

FROM THE GROUND UP

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Focus on Migrant Students

AIM Retreat Encourages Young Leaders

by Ramiro Arceo

Nineteen migrant students from seven counties in North Carolina are taking leadership by beginning Action, Inspiration, Motivation (AIM) clubs at their schools. These students participated in SAF's AIM Leadership Retreat held at Camp Oak Hill in Oxford, NC, the weekend of October 27-29. The retreat focused on building the students' leadership abilities and encouraged them to support one another in school for the betterment of themselves, their schools and their communities. The students made commitments to learn as much as they could over the intense two-day period so they could return to their schools and create an AIM Club.

The activities at the retreat included workshops about dispute and conflict resolution, youth empowerment and starting AIM Clubs. A recruiter from the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia, spoke to the students about CAMP and how to apply to college. All activities were aimed at motivating students to become peer leaders at their schools and to take action to improve their education.

Starting an AIM Club involves students recruiting members and selecting activities for the club's first year. Activities are intended to enhance students' educational experiences and might include: taking field trips to area colleges, participating in art and theater events and organizing community service events.

SAF staff and school advisors will participate actively in the development of these clubs. By the end of the academic year, each club will be self-sustainable and able to provide assistance to other counties that wish to start AIM Clubs.



Students at the AIM Retreat in Oxford, NC

Photo by: Ramiro Arceo

Facts about Migrant Children

- Of farmworker parents (both foreign-born and US-born workers), 50% are accompanied by their children as they migrate.¹
- In 1994, a study showed that 60% of migrant students drop out of school (down from 90% in the 1970s).²
- By the time a migrant child is 12, he/she may be working in the fields between 16-18 hours per week.²
- The average migrant child may attend 3 different schools in one year. For many children it takes roughly 3 years to advance one grade level.³

Sources: 1 ERIC; http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed423097.html; 2 David Bell, "The Nation's Invisible Families Living in the Stream," MEMO; 3 National Center for Farmworker Health

Also in this Issue . . .

The Future of CAMP.....	2
NC Migrant Educators Seek to Involve Parents.....	3
Using Life Lessons to Mentor Students.....	4
Reaching Students Through Photography.....	4
Former Migrant Student Speaks Out: Technology in Migrant Education.....	5
New Educational Technology Programs Serving Migrant Students.....	5
Announcements.....	6
Ways To Get Involved.....	6

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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From the Ground Up Editor:
Alison Blaine

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Bright, Growing Future Expected for CAMP Nationwide

by Alison Blaine, from interviews with Marcos Sánchez and Rocio Cárdenas

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) was founded in 1972 with the mission to help students whose parents are migrant and seasonal farmworkers enroll into and graduate from a college or university. The first CAMP location was established at St. Edwards' University in Austin, Texas, but has since expanded nationwide. In the past year, three new CAMP locations were established in California, along with one in each of five other states: Texas, Oregon, Wisconsin, Michigan and Washington.

Marcos Sánchez, Director of CAMP at California State University, Sacramento, is excited about what the new programs reflect about the future of CAMP. "I feel very positive about our future," Sánchez relates.

For the past three years, Sánchez has been part of the leadership in developing a strategy to strengthen his program and receive additional funding from Congress for new CAMP locations across the country. The establishment of new CAMP locations in California and elsewhere provides Sánchez and other CAMP directors and staff with every incentive to continue their efforts.

Rocio Cárdenas, a former CAMP student at CSU Sacramento, now serves as Director of the only CAMP location in the southeastern United States, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, GA. As CAMP locations are being established in other parts of the country, Cárdenas is very optimistic about the future of her program and the funding of new CAMP locations in the southeast. She affirms, "The increasing migrant population in the southeastern part of the United States will eventually cause the creation of other CAMP programs in the southeast....The creation of other programs in the nation gives us the guarantee that we will continue to receive funding from the government and that the migrant population will be noticed."

The progress and expansion of CAMP nationwide can be attributed to directors and staff like Sánchez and Cárdenas who are committed to extending the opportunity of higher education to all migrant students. Of course, much credit must also be given to the students themselves, who overcome major obstacles in attaining the academics necessary for better and brighter futures.

