

# FROM THE GROUND UP

A PUBLICATION OF STUDENT ACTION WITH FARMWORKERS

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## Boycott of US Tobacco-Owned Wines Called

Mexican-American vineyard workers at the Chateau Ste. Michelle and Columbia Crest wineries in Washington have decided to take on the UST (formerly US Tobacco)-owned company in order to win higher wages and better working conditions. More than 200 workers, represented by the United Farmworkers of Washington State (UFWWS), called the nationwide boycott in June of 1991 after the winery did not honor workers' requests to unionize. Farmworkers are urging consumers not to buy **Columbia Crest or Chateau Ste. Michelle** wines and asking proprietors to discontinue selling the wines.

Some of the conditions workers seek to improve:

- Vineyard workers often work up to 90 hours a week in extremely dangerous and demanding conditions—but do not receive overtime pay
- In 1992, US Tobacco reported a profit of \$450 million, while vineyard workers real wages have decreased 15% since 1987
- Women vineyard workers earn 30% less than males workers; there are no female foremen
- Since 1987 the workers have requested that the company abide by the results of a union election. UST has aggressively denied this request. (See "Boycott", page 4)

## SAF ORIENTATION: A Short Journey

During the last week of May, 21 unsuspecting college students walked through the doors of the Short Journey Center in Smithfield, NC. For many of these eager people, the trip was long. Many would be meeting members of the group for the first time. "... Am I in the right place?"

Ice-breakers marked the beginning of the **SAF 1993 Summer Internship and Leadership Development Program**. From "Duck, Duck, Sarah" to flying tennis balls, everyone learned the names and interests of their fellow SAF interns. Through fun and games, the interns made new friends and rekindled old acquaintances.



photo by C. Corrie

On the other hand, the week focused on the interns' purpose for being there: to learn more about farmworkers and their needs. Scheduled throughout each day were speakers representing the various areas that encompass a migrant or seasonal farmworker's life. Pam DiStefano, attorney from Farmworkers Legal Services of NC, explained and answered questions regarding the legal rights (See "Orientation", page 6)

SAF interns learn about pesticides through skit.

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## A word from the director . . .

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I'm discovering that it's not easy to put down on paper all the emotions of a year of work and learning that have been my experience with Student Action with Farmworkers. We want this newsletter to be a forum for ideas from across the country about the ways young people can best become involved with farmworker service, advocacy and community organizing efforts. In this issue, I will start at "the beginning" and give an overview of the history we are now all a part of—students, farmworkers, sponsoring agencies, funders, and other friends of SAF.

The idea of bringing college students together with migrant and seasonal farmworker families for mutual learning is not new. SAF grew most directly out of a summer internship program sponsored by the Center for Documentary Studies (CDS) at Duke University in which thirteen other students and I participated in 1990. The faculty advisor was Dr. Robert Coles, a documentary writer, child psychologist, professor and advocate for the poor, who had been concerned since the 1960s with the situation of migrant children and families. In addition, Dr. Coles has inspired college students over the past twenty years to take time to enter the migrant world—both to learn and to help.

The first group of students effected by Dr. Coles' teaching on migrants ventured into rural North Carolina in the summer of 1976. Duke undergrad and graduate students documented farmworker conditions across the state which formed the basis for a US Civil Rights Commission hearing. The administration of the program transferred among other student groups, but for the next 7 years students from Duke and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill worked in eastern NC in the areas of health, education and legal services.

In the mid-eighties, the Leadership Program of Duke's Public Policy Department began a summer internship program called Interns in Conscience. One of the sites was south Florida, where Duke students worked with the

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*"If we are truly effective in our work, farmworkers will one day have the respect, rights, income and opportunities they deserve..."*

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farmworker community until 1989. In 1990, the CDS started its summer program in eastern North Carolina, modeled after the Leadership program but including a documentary component.

The CDS program was funded by a grant from the US Department of Education. One interest of Coles and the USDE was to see how college student volunteers could have an impact on the education of migrant children. We soon discovered that education involved many more aspects of children's lives than the schoolroom, and expanded the program to include legal services, health, ESL, ministry and advocacy. After graduation in 1991, I wrote a resource manual to help students at other schools start similar programs and began to develop plans for SAF. I discovered a network of young people committed to public service and a network of farmworker-related nonprofits, yet few if any connections between them—a gap we hope for SAF to fill. I spent last summer talking to a variety of people involved in student service and with farmworkers. There seemed to be interest in the idea of SAF, and all of a sudden things started to happen. We formed a board, applied for our non-profit, tax-exempt status, and started trying to raise funds.

It is hard to believe that SAF has made it this far in one year: thirty-two interns from 11 schools for our very first summer. We have learned a great deal about how to be an effective organization, one that I hope will continue to provide support to our nation's farmworkers. Of course, we must never forget that our ultimate goal is to work ourselves out of a job, and dissolve SAF. If we are truly effective in our work, farmworkers will one day have the respect, rights, income and opportunities they deserve and the need for Student Action with Farmworkers will be about as great as the current need for a Student Action with Dentists or Student Action with Lawyers.

