

Telamon—Virginia

May 2012

Empowering Individuals, Improving Communities

Message from the State Director Sharon Saldarriaga

Regardless of your political point of view, we most likely can agree that, as citizens of our great United States, our youth should be able to imagine a college-bound future. Lately, there has been much debate about the student loan crisis and affordable education. Why has the cost of education increased tremendously in the past decade by almost 10% annually? Can you recall when tuition costs for a year did not equal the cost of a new luxury car? On April 25, 2012, the total student loan debt in this country reached 1 trillion dollars...more than that of credit card debt.

For a country to be great, the pursuit of happiness needs to be attainable. Education alone does not guarantee complete content-

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History, Culture, Art

By Dianne Arenas
Case Manager, Eastern
Shore

Using funds from The Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc., Telamon offered a variety of cultural activities for children from local farmworker families. Activities were held at the Barrier Islands Center on a perfectly beautiful day. Eighteen children arrived at nine in the morning, and were divided into three groups to participate in a rotation of activities.

In one activity, Martha Giles, a musician from Virginia Beach, led a workshop for the children that included songs, movement, and experimentation with numerous musical instruments from around the world. In another activity, with the Abakadoodle art program, the children incorporated coastal water themes into artwork. They painted imprints of different fish, and crafted artful objects from homemade play dough.

Later, Mr. Jerry led a tour through the old kitchen at the Bar-



rier Islands Center. The children saw the dirt-floored kitchen with its huge chimney where food was cooked. The two-hundred-year-old building still has many of its original bricks. Outside the kitchen hung a dinner bell; the children loved this bell because it was incredibly loud.



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History, Culture, Art
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The Barrier Islands Center (BIC) is located on Route 13, on Virginia's Eastern Shore just twenty miles north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The BIC preserves the most complete almshouse complex extant in the United States, using its buildings to showcase the culture, history, community, and ecology of Virginia's Barrier Islands and the peoples who made them their



home: Native Americans, farmers, watermen, hunting and fishing guides, storekeepers, hoteliers, and the Lighthouse and Lifesaving Service among others. The museum is situated on the historic seventeen

acre "almshouse farm". Though the Eastern Shore's chain of seaside barrier islands are mostly deserted now, the museum preserves the photos, artifacts, and written accounts of the fascinating stories of those who once called these islands home.



Never Too Late

By Kathy Bullano
 Regional Manger, Danville

In today's job market, a GED is as important as having a college degree. Without a GED, a person cannot apply for most jobs in the labor market let alone further their education. David Allen came to Telamon Virginia in Danville as a referral from our Telamon Virginia Housing Office in Chatham. David had worked for many years on chicken farms and tobacco farms. He was having very hard times. He was 51 years old, had dropped out of school at the end of the eighth grade, and was now facing difficult choices: either muster the resources to get a GED, or struggle for the rest of his life doing seasonal farm work, or several jobs at once.

After 11 months of persistent effort at the Southern Virginia

Higher Ed Center in South Boston and after 3 attempts to pass the GED test, David came bursting into our office with a huge smile and his GED certificate in hand shouting, "I did it! I did it!"



Pride and accomplishment glowed from David's face. His entire demeanor was notably changed. He was confident and talked eagerly about employment. David felt so empowered he enrolled in forklift training at Goodwill Industries to enhance his work opportunities.

During the time David was enrolled in GED classes, Tela-

mon assisted him with a variety of services. He received weekly needs-related payments to purchase gas for attending classes. He attended financial management, computer literacy, and pre-employment trainings. Through these services, David became job-ready by the time he received his GED. With our services and encouragement, David said he was able to stay focused on his GED classes. Both guidance and support were essential to helping David realize his goals.

Admittedly, it was a hard journey, and David had to keep taking the GED test over and over, but he succeeded. And it was worth it. He not only achieved the certificate he needed to find better employment, the entire process affirmed character and rewarded courage. David's continuing success will build from his new "I can" attitude. He said, "If I can finally get my GED after all these years, I can do anything."

Pioneers

On March 26, 2012 Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, inducted the Pioneers of the Farm Worker Movement into the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Hall of Honor and dedicated the Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Auditorium at the DOL building in Washington, DC. The ceremonies included unveiling a mosaic of Cesar Chavez created by Arizona schoolchildren. Telamon Virginia State Director, Sharon Saldarriaga, had the honor of attending the ceremony, along with members of the farm working community, and the Chavez family. Sharon stated, "This is one of America's most powerful stories of courage and victory. I was proud to be a witness."

