



Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Works!





About the National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association

The National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA) was incorporated to be the voice of the children of farmworkers within the Head Start community. The NMSHSA serves as the premier advocate for MSHS, which works to educate policymakers as well as the general public on the quality comprehensive services that MSHS Programs provide to farmworker children and their families.

MISSION:

In union with farmworker families, the National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association advocates for comprehensive, high-quality Head Start services with diverse stakeholders, paving the path for stronger communities and the lifelong success of children and families.

VALUES:

Because we support the farmworkers who feed our nation, the National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association values:

Respect for the families, their backgrounds and culture, and the strengths they bring to the Head Start program and their communities

Family Engagement and commitment to amplifying the voices of families

Mission-Driven Advocacy to strengthen and expand programs and services designed to meet the unique needs of farmworker families, their children, and their communities

Partnerships with diverse stakeholders including families, alumni, and local, state and national organizations and associations



A Message from the National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association Leadership

The child development program known as Head Start was launched in 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. Its goal was to break the cycle of poverty by providing early childhood education and comprehensive social services to low-income children and their families.

In 1969, Migrant Head Start was created to address the unique needs of migrant farmworker families. Nearly 30 years later, the program was expanded to serve seasonal farmworkers and became known as Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS). Today, the life-changing child development program continues to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs of farmworker families.

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs provide services to over 28,500 children and their families annually in 38 states. We have developed a service model based on best practices of early childhood education and the needs of children, their families, and local communities. Its design includes elements that are vital to farmworkers with young children: operating hours that accommodate long days working in the fields; transportation for children; dual language services; program options that accommodate infants and toddlers; and months of service that are built around harvest seasons. In addition, the program's social services help families address the many stressors brought on by poverty, migration, and a complex social and political context. MSHS has been built on the successes of Head Start's comprehensive approach, including a strong focus on parent and community engagement, and preparing children to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

The National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA) understands the important role farmworkers play in our nation's ability to access healthy, safe, secure, and affordable food. They are essential to the production and harvesting of crops, which not only puts food on tables across the country, but expands agricultural exports to markets across the world. Their contributions fuel the economic engine of the United States. In 2016, revenue from agriculture exceeded \$357 billion¹ and contrary to popular belief, most agricultural production is still reliant on the the skilled hands of farmworkers.

Our Association celebrates the hundreds of thousands of children and families who have been positively impacted by the success of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. We ask policy makers to consider the unique needs of farmworker children when creating policies that affect their lives and ability to thrive. We also hope that advocates for children will look to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start as a model for early childhood development frameworks.

This publication serves as a testament to the success of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. The personal stories shared in the following pages will give readers a greater understanding of the program's impact on children and families while providing a glimpse into a high-quality early child development program.

Sincerely,



Joseph M. Castro
NMSHSA Board President



Delia Garcia
NMSHSA Executive Director

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start: A Unique and Successful Approach

Like all Head Start programs, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs are interdisciplinary, which means they focus on education, health (physical, dental and mental), social services, nutrition, parent engagement, and community involvement. However, MSHS programs are also required to address the additional challenges facing farmworker children and their families.

“Across the United States, agricultural workers do the pruning, picking, packing, and harvesting work that brings food to our tables every single day and contribute to the well-being of our economy. As a nation, we depend on their sacrifices and hard work to be able to eat. Apart from working long hours and being underpaid, one of the biggest sacrifices farm workers make is spending time away from their family. The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program provides child care services to migrant children and their families. It ensures a safe and nurturing environment for children and the necessary resources for their parents.” - Congressman Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ 3)

MSHS: The Only Head Start Program with a Parent Work Requirement: Parents are required to work in order to qualify for MSHS services and must demonstrate that over half of the family’s annual income was earned in agricultural work - laboring in various sectors of our nation’s agriculture industry – from harvesting to sorting to processing and everything in between. It is common for MSHS families to have both parents working in agriculture.

MSHS: The First Head Start Program to Serve Infants: Starting in 1969, before the launch of Early Head Start in 1994, MSHS served children from birth through five years of age. On average 75 percent of the children enrolled in MSHS are under 4 years of age and infants and toddlers comprise over 53 percent of the children served. All MSHS facilities are designed to serve infants, toddlers and preschoolers in one building with the intent of modifying environments based on the ages and stages of development of children.

