

# Telamon—Virginia

August 2007

Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

Volume 9, Edition 3

Message from the State Director -  
Sharon L. Saldarriaga

Although this fall's unseasonably warm temperatures certainly haven't made it feel much like fall, I am happy to report that several other activities do. This is the time of year when many farmworkers enter our National Farmworker Jobs Training Program in order to participate in the training and employment activities, which provide them with the skills and education to compete in today's job market for employment leading to self-sufficiency. It also is a time when many of our existing programs are renewed and new ones are implemented.

Our program which helps farmworker youth with basic remediation and cultural awareness and our La Chamba workshops which provide Latinos with Workplace Literacy Skills, are progressing successfully. Our Conexiones Project has gotten off to a fine start (See story on page 4). In housing, our farmworker housing project with Parker Farms was completed, providing housing for 48 farmworkers. Our Ingleside Project, providing housing for 16, should be finished in November.

In Gretna, funds were awarded to build six houses for low-income families and that office's homeownership counseling programs continue to help first-time homebuyers purchase homes. In South Hill, we are getting ready to reinstate our Indoor Plumbing/Rehab program and expand it to three counties. The LIHEAP, Weatherization, and Emergency Home Repair programs continue to offer residents energy improvements.

With Thanksgiving and Christmas just around the corner, again, please give thanks to the farmworkers for the bountiful harvest we enjoy. §

## Farmworkers Move into New Housing

Sharon Saldarriaga  
State Director  
Richmond

We are pleased to announce that our Parker Farms Farmworker Housing Project has come to an end. Four duplexes were completed in July and farmworkers immediately began to occupy the buildings. Each duplex holds twelve workers for a total of 48 workers.

The project was the result of several funding sources: HUD's Rural Housing and Economic Development program, the Department of Housing and Community Development, Parker Farms, the Home Depot Foundation and other private funding sources.

The project began as an AmeriCorps program under the administration of Design Corps, which later transferred to Telamon. They assigned an AmeriCorps architectural graduate to develop plans using principles of sustainable design and assist with developing applications to fund the project. The design was based on focus groups conducted with farmworkers to determine their housing needs and preferences such as room sizes and amenities.

Originally, the units were designed to be strawbale structures involving primarily the use of volunteer labor. However, because of time constraints and the lack of contractors familiar with strawbale tech-

niques, we had to resort to conventional construction methods.

The units are cement block with a stucco finish. One unit is handicap accessible.

The program was designed in a way that required that a percentage of the project be paid by the grower and that the units be built on the grower's property. This was an asset because it avoided any NIMBY problems, i.e. community opposition.

We are currently completing four single farmworker family homes for Ingleside Nurseries, also in Westmoreland County. One of these units is of strawbale construction. This project should be finished by the end of November. Then, we plan to expand this program into additional counties. Over the next two years, we hope to build farmworker

housing on the Eastern Shore and in Scott County in southwest Virginia. This phase will use our existing plans and conventional construction techniques.

Anyone interested in getting more information about this program, please contact Jim Reina at 804.355.4676 or [jreina@telamon.org](mailto:jreina@telamon.org). §



## Celebrating Crime-Free Communities

By Lynita Falls  
Housing Counselor  
Gretna

Each year, on the first Tuesday in August, communities across the nation celebrate National Night Out. The event is sponsored by local sheriffs' offices and/or police departments as a way to celebrate crime-free communities. The event focuses on clean and fun family entertainment in a crime-free setting. Thousands of people across the county and city participate in the local events, despite the record breaking 100 degree temperatures.

These events throughout our communities allowed residents to come out for free hot dog meals and enjoy local music. Other attractions included a dunking booth, car shows and various children's activities. The events also allowed local service and non-profit agencies to set up booths to present their product to the attendees.

Housing Counselor, Lynita Falls, set up a booth at the Pittsylvania County event in Chatham to display Telamon's newest housing program—CHDO for Pittsylvania County. Attendees stopped by the booth to learn about this affordable housing opportunity and the many other services that are available through Telamon. This event was an excellent opportunity to showcase Telamon's services.

