

Telamon—Virginia

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Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

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Message from the State Director -
Sharon L. Saldarriaga

As we begin the new year, those of us who work with populations facing multiple language and cultural barriers remain challenged by the current political climate both in Virginia and nationally, which continues to look for ways to deny legal status to millions working and contributing to the social and economic fabric of this country. Once again, Virginia has introduced anti-immigrant legislation that is counterproductive to the well-being of the Commonwealth. Hopefully, wiser heads will prevail and much of what has been offered will be defeated.

We are pleased to report that our two farmworker housing projects in the Northern Neck have been completed and we will be looking at expanding the program to the Eastern Shore. In Gretna, we are poised to begin construction on two homes for low income residents. This will be the first phase of a project to build a total of six homes. In March, our National Farmworker Jobs Program staff will be in Washington, D.C. for training and meetings with our congressional legislators to discuss the employment, training, and economic development activities we provide to Virginia's farmworkers. As we enter this year, we remain committed to improving the lives of those we are entrusted to serve. §

Cardinal Village Hosts Financial Workshop

By Lynita Falls
Housing Coordinator
Gretna

The Cardinal Village Tenants Association hosted a week long Financial Workshop October 22 through 26, 2007. Members of the association promoted the workshop throughout their apartment complex and surrounding neighborhoods. Everyone was invited to participate and learn tips on how to become financially sufficient. Approximately 15 persons participated in the class throughout the week.

Topics for the week included: Getting Financially Organized; Identity Theft; Reading, Understanding, and Repairing Credit Reports; Money Management; VIDA/Savings Programs; and Mortgage Financing for First Time and/or Low Income Homebuyers. At the end of the week, Te-

lamon had a review period in the form of BINGO. Questions were asked about the topics from earlier in the week and the answers were on the BINGO cards.

At the end of the week, we had seven graduates of the workshops. The group possessed lots of energy and excellent input to

the class and offered each other money saving tips. Congratulations to our graduates: Ms. Christine Brooks, Mr. Eric Bullock, Ms. Patricia Cabell, Ms. Constance Henderson, Mr. Lynn McGinnis, Ms. Coretta Stone, and Ms. Janie Williams.

A special thank you goes to the Cardinal Village Tenants Association for their hard

work in organizing this event. Members of the Association include: Ms. Constance Henderson, Ms. Christine Brooks, Ms. Janie Williams, and Ms. Coretta Stone. §



At the end of the week long session, the Financial Graduates pose for a group shot. Pictured: Row 1: Ruth Ann Ball, Housing Counselor; Coretta Stone; Christine Brooks; Janie Williams; Robin Roark, Homeownership Project Manager; Row 2: Constance Henderson; Lynn McGinnis; Eric Bullock. Not Pictured: Patricia Cabell. The Telamon bear was designed by Constance Henderson.

Telamon-Gretna Welcomes Tytiana

By Lynita Falls
Housing Counselor
Gretna

Tytiana Clark-Dennis joins Telamon as a Secretary in the Gretna office. Tytiana brings lots of office experience to Telamon through her background as an Office Manger at DePaul Family Services. She will work part-time in the Gretna office offering administrative support to the housing staff. She also will work part-time out of the Danville housing office assisting with the bi-weekly homebuyer's club and other training sessions as needed.



Tytiana resides in Hurt with her husband James and four children; Ashyna, Ashton, Trevon, and Tamara. Tytiana enjoys reading, shopping, and children's sporting events. She also enjoys spending time with her family and friends.

Welcome aboard Tytiana. We look forward to working with you. §



Computer Classes for ESL Students at Telamon on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

By Soraya Buckner
Regional Manager
Exmore

A majority of farmworkers are illiterate when it comes to computers. They typically do not have the opportunity to have one



at home, and there is no where on the Eastern Shore of Virginia where they can go for a computer course with a bilingual instructor.

We know that knowledge of computers, use of the internet, and use of email are essential. Computers are used for all kinds of job related functions. They are used for job searches, resume development, cover letters, and labor market information. In other words, farmworkers need the opportunity to become familiar with technology in order to increase their employment opportunities in today's world.

In partnership with the Eastern Shore Community College, computer classes for limited English proficient students started at the Telamon office on the Eastern Shore. The course is sixteen weeks long. The instructor is bilingual in English and Spanish which allows her to explain things in both languages for those who are not yet fluent in English. The classes are held in the evening so as to not interfere with their jobs. Each student has access to a computer, a textbook, and a workbook. These are pro-



vided in English and all classes and resource are free.

The curriculum of the class matches perfectly with the needs of our farmworkers: computer concepts, Microsoft Windows, word processing, the web and email. §

Up and Coming Customers

Nelson Diaz
Regional Manager
Richmond

Rosa has done farm work since she came from El Salvador in 2001, yet she has always wanted to do something different with her life. The only problem was that she did not know

where to go or how to get another job. Last year, Rosa moved from Dinwiddie County to the City of Hopewell, hoping to find a job off the farm. She remembers how much she struggled without any money to pay rent and the other bills that piled up.

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Reaching out to the Younger Generation

By Sharleen Drummond
Case Manager
Exmore

The Kellogg Foundation reports that although overall, rural high school graduation rates match or exceed their urban counterparts, out-migration of the youngest and more highly educated is a primary export for many communities. The result is that the adult workforce that ends up in the rural areas is less educated. In fact, a study of the rural South showed that 38 percent of adults do not have high school diplomas.

In the rural Eastern Shore of Virginia peninsula, we know that many children of agricultural workers either drop out of high school or do not seek further education after graduation. They do, however, tend to remain in the area with their families.