MSHS: Providing Full-Day and Seasonal Services: To accommodate parents working in agriculture and the needs of their employers , MSHS often provide services 7 days a week for 10 to 12 hours per day during peak agricultural seasons. MSHS programs are in operation anywhere from six weeks to as long as year round depending on their location and the demands of the labor market.

MSHS: Providing Holistic, High Quality, Early Childhood Education Services: Children served by MSHS develop literacy skills in both English and Spanish. MSHS programs employ bilingual teachers with degrees in early childhood education. MSHS staff work with parents to address educational goals outside the classroom.



Promoting Family Engagement and Empowerment: Family engagement is a cornerstone of Head Start success and MSHS programs accommodate the working schedules of parents by conducting center and Policy Council meetings in the evening or on weekends. Parents play a critical role in decision-making and take on leadership roles at the local, state, and national level to be a voice for Head Start and MSHS programs.

Ensuring Collaboration and Coordination: Operating in 38 states, MSHS programs strive to provide coordinated services to mobile farmworker families to ensure that academic and medical records are transferred with the child.

In the Life of Farmworkers Families

According to the most recent national survey, an estimated 1.13 million² farmworkers labored in fields and orchards across the country supporting our nation's agriculture industry, which generated \$375 billion in 2015.³

In preparing this report, we surveyed MSHS programs across the country to find out what crops are being harvested and processed by MSHS parents. The chart on page 8 lists crops our families work with and how much these crops contribute to the national economy. We found that in total, the work done by MSHS eligible families contributes to 42 percent of the national agricultural economy. While some of our parents are employed in highly mechanized crop sectors, the vast majority are harvesting fruits and vegetables that are hand picked. Fresh produce is extremely labor intensive as harvesting relies on hand-skilled labor. The work of our farmworker families ensures that all Americans have access to safe, secure, and affordable food.



Many farmworkers across the country are migrants. According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey a migrant farmworker is an individual who has traveled or relocated at least 75 miles to obtain a job in agriculture over a 12-month period.⁴ Frequently, farmworkers move with particular growing and harvesting seasons as needed; leaving a “home-base” state or traveling significant distances within a state following the crops and the demand for skilled labor.

The map on page 6 illustrates the expansive coverage of services provided to farmworker families and gives specific examples of MSHS programs across the country. It details the types of crops, the length of seasons, and the positive economic impact agriculture has on the respective state economies.

“As a dairy farmer, I know how important a skilled and reliable labor force is to California's agriculture industry. If you were to drive through the pistachio groves or grape vineyards sprawled throughout my Congressional District, you would understand how vital farmworkers are to the economy of California's Central Valley.

Americans have long been accustomed to having fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables year-round. However, many do not understand the amount of manual labor involved in harvesting these specialty crops. Behind each pint of berries bag of grapes, or bushel of plums, are the skilled human hands, knowledge, conscientiousness, and backbreaking work of farmworkers. These workers spend long days making the basic sustenance of our daily life and health possible. In return, we should show our appreciation for their dedication and invest in our communities as a whole by supporting Migrant and Seasonal Head Start.” - Congressman David Valadeo (R-CA 21)