Until that day, much work remains for us all. Please continue to support SAF, and throughout our newsletter you will learn about other ways we can each have an impact on improving conditions for farmworkers. If you ever have any questions, please call me.

*Carolyn*



## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

### S.C. STATE RECEIVES GRANT

This summer South Carolina State University students are meeting the needs of migrant education within the Midland area. This project resulted from a grant, entitled *Migrant Education—A Cooperative Effort in Cross-Cultural Understanding*, awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services in October 1992. This grant was offered by HHS specifically to historically black colleges and universities so as to foster healthy multi-racial relations.

Under the leadership of Dr. Patty Pollard, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages at S. C. State, the project offers ESL classes to Latino farmworkers, as well as aid to African-American workers who have educational needs. Assisting Dr. Pollard in these classes are two other SCSU faculty members and a student team. The team will also:

- assist workers in accessing governmental agencies and health clinics
- translate and distribute appropriate Spanish materials (SC drivers' study guides, facts about AIDS)
- offer guidance classes to migrant women and children on nutrition and health

The team office is located at Hope Lutheran Church, Vance, South Carolina.

### Enthusiasm Drives UVa Volunteers

It is the last Tuesday of classes at the University of Virginia, and the volunteers who have come to teach at the migrant camp all semester return to mark the end of the program. These young "teachers" leave their offerings of chips and egg salad on the large picnic table. Soon these items are joined by a large pot of beans, a stack of tortillas, a dish of rice, and a pot of chicken in hot sauce. Before dinner, Miguel, who lives at a different camp but has come for the picnic, works to put up the pinata with Estabon, a UVa student from Argentina. After everyone has eaten, it is time to break the pinata, and the blindfolded children are misled by cries of "Higher! Higher!" and "Bajo! Bajo!"

The Migrant Aid tutoring and literacy program serves everyone at the camp. Laura Yamhure, the director of the volunteer program and a student at UVa, explains that the "purpose of the tutoring program is really to provide them with instruction at the level they need. So for some people it's a matter of understanding how to fill out forms and for some people it's conversation. Some people aren't literate in Spanish and we're just doing basic literacy skills." On a typical evening, some volunteers help children with their homework, others go over basic shopping vocabulary with couples, and others play spelling bingo with the single men. All the volunteers are UVa students recruited through Madison House, the office of volunteer services for the University of Virginia.

The Migrant Aid Program is the joint effort of Madison House and Albermarle County. Even though the county can provide certain amounts of funding, structure, and continuity, (See "Enthusiasm", p. 4)



photo by Judy Leeman

Shannon, Adrian, and Tammy moments before the tickling broke out.

## Enthusiasm

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it cannot supply the people power needed to provide services to the migrant community. Laura continues by saying, "The students have time and energy, so its a really nice complementary relationship." These students contribute four hours of their time each week. The drive to the camp is tiring, but the whole experience is surprisingly energizing. This enthusiasm shows during the last week of classes when final papers are due; all 12 of the volunteers made the final drive out to the camp to say good-bye to the migrant workers at the end of the semester picnic.

Victor Esquivel, a 12 year old boy who has lived at the camp for half of his life, writes about the picnic: "The picnic was about the teachers. We did it because the teachers came to help us do our homework, activities, and other stuff. And lots of people came. All of the teachers came." Although some of the families at the camp have settled out, many of the single men will have moved on before the next school year. A few students may graduate or move on to another activity. The picnic provided an opportunity for the students to say good-bye to the individuals they became close to over the semester, but may not have an opportunity to see again.

The picnic ends abruptly as the sun sets early behind the mountains and the temperature drops quickly. The volunteers hurry to say good-bye to the families and workers who have befriended them over the course of the semester. One of the workers stops Erica before she gets in the car. He thanks her for teaching him, and tells her how much he enjoyed her enthusiasm, the way she acted things out and used her hands so that he could understand. He speaks slowly, stumbling occasionally, but in comprehensible English. Erica grins, and they shake hands as everyone gets into the car for the drive back to Charlottesville.

by **KYRA CASPRY**  
University of Virginia

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Editor: Erica Davis

## Boycott

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firing workers who voice concern over working conditions.

**What can we do?** There are several actions the farmworkers are asking us to take, in addition to personally boycotting the wines.

### **1) Send a postcard or letter supporting the UFWWS and the boycott to:**

Allen Shoup, President  
Chateau Ste. Michelle, 1 Stimson Lane,  
Woodinville, WA 98072

Vincent Gierer, President  
UST, 100 West Putnam Ave.  
Greenwich, CT 06830

**2) Call General Mills-owned Olive Garden Restaurants and ask them to stop serving Columbia Crest and Chateau Ste. Michelle.** 350 Olive Garden restaurants nationally sell the wine. Call 1-800-O-Garden and ask them to stop selling the wines. You can also stop by your local Olive Garden and ask to talk to the manager about the boycott.