Marcos Sánchez • CSU Sacramento • (916) 278-7214

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New CAMP Programs:

CSU Bakersfield • Homer Montalvo • (661) 664-2160 • hmontalvo@csubak.edu

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Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, TX • Maria L. Gonzalez • (210) 434-6711 ext. 253 • gonzm@lake.ollusa.edu

NC Migrant Educators Seek to Involve Parents

by Alison Blaine, from interviews with Maureen Anderson, Denise Beane and Roxanne Taylor

Maureen Anderson, Denise Beane and Roxanne Taylor are three NC migrant educators who recognize the importance of active parent involvement in childhood education. In families with migratory lifestyles, however, there are a number of obstacles that may severely limit or prevent parents from getting involved in their children's education.

Anderson, the Migrant Education Coordinator of Buncombe County Schools since 1996, cites language and cultural barriers as two major problems discouraging active migrant parent involvement in schools. Contributing significantly to the problem of the language barrier, she adds, is the scarcity of Spanish-speaking personnel at the school level. Lack of transportation and lengthy work schedules are also common factors that "make it difficult for parents to attend [school] events even at night or on the weekends."

Beane, a migrant educator since 1986 and Taylor, a tutor/recruiter/interpreter for the past seven years, both serve the Randolph County School District. Beane's strategy for involving parents is to "first get to know the parents and show them you care." She adds, "I'll never forget what I learned in one workshop I attended, 'Parents don't care WHAT you know, until they know that you CARE.'"

In efforts to curb the difficulties of the language barrier, Taylor tries to make herself available to migrant families as a liaison between home and school. "Many families have my phone number and call me to help with things received from the school that they do not understand...Many parents attend functions at the schools if they know that I will be there to interpret for them."

Like Beane and Taylor, Anderson stresses the importance of the migrant educator's role in establishing caring, personal contact with parents. She affirms, "Once parents enjoy a good experience that is non-threatening and inviting, they can't wait to come back and usually bring friends!"

Anderson, Beane and Taylor are very dedicated migrant educators who acknowledge the responsibility of the school system in working with migrating families to help facilitate parent involvement in schools. Anderson sums it up by saying, "the school system must make every effort to reach out to every parent who wants to be involved. Of course, the parents must make some effort also. But shutting out parents who want to help their children solely because of the language barrier is unacceptable and illegal!"



Photo by: Maureen Anderson

Children from the Buncombe County Schools Migrant Summer Camp on a field trip in the Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina

Online Resources for Migrant Educators

- ◆ Educational Resource Information Center
<http://www.ael.org/eric>
- ◆ ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education
<http://www.ericsp.org>
- ◆ ESCORT Migrant Education
<http://www.oneonta.edu/~thomasrl/>
- ◆ National Office of Migrant Education
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/>

Using Life Lessons to Mentor Students

by Felipe Olvera, Jr., Summer 2000 SAF Intern with Anchor School Project on John's Island, SC

My life has been a struggle and a struggle that I am glad I had. Coming from migrant parents, it has been hard to get an education because of my native language (Spanish). Once I learned how to speak English it was up to me to stay in school and try to get an education.

My parents didn't make it far in school so they knew I would need help in order to get out of the farmworker occupation. Luckily I had my older sister to help me; I didn't realize how much she helped me until I got to the university level. Once in college I started giving back to my community by tutoring younger students.

During this summer as a SAF intern, I had the opportunity to make a difference in migrant children's lives on John's Island, South Carolina. I worked with 4th and 5th graders for a 6 week period. I was able to relate to the migrant children because I was one myself. I knew how they felt about school and could see the struggle in their eyes.

I was a role model to the kids as well as a friend. Most of the children were the oldest in their family, so they didn't have anyone to look up to. I tried to pave a road for them and told them to follow the path to an education.

All my life I worked for what I own because my parents didn't make enough money. I work hard in what I do because I was a migrant child and had my sister to look up to.

I wanted to share my knowledge and experiences with my students in John's Island, so they could have confidence and succeed. It is very important for migrant children to have what they need: **ROLE MODELS.**

Felipe Olvera, Jr.
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Reaching Students Through Photography

by Laura Greeson, Summer 2000 SAF Intern with Chatham County Migrant Education Program, Siler City, NC

This summer I had the pleasure of working with middle school Latino children in the Migrant Summer Program of Chatham County Schools. As a journalism major interested in how media images affect minority children, I chose to work with the Literacy Through Photography (LTP) program. This program is designed to teach children the basics of photography, to encourage them to experiment with photography as an art form, and to strengthen their creative writing skills. I found that the most important lesson taught in the LTP classes is how to see yourself and to love what you see.