In the City of Danville, Telamon participated in events at Cardinal Village and Seeland Crossing communities. Housing Counselor, Ruth Ann Ball, and Project Manager, Robin Roark, set up a booth at the Cardinal Village event. Housing Counselor, Kimberly Walker, set up a booth at the Seeland Crossing event. At these events, our staff handed out information on housing programs and other counseling services that are available to the residents in those areas. §

## Farmworker Facts from The National Farmworker Ministry

- Farm work is one of the most hazardous occupations in the country. The death rate among agricultural workers nationwide was an estimated 20.9 per 100,000 workers in 1996, compared to the average for all industries of 3.9 per 100,000 workers. (Reeves, et. al. "Fields of Poison: California Farm workers and Pesticides." 1999.)
- Farm workers in the United States earn an average of \$10,000 per year.
- Farm worker wages have declined by more than 20% in the last twenty years, after accounting for inflation.
- Farm workers have the lowest annual family incomes of any U.S. wage and salary workers. (Charles D. Thompson Jr. and Melinda F. Wiggins, *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor and Advocacy*. University of Texas Press; Austin; 2002.)
- 1/2 of all farm workers are hired through contractors. This arrangement allows growers to avoid their obligations under state or federal employment law - including minimum wage requirements. (Farmworker Justice Fund 2004 Report)
- There are an estimated 900,000 migrant students. About 50% finish high school. ("Changing School With the Season," *Christian Science Monitor*. February 15, 2005)
- Physicians treating farm workers generally compare their health to that of residents of the developing world. Farm workers suffer from chronic infections, advanced untreated diseases, and numerous problems resulting from limited access to medical care. (Daniel Rothenberg, *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*.)
- Farmworker women "do nearly every kind of farm labor on every kind of farm. They routinely earn less money than men for doing the same work." Many face sexual harassment at work and are frequently isolated, living in remote rural areas, dependent upon their husbands or crew leaders for transportation. (Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc.)
- About 52 percent of farmworker women are U.S. born. Two out of three are non-Hispanic. Due to the need to migrate to find employment, two in five married farmworkers live apart from their spouses while doing farmwork. The same proportion live away from their children. ([www.medscape.com/viewarticle/470445](http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/470445)) §

Facts found at [www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org)

## 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](mailto:crodriguez@telamon.org).

**HURRY!**  
**THEY ARE GOING FAST!**



## The Virginia Employment Commission Employer Fair

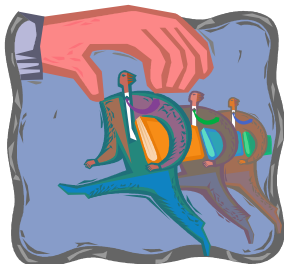
By Sharleen Drummond  
Case Manager  
Exmore

Telamon in Exmore recently participated in an employer fair hosted by the Virginia Employment Commission. The mission was for agencies to meet with employers in order to provide information on available services for their businesses. The employer fair was a success for Exmore's office as several employers expressed their willingness to work with Telamon clients.

One large business, Blue Crab Bay, is interested in our On-The-Job Training and will be giving us a tour of their location in order to educate us with regard to their available jobs and daily activities.

Also, T&W Block, a company who hires many drivers who have a CDL class A licenses, expressed interest in one of our clients who will receive training in order to obtain his CDL license.

The information about our services provided employers with an explanation of how Telamon can benefit their business. The fair opened new doors and provided opportunities for Telamon and its clients. §



## The Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc. Children Whisked Away On Magical Trip

By Angela Rodriguez  
Case Manager  
Winchester

In the front row of the Winchester Little Theater sat six children, five of whom had never seen a play outside of the small school productions that were rendered throughout the school year. Trying their hardest not to fidget, they waited impatiently for something to happen. Suddenly the lights went out, and six pairs of eyes searched the darkness to discover from where strange sounds originated. The pounding of drums, the jingling of jewelry and bells, and the sound of pounding feet and clapping hands erupted in the theater. When the lights came on, the children were transported from the theater to a little town square in the middle of an Arabian desert where brightly colored harem girls and tumbling jesters danced to entertain a great sultan. With a great booming voice, the sultan called forth a renowned story teller who wove together a tale of a boy named Aladdin and his wonderful lamp.