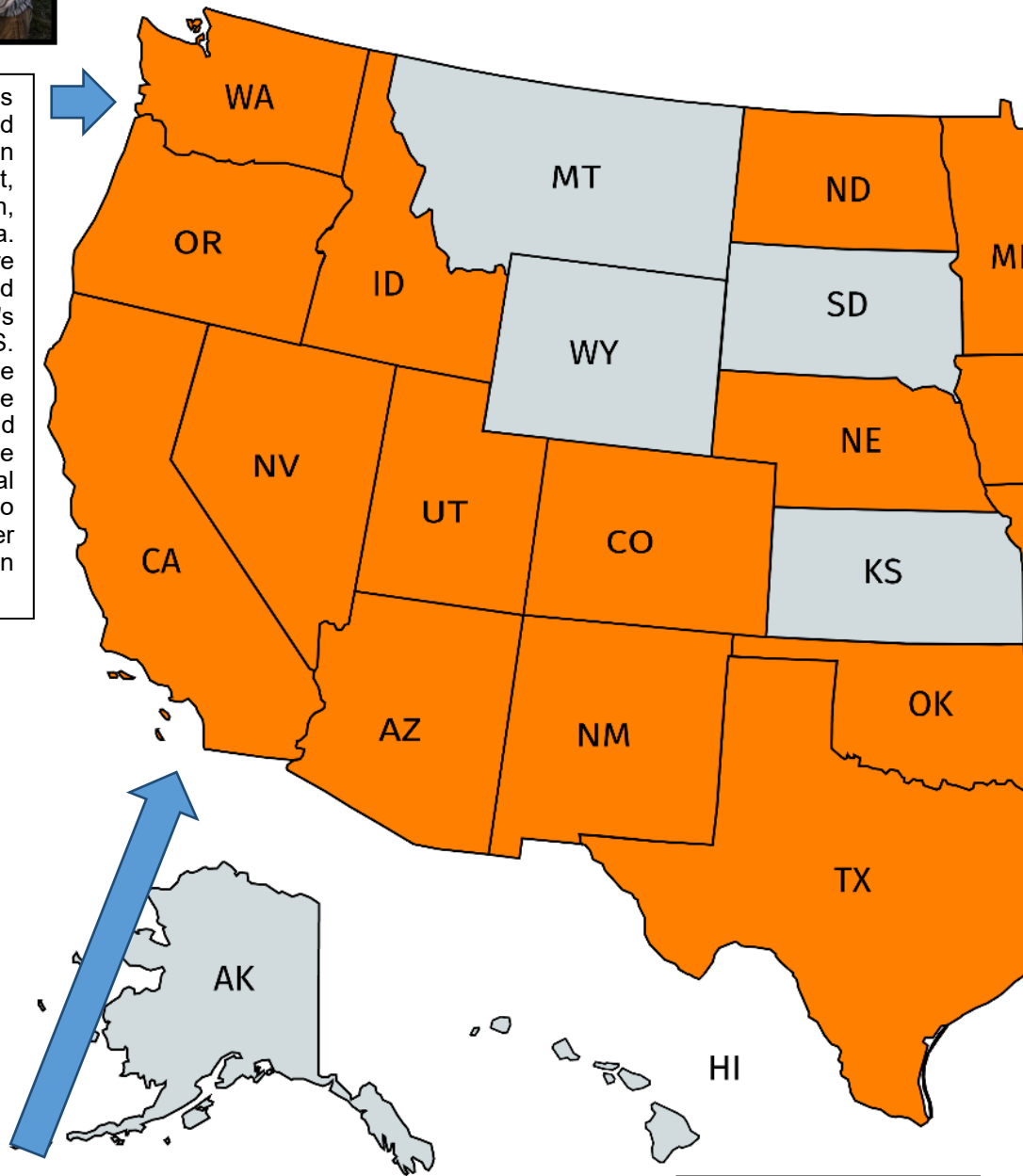
Although migration patterns have evolved over the last two decades, the challenges that face farmworker parents remain the same. It is extremely difficult for farmworker families to secure safe, affordable childcare or early learning programs that accommodate the demands and schedule of their seasonal agricultural work. In most communities local child care resources are not available, especially for infants and toddlers, during peak harvest seasons when parents are expected to work between 8 to 10 hours a day. If MSHS is not available, parents are left with few options other than arranging for unlicensed child care or taking children with them to the fields, where they may be exposed to pesticides, hazardous equipment, extreme heat, and other health dangers. Fortunately some 20,000 farmworker families and more than 28,500 children, MSHS is an option.

To this day, MSHS exemplifies how the Head Start model can be adapted to reach and serve the unique needs of a community, to empower parents as their child's first and most important teacher and to prepare the next generation of learners and leaders.



Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs Across the Country

Inspire Development Centers is located in Sunnyside, Washington and operates child development centers in the counties of Whatcom, Skagit, Okanogan, Grant, Adams, Franklin, Walla Walla, Benton, and Yakima. Washington's top commodities are potatoes, cherries, grapes and hops. The leading crop is the state's apple industry, with 70 percent of U.S. production. Apple production alone contributes \$2.4 billion towards the state's economy. Growers know and understand the importance of the role the farmworker plays in the agricultural industry, as many jobs are unique to each crop and makes the farmworker irreplaceable by machinery in capturing the fresh market.

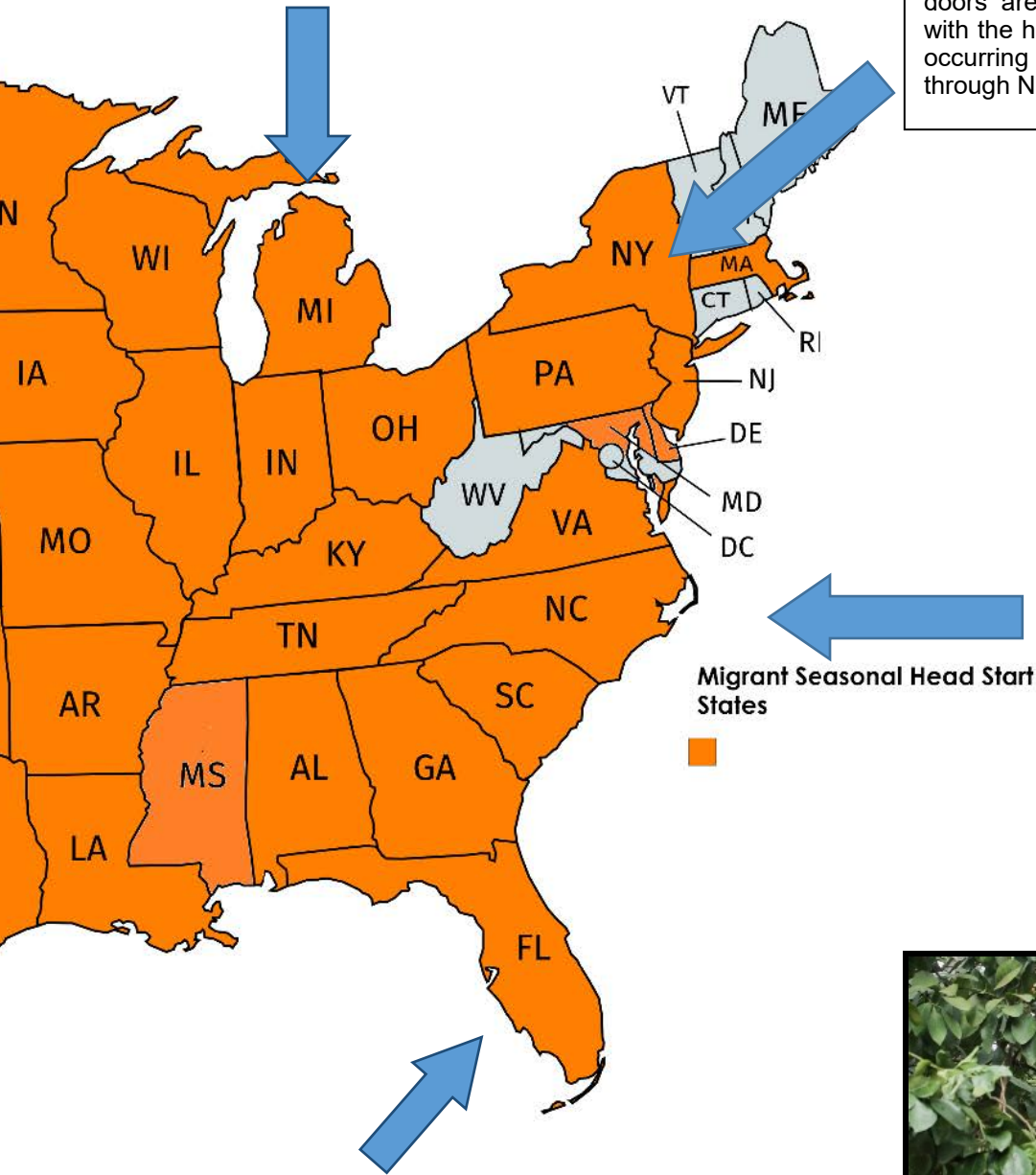


Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo, Inc. (CAPSLO) serves farmworkers and their families in nine of California's top agricultural producing counties. Farmworkers in the region harvest a wide range of crops from almonds, peaches, raisins, cherries, strawberries and grapes, to list a few. Across the eight counties, grape production is one of the most common and one of the most valuable crops. Grapes in this area are valued at \$3.3 billion. CAPSLO offers services throughout the harvest seasons to match agricultural demands. Services operate an average of 7.5 months between January and November.