The class was taught in two themes: self portrait and family traditions. During the first two weeks of the program, we showed the children how to read photographs based on framing, movement, lighting, and other aspects. Once they got their own disposable cameras to use, we gave them various assignments designed to familiarize them with all the different techniques they had learned. The first roll of film was devoted to pictures of the students at home, with their friends, in front of a mirror, and even a couple self-portraits taken at arm's length. After they got the

developed rolls back, they picked their favorite three pictures and wrote about what they saw, using the method of photo-reading they had been practicing.

I noticed right off that many of the students were having a hard time beginning to write. As young teenagers with rapidly developing bodies and acute awareness of their physical appearances, they found it difficult to write about themselves as seen through the camera's lens. It appeared to be especially difficult for the young Latina women, who are constantly bombarded with images of the "perfect" body, of waif-like models with blond hair and pale skin.

One girl in particular seemed very troubled by the assignment. Maren was a beautiful girl, exceptionally tall for her age and very mature physically. I worried about her, because although she wore the body of a young woman, she was still a child in all other respects. When I asked why she hadn't started writing, she peered down critically at the pictures of herself amongst her friends. "I don't like the way I look," she said. "I'm too tall. I don't want to write anything." As we talked about different ways she could start, she gradually loosened up and

became excited about the poster she was making. After everyone else had finished she was still working intently, and when I saw the finished product I had to smile. She had prominently displayed the three pictures of herself in her pink dress, and decorated the whole poster with sparkly markers, spelling out the words "I love myself" over and over on the page.

Maren wasn't the only one to benefit from the experience. Most of the children seemed excited to learn about this new medium, and for many it was the first time to have a camera of their own. In this country, media images usually depict Latinos as outsiders, stereotyping them as ignorant, illegal immigrants or gang members. Even more dangerous than these stereotypes is the virtual invisibility of Latinos in the media, despite the growing number of Latinos in the US. With the cameras, for the first time these children had control over how they were represented. They gained self confidence and strengthened their voice, and they will not allow themselves to continue as the invisible minority.

Laura Greeson
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Migrant Students Deserve Better Access to Technology

by Idahnell López, Summer 2000 SAF Intern with the Anchor School Project in Johnston County, NC

Farmworker children have the capability of doing so much, but they need doors to be opened for them. I was a farmworker from the time I was twelve until I was seventeen. But I'm an Idahoan farmworker, therefore, spending the summer in North Carolina teaching migrant children about computers was a blessing to me because I learned so much about North Carolina's farmworkers and their struggle for survival. As a former migrant student, I know that migrant students would have a better chance of survival in school systems if more people were willing to help.

I feel strongly that an important way to help migrant students is to provide them with access to computer technology and to teach them useful computational skills. It should be part of the school curriculum to teach farmworker children how to use PCs and iMacs with software programs such as Microsoft Word, Works, Power Point, Excel, and any other program that will give them competitive skills in the job market.

Because I've had five years of computer experience, using a computer comes easy to me. Most of my students, however, only had this summer to use a computer. I had to remind myself that they aren't familiar with computer terms and they don't type as fast as I do. It quickly became evident that my students loved using digital cameras. I hadn't had any opportunities to

handle a camera until I was given one for my fourteenth birthday. If my experience is anything to go by, then many of the students had never used a camera before—much less a digital camera. The fact that this wasn't an ordinary camera made the lessons more interesting.

When I first showed them how to save their projects on a disk I noticed that some of my students had never seen a computer disk before. They asked what a disk was and they didn't know how to insert the disks into the computers. So many opportunities are granted to the privileged and yet my people are forced to live in the Stone Age because people with power don't care. Whatever the case, I learned true patience. I had to put myself in the students' shoes in order to understand their struggles to complete the project.

Most children attend school to learn in a one-size-fits-all system. If they can't adapt to the curriculum and if someone isn't there to give them the help they need, then they are doomed to fail. People should be made aware of the predicaments that affect our children's learning. Whatever the situation may be, I'm still proud of my race and of the hardships we have struggled through because it has made us stronger. Achievement is possible! And it can be done!

Idahnell López
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New Educational Technology Programs for Improving Migrant Education

by Alison Blaine

The advances of the cyber age are beginning to change the face of migrant education. Across the nation, technology-oriented programs are being established to help overcome problems that students with migratory lifestyles face each academic year.

