

Telamon—Virginia

November 2013

Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

Message from the State Director Sharon Saldarriaga

With passage of the Affordable Care Act, many of the customers we serve throughout our employment and training, housing, and health and safety programs will be able, many for the first time, to get health insurance. Farmworkers in particular face critical health challenges as a result of the work they perform and the living conditions they must endure. Although the rollout has had its share of problems, once implementation is accomplished, our customers will be able to get the medical care they need. Providing access for thousands of previously uninsured persons results in a healthier population and this benefits the country as a whole.

As the holiday season approaches, please take a moment to reflect on the difficult labor performed by our nation’s farmworkers. Their efforts bring forth the many wholesome foods we need to feed our families and enjoy our traditions.

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A Different Career

By Chris Hicks, Editor



Todd Blanks of South Boston, Virginia was raised on a farm. His grandfather is a tobacco farmer and Todd worked on the farm

for as long as he could remember. He worked seasonally as a tobacco picker for almost six years. Although farming was part of a tradition, his family was concerned about the future and they advised him to pursue other career opportunities in case anything ever happened to the farm.

In March of 2011, Todd came to the Danville office of Telamon and asked what we could do for him. He had already done some investigating and had decided that he might like to learn about heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). He said, “I... found HVAC to be one of the few industries still growing and I knew that it would be a rewarding and ever-changing career path.”

The staff in Danville met with Todd and introduced him to our

NFJP program, explaining his commitments and how the program could assist him during his education and, afterwards, in finding employment. They performed testing and assessments, and determined that Todd was indeed well-suited to a career in HVAC.

Todd enrolled at Danville Community College (DCC) in fall of 2011. He studied HVAC with the goal of receiving a Diploma in Air Conditioning and Refrigeration and Certificates in Summer and Winter servicing programs.

During the two years Todd attended classes at DCC, Telamon assisted him financially. He said that going to school full time while working was the biggest challenge of his life, and he was grateful for the assistance we were able to provide. In addition to providing money for transportation, we also helped him to pay for items such as books and tools.

Within one week of Todd’s graduation in July 2013, we helped prepare him for interviews with Brady Services in Raleigh, NC. A few weeks later, Todd was offered the job. He is working full-time with benefits and making \$17 per hour. Todd felt honored and was very grateful. He said Brady is the ideal place to work.

Securing New Opportunity

By Sara Lopez
Workforce Development Specialist,
Montross

Deva Hampton came into the Montross office one day in October with her husband, Victor. They were interested in our NFJP program because their combined income was not enough to support themselves and their two children, Ava and Christian. Without the aid of friends and family and the support of food stamps, they would not have been able to survive. Victor was doing seasonal farmwork, but he was scheduled to be laid off from his current job in one month. Deva was working as a waitress, but she was only permitted to work a small number of hours each week and the job was located 24 miles from her home. Between the two of them, they only had a single vehicle, plus Deva was still driving on her permit and would need to wait 60 days to get a license. Deva did have a GED already; what she needed was help in identifying a more lucrative career field and some skills for obtaining the job. Ideally, they hoped to find an employer that would hire both of them so they could share the car and both get to work more easily.

On assessment tests, Deva scored highly in areas of business and detail. When we tested her for her interests, we soon discovered that work in a business office would be a good environment for



Deva. When we talked to her, we quickly decided that Deva would do very well in a sales position.

We continued to advise Deva, showing her how to access different resources for job hunting. We also began the process of coaching her on how to fill out job applications, how to perfect her resume, and how to succeed in an interview. We trained Deva through a Job Readiness class and taught her about financial literacy. In just a short amount of time, Deva was ready to meet an employer, and we found one that was hiring. We scheduled an interview for her with ADT Systems in Fredericksburg. She met with them, and it went so well, they offered her a job immediately.

Deva's new job in sales for ADT pays \$35,000 annually. This is almost *seven times* more money than Victor and Deva's combined income before they enrolled with us. Plus, they told her she had a chance to earn a \$1000 bonus in just two weeks, and she would be receiving benefits. We know Deva will be successful in her new job. She is very hard-working and has an amazing attitude; she is both mature and responsible. When we spoke to her, she was very excited and said she loves her job. We are very proud to be a part of Deva's journey to a bright, new, more secure future.