Telamon Corporation operates Head Start in six states. In Michigan, services operate May through October. Farmworkers normally start the harvest seasons working on asparagus, cherries, and blueberries. Towards the end of the harvest season, and depending on crop conditions, Michigan farmworkers harvest apples across the state. Michigan is the nation's leader in blueberries, which farmworkers perform the backbreaking work that supports the \$122 million harvest.

Agri-Business Child Development-New York serves farmworkers and their families in 19 counties in the state of New York. Farmworkers in this region handle apples, corn for grain, potatoes, grapes, and cabbage. The most valuable crop in New York is apples. Farmworkers contribute heavily to the apple industry, which requires skilled hands and eyes. Apples have brought in a total of \$274.5 to the state economy. ABCD MSHS doors are open for service year round with the height of the agricultural season occurring during the months of April through November.



East Coast Migrant Head Start Project operates in several states, including Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Highlighting one state, North Carolina farmworkers work tirelessly to harvest bell peppers. In February 2017, North Carolina reported the value of the state's bell pepper production to be \$19 million. Hand-picking bell peppers is a must, as machines do not provide the skilled eyes and delicate hands required for the fresh market.

Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Inc. has centers throughout the counties of Gadsden, Marion, Putnam, Flagler, Volusia, Orange, Lake, Pasco, Hillsborough, Manatee, Hardee, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Collier, Lee, Palm Beach, and Miami-Dade. In Florida alone there are 47,000 agricultural producers. Besides oranges, Grapefruits are another large commodity in the state of Florida. In fact, at \$12.64 a box, the grapefruit industry brings in an annual \$136.5 million to the economy.



**National Gross Revenue of Crops Harvested by MSHS Families:
Crop Receipts Measured in units of \$1,000**

Corn	47,204,430
Soybeans	33,184,310
Wheat	9,473,350
Hay	6,955,236
Grapes	5,561,719
Almonds	5,325,000
Cotton	4,913,549
Potatoes	3,594,450
Apples	3,394,185
Lettuce	2,960,741
Rice	2,893,183
Tomatoes	2,673,896
Strawberries	2,219,144
Oranges	1,963,353
Sorghum	1,836,619
Tobacco	1,605,372
Sugar beets	1,458,069
Beans	1,360,259
Mushrooms	1,191,357
Sugarcane	1,015,756
Onions	993,360
Walnuts	976,860
Peppers Group	941,858
Corn, Sweet	927,413
Broccoli	918,981
Blueberries	859,172
Cherries	845,952
Carrots	797,869
Sweet potatoes	716,553
Lemons	696,835
Pistachios	669,600
Peaches	605,794
Raspberries	580,924
Sunflower	567,388
Pecans	560,216

Pears	500,416
Watermelon	483,003
Tangerines	468,083
Celery	456,338
Cabbage	386,085
Cauliflower	371,108
Peas	360,323
Cucumbers	349,698
Plums and prunes	331,197
Avocados	295,797
Garlic	279,294
Spinach	272,801
Cranberries	267,527
Cantaloupe	261,521
Grapefruit	216,258
Squash	174,259
Olives	160,043
Nectarines	150,413
Oats	125,639
Pumpkins	90,214
Honeydews	80,548
Flaxseed	80,516
Asparagus	75,648
Artichokes	72,874
Apricots	41,730
Blackberry group	40,779
Kiwifruit	30,893
Figs	21,853
Tangelos	9,221
Total	158,896,832

KEY

	Small labor input
	Labor input varies
	Labor intensive

USDA ERS data reflects Cash Receipts by commodity for FY2015. (See endnote 3)

