

Telamon—Virginia

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Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

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Message from the State Director Sharon Saldarriaga

Several exciting events are taking place at this time. We received a slight increase in our National Farmworker Jobs Program this year. This enables us to maintain our current level of services and direct additional dollars to training activities for farmworkers to better prepare them for increased employment opportunities.

In housing, stimulus funds were awarded for weatherization, allowing us to serve many more families than in previous years. New staff are bringing new focus and energy to several of our programs. We currently are working on several new proposals. And finally, we are excited about our effort to promote a “green” focus throughout our programs and among our staff. All things considered, we are looking forward to a busy and productive year.

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Mini Art Camp “All About Me”



By Dianne Arenas.
Regional Manager-Exmore

The Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc. provides funding to address basic skills deficiencies among migrant farmworker youth, promote family literacy through the purchase of books, and engage the youth in cultural enrichment activities.

Twenty-one children who live on Virginia’s Eastern Shore enjoyed a two-day Mini Art Camp during spring break. The setting for this camp was the Barrier Islands Center in Machipongo, VA. This is a museum dedicated to the families who lived on these islands. Monica Bidgeforth, Director of Abrakadoodle, along with her mother, Ebba Tinwin and sister, Sarina Hrubesch, did a fantastic job in encouraging the children to experiment, explore, and create while learning about art history, techniques, and concepts. They also helped them develop fine motor, verbal, and critical thinking skills.

The 3 to 7 year old theme was “All About Me”. On day

One, the children did a lovely “Name Quilt” where they learned about the folk art of quilting and using patterns and shape to create name art. Then they did “My Dancing Dot Family” in which they created a representation of their families as they learned more about dots and lines in this fun activity.

On day two, the children did self portraits. They discussed what part of the body is included in a portrait and how to position facial features; then the students painted their own self-portraits. Afterward, they painted houses as a Rainbow Homes Project and learned about colors. The children talked about the homes in which they live and then created a beautiful rainbow in Roy G. Biv order.

The 8 to 12 year old theme was “Paint Me a Story.” On day one, the students made Arpilleras (originally from Peru and Bolivia, they are three-dimensional textile pictures that tell stories about village life) in which they told a story about their life. Next, the students created a “bull’s eye” painting, inspired by painter John Barber, which uses color and shape to guide the viewer’s eye to the subject of the painting of a favorite place using a water color resist technique.

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"All About Me" cont.

On day two, the children painted a self portrait then used collage techniques to personalize their artwork and reveal their interests. Then, the children created a photo illustration showing themselves and their dreams. This was inspired by Marc Chagall, a Russian artist who is known for his paintings depicting floating or dreaming people and bright colors. §



We thank our families and community friends who helped make this event a success.

Staff Notes

Welcome to Sarah Howard, Office Manager for Richmond. She comes with extensive experience in all facets of office management.

Congratulations to Luis Coral, Pesticide Safety Trainer, for becoming a certified OSHA Forklift Trainer.

We also wish to congratulate Dianne Arenas on her promotion. She is replacing Soraya Buckner as Regional Manager in our Exmore office.

Congratulations to Marlene Larios, recently promoted to Deputy State Director for our employment and training programs.

A big thank you goes to Soraya Buckner for her hard work, dedication and commitment to farmworkers and to Telamon. We wish her the best of luck in any future endeavors. §

It's Never Too Late for Change: A Tobacco Worker's Story

By Teresa Anderson
Case Manager
Danville, VA

After spending many years of working in tobacco, William Burns came to our Telamon office in Danville, Virginia and was found to be eligible for our program. William served in the U.S. Army for 7 years, 3 of those years in Vietnam as a truck driver, where he was injured and later honorably discharged. Returning to Danville, William felt- he had no work skills to offer an employer, and soon he turned to selling drugs, a decision that would change his life forever. William was arrested, found guilty, and spent the next 18 years of his life in prison. After prison, William again returned to Danville and found himself homeless and living on the streets. The only job he could find was working in a tobacco processing plant. Five years went by and the tobacco warehouse closed due to the rise in sales of imported tobacco. Soon afterward, William found another seasonal tobacco job; there is where I met William collecting his last paycheck of the season after working four months loading and unloading tobacco. William had a strong desire to work, but he found finding employment difficult due to his felony convictions.

William had worked hard after prison to regain the respect and trust of the community after his drug conviction.

His life long dream had always been to own his own business as a barber, but he felt he never had the right resources to fulfill it.

After assessments and career planning activities with William, he was motivated to tour The Cultural Arts Training Center, a school of cosmetology, barbering and nail technicians. William made the decision to enroll and Telamon assisted him with tuition assistance, which included his uniform, his barber kit and all other necessary supplies mandatory to complete his training class. He also receives a weekly needs related payment to assist him with his transportation and other needs. Targeted to complete his training in February, 2010, William currently has a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Now, at the age of 61, William has changed his life completely; when he is not in his 30 hour a week hands on barbering classes, he is on call clergy at Danville Regional Medical Center where he visits the sick and offers encouraging words and prayers. He also spends a lot of his time mentoring children, encouraging them to say "No to Drugs" and not to make the same mistakes he has made in his life. He is already making plans for his barbershop and has started interviewing for workers. I've never met anyone so determined, motivated and excited about his future. William says he thanks God for Telamon Corporation. §

Little Movement on AgJOBS

On May 14, 2009, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Congressmen Adam Putnam (R-FL) and Howard Berman (D-CA) introduced, in the Senate and House, the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security (AgJOBS) Act. While there have been a few additional co-sponsors, there has been little progress since then.