Congratulations, Deva!

STAFF NOTES

At the AFOP conference in September, all the participating staff members had opportunities to



strengthen skills, network, and learn useful information from the workshops. One highlight was when

Telamon's Ana Nethken (Workforce Development Specialist, Harrisonburg) was awarded the certification for AFOP's Job Retention training program. The certificate marked the completion of a one year extensive program conducted by Jodie Sue Kelley from Cygnet Associates. Through the training, Ana acquired new tools and strategies to implement in her daily work. The focus of the training was job retention and how to increase the success of our clients. The training program consisted of regular webinars (every 6 weeks), face-to-face workshops, and independent study through various projects and homework assignments. At the end of the program, Ana passed a final exam in order to earn the credential. Ana said she really enjoyed the program; she felt the information would better enable her to assist her customers.

WELCOME!

Gail Hicks-Smith, Workforce Development Specialist in South Boston

Just the Facts, Please

By Ana Nethken
Workforce Development Specialist, Harrisonburg

When Cesar Aponte first came to Telamon in March, he had lost hope for a better future. He felt like no one could help him resolve his difficult situation. He was a seasonal farmworker and was currently unemployed. His most recent work had been at a hatchery collecting eggs. He was under a tremendous amount of pressure with huge responsibilities: his wife was expecting their first child and he had no income. Each time things seemed to improve, something had gone wrong. When he would find work, it would soon run out. They had found a temporary place to live, in a small room in his friend's house, but the friend told them that they would have to move out in less than a month.

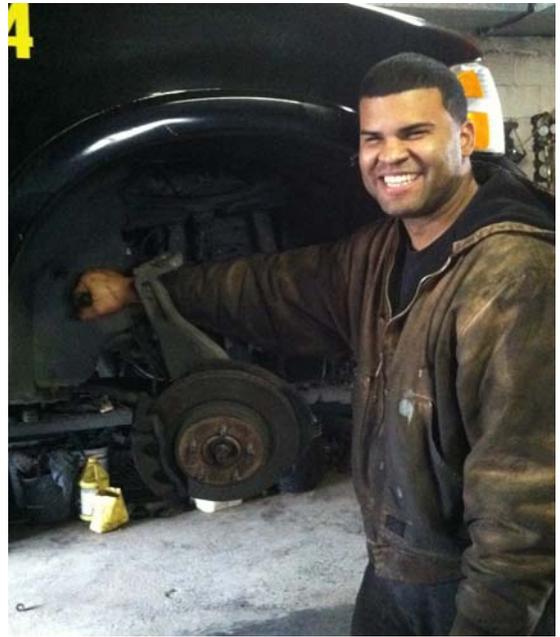
We explained how the NFJP program worked and what he might achieve if he were willing to enroll. We told him it was still possible to make a difference in his life. His first response was, "I don't want you to sell me dreams that aren't going to come true. I want something real." So we gave him the facts. After our interview, we began the process by assessing Cesar and engaging his active participation. Step by step we worked with Cesar to develop a realistic plan to achieve his goals. We sys-

tematically addressed the barriers that prevented him from attaining economic stability.

Telamon advised and coached Cesar, and provided short-term emergency assistance during the initial weeks to address the most immediate financial problems. We provided the family with nutritional assistance and residential support, and provided medical services for Cesar's pregnant wife. Once his situation began to stabilize, we worked to improve his long-term opportunities.

Cesar understood that finding work was made much more difficult because his English language skills were poor and he lacked work experience anywhere except in agriculture. He said he always wanted to repair cars because he knew something about them, but he did not have any formal experience to show a prospective employer. He still seemed skeptical that we would actually help him solve these problems, but we continued to move forward.