### **3) Adopt a restaurant in your community.**

Write or call for more information. Dozens of restaurants around the country have already dropped the wine.

For more information, contact Kurt Peterson of the UFWWS at PO Box 899, Granger, WA 98932. Phone: 509-854-2161.

**Submissions are requested for  
NOTES FROM THE FIELD!**

## SAF Board of Directors

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## Nursing Students Reflect On Experience in Migrant Health Program

I'm Sylvia Perez and my husband is Jose Perez. We were both nursing students last summer when we had the opportunity to work with migrant farmworkers in Alamosa, Colorado. It was the most demanding, exciting and rewarding summer we ever had.

We got involved with the Colorado Migrant Health Program when our instructors explained that we would work directly with migrant farmworkers at different sites in Colorado; we would get to learn about different cultures, teach health education, and provide preventive health services. The mission statement of the Colorado Migrant Health Program is to improve the health status of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families by assuring primary and preventive health services.

We worked at the migrant summer school for 45 days. During that time we provided health screenings for approximately 750 students. We checked patients for visual acuity and depth perception, hearing, height, weight, and hematocrits. TB tests and immunizations were also provided. We were able to practice Spanish since most of our children were from Mexico and Guatemala.

As a result of these health screenings, we found that many of our students needed glasses. The parents paid what they could and the program paid the remainder. Nine referrals were made to the community health nurse for positive PPD's.

We had the opportunity to make home visits. One example was a visit to a Guatemalan girl who had rheumatic heart fever. We made the visit to get a consent form for a pre-medication needed for dental work. The parents were unaware of the diagnosis and confused. After some record checks and phone calls to the community health nurse, we found she never even had rheumatic heart fever. There was a mistake on the record. The parents were grateful. The home visit really paid off. Every home visit we made the migrant farmworkers were always very hospitable. They were very appreciative of the concern we had for their children. They always cooperated with us by giving information and were eager to comply with whatever we asked.

The most rewarding part of the summer was getting to know a family that we worked with. Our assignment was to interview a family at the end of the rotation on what the life of a migrant farmworker really was like. They're not so different from us. Although the work they do is back-breaking, it's what they know how to do and for many of them, what they have always done. We've gained a great appreciation for the migrant farmworker. Everytime we visit the supermarket, we remember there was probably a hard working migrant farmworker who helped gather those fruits and vegetables.

by **SYLVIA AND JOSE PEREZ**  
University of Colorado

### *The SAF Mission:*

*To improve the status of farmworkers in our society by educating and involving college students in farmworker service, advocacy and community groups.*

## Orientation

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of farmworkers. Tri-County Community Health Center outreach workers shared information about farmworker health issues such as TB, AIDS and hypertension. Dan Pratt, director of the NC Migrant Education Program, and other educators spoke on the importance of education for migrant children. Other speakers discussed pesticides and field sanitation, hunger issues, community and labor organizing, and various agricultural boycotts. Each speaker became a new resource for the interns to use over the course of the summer months.

The orientation also focused on topics of personal interest to the interns, such as documentary photography or the national community service "movement." SAF executive director, Carolyn Corrie, explored issues of race and diversity with the group. This seemed to interest the group as many lines of honest communication opened. Conversations about personal experiences, international dance lessons, and various forms of late night fun were shared. Building group cohesion appeared to be no problem for these interns.

Perhaps The Short Journey Center was the ideal place to have orientation. For one week, these students took a "short journey" through the lives of both migrant and seasonal farmworkers of North and South Carolina, as well as themselves.

## CAMP Alum Goes to SAF for the Summer

CAMP, which stands for College Assistance Migrant Program, was established in 1981. This unique program at California State University at Sacramento and other campuses helps students from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds succeed in college. CAMP offers the student a smooth transition from high school to the university atmosphere, as well as academic counseling, tutoring, computer lab, and financial assistance. A student is in the program for only the first year, but may return if the need arises.

Benerisa Flores, 1993 SAF intern, was in the program her first year at CSU, Sacramento in 1991. Benerisa feels the program is worthwhile because it gave her a lot of support and encouragement. These two components are very important to CAMPers since many are the first in their families to leave home to attend college. Benerisa reflects over feelings about her first year at CSU and the importance of CAMP in her life: "The transition was less difficult and I found in CAMP my second home. Although I was not in CAMP this year, I still went back to visit."

It was in one of the visits Benerisa was told of the existence of SAF: "When I found out about the Student Action with Farmworkers internship program, I became very interested in participating. I feel that my background as a farmworker and now a college student enables me to identify with the needs of students who may be going through similar experiences that I have undergone. This internship has given me the opportunity to travel to another state, which was something I have always wanted to do. I felt that I was well qualified, and would do a good job because in the process I can achieve the main objective: to learn." Benerisa's long-term goals are to become an elementary teacher with a concentration in bilingual education and to be a mentor to others.



Benerisa teaches students to count.

photo by C. Corrie