State Director's Message

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ment; however, it can dramatically increase opportunity and economic stability for our whole country. When more of our citizens (and yes even our non-citizens) have a path to education, it greatly benefits everyone. With a more educated and skilled workforce, we have the potential to begin building, inventing, and creating great products and stimulating great ideas again! Get empowered, take notice, and even take a stand on the outrageous cost of education and the current student loan debt crisis. We need to ensure that our country adopts policies to cap stu-

dent loan interest rates and continues active dialogue on the rising cost of education. Education should be accessible and affordable to anyone seeking greater opportunities.



Milestones

By Sara Lopez
Case Manager, Montross

Recently, Tonia Varner, Regional Program Manager of Adult Education at Rappahannock Community College, shared some rewarding information with us. Olivia Merlo Diaz and Rocio Marin Diaz, two of Telamon's participants, have completed the ESL portion of their program and are now working solely on Pre-GED and GED level work. Reaching these milestones shows dedication on the part of both the teachers and the students. Olivia and Rocio were awarded with new notebooks and plenty of pencils. They both plan to obtain their diplomas by the end of this year. Congratulations ladies! Keep up the great work!

Improved Outlook

By Damary Rapetti
Case Manager, Harrisonburg

Ramonita Ortiz enrolled with Telamon hoping to overcome previous barriers and find better job opportunities. During the fall we helped her apply for various jobs she desired. Unfortunately, prospective employers were not responsive. We continued to assist her job search and enrolled her in ESL classes to increase her prospects. Ramonita's life was starting to improve, yet she desperately needed income. Next, we helped her apply for several jobs through the VEC. In March, Ramonita called to say she had an interview at the Pilgrim's Pride poultry plant, and then she got the job. The next time we saw Ramonita, her attitude was amazing, even her face was visibly brightened. She is enjoying her new job. Her entire outlook on life is more optimistic.



National Heat Stress Awareness Week (April 23rd - 27th)

The Department of Labor and AFOP (Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs) launched National Heat Stress Awareness Week and asked heat stress trainers nationwide to participate. Telamon Virginia, conscious of the importance of Heat Stress prevention for our farmworkers, decided to train at least 100 workers during the event week. In order to fulfill our commitment, we contacted our partners (growers, community organizations and community leaders) and organized trainings statewide. With support from the Migrant program in Roanoke, the Migrant program for farmworkers in the Eastern Shore, and many growers, we scheduled thirteen training sessions.

Why is heat stress awareness critical? Every year, a number of farmworkers die from heat-related illness while working in agricultural

fields, and many more are injured by heat stress while on the job. Illnesses caused by heat can be easily overlooked because they are not specific to any crop, task, or equipment, and develop in commonly-occurring environmental conditions. What is heat stress? It is the net (overall) heat burden on the body from the combination of the body heat generated while working, environmental sources (air temperature, humidity, air movement, radiation from the sun or hot surfaces/sources) and clothing requirements. What is a training session like? It is an interactive session in which we talk with the farmworkers about heat stress symptoms and prevention. Our main goal is to get the workers to participate and talk about their own experiences working in the field. We use

various tools and methods, including the AFOP Flip Chart Heat Stress training book, question-and-answer techniques, role playing, and demonstrations. During the session we train the workers in how to identify hazards associated with heat stress, recognize symptoms of heat stress and heat illness, identify appropriate first aid procedures, avoid heat illness (prevention), recognize the potential dangers associated with the use of alcohol and/or drugs, and use appropriate protective clothing and equipment.

If you want to arrange Heat Stress training for your farmworkers, or Worker Protection Safety training, please call us.

Roberto Quintero 804-836-3540

All trainings are FREE!

RAFFLE WINNER



Telamon congratulates **RICHARD RUFFIN**. He was the winner of the drawing held April 30, 2012 for a Nook Tablet.

We thank all the supporters who purchased tickets.

Through this fund raising event, we were able to raise \$640 which goes to support the National Farmworker Jobs Program.

STAFF NOTES

A warm welcome to Roberto Quintero, the new Pesticide and Workplace Safety Trainer. His primary responsibilities are to provide workshops for growers and their supervisors, and the all-day hands-on training for pesticide handler employees to learn safe pesticide practices and Heat Stress protection. Roberto has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Newport

University in California. He has experience working across the Commonwealth as the Director of the Virginia Parent Information Resource Center and is currently the Marketing Chair of the Virginia Parent Teacher Association.

