Farm work is dangerous work, but access to health services is a huge challenge for farmworkers in North Carolina. Poverty wages, lack of transportation, isolation and language barriers result in an inability to afford basic health costs or even access to free clinics.

Through SAF’s 2012 Sowing Seeds for Change health fellowship 5 recent college graduates reached over 1,000 farmworkers during the agricultural season (June-November) by enrolling them in migrant health clinics, transporting them to doctors appointments, interpreting for them during clinic visits, conducting health assessments, and educating them about health issues including nutrition, diabetes, HIV/STI prevention, pesticides and heat illness.

Fellows also completed documentary, theater and community health projects with farmworkers. In addition, they organized events and wrote articles and blogs to raise awareness about farmworkers in the community. Fellows presented about farmworkers and their SAF experience to over 100 community members through various public speaking opportunities. Fellows were inspired to continue to work with farmworkers and immigrants for the long-term.

Thank You to our Funders!
The North Carolina Farmworker Health Program: Office of Rural Health and Community Care, NC DHHS Fellows’ host organizations & Individual donations

Contact Us
Laxmi Haynes, Program Director
919-660-3660, farmworker_justice@yahoo.com
Ramon Zepeda, Program Director
919-660-0704, ramon.zepeda@duke.edu

www.SAF-UNITE.org

---

Shaoli Chaudhuri
Graduate of Duke University
Surry Co. Health & Nutrition Center, Dobson, NC

“Farmworkers are not people who need us to swoop in and solve their problems for them. Nor are they all mistreated. They are capable, dignified workers, whose blood, sweat, and tears go into our food, for which we should be grateful.

I think I will definitely go into my future endeavors doing my best to stick to SAF’s name and do everything with and not for farmworkers.”

Shaoli’s Blog:
http://shaofista.tumblr.com/

Dashiel Huebner
Graduate of East Carolina University
Piedmont Health Services, Prospect Hill, NC

“Throughout the summer I learned a phenomenal wealth of knowledge and skills. For all of this I would like to thank the outstanding support of my fellow SAFistas, allies, and farmworkers, who have entirely changed my world.”

Emily Dixon
Graduate of Appalachian State University
Appalachian Regional Health Care, Boone, NC

“I love that I have been able to explore many different skills and ways of supporting farmworkers, whether through health screening events, assessments in the home, presenting to the community, transportation and interpreting at appointments, or just platicando. There are so many components to this work that I am constantly learning and re-evaluating my own thoughts and actions.

After the fellowship, I will continue with my role as a Migrant Health Outreach Worker with the newly funded Federally Qualified Health Center in Boone.”

---

Student Action with Farmworkers
20 Years of Growing Farmworker Activists
The documentary and community health project were really beneficial to the workers involved since they received more individual and personal attention than normal. [This] emphasized even more the value that our programs try to give to the expressions and voices of the folks we’re working with.

And since our programs wouldn’t normally have time to incorporate these projects into our outreach routines, it’s nice that SAF makes them requirements for students.”

-Dida El-Sourady, Surry Co. Health, Fellow Supervisor 2012

Emily Williams
Graduate of College of Charleston Vecinos Inc., Cullowhee, NC

“As an outreach worker, I can come up with a million games, charts, and information sessions based on the amount of water and rest one needs when working outside in a field. However, if the grower yells at you when you take a break, calls you lazy, or does not provide sufficient water and shade, it does not matter how much you learned; you will not be able to follow the instructions.

I feel this is both the motivation for my job and one of the most frustrating aspects. I have to find ways of helping the farmworkers come up with solutions to the problems. They are the ones who are able to say what works and what does not. Maybe they will be able to come up with a better solution- or at least get the tools to help themselves organize and demand their basic rights as human beings.”

Emma Lawlor
Graduate of Wake Forest University NC Farmworkers Project, Benson, NC

“The most important lesson that I have learned so far is to never underestimate the simple power of friendship, compassion, and empathy.

The health information and services that I have been able to help bring to workers this summer were certainly important to them. But I think the things they most appreciated are more simple than that. Just knowing that someone is concerned about their well-being and just having a friendly visitor are what really seemed to brighten their days.”

Emma’s Blog:
http://emmitainfinita.wordpress.com/2012/07/19/emmita-safista/

Right: Fellows attended an annual farmworker health conference, the East Coast Migrant Stream Forum in VA Beach, Oct. 2012

Health Outreach Accomplishments

Fellows reached 1,114 un-duplicated patients
(22% increase over 2011)

Fellows had 4,686 health education encounters
Health education topics include hypertension, diabetes, nutrition, pesticides, heat illness, and HIV/AIDS/STI’s. (35% increase over 2011)

Fellows had 1,236 case management encounters
Case management includes transporting workers to clinics, interpreting, and making referrals. (12% increase over 2011)

Fellows provided resources to patients 1,951 times
Resources include condoms, over the counter medications, toiletries, vitamins, food and clothing.
Community Awareness Projects

The Community Awareness Project helps community members learn about where our food comes from, how injustices against farmworkers go unnoticed in mainstream U.S., and what campaigns to support in order to create positive change for farmworkers. Fellows:

- Collected worker testimonies for the Farmworker Advocacy Network to identify workers interested in being involved in advocacy, collect evidence for the need for change in labor conditions, and bring worker’s voices directly into FAN’s efforts,
- Promoted awareness and action through writing and presentations, and
- Organized service projects with the community to support farmworkers’ immediate needs.

