

Telamon—Virginia

February 2012

Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

Message from the State Director Sharon Saldarriaga

Although there are encouraging signs that the economy is improving, jobs are still difficult to find, especially for those with few marketable skills, either from lack of education, having few occupational skills, or not having the skills that are needed in today's job market. If people in any of these categories are to be competitive and we as a nation are going to have the ability to compete on a global stage, we must have workers who can rise to the challenge. Investing in human capital is essential. This means we must continue to strengthen the country's commitment to workforce development by continuing to fund successful programs that enable jobseekers to get the training, education, and other skills required to not only succeed individually, but also to strengthen our position in the global arena.

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Telamon Has the Key

By Roberto Maldonado

Being a dependent of a migrant farm worker was tough because I thought higher education wasn't an option for me.

When your family is on the move all the time, there is no time to think about the future because you have to get through today. If it weren't for teachers and coaches putting the idea in my head, I never would have thought about college.

Despite moving around, I got good grades in school so I knew I could get into college. That was the easy part! Finding the college I wanted to attend was not so hard either; it was hands down Wesleyan College in Virginia Beach. The question was: How was I going to pay for it? I knew financial aid would help. I planned on working part time and I knew about getting loans, but it wasn't going to be enough to cover my tuition to gain my Bachelor's degree in Communications/Spanish.

After mentioning my situation to some friends and family, they



suggested I call Telamon, an agency that helps farm workers and their families obtain education. So I visited Telamon's Exmore office to learn more. The enrollment process was simple. Dianne Arenas explained the whole program and told me my options.

Dianne did a wonderful job getting me started. Jessica Bonniwell became my Case Manager and she really kept me in check. Because of Telamon, I was even given the opportunity to become an AmeriCorps volunteer, working directly with Telamon and farmworkers to gain actual work experience in the Communications field during the time I attended college.

Working together with these two ladies kept me busy. It was so worth the time I spent with them because of the opportunities I experienced and what my future now holds. Because of the opportunity that Telamon gave me, I graduated and immediately obtained employment in the Marketing Department for a well-known Virginia Beach corporation. And the best part is: this is just the beginning!

Sometimes I catch myself

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Testimonials Tell the Story Best

By Sara Lopez
Case Manager, Montross

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were non-existent in our area before partnering with Rappahannock Community College a little over a year ago. Here at our Montross, VA Telamon office, we saw the great need and desire for the classes from many of our participants.



With a little teamwork, the classes were established and enrollments started coming in.

Our Telamon staff members and our wonderful ESL and ESL/GED teachers, David Boyd and

Josie Wold, are very proud of the students who continue to show their determination in reaching their goals. The classes at Telamon were honored for being the number one class throughout all of

adult education in the area for their attendance and progress.

A few of the students wanted to share their thoughts on the Telamon farmworker program and on their classes.



“I, Elsa Palomar, want to share with everyone that Telamon Corporation is a

program that has helped me see my future in an empowering and professional way. The English classes are a very important help because not only do they teach you a new language, but they also give you the opportunity to advance to the GED level. This is very important for anyone with a language barrier interested in a better future.

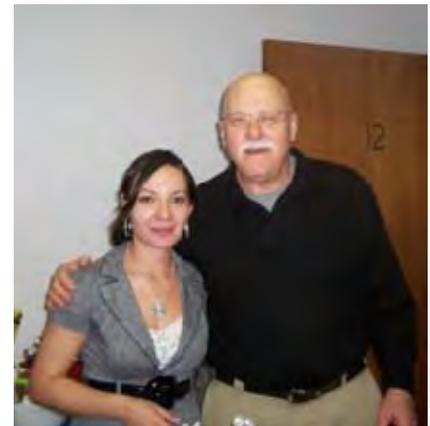
I would like you to know that Telamon is a program with these and many more opportunities. I invite anyone to be part of this program and to meet with the employees who only want the best for you. Come and sign up.”



