

## Farmworker Student Activism

### Starting the Farmworker Outreach Program

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Participating at a health clinic with SAF gave me the opportunity and the experience to work with approximately 500 migrant and seasonal farmworkers. As I returned to California, I wanted to develop and start an outreach program to create awareness in the migrant community regarding health access to medical services and education.

The way in which I initiated the program, now called the Farmworker Outreach Program, was by writing a proposal and presenting it to the executive director at the non-profit community based organization, The Council for the Spanish Speaking. The director was impressed and immediately hired me. I was extremely happy and enthusiastic to begin a program that was going to address primarily the health of migrant farmworkers. I began making flyers on sunscreen protection, heat exhaustion, pesticides, and other health and safety issues.

Many farmworkers are not aware of how extremely important it is to wear sunscreen lotion while working under the cancerous sun. I redeveloped a health booklet that looks like a form of a passport; however this booklet will keep a continuous record of farmworkers' past clinical visits and important medical information.

I presented the Farmworker Outreach project to board members, doctors, and a judge to give them a better understanding about the conditions and lives of migrant farmworkers. I am currently working with a cartoonist from Los Angeles that is going to create the characters for a story,



Former SAF interns Marivel Gomez (left of center) and Maria Ruelas (right) with farmworkers in Pitt County, North Carolina  
Image courtesy of Marivel Gomez

titled the "Cervantes Family," based on a farmworking family. The story, or novela, deals with real life issues that farmworkers are confronted with while working in the fields.

In working with farmworkers and starting the Farmworker Outreach Program in our community, I have gained inspiration and motivation to make a change. This project has changed my perspective on life and has made me focus on my career goal within this field of work. Farmworkers deal with injustice, exploitation, unfair wages, no medical benefits, and unsanitary living conditions. As a student, I have the opportunity to learn about the issues and learn how to deal with them in a non-violent way. I am very grateful for my experience and the knowledge I have obtained by working with SAF.

Completing my internship and developing this project, I have come to the conclusion that any individual can make a change in the world around him or her, if they put an effort into doing so. It only takes one person to begin a change. Through my experience, I have come to the realization that one person alone can create awareness on issues that affect those who are not recognized as part of our society.

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**SAF** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.

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## U Idaho CAMPOS Dedicated to Students, Farmworker Advocacy

by Jesse Martinez, President  
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The University of Idaho College Assistance Migrant Program (UI CAMP) recruits students who meet the definition of migrant or seasonal farmworkers or children of migrant farmworkers. The program provides support for the first year of their enrollment in higher education. The services provided by CAMP include tutoring, counseling, academic advisement, health services, financial assistance (room and board, stipends, books, tuition) and follow-up assistance to assure that the students can continue their educational program after their freshman year.

College Assistance Migrant Program Organization of Students (C.A.M.P.O.S.) is a second year organization at the University of Idaho. It is a branch of the CAMP program. The main reason that CAMPOS was established was so that former and current CAMP students could feel they had a family at the University of Idaho and so we could stick together and do different events, such as barbeques and dances, and to give each other the support we needed.

Since last year, CAMPOS's membership has doubled to roughly 40 members. The dedication that the students of CAMPOS have is tremendous. At the beginning of the Fall 2001, there were changes in the leadership positions. The new officers wanted to make CAMPOS more than just an organization for support but an organization for committing to changes in both our community and society. Not only sharing our heritage, but also promoting awareness of issues not so perceptible to the rest of our community. CAMPOS' members have done a great job getting the word out on what CAMPOS is, what it believes and where we want to go. Most of the members come from migrant farm life, so we try to promote it in every event we take part of.

CAMPOS promotes our heritage in fundraisers and events. When we sell food for fundraisers, we sell traditional Mexican food. We keep away from the food that is currently boycotted from the United Farm Workers (UFW). As an organization, we try to keep away from supporting corporations that are not cooperating with farmworkers. Our events on campus are events that mean something in our lives. Events such as the Cesar Chavez Celebration, Farmworker Awareness Week, Cinco de Mayo, and our annual talent show. In these events, members provide the campus with flyers, statistical information and migrant songs about farmworkers' experiences done on our campus.

During our Cesar Chavez Celebration, we played films and movies, such as, "The Milagro Bean Field War", "The Fight in the Fields", and a week long documentary series called "Chicano." We had a display on who Cesar E. Chavez was and his accomplishments, and had handouts to inform people of the many injustices farmworkers go through. We also had two speakers from Boise, ID and Los Angeles, CA come to the university and speak on farmworker awareness. In order for this to be done, we sought help from other departments and organizations on and off campus. The University of Idaho Office of Multicultural Affairs, Student in Action for Farmworkers, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Organizacion de Estudiantes Latino Americanos (OELA) at the U of I, and many more were helpful resources.

We do everything in our power to create the awareness not only on our campus or community but everywhere we go. I know that CAMPOS will be a successful and more supportive organization as the years go by, because we are not only getting bigger, but also wiser.

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## Raising Farmworker Awareness In South Texas

by Enedelia Rios, President, Association of Migrant Students  
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My name is Enedelia Rios and I am currently attending the University of Texas Pan-American in Edinburg, Texas. I was a SAF Into the Fields intern this past summer (2001) placed with Rockingham County Migrant Education. After I finished with the internship, I knew that my goal for the year was to promote the National Farmworker Awareness Week during the month of March. I knew it was going to take preparation and time, but it was pay back time for the great opportunity that Student Action with Farmworkers had given me.

I have to say that it took a whole group to bring it all together, and the name of this group is the Association of Migrant Students (A.M.S.). This group of students is an organization on campus that promotes migrant issues and helps migrant college students create bonds between each other. I started emphasizing to the members how important it is to promote Farmworker Awareness Week, so at the beginning of the Spring semester we started planning. I received the SAF package in the mail with some ideas, but I thought that as a group we would be able to accomplish other things as well.

The organization got together with the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) in order to have more help for the event. The CAMP director, academic advisor and counselor were able to schedule a presentation on campus with Juanita Valdez-Cox, the regional director of the United Farm Workers (UFW) in San

Juan, Texas. A.M.S. was in charge of getting people inside the theater to listen to the presentation. The way we were encouraging people to go in, was by passing out different fruits with flyers and of course emphasizing that 'farmworkers feed the world.' All the members and staff had the organization's t-shirt, which on the back had a real nice picture of farmworkers' hands feeding the world; it was drawn by Mayra Lopez, an A.M.S. member.

We were broadcast on three different channels around the valley, two were English speaking and the other one was Univision. I was interviewed by one of the channels; they asked me what I had contributed to the migrant community and I answered that I had contributed a bit by continuing my education, but that I would contribute more in the near future when I become an educator. The Monitor newspaper published an article on farmworkers with the assistance of the A.M.S. advisor, Angela G. Cantu, and we were also on the front page of the university's homepage on the web.

The Association of Migrant Students is a young organization on campus whose main goal is to unify the migrant students with events, like National Farmworker Awareness Week, that make us proud of our migrant backgrounds. As the president of this organization, I will do my best to have another successful week next March.



Enedelia Rios (2nd from right) with the Association of Migrant Students at UT Pan-American

Image courtesy of Enedelia Rios