Within this past year, the national Migrant Education Program (MEP) has granted funding to five projects that "are exploring how to use technology to combat the problems of educational disruption, lack of resources and language difficulty that traditionally plague children in migrant worker families" (MEP website).

◆ **Project MECHA** (Migrant Education Consortium for Higher Achievement)—

serves up to 500 students in grades 3-12. The project serves migrant students traveling to Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Dr. Janie Greenleaf • (305) 899-3031
• <http://www.mecha.org>

◆ **ESTRELLA** (Encouraging Students Through Technology to Reach High Expectations in Learning, Lifeskills, and Achievement)—serves students migrating from southern Texas areas to Illinois, Montana and New York.

Ms. Brenda Pessin • (312) 663-1522 •
<http://www.estrella.org>

◆ **InTIME** (Integrating Technology Into Migrant Education)—serves all of Oregon's approximately 23,000+ migrant students.

Mr. David Rosalez • (503) 391-9480 •
<http://www.intime.k12.or.us>

◆ **KMTP** (Kentucky Migrant Technology Project)—has been extended to eight new KY counties.

Mr. Michael Abell • (502) 222-0748 •
<http://www.migrant.org>

◆ **Anchor School Project**—serves students and families migrating from Collier County, Florida up the eastern seaboard.

Jean Williams • (910) 334-4671 •
<http://www.anchorschool.org>

Source: National Migrant Education Program. "Programs in the Office of Migrant Education" web site: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/2000techsum.html>

Ways To Get Involved with SAF

❑ Call for Applications

SAF's 2001 Into the Fields Internship and Leadership Development Program seeks **29 bilingual (Spanish and English) college students** to support farmworkers as they struggle to improve their living and working conditions. Applicants must be from farmworker families, former Labourer-Teachers or students enrolled in a college or university in North or South Carolina. Participants receive furnished housing, \$1100 living expense stipend, a \$1500 scholarship, and the experience of a life-time. The selection process is competitive.

SAF seeks one **2001 Sowing Seeds for Change Apprentice** to coordinate our national network of student activists participating in the movement for farmworker justice. The Apprenticeship is a year-long position. Applicants must be graduating seniors. Former Into the Fields Interns are encouraged to apply. The Apprentice will receive an entry-level salary and health benefits. The selection process is competitive.

Applications for both programs are due February 9, 2001. To receive more information, contact Libby Manly at 919-660-3652 or levante@duke.edu.

❑ **Donate your frequent flyer miles** to sponsor students from farmworker families participating in SAF's Into the Fields Internship. You must have a minimum of 25,000 miles on a major airline to purchase one coach class ticket for domestic travel. You can also donate money to sponsor the travel of farmworker students. Contact Libby Manly at 919-660-3652 or levante@duke.edu for more information on contributing your frequent flyer miles.

❑ Host a House Party

Educate your friends and colleagues about farmworker issues! Help SAF to spread the word about our mission and gain new supporters. Hosting a small fundraiser at your home is an easy way to support SAF. Contact Melinda at mwiggins@duke.edu or 919-660-3616.

Thanks to our Donors

Melody S. Bailey, Frederick G. Bauerschmidt, Cornell Migrant Program, Britta Dedrick, Martha Diefendorf, Karen Dixon, Eugenia Eng, Pollie Guthrie and Rebecca Mitchell, Trent Harvey and Regina de Lacy, Pamela Hull, Luis Maciel, Rachele Poling Marquez, Michael Mills, Chris Sims, Tim Wallace, Debra Woodruff, and many others who wish to remain anonymous.

Announcements

❑ **Earn a master's degree** in Special Education with an emphasis in Migrant Education at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. The program is tuition free and provides participants with a living stipend. To receive an application and more information, contact Spencer Salend at 914-257-2836.

❑ During the summers of 1999 and 2000, SAF interns documented the traditions of North and South Carolina's farmworkers and Latino immigrants. **Recollections of Home/ Recuerdos de mi Tierra** is a bilingual (Spanish and English) documentary publication that opens a window into farmworkers' recollections of home, rich with cultural practices, beliefs and values. 60 pages, 5 color photos, 34 black and white photos. To order a copy, please send a check for \$10 to SAF.

❑ Through Project Levante, SAF encourages middle and high school migrant students to stay in school. **SAF would like to thank the NC Migrant Education Program** for supporting this project. For more information, contact Ramiro Arceo at rarceo@duke.edu.

SAF

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