Gwen (Telamon-Winchester's Regional Manager) and I took the children who are participating in our summer youth program, funded by the Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc. to the Winchester Little Theater to see their production of "Aladdin and the

Wonderful Lamp." The theater, which is designed to allow every section of viewers to see the action from a different angle, also allows performers to interact with patrons during the play. This provided a very unique opportunity for our children who were seated in the first row at eye level with the performers. Eight-year-old Alex and nine-year-old Ishmael were engaged by the performer who played Aladdin's mother. On the occasions when she was trying to find her son, Alex and Ishmael assured her that they didn't know the whereabouts of Aladdin.

At the intermission, the children discussed the story that was unfolding before their eyes. When I asked the children what they thought of the play so far, everyone was in positive agreement. "I didn't think that I would like it, because you know, it's a baby story," said fourteen-year-old Lisa, "but this is really cool." "I love the costumes!" exclaimed fourteen-year-old Maria, and ten-year-old Briana recounted conclusively, "this is the coolest play



*Youth waiting outside the Winchester Little Theater*

## Conexiones-Training & Employment Center Expands in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

By Cecily Rodriguez  
Deputy State Director  
Richmond

Having completed our first program quarter, Telamon's newest program, Conexiones-Entrenamiento y Trabajos, is well underway. We have expanded our services from just offering assistance at the Richmond Career Advancement Center at 201 W. Broad Street to include services offered four days a week at the Southside Plaza Community Center at 4100 Hull Street Road and one day a week at the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce at 10700 Midlothian Turnpike, Suite 200.

We have provided job search assistance to over 150 people. We have helped customers write 40 resumes and referred 81 people to jobs. We also have made 220 referrals to community service providers, and to education and workforce programs.

Our goal for this program is to increase the participation of the Hispanic community in larger workforce development efforts happening in our community. The primary barrier for our customers is language since many service providers in our area lack Spanish-speaking capability. This is where our assistance is critical. We provide the bridge between the service provider, employer, or educational administrator and the customer.

A major strength of our program is our ability to offer

“Preparate para La Chamba” (Prepare yourself for Work) workshops. In these workshops, funded by The Cameron Foundation, we provide intensive training on how to function in the American workplace. According to the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Board, between 2000 and 2010, there will be a major increase in the 55+ population. Naturally, the job market will have fewer entry-level workers. Employers are now turning to non-traditional sources of labor, like immigrant populations, to fill these jobs. Combine this trend with the



*The most recent group of workshop participants for the “Preparate para La Chamba” workshop held at the Chester Public Library on September 22nd.*

increase in the Latino population, and the need to train these new workers who may have limited work experience and may not be familiar with American culture, becomes critical.

Telamon's workplace skills workshops have been created to fill this gap and to help Latinos be successful. This course is highly interactive and covers the 8 basic tenets of work ethics: 1) pride and accountability for your work, 2) being at work when needed, 3) productivity, 4) dependability, 5) hon-

esty, 6) a good attitude, 7) good interpersonal skills, and 8) responsibility for one's actions. In the first quarter, we have held three workshops and trained just over forty participants.

In the few months since we have opened our center, it has become clear to us that there are a wealth of programs available in which Latinos can increase their educational and technical skills; however, there is not typically anyone available in these facilities to provide information in Spanish. This often means that the customer cannot get past the first phone call or registration requirement.

Many people take for granted the amount of time it takes to plan for a job search. That time can be doubled when you add a language barrier. We typically spend 2-3 hours with each customer during their initial visit, time that many workforce programs are not able to dedicate to one customer. Many of our customers speak some English, but their accent or vocabulary can interfere with communication. Often times, front line service providers are overwhelmed with customers and can, without intention, deter limited English proficient speakers from following through with their request for information or registration for training.

We are excited to be a part of workforce development in the greater Richmond region and look forward to helping ensure the participation of limited English proficient Spanish speakers into the wonderful training and employment opportunities offered here. §