

# MIGRANT

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to help build community, says Bo Arbogast of East Coast Migrant Health Project, a federally funded program that places its medical advisers and other helpers in migrant communities along the East Coast. Arbogast assisted Valdez in her presentation.

The two also hope the women will learn enough about health issues so they can share the information with others in their community.

Jackson Allers, also a senior at Duke, was spending his second summer as an SAF intern. This summer he worked on a recreation program designed to offset the problem of drug and alcohol abuse - especially prevalent among single males - in the migrant camps.

The program offers the migrants volleyball, soccer, basketball, movies, food and socializing.

Camp life is almost devoid of stimulating activity, both mental and physical, Allers says. "That's why substance abuse is such an option. What the hell else do you have to do?"

In addition to the recreation program, Allers and the five other SAF volunteers at the Tri-County health clinic, visit farms scattered throughout Johnston, Sampson and Harnett counties, taking blood pressure and examining the workers for other health problems.

High blood pressure is a common problem and the rate of tuberculosis among the migrant population is disproportionately high.

"OK, Larry, you're high," Allers

tells a worker one night after taking his blood pressure.

The worker replies, "I guess it comes from pork. I eats a lot of pork. And I drink a lot of beer."

While they wait for a physician's assistant to finish examining another worker, Allers tells Larry he can get free clothing from the clinic and can have his teeth examined for free. Pulling a tooth will cost him \$7.

Luis E. Reyes, a physician's assistant with the East Coast Migrant Health Project who works for Tri-County Community Health Center, joins the men, and quickly begins asking Larry about his health.

Reyes learns through the conversation that Larry was born with a hole in his heart, has problems urinating and periodically has high blood pressure.

Reyes fills out for Larry an appointment slip for a physical at the clinic, then moves on to the next man, who has a problem with his feet.

Meanwhile, Allers, the student volunteer, tells Larry about the clinic's van that makes rounds to the camps. Larry promises he'll be in the following week for a

I feel an obligation to give something back. I've been eating everything they've been picking for me for my entire life.

**JACKSON ALLERS**  
Volunteer

checkup.

This scenario is re-played two nights a week on a handful of the farms that are home, if only for the season, to about 30,000 migrant laborers in the three counties.

Carolyn Corrie, director of SAF, says 495,000 migrant farm workers and their families pass through North Carolina each year. The state ranks fifth nationwide in the number of migrant farm workers behind California, Florida, Texas and Washington.

"There are too many camps for us to count," Allers says.

But despite their numbers, Allers says, most people don't give much thought to the migrant population, even though they're responsible for picking the food that goes on our tables.

Houston is a "Mecca" for migrants, Allers says of his hometown in Texas. "But I didn't even know what a migrant farm worker was until I came to Duke.

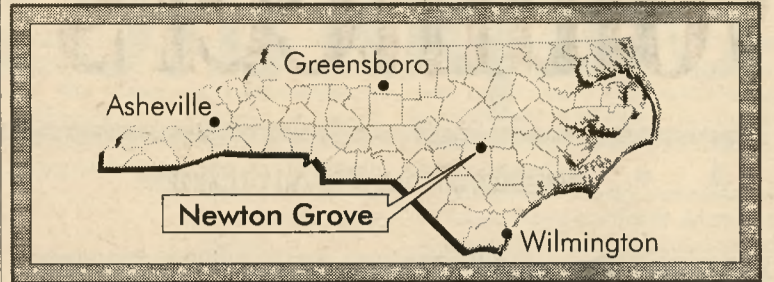
"The farm worker population to me seemed to be an invisible population," he says.

Now it's a population he'll never forget.

Valdez says it's hard to gauge the impact of programs to educate migrant workers. Will the women in the Smithfield trailer park, for example, teach what they've learned to others?

It's not hard to conclude, however, how much the experience has changed the lives of the interns. Many say their "migrant summer" changed them forever.

"I've come to the conclusion that there's not that much that separates me from a migrant farm worker,"



Allers says. "I just lucked out by birth."

"I feel an obligation to give something back to this culture," he says. "I've been eating everything they've been picking for me for my entire life."

Allers says he had no choice but to come back for a second year as an intern.

"It sucked me in. It was like a vacuum."

Allers says his future career, whether in documentary photography, social work or writing, will focus on the South and what he says is the paradox of different cultures all trying to adapt to what he characterizes as a white, ruling-class system.