The first step was to put Cesar in English as a Second Language classes at the Massanutten Technical Center in April. Our goal was to improve his basic communication skills. Next, he attended Job Readiness training to get him prepared for the workplace. By May, Cesar was ready to begin a work experience assignment. We placed him at Nando's Auto Repair shop,



owned by Fernando Hernandez, a previous NFJP client whom we had assisted. Through this work experience, Cesar was able to develop additional soft skills and attain direct hands-on experience in auto repair. At this stage, Cesar became much more optimistic and began to really believe that his life was taking a turn for the better.

After completing the work experience, Cesar was hired as a full-time employee of Benish Corporation, working as an auto mechanic. It was not a dream; it was the reality he had asked for. Cesar said, "I appreciate the assistance provided by the program. I was blessed when I found Telamon." He said that Telamon helped him to complete the journey, that he now had stable income to support his family. "I can smile in welcome of my new future." When clients are prepared to invest their time and effort, their willingness can create positive changes in their lives.

Pesticides: Home Safety Issues

By Roberto Quintero, Pesticide and Workplace Safety Trainer



One of our goals in Telamon Virginia is to provide our clients and friends with valuable information to prevent or reduce health hazards related to pesticides. For this reason, we want to offer a series of articles about pesticides and home safety issues. In this first article, we will talk about pesticide definitions and how to choose pesticides for home use in the safest ways. In subsequent articles, we will talk about pesticide safety for indoor and outdoor uses, how pesticides can affect your health, and how you can get help.

What are pesticides?

Pesticides are chemicals designed to kill or harm pests. They include insecticides used for insect control, herbicides used for weed control, fungicides used for fungi control, and rodenticides used for rodent control. Household pesticides can be purchased from supermarkets or hardware stores and are designed for use by householders around the home or garden. Household pests can include insects such as flies, cockroaches, and mosquitoes, or rodents like mice and rats.

While household pesticides may easily be obtained, this does not mean that they are harmless. They are toxic and if used carelessly, they may affect the health of the user, their family, pets or the environment. You should always select pesticides that are designed for the pest you wish to treat, follow the label instructions carefully, and use the least amount possible.

How can you use pesticides at home more safely?

1) Think about whether your proposed use of pesticide is appropriate. For example, it may not be realistic to expect your property to be completely pest-free. It is possible that the repeated use of pesticides may be more dangerous in the long term than the pests themselves.

2) Consider non-chemical pest control measures. The key is to make your house, workplace, and garden unattractive to pests. Some suggestions include:

- Rodents – don't put food scraps in the garden for birds or possums. Throw out food left in dog or cat bowls. If you have an aviary, keep birdseed in rodent-proof dispensers. Pick up and dispose of fallen fruit from any fruit trees. Regularly trim plants such as creepers. Keep potential nesting places, such as wood and rubbish piles, off the ground. Consider using traps, but do not lay traps in areas where children, pets or native fauna could be harmed.
- Flies – keep a tight lid on outdoor garbage bins. Put garden compost in a well-sealed container. Flies don't like Chrysanthemums; consider planting some near your front and back doors to repel flies and other insects. Hang flytraps or fly paper outside in areas where flies tend to gather.
- Fleas – wash pets, their blankets, and other bedding regularly. See your veterinarian for treatment

options for your pet.

- Cockroaches – remove any sources of water such as in the base of the shower, in sinks or in dishes left in the kitchen. Cockroaches need a daily source of water to survive. Don't leave food scraps on benches or in pet bowls. Keep rubbish in a bin with the lid on tightly. Don't keep piles of wood chips or mulch near the house. Seal cracks and crevices where cockroaches may get into your home.
 - Mosquitoes – drain any collected puddles of water, as this is where mosquitoes breed. Change the water in birdbaths at least once a week. Run your swimming pool filter for a few hours each day. Regularly clear your gutters of leaves and other debris that may collect water. Keep larvae-eating fish in ornamental ponds – see an aquarium dealer for suggestions on appropriate fish.
- 3) Be sure you identify the pest before you buy a pesticide. What you assume to be rats in your roof could be possums.
- 4) Determine the most effective pesticide for your pest problem and make sure the pesticide you choose is designed for the pest you intend to use it on.
- 5) Pick the least toxic pesticide available.
- 6) Use the least amount of pesticide possible. All pesticides are toxic and can cause harm if used incorrectly.