“I collected worker testimonies that ranged from sharing stories of rampant employer mistreatment to thoughts of how an ideal agricultural system could benefit the societal well-being.

I partnered with an Americorps volunteer and UNC student organizations to facilitate a Harvest of Dignity film screening and canned food drive to benefit farmworker families. This project also involved direct engagement with farmworker youth, who traveled to the UNC-Chapel Hill campus and toured the college.”

-Dashiell Huebner

“I have helped plan and execute two events this fall. At the Farmworkers Project, we had our annual Agricultural Exposition and Community Festival in Benson in October. My role included securing donations for the event, helping plan some of the day’s activities, and working all day of the event.

I was also a member of the planning committee for SAF’s final 20th anniversary celebration...and helped with planning, securing, and collecting donations for that event, as well.”

-Emma Lawlor

“Presenting to community members about farmworkers, farmworker issues, and the Farmworker Health Program has been one of the most rewarding things. Along with my co-workers and intern partner, I believe we have presented to about 100 people...”

-Emily Dixon

Left: Dashiell drinks water during his clinic staff’s day of work in tobacco fields. Center: Shower in migrant camp by Dashiell. Top right: Farmworker housing by Emma. Bottom: Tobacco field sunset by Dashiell.
“Being pushed to lead the Community Health project was one of the most challenging parts of the fellowship. I tend to be more comfortable in supporting, or “behind the scenes” roles when it comes to meetings and groups of this nature.

However, it was very helpful to venture out of that role with such a supportive group helping me. Overall, I think the project was successful, and reached approximately 12 farmworkers and family in the area.”

- Emily Dixon

“They seemed to clearly solidify their understanding of how mental and physical health are related. They also learned a new relaxation exercise and discussed other stress-reduction techniques.

I think some of them will utilize some of the information we discussed but the realities of a cramped and emotionally-charged group-living situation in a camp without control over their schedules or transportation makes ‘diet’ and ‘chronic disease’ tough topics to tackle.”

- Emma Lawlor

“I conducted a long-term community health project with one of our camps, holding substance abuse workshops to help them confront possible addictions and empower them to seek out other means of avoiding the stress so ubiquitous in this work. This was not an “easy” project by any means, but it was certainly one of the most fulfilling components of my time as a health fellow. I was able to establish a great relationship with the camp, gain the workers’ trust, and go more in-depth into the health concerns they have.

Addressing substance abuse as a group brought out the many factors that led these farmworkers into turning to alcohol or smoking--abuse in their families, alcoholic parents, peers who promote those behaviors, the extreme stress and isolation, worries about family in Mexico, and more. I offered materials and such resources as utilizing our 340B [drug pricing] program for acquiring, for example, nicotine gum. I reached out to between 4 and 6 workers each visit.”

- Shaoli Chaudhuri

Through the Community Health Project, fellows engaged 27 farmworkers in small groups to increase education and take action around an occupational health issue of their choice. This project gave fellows the opportunity to engage workers on a deeper level than their usual one-time health education encounters.

Project Goals:
• To enable a small group of farmworkers to take action in addressing their occupation-related health concerns
• To conduct popular organizing with farmworkers to identify a shared health concern and create an action plan
• To engage the allied community in supporting farmworkers to realize the action plan
• To note some behavior change among farmworkers in regards to taking care of their health

Top: Dashiell created an informative news bulletin with his group of 4 farmworkers illustrating steps to prevent Green Tobacco Sickness. Middle Fields by Emma. Bottom: Emma conducting health education with workers.
In the fall, fellows collaborated on creating the Faces of Farmwork bilingual documentary memory book and online presentation. They collected documentary quotes and photos from the 2012 intern/fellow documentary projects. Printed copies were given to the farmworkers who participated in the projects.

Share the project: http://prezi.com/grw4tezrn6lv/faces-of-farmwork/

Emma Lawlor participated in SAF’s theater group with other SAF interns and performed for 99 farmworkers. The group returned to two camps and facilitated theater exercises with 50 workers, sharing and acting out their experiences of oppression.

The play, Más Vale Prevenir que Lamentar/Better Safe than Sorry, addresses the risks involved in having unprotected sex, and the importance of using a condom to reduce the risks of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI’s).

Farmworkers received a condom demonstration, condoms and fotonovelas to read more information on HIV and STI’s. Farmworkers get an entertaining break from the routine and great conversation. The actors gained trust quickly, allowing SAF and the host organizations to better address their needs.

“Motivated by a deep connection to my outreach experience with the African-American farmworkers, I was inclined to present the legacy of a retired share-cropping family, living in Orange County, North Carolina. Even after final retreat, I continued to develop the narrative and method of telling the unique story.”

-Dashiell Huebner