

Focus on Migrant Education

"LITTLE WILLIE"

Today I graded Little Willie's creative assignment. He and the rest of the students in my second Migrant Education Summer School class have to do one of these exercises in creativity daily. The directions for today's assignment were to write five sentences and to draw a picture that symbolized how each of them felt about themselves. Little Willie wrote "I feel tired and sometimes the world makes me feel stupid. I am stupid!" These words struck my heart with the intensity of a stray bullet from an all too familiar gun. How could a child so young and so full of life make such a strong, negative statement? These words sounded too grown up to be coming from such a little boy. After much thought and consideration today, I realize that Willie is a little 'grown-up' living in a world that treats him as if his agricultural way of life is a mockery of the American dream. Living under such a huge umbrella made him feel tired and stupid - where is the respect for America's children these days? How can we have a future if our little stars, like Willie, are feeling stupid and

Continued on page 5

What You Need to Know about Migrant Education:

- The "average" migrant child may be in three different schools in a year. For many children it takes roughly three years (for them) to advance one grade level (*MEMO*, September/October 1994).
- Migrant farmworker children are essential in the migrant family economy. Many drop out of school to help support their families or care for younger brothers and sisters. According to Bell et al., "by the time the migrant child is 12 he or she may be working from 16 to 18 hours per week" (*MEMO*, September/October 1994).
- Migrant workers typically complete 7.7 years of schooling, compared with 12.5 years for the general population (*MEMO*, September/October 1994).
- Well over 50% of migrant children do not finish high school and therefore usually find few alternatives to farmwork. The highest school grade completed by farmworker children is half the U.S. average (*FLOC Support Bulletin*, October 24, 1994).
- Migrant students who do achieve in high school indicate that the single most important factor in contributing to their success was an adult who cared (*Rethinking Migrant Education*, 1992, p. 15).

Also in this issue . . .

WHO'S WHO IN THE SAF OFFICE.....	2
NOTES FROM THE FIELD	
MIGRANT SCHOLARSHIP FUND.....	3
PROJECT LEVANTE.....	4
CALIFORNIA'S PROPOSITION 187.....	5
"LITTLE WILLIE", CONTINUATION.....	5
CALENDAR OF EVENTS/OPPORTUNITIES.....	6

SAF Mission:

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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The next issue of **From The Ground UP** will focus on *farmworker women*. Please send articles and photos to the SAF office by March 1, 1995.

Editor: Felice Anaïs James

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WHO'S WHO IN THE SAF OFFICE

Margaret Horn, the executive director of SAF, is originally from Talladega, Alabama. Margaret graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1989 with degrees in Anthropology and Sociology. She received a Masters of Arts degree in Medical Anthropology from UNC-CH in 1993. Her graduate research in Mexico focused on migrant and refugee health. While at UNC-CH, Margaret was a Teaching Fellow. Before graduate school, Margaret worked as Director of the Appalachian Student Health Coalition at Vanderbilt University Medical School. She was also very involved in the Alternative Spring Break Program at Vanderbilt University.

Melinda Wiggins, the program director of SAF, is a former SAF intern and special projects coordinator. While interning with SAF, Melinda worked in Newton Grove, North Carolina, with both the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry and Church Women United. Melinda received a degree in Political Science at Millsaps College in her home state of Mississippi, as well as a Masters of Theological Studies degree at Duke University. Melinda has had experience organizing students on campuses, interning with legislative agencies in Mississippi and Washington, D.C., and working with homeless populations.

Originally from Ypsilanti, Michigan, *Juanita Chenault* has come to work in the SAF Office through the Public Allies Americorps Program. Juanita decided to leave her senior year at Eastern Michigan University to do direct service in North Carolina. At SAF, Juanita coordinates both the Intern Referral Service and Project LEVANTE. After her apprenticeship with Public Allies, Juanita plans to finish her undergraduate studies; then attend graduate and law school to study family therapy and advocacy.

Laura Neish, the education coordinator of SAF, is a senior History major at Duke University. She participated in SAF's ITF program in 1993. As an intern she worked at St. Martin's Migrant Head Start in Newton Grove, NC and the Johnston County Migrant Summer School program. At SAF, Laura organizes the resource center and researches new educational material.

Felice Anaïs James is a Junior at Duke University who plans to attend medical school upon completion of her undergraduate degree. She was a SAF intern the summer of 1993 and worked for East Coast Migrant Health in her hometown of Marion, South Carolina, this past summer. Felice works in the SAF office as the newsletter editor.

