the minds of many of our offenders. You are helping change that.”

The Art of Volunteering

By Nelson Diaz
Employment and Marketing Specialist

With the economic downturn, high unemployment rates, and a tough job market in the area, if you are unemployed, one great thing you can do is donate your time, talent, and experience to help others in your community. Whether you worked with computers, children, or seniors, any interest or experience you have can be developed through volunteering. Volunteering can help you learn new skills or enhance your existing skills. Also, it can help you meet new people which can lead to getting a job more quickly. And remember, volunteer experience looks good on your resume! It can be the one thing that sets you apart from the competition. In fact, according to LinkedIn, forty-one percent of the professionals that LinkedIn surveyed stated that when they are evaluating candidates, they consider volunteer work equally as valuable as paid work experience. Twenty percent of the hiring managers surveyed agree they have made a hiring decision based on a candidate's volunteer work experience.

So, look at volunteering as an opportunity to acquire job related skills and improve your job opportunities. Just follow these simple steps and prepare yourself for a new career:

Determine your dream job.

Confucius once said, "Find a job you enjoy, and you'll never work a day in your life". Some of us know what we want from a very young age while others are still trying to figure that out. One easy thing you can do to focus your search is visit www.onetonline.org/find. Look for the occupations that are expected to grow rapidly in the next several years from entry through professional levels. This may give you an idea of where you would like to volunteer.

Find the right opportunity. It is important to identify an organization that is meaningful to you. In addition, select volunteer work that might evolve into a job in that organization, or provides experience for a paid job of a similar nature somewhere else. To help you choose the right volunteer position that can lead you to a good job opportunity, keep in mind: it is important to know your likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses. Go online and assess yourself at www.careerinfonet.org. Once you have determined your ideal job, you can search for employers that match your interests. For example, if you would like to work in the health industry, contact the person who oversees the department at any local hospital and ask if they could use a volunteer. Added to your resume, this will show potential employers that you are not afraid of a challenge, you can handle many tasks at the same time, you work well in a busy environ-

ment, and you can handle difficult medical situations with ease. Just make sure you detail any medical experience you received, especially if you are applying for health care jobs where medical training is a plus.

Once you get the volunteer position,

treat it exactly like a real job. Make sure you always get there on time and work hard. Learn as much as you can, be honest, show you care, take notes, and do not forget to dress appropriately. Also, be a team player and treat your co-workers with respect.

Take it to the next level. After you have been there for a few weeks, inquire about the possibility of being hired. If you do not meet the position requirements, ask for additional training. Or, if applying to other companies, ask for a letter of reference. To find job opportunities, do not forget to use social media like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn as well as job postings on sites such as wwwIndeed.com.

Keep in mind by volunteering, you are showing potential employers that you can commit to work; are accustomed to a work routine; and have recently used, and possibly improved, your skills. Also do not forget, *all it takes to make a difference is you*. So, start today and make a difference in your community or someone's life! Not only may you find an experience that is personally rewarding, but also, you might get your dream job.

Good luck!

State Director’s Message

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Action Linking Together, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington and the VA Coalition of Latino Organizations, the summit provided attendees with information on current legislation and the effects on our communities. Attendees also participated in a number of working groups designed to develop strategies and build partnerships among advocates to combat the increase and consequences of anti-

immigrant legislation.

Hopefully, with more information, the general public will begin to see the negative impact of these various pieces of legislation. Most agree that having local police involved in the enforcement of civil immigration laws makes our communities less safe by eroding trust in the police that has taken years to evolve among the immigrant community. In agriculture, we are hearing reports of crops rotting in

the fields as farmworkers, scared to come or stay, are not available to harvest our fruits and vegetables. It would be of great concern should our nation be unable to maintain a secure food supply. In addition, when immigrants leave, communities experience a significant loss of revenue. These represent only a fraction of the many consequences of ill-developed responses to the immigration issue. Surely, we can do better.

Emergency Home Loan Program, Update

Over the past couple of months, Chatham housing staff has been processing applications for the Emergency Homeowners Loan Program (EHLPP). EHLPP is designed to assist homeowners who are at least 90 days behind on their mortgage due to becoming underemployed due to the economy or a medical condition. Program guidelines with our grantor, Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA), required all potential applicants to apply by July 27, 2011.

After the July 27th deadline, applicants were reviewed for Stage 1 eligi-

bility. Those applicants who met the first level of eligibility were submitted to VHDA for the statewide lottery. As the numbers of potential eligible homeowners were calculated on a statewide and national level, the potential eligible homeowners for the program did not exceed the maximum number of families that could be served nationwide. There were 732 applicants statewide submitted into the VHDA lottery. Therefore, the initial lottery process was eliminated and all potentially eligible applicants were allowed to proceed.

Our housing counselor has been meeting one-on-one with poten-

tially eligible families to collect documents and submit applications to the Fiscal Agent for approval by September 30th. This program has been highly demanding with very short deadlines and continuously changing requirements. While our numbers may seem small, we are proud to say Chatham has two eligible homeowners who are approved for EHLPP assistance. This is a substantial accomplishment for a small rural area of Virginia. As of October 6, 2011, there were only six homeowners approved in the state. Congratulations to those families as they continue through the EHLPP process.

Staff Notes

Barbara Witcher recently joined the Chatham Housing office as our new Secretary. Barbara holds an Associate degree in Administrative Support Technology from



Danville Community College. She provides administrative support to our housing programs and community outreach for services we offer. Barbara resides in Blairs with her husband Larry and their Pomeranian Sam. She has two children and three grandchildren. She enjoys shopping, TV, family functions, church events, and singing.

Welcome aboard, Barbara! We look forward to working with you.

New NFJP office in Tidewater

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