MSHS Success Stories From the Fields

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MSHS PROVIDER

Lourdes Villanueva, Redlands Christian Migrant Association & John Menditto, East Coast Migrant Head Start Project

The small town of Jennings is located a few miles south of the Florida-Georgia state line; 360 miles due north of Immokalee, Florida, America's tomato capital. The vast distance between these two towns belies the fact that Jennings and Immokalee share a common population. Each year, hundreds of farmworker families make the six-hour trek up Interstate 75 from Immokalee to work in and around Jennings, planting and harvesting tomatoes. And each year, two Migrant and Seasonal Head Start service providers ensure these farmworker families receive comprehensive Head Start services of the highest quality.



Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA), headquartered in Immokalee, and East Coast Migrant Head Start Project (ECMHSP), headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, are independent non-profit corporations, but we share a common mission. Both organizations are dedicated to meeting the school readiness needs of farmworker children. And while educating the young children of farmworkers is our primary focus, the Head Start centers we operate do much more than that – such as providing nutritious and culturally-sensitive meals and ensuring children have access to high-quality health care, including medical and dental screenings.

Vianey Leon Lopez is a migrant farmworker and young mom who travels each year with her family from Immokalee to Jennings to work in the tomato fields. When Vianey is in Immokalee, her son, Oscar, receives Head Start services at the RCMA Head Start center. There, he learned all 26 letters of the alphabet, developed excellent writing skills, and began completing simple math problems. “The teachers were very dedicated at RCMA, and it’s the same way at East Coast,” Vianey shared recently after working a long day harvesting tomatoes in Jennings. “At both RCMA and East Coast, Oscar receives instruction in both English and Spanish and he even gets regular homework assignments which he completes with only a little help from me.”

We harbor no illusions about the degree of difficulty of our mission. Providing high-quality and comprehensive Head Start services to farmworker families is very hard work. But harvesting the fresh fruits and vegetables that feed our nation is harder work. With this truth in mind, RCMA and ECMHSP will continue to work together to ensure farmworker children enter school ready for success.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MSHS PARENT

Theresa Martinez, migrant farmworker and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start parent

My name is Theresa Martinez. I am a seasonal worker. I was raised in a migrant family. I have five children of my own.

I would like to share with you what I think members of Congress should know about MSHS. Congress should be made aware of all the benefits MSHS provides. Some examples are safe place



for your children while you work, education for your children while you work, and a clean and healthy environment for children. Your children have opportunities to learn and grow educationally and socially. Truthfully without MSHS most children are left with whoever will watch them. Some may be taken to the fields and have to endure the heat. If not then some parents miss work, risk losing their jobs or even worse — don't get to work at all.

My children who have attended MSHS have received medical services, dental services, eye exams, physicals, and vaccines. That might not seem like a big deal, but to a working parent, it is, especially to migrant parents who

are not familiar with the area. Having a child be ready for kindergarten is also amazing. MSHS gives the extra boost that maybe hard working, tired parents wouldn't have time to. Language and social skills are also learned and greatly needed when starting schools. It definitely helps when they can ask for a drink or say they need to use the restroom when they start school.

I, as a parent, have learned a lot from MSHS. Parenting is not easy and learning to educate yourself and be involved in your children's education is vitally important. Having parent meetings and brushing up on parenting skills is always interesting to me. I don't think I really have words for the positive impact MSHS has had on my family. I really hate to think how things would have been without MSHS and all the opportunities we have been blessed with. The adventure has definitely been a positive one.

I also have to say that it was a benefit to my family to be able to work while my children were at MSHS. Paying child care for three boys and working just wouldn't have been possible. I really enjoyed the fact that I could work, not have to worry about my boys if they were hungry, being mistreated, not learning, or just watching TV. While I worked to support them, they were just fine. Eating healthy meals, and even better than that, learning (that's my favorite).

MSHS is great about sharing information on resources within the program and also if the parents and children need additional outside services they try to point you in the right direction.

Again, I would like to say thanks for letting me share what MSHS means to me and my family.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MSHS GRADUATE

Lionor Galindo, NMSHSA Internship