Valdez says her future also was shaped by her summer as an SAF volunteer.

She already knew she wanted to be a doctor. Now she knows she won't be satisfied in private practice.

"All I've seen this summer is the huge need of low socio-economic classes. They need medical attention," she says.

"I don't think I'd be content just forgetting about it."

Speaking in Spanish - a language that comes easily for the daughter of Cuban immigrants - Valdez explains to her students in the trailer park how the HIV virus is transmitted, how viruses attack the body's defenses, and what bacteria is.

After the lesson, the women gather around Valdez, hugging and kissing her good-bye.

"It was tough getting them eager," Valdez says later. "But when I see this sort of response or interaction I feel much closer to them."

"This is a frustrating job and you feel for these people," she says. "I don't know what kind of impact I've made, but when I get into a position of power - when I can have more of an impact than as a junior biology major - I've learned a way to address a social ill.

"Hopefully," she says, "I won't forget about it."

As if to reassure herself she adds, "It's been part of my life for 10 weeks. It's going to stick with me."

A bright idea

## Duke grad hatched volunteer group

As a Duke University undergraduate, Carolyn Corrie saw a need for student volunteers to work with migrant farmworkers. So she formed a nonprofit, Student Action with Farmworkers, and obtained some foundation grants. Now, SAF is ready to expand to include volunteers from 10 college campuses.

BY KATHERINE NOBLE

For a growing group of workers in North Carolina, health insurance, benefits and job security are luxuries they wouldn't even dream of.

Instead, they worry about heat exhaustion, rides to the health clinic and exposure to dangerous pesticides.

A Durham-based, college volunteer program, Student Action with Farmworkers, is working to meet the health, educational and legal needs of North Carolina's migrant farm workers through 10-week summer internships.

A recent injection of federal grant money will enable SAF to place more students in the fields next summer.

Carolyn Corrie, SAF director, says she will use the two-year, \$133,250 matching grant from the Commission on National and Community Service, to expand the program this fall to nine college campuses in North Carolina and one in South Carolina.

The funds must be matched one to one from non-federal sources that Corrie still is pursuing.

Corrie says she hopes that at least 50 students - three to four at each university and ten formally migrant college students - will participate in the program in 1994.

This year's interns were from a variety of schools, including Duke, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and N.C. Central University.

The grant will also fund a student

coordinator on each campus to help cover recruiting and fundraising costs and lay the groundwork for preparatory classes for the volunteers. The federal funds will also pay for an assistant in the Durham office to help Corrie organize the expansion.

A portion of the funds also will fund students who on their own couldn't afford to spend a summer volunteering.

"People need to be able to live," Corrie says. "I'd like to make the internship a more competitive option for people, especially students on financial aid."

Ideally, she says, each intern, regardless of financial need, would receive a \$1,000 stipend. The students will raise half that amount themselves. Students on financial aid would receive an additional \$1,000 post-service educational stipend to help pay for school.

Corrie, 24, typifies how an internship can change a student's life.

After her freshman year at Duke, Corrie spent the summer working in New York City at the National Coalition for the Homeless.

"That summer in particular changed the way I looked at life and what I was doing," says the New York City native.

A History and Latin American studies major, Corrie spent her junior year studying in Costa Rica.

"I remember a friend telling me, 'You don't need to leave the United States to use your Spanish, Carolyn.'"

Corrie took the advice. In 1990, she was part of the first group of students in Duke's Center for Documentary Studies program to spend the summer working with migrant farm workers.



That summer changed the way I look at life.

**CAROLYN CORRIE**  
SAF Director

Soon after graduating in 1991, she set out to expand the migrant internship program.

There's a huge student service movement, Corrie says, but very few programs address the needs of migrant farm workers.

In August 1992, she incorporated SAF as a nonprofit organization, albeit a poor one.

"We had no money at all," Corrie says.

In November of 1992, SAF received a \$10,000 challenge grant from the The Kathleen Price and Joseph M. Bryan Family Foundation in Greensboro.

In March, a \$15,000 grant from The Cannon Foundation in Concord came in, allowing SAF to match the Bryan grant.

Since then, money has come from individual donors and foundations, including the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation in Durham and The Adele M. Thomas Trust in Chapel Hill.

Assuming SAF's fundraising efforts are successful, the organization's 1993-94 operating budget will be \$235,000.

Corrie says she hopes eventually to pass the reins of leadership to another former intern, maintaining the "by students, for students" basis of the organization.




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