“Hi. I am Olivia Merlo, and I have been studying through Telamon for almost one year.

They have supported and helped me to achieve my goals in this country. Since I have been studying in the U.S.A., I have learned much about the language and culture.

For me, Telamon is a great support because they have provided English language and math classes. These courses have given me the knowledge and confidence to act in my community. With the help of Telamon I am preparing for the GED, planning to take the test for Citizenship, and seeking a better job and brighter future for my family and myself.”



“I am Rocio Marin. I live in Hague, VA and I am studying English and math at Telamon Corporation in Montross, VA. Telamon offers me the opportunity to improve my English and math skills, as well as to prepare for the GED. However, the greatest benefit Telamon has given me is confidence. I am no longer afraid when I leave my home because I am confident in myself in the English speaking world. Thank you Telamon Corporation.”

Settling Out of Farmwork is an Option!

By Nelson Diaz
Employment Marketing Specialist

This past November, while visiting one of the Bowman's apple orchards with Fernando Perez II from the Migrant Education Program, I had an opportunity to promote our services to the migrant farmworkers that were living in the camp. Among them was Willem Saturne, Gary Luxamar, Junior Louis and his brother, Maxener Louis - four young farmworkers who had been traveling from Florida to New Jersey to Georgia and then to Virginia. But their story goes back to their country of origin, Haiti. They emigrated after the devastating earthquake that struck their country in January 2010. "We were among some of the lucky ones not only to survive, but also to migrate in search of a better life," said Max. He also said he would like to go to school and someday return to his country and start an organization that would allow him to help others. Gary stated, "Behind us was our family and our country left in darkness, destruction, and hunger." After coming to the U.S., they had been working on farms. When they learned about Telamon services, they decided it was a chance for them to improve their lives and establish roots in one place.

This is where their dreams began. But before the dreams could become reality, Telamon's team of dedicated workers had to help them resettle into the Harrisonburg area. The task was not an easy one. They had no steady address, no credit cards, and no bank accounts. This made it difficult for them to get an apartment. With the help of Michael Hendricksen from Matchbox Realty, we were able to get them an

apartment. Then, we also helped them get necessary household items, such as warm clothing, beds, and food. To garner local resources, we contacted Seli Perry from Mercy House who suggested we go to their Thrift Store and talk to the manager for a special discount. The manager, Tim Forloines, gave us a 25% discount and free delivery. In conjunction with all of this, we contacted Esteban Nieto, the HR Director at Pilgrim's Pride, to see if he had any openings; he said he would see if he could help us. We also recognized that they were going to need transportation to get to work, so we contacted an old friend of Telamon's, Jose, who owns Escrow Motor I & II. He was able to sell them a car he had listed for \$3000 for just \$1500, and he agreed to let the guys pay him after they had started working.

Today they know that they still have a long way to go but Gary, Max, Junior, and Willem now have a job with benefits making \$9.50 with an increase of \$1.00 on the way. They have opened bank accounts and are currently attending an English as a Second Language program at the Massanutten Technical Center. They still miss Haiti and are still struggling to adapt to American culture, but they are happy knowing that finally they have a place they can call home. Equally uplifting is the knowledge that they have begun classes that will enable them to obtain the necessary education and training for higher-skilled jobs.

Resettlement is never an easy process. Telamon's State Director and I put in many 12-14 hour days to make their transition successful. As for me, I just continue walking, thinking about, and looking back to all the time, energy, and effort we spent helping to make a difference and feeling grateful to be alive. As I look at the sky, I say to myself "...un beau jour pour aider quelqu'un." (It's a beautiful day to help someone.)

A New Mind Set

By Lynita Falls
Certified Housing Counselor, Chatham

Over the past years, we have watched the economy around us go from bad to worse. Foreclosure rates are still at all-time highs. Local unemployment rates are still at record numbers. Many of the clientele that we serve have difficulties in meeting their monthly financial obligations. Barbara Witcher and Lynita Falls participated in a training session sponsored by the BEST Coalition. The presentation, entitled "Financial Social Work" by Ms. Reeta Wolfsohn, CMSW, puts a new prospective on daily counseling activities to help area residents achieve financial stability.