The following is reprinted from a press release issued by the Immigration Policy Center in May: AgJOBS is a bipartisan, compromise bill that is the result of years of negotiations among farmworkers, growers, and Members of Congress. The legislation has two parts: 1) an earned legalization program for unauthorized farmworkers who meet certain eligibility requirements; and 2) a revision of the H-2A temporary foreign agricultural worker program. Numerous organizations from across the political spectrum believe that the bill is necessary to create a stable agricultural workforce, improve the lives of farmworkers, and give employers access to the workers they need.

AgJOBS also serves as a blueprint for comprehensive immigration reform. AgJOBS demonstrates a successful model for compromise where workers and employers have come together to resolve their differences. The dysfunctional U.S. immigration system is currently standing in the way of addressing deeper structural problems

that impact U.S. workers and U.S. competitiveness in a globalized market. The Immigration Policy Center has produced a fact sheet about the current challenges found at the intersection of immigration policy and agriculture, and why addressing these issues is critical to the nation's economy.

The Most Current Data Shows:

Farmwork is critical to the U.S.'s food security. According to agricultural labor economist James Holt, less than 2% of the U.S. workforce is engaged in farm work. However, more than 550,000 U.S. farmers hire workers to fill more than 3 million agricultural jobs each year. Because many of these agricultural jobs are seasonal, the 3 million jobs are filled by 2.5 million workers.

Most farmworkers are not authorized to work legally in the U.S. According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), the percentage of agricultural workers who reported that they were unauthorized has increased dramatically in the last two decades, rising from 7% in Fiscal Year (FY) 1989, to 16% in FY 1990-91, to 28% in FY 1992-93. In the most recently published NAWS survey from FY 2001-02, 53% of all seasonal agricultural workers admitted they were not authorized to work in the U.S. However, many experts suggest that the number may actually be closer to 75%.

- **U.S. growers want a stable, legal workforce.** The vast majority of U.S. employers are law-abiding and attempt to hire legal workers. However, even "good" employers can get caught up in immigration-enforcement actions. Labor disruptions due to worksite raids, immigration audits and investigations, Social Security Administration (SSA) "No-Match" letters, and other immigration-enforcement activities can result in severe financial problems for growers: crops rot in the fields, jobs further down the production line are lost, growers cannot make payments on loans, and farms go out of business.

Farmworkers suffer poor working conditions. As in other sectors of the economy, the presence of many unauthorized workers exacerbates the problems of poor wages and working conditions and results in weak bargaining power for all workers. Undocumented workers live under the constant threat of deportation and are therefore less likely to lodge complaints or join labor unions, resulting in poorer wages and conditions for all workers, including U.S. citizens.

Passage of AgJOBS makes sense for the country, for the future of agriculture, and the well-being of farmworkers. For more information, please visit www.immigrationpolicy.org or www.farmworkerjustice.org



Weatherization, The Original Green Job

By Mayra Nickerson
Deputy State Director

Everyone is now talking green and sustainable. The emphasis in Telamon's South Hill, Virginia office has always been on helping to make people's homes safer and more affordable. However, in South Hill, they have also been thinking and talking green since 1985, when they first began repairing and weatherizing homes. As Richard Ruffin, the weatherization supervisor, who has been with Telamon since 1993 noted recently, weatherization work is one of the oldest green jobs.



Richard Ruffin, Weatherization Supervisor, in front of one of the new vans bought with the ARRA grant.

They have been at their current location at 120 West Danville Street since September 7, 1993. Since then, the South Hill staff has served hundreds of households. Thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and a demonstrated capacity to get the job done, South Hill has recently experienced

substantial increases in funding for weatherization including \$1,400,000 for Program Year 2009-11.

With the increase in funding and output projections (from 130 households served in 2008-9, to an estimated 368 in 2009-11), came the need for ramping up activities and adding staff. Subsequently, the South Hill office has grown from a staff of four full-time employees and a volunteer to nine full-time employees and a PathStone Volunteer. That's a total of four new green jobs and related administrative support, so far!

The South Hill staff is made up of: Carolyn Walker, Housing Office Manager; Richard Ruffin, Weatherization Supervisor; Anthony Davis, Crew Leader; Herman Thompson, Crew Leader; Bryon Shelton, Construction Worker; Eddie Hood, Construction Worker; Jamall Wilkins, Construction Worker; Matthew Hite, Construction Worker; Frema



Druagh, Secretary; and Betty Carter, PathStone Volunteer.

Richard and Anthony are both EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) certified renovators. Richard, Anthony and Herman all now hold Lead Work Practices certificates. They have also all been trained in the use of new weatherization technologies and instruments such as blower doors and infrared cameras.

To learn more about weatherization, visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program website <http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/about.cfm>

The South Hill office serves Brunswick and Mecklenburg Counties. For weatherization assistance inquiries, please contact Caroline Walker at 1 (800) 787-5099.

Tytiana Dennis, our Foreclosure Counselor in Gretna, attended a one-day workshop in Richmond on July 30, 2009, which was sponsored jointly by the National Consumer Law Center and Housing Opportunities Made Equal (H.O.M.E.). In addition to being a certified Housing Counselor and also a Foreclosure Counselor, she now holds a certificate in How to Identify and Resolve Mortgage Servicing Issues. We commend Tytiana for continuing to help us strengthen our housing counseling programs.