With these two facts in mind, we decided that the National Farmworker Jobs Program could begin to address some of these issues on a micro-level by designing a forum in which we could discuss how further training and education can help the employment outlook of dependents of agricultural workers.

In December, I conducted a presentation about Telamon to students at Northampton High School. The principal, Ms. Gray, has been a supporter of our program and she was delighted to have us speak to the students. She organized the students and set up a room for the presentation.

The presentation was personalized to engage the teenagers. It explained what services Telamon offered, why our services would benefit them, what the hottest jobs

are right now, and topics that enticed them to look beyond high school graduation, such as a section we call, "Put Some Green In Your Jeans." The presentation was effective and seemed to have inspired some youth to consider their options after high school as well as educated them on Telamon's employment and training services.

Two counselors were also in attendance, Mrs. Suzanne Henderson and Mrs. Sandy Finney. They are willing to partner with us to assist the qualifying customers. We are looking forward to working with these students and also with Northampton High School staff. We also hope to expand and offer this presentation to other schools in the area. It is clear that we all benefit from a better prepared young adult who is willing to stay in the area, complete further occupational training, and become an active and successful participant in our areas workforce. §

Recipes from the Field

National Farmworker Jobs Program staff from all over the state have collected favorite recipes from current and past participants and we have created a wonderful recipe book filled with yummy foods from all over the world. Books are selling for \$10 and all proceeds go to help support farmworker programs in Virginia and around the country. To order yours, contact Cecily Rodriguez at 800-285-1676 or crodriguez@telamon.org. §



Up and Coming Customers

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One day a friend told Rosa to go to the Virginia Employment Commission to get assistance with a job search. "That was my lucky day," she said. I was there representing Telamon like every other Monday, and after I explained the eligibility for the program, she exclaimed, "I have worked on a farm for years."

It wasn't long after she enrolled that she attended Telamon's "Prepare para la Chamba" workshop, which is designed to gain an understanding of how American businesses and the workforce system operate. We also taught her how to do a resume and how to prepare to get a job.

In the meantime, Telamon assisted Rosa with her rent. But it wasn't the end. Rosa also expressed that she always wanted to learn English and acquire computer skills. So with our help, she registered for a bi-lingual computer class. In just one month, she was job ready and I helped her find a job.



Now Rosa has a job, she works full time, and she is preparing to take her citizenship exam to become an American citizen.

You could be our next success story, or, if you know someone who would like to be our next success story, please call me at (800) 240-6792 or visit www.telamon.org for more information. §



Conexiones Corner

What people say about Conexiones Sounds Very Good...

By Nellie Vega Cruz
Conexiones Coordinator

For the past eight months, Conexiones, Centro de Entrenamiento y Trabajo, has provided workforce development services to the Richmond's Hispanic neighbors in partnership with the Richmond Career Advancement Center. Our customers have received an invaluable service. They felt so strongly about this that they wanted to share their experiences. Additionally, they have referred other customers so they can benefit from our services. We thought it would be nice to post some of the our customer's comments on this page to demonstrate their satisfaction and the friendly, family way in which we welcome our customers.

- **Rolando Segovia-** "I went on the training course Prepárate para La Chamba at Hopewell Public Library. The training I received was fantastic, amazing and I recommend that everyone to attend. The training has had an enormous impact on our Hispanic Community."



Rolando Segovia

- **Lediza Duran-** "Prepárate para La Chamba it's really the most educative and informative training I have received. Thank you!"
- **Paula Peña-** "Conexiones gave me a clear explanation about available services and several informative job services; questions were always responded to and answered clearly."

- **Wilmarie Vega-** "Thank you so much Conexiones for all the information you provided me and my family. I started working at Chipolte Mexican Restaurant and I feel great!"

- **Sayda Nelli Raga-** "The resource center is fantastic and the services provided really allow me the opportunity to begin my education to achieve my GED certification; additionally, it showed me where to go for more services in Spanish."

- **Nancy Castellón-** "I thoroughly enjoyed the whole training. Prepárate para La Chamba was one of those courses that left you buzzing with ideas. I am excited at the prospect of continue using, re-using and passing this information onto my co-workers, family and neighbors."

- **Amada Acevedo-** "Many thanks for the best information and service"

- **Dina Mejia,** "I thought the Prepárate para La Chamba training was excellent. Clear, concise and to the point, everything was relevant to us."



Bergman Brothers/Food Lion
Distribution Center Job Fair

- **Adriana Buon-** "I thought the services were great. I was having difficulty putting into writing my duties and responsibilities. It really helped having someone to help us do a professional resume in Spanish. I cannot say enough about the benefits of having actual detailed services. I am very grateful to Telamon-Conexiones for helping me to find a job at Dr. Randy Adams office as a dental assistant. Thank you!"

- **Remberto Vargas-** "I am writing this brief note to say how impressed I was with Conexiones service, for giving me specific ways to change my resume to enhance my skills and experience to attract future employers. I also attended one of the trainings called Prepárate para La Chamba and I think it is a very informative training. I would recommend Telamon-Conexiones to anyone who is interested in presenting themselves to a company in a professional manner. Thank you!"

- **Tersicio Vargas-** "The information and services provided was wonderful. Thank you for the response to my questions/comments... and for your patience for helping me to find a great job at food Lion. I really like it! Thank you.

- **Jesus A. Perez & Victoriana Marin-** "My husband and I are very thankful for taking the time to answer all questions and help us to find a job. I am impressed with Telamon Conexiones Resources Center; it's feels like a program we can trust to give us real help. Thank you! §



Nancy Castellón



Tersicio Vargas