Ms. Wolfsohn's Financial Social Work model incorporates education, motivation, and support on an ongoing basis, which is the process required to create sustainable, long-term, financial behavioral change. Ms. Wolfsohn's model begins participants on a journey to sustainable, long-term, financial behavioral change because, until and unless behavior changes, *nothing changes*.

Barbara and Lynita have successfully secured scholarships through the BEST Coalition to participate in the ten-week course and become certified as Financial Social Workers. Once certified, they will serve as Financial Mentors to interested participants over the next four years.

Bryan Smith's Success Story...

And it Feels so Good

By Teresa Anderson
Case Manager, Danville

Bryan Smith came to Telamon Corporation in Danville, Virginia in August of 2010. He was working through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family Program (TANF) at the Salvation Army. Because of his past criminal background, Bryan had only worked on farms and in temporary positions with staffing agencies. Bryan said he worked hard for the staffing agencies at several manufacturing plants. But when it came time to be hired permanently, Bryan was rejected because of his prior criminal background, not due to his job performance. Bryan had three dependent children and was not able to make ends meet without assistance from Social Service programs.

After eligibility determination, testing, and assessment, Telamon worked with Bryan to find employment. I referred Bryan to the Workforce Career Center in Chatham for co-enrollment. Case Manager, Threllis Hall, immediately started working with Bryan on the assessments needed to qualify him for their internship program through Yorktowne Cabinetry - a specialist in the manufacture of cabinets. While the Workforce Center paid for Bryan's hourly stipend in the nine-week internship program, Telamon

provided Bryan with transportation assistance for his travel back and forth to Yorktowne. After successfully completing the internship program, Bryan was offered a full-time position at Yorktowne Cabinetry as a Sprayer. His starting pay was \$12.63 an hour. This was the best hourly rate and the first full-time job with benefits that Bryan had ever been afforded. At present, Bryan's hourly wage is \$13.72 an hour.

Bryan says: he is welfare free and it feels so good! Bryan has been offered a supervisor's position at Yorktowne Cabinetry. We at Telamon in Danville are so thankful for the opportunity to assist another client from Welfare-to-Work, and to see Bryan thrive and grow with such dignity and pride in what he is doing.

Special thanks to Threllis Hall, Case Manager and Certified Workforce Development Professional at The Workforce Career Center in Chatham, for all her hard work and diligence, her caring attitude, and the knowledge she shares with Telamon Corporation. Miss Hall has been a Case Manager at the Virginia Workforce Career Center for 4 ½ years. Threllis really gets the job done. We are truly pleased with how she makes co-enrollment a smooth transition, and how together we help our clients become successfully self-sufficient. Threllis' motto is: *You never know when you will be the one on the other side of the desk seeking human services.*

Telamon Has the Key

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thinking about how things could have turned out if it had not been for the Telamon program and their great Case Managers. The biggest struggle for me had been the financial part of the college experience. I had the motivation and I had the intelligence, but in life sometimes we need that extra hand to get us over the hump.

For me, Telamon feels like an older brother that takes your own motivation and helps get you to where you are going. The Telamon staff was vital to my success. They made every effort possible to help me along and kept me in line in order to accomplish my goals. They set me up for life and really helped me to believe in myself. I am a 22-year-old graduate of Wesleyan College with a Bachelor's degree. Today, I not only *think* of my future, I can *see it* thanks to this wonderful program!

Staff Notes



Telamon Virginia welcomes its newest staff member, Damary Rappetti. Damary joins us as Case Manager for the Harrisonburg office.

Our Secretary in the state office, Chris Hicks, is now on board as a permanent Telamon employee.