

Farmworker Student Activism

Starting the Farmworker Outreach Program

by Marivel Gomez, CSU Sacramento
maribella07@hotmail.com

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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