

BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center 30th Anniversary Exhibit

Introduction

For the past 30 years, the Geneseo Migrant Center has been privileged to serve migrant farmworkers and their families in the immediate service area and also on a statewide, regional and national level. Thousands of farmworkers have migrated throughout the area during these three decades with many participating in education, health, arts and other program activities sponsored by the Center. The Center staff have seen migrant children grow into adults, starting families of their own. Some of these former migrant children continue to travel as farmworkers themselves; some have moved into other professions. Each migrant worker or migrant child served has been important; however, some have left very special memories. Some of those memories are reflected in this exhibition.

This exhibition is a celebration of both the importance of migrant workers and the Center's 30th anniversary. The Center was the vision of Dr. Gloria Mattera, Professor of Education, with encouragement from Dr. Robert W. MacVittie, then SUNY Geneseo President, and Dr. William Cotton, Director, Education Division. The Center benefited from Dr. Mattera's years of dedication and service, Dr. MacVittie's support, and Dr. Cotton's early leadership.

The Center's continued existence has been possible primarily through the receipt of public funds - both state and federal. We have tried to be responsible guardians of these dollars. The success of the Center throughout the years has been a direct result of the dedication and commitment of many, many staff. More than nineteen hundred (1,900) individuals have worked in some capacity for the Center - each person deserves thanks. The Center is presently comprised of a full-time staff of seven individuals and a part-time, seasonal staff of thirty to forty. Special recognition and a heartfelt thanks must be given to all current staff members. Of these, Patricia Edwards, Mary Fink, Sylvia Kelly, Doris Sherman and Jean Sparks have collectively given more than seventy years of service. This core group has been the cornerstone of Center programs for many years.

The photographs featured in the exhibition were a labor of love for the key photographers: Elizabeth Boettger, Bill Cronin, Michael Greenlar and Roger Smith. The photographers have vividly captured the reality and strength of the lives of migrant farmworkers. The show comes alive with traditional art from Anel Hernandez, Irene Jerome, Serafin Muñiz, Lena Jerome Nottaway, Olga Rodriguez, James Scrivens, Cantave Sean and Jacob Wawatie. Thank you to each of these artists and the numerous others over the years who have shared their culture and talent.

Agriculture is difficult work not only for the farmworkers but, also, for the farmers and their families. We offer our thanks for the assistance provided in this show to Mr. Walter Mehlenbacher for comments on script, Mr. and Mrs. Roger Bennett for loaning a mink pen for display and reviewing script, Mr. Allan Saxby for sharing his memories of Algonquin workers, and to Mr. and Mrs. Roy Gibson for loaning the camp table from the Blue Eagle migrant labor camp.

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Health care for migrant workers and their families has not always been readily accessible. The Center has been very fortunate, indeed, to have benefited from the generosity and skill of Dr. Arnold Matlin. Dr. Matlin has provided care to migrant children and continues to serve as the medical advisor for the Center. Dr. Matlin, thank you for your input and remembrances in preparing the health panel for this exhibition.

Hours and hours of labor have gone into the design, mounting and composition of this exhibit. Each person involved is to be commended and thanked: Curator, Jan Jackson Ledermann; Assistant Curator, Toni Hill; Consulting Scholars, Sue Roark-Calnek and Rose-Marie Chierici; SUNY Geneseo Student Intern, Kyle Barton. You each have done a superb job - muchas gracias!

With much appreciation,

Robert Lynch, Director
BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center