

# Migrant Farmworkers Project

A Project of Legal Aid of Western Missouri  
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## Harvest of Stories

### Nuestros Amigos,

To really understand what the first three weeks of high harvest season are like in Lafayette County, you almost have to be there. (And, fortunately, many of you *are* there for important parts: food pantry distribution, clinic services, ESL dinners, youth group, tutoring, and the like.)

Sometimes we imagine the month of August as a massive, timed jigsaw puzzle where we coordinate the various needs, tasks and schedules of different people in a very short period. New migrant families pour into Lafayette County every day, needing work, housing, food, clothing, medical appointments, school enrollments, backpacks and more. Employers need to get fruit off the trees, into bags, and onto trucks. Clinics, schools and social services need to fill schedules, distribute goods and services, and gear up to fulfill their specific missions. And MFP staff needs to be everywhere at once!

It's a tremendous job for a small organization that gets more value out of individual donations and volunteer hours than from big grants and paperwork. We don't mind saying this because it comes with a heavy dose of humble gratitude. This massive effort comes off with only a few small glitches each year because of your support, without which none of this would work. Thanks!

Erin Bartling, Project Director

Suzanne Gladney, Managing Attorney

### La Nutrición

The *KC Star* recently carried a story about the disturbing trend in rural hunger ("Study confirms child hunger is a growing problem in rural areas," August 24, 2011). According to Harvesters Community Food Network, there is a 25% child food insecurity rate for Lafayette County, higher than the Jackson County (Kansas City) rate.

Although MFP's migrant farmworker clients live and work on some of the richest agricultural land in the country, their families fall below poverty levels, making it extremely difficult to obtain nutritious, well-balanced diets. At the beginning of this season, our food pantry is confronting its greatest demand in over a decade, even though our migrant population is slightly less than in previous years and many of these families do not have transportation or cannot afford to drive to the food pantry. In our first three weeks of operation, the food pantry distributed 384 food bags and boxes to 135 families, representing 139 children.

Our first response is to coordinate transportation and deliveries from the food bank to reach all families in need. MFP supporters have come through in recent months with a wonderful response to our request for donations of beans and rice.

The Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) issued vouchers for qualifying families, now in its 28<sup>th</sup> year of collaboration with MFP. Fifty-three young migrant kids and their moms signed up last month at special evening WIC clinics. Also in late August, United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) assisted MFP to provide emergency food vouchers for 30 families who qualify for their program. And, MFP worked with local school districts to ensure that all migrant students are registered for free and reduced lunches. As always, Harvesters Community Food Network does the hard work of securing much of the food that stocks our pantry. Thanks to everyone who continues to donate food and volunteer Monday evenings at our food pantry. We still have a few Monday evening volunteer spots available. Call our office (816-474-9868) to sign up with Erin or Suzanne.



*Thanks to former MFP Youth Group participant, Juan, and present Youth Group participant, Manuel and other community volunteers, for being with us on Monday evenings to help coordinate and execute food pantry distributions.*



## ¡Bienvenidos!

Two new long-term volunteers joined the MFP staff in August, the busiest time of year. Ali Shumway (Jesuit Volunteer Corps) and Sierra Pryce (Mennonite Voluntary Service) are quickly learning the rural roads, building relationships, assuming coordinating roles and making very necessary contributions to the lives and well-being of migrant families and youth.

Welcome Father Christopher Smith, new pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Lexington. MFP has enjoyed the generous hospitality of the Immaculate Conception parish community for 28 years. We and our client families are delighted to welcome Fr. Christopher.

One more new thing: MFP now has a website. Check us out at [www.migrantfarmworkersproject.org](http://www.migrantfarmworkersproject.org) Thanks to former MFP director, Clare Murphy Shaw, for bringing us into the information age.

*Note picture on front: Ali Shumway, new MFP migrant advocate, at the PAT evening session in Dibbins Hall.*

## Las Necesidades

**ESL dinners...** English as a Second Language students often must skip dinner to make it from orchard to class on time. MFP provides hot, tasty meals to accommodate this tight schedule and encourage participation. We also try to provide sack lunches for the following day's work as an added incentive for attendance. If your family or community group is interested in providing a meal for 20-25 students and teachers, please call Erin or Suzanne - 816-474-9868.

**Tutoring snacks...** MFP offers after-school tutoring on Thursdays in Lexington and Waverly. We need: granola bars, cereal bars and juice boxes to help our students stay on track with complicated math problems and English essays!

**Coats and blankets...** Families and work crews usually travel together to Missouri in August, arriving in vehicles without enough space for packing bulky winter necessities. In October, MFP distributes hundreds of warm, gently used coats and blankets donated by Project Warmth and our supporters.

Please contact us if you can help us with any of these needs.



MFP staff with the Silva family at the end of a special evening celebration!



*This summer, Fernando and a group of MFP youth friends went fishing and learned about waterway ecology at the Missouri Conservation Department's urban fishing program at Lake Jacomo.*



*Seventeen kids from ten families had an educational, and wild time at an evening of stimulating PAT activities. This fun Monday evening program was held at Dibbins Hall, Immaculate Conception Church in Lexington. Thanks to Linda Harris, Parents as Teachers educator, for offering this new event.*

## Eat Right. Support your local farm(workers)

Many MFP friends and partners like to shop and eat locally grown produce when they can. Food tastes better when it's tended, picked and packed by the people we know. The migrant workers and families live and work at these orchards and farms. Look for these brands of apples, peaches, tomatoes and other produce available in KC-metro supermarkets and at roadside country markets along Hwy 24 in Lafayette County:

Beckner Orchard, Wellington  
Fahrmeier Family Farms, Lexington  
Peters Orchard and Market, Waverly  
Rasa Orchard, Lexington

## Save the Date

Sunday, December 4th, 1-5 p.m., MFP's annual afternoon at 10,000 Villages in Overland Park. Come for your holiday shopping and support MFP.

## The apple season begins...

*Two events marked our traditional 'season opener': The St. Andrew Christian Church-MFP Youth Group combined workday and MFP field outreach. At the combined youth group workday, about twenty youth, from each organization, assembled hundreds of hygiene kits, skin protection kits and food bags. We also gave our food pantry and clothes closet a good cleaning and reorganization. Many thanks to St. Andrew Youth for continuing this partnership, now in its 8th year! On four outreach nights, MFP staff met and welcomed hundreds of farmworker families, arriving daily from summer picking locations and Florida, Texas and other home-bases. We distributed kits assembled by our youth group, assessed families' needs, and recruited for ESL, Youth Group, health clinic services and other MFP programs.*



*On many Monday evenings at the height of harvest season, we distribute heavy, well-balanced bags of nutrition as quickly as we assemble them. The work is usually hot and fast-paced. MFP volunteers always come through for our clients. (Pictured: Bob McGill and a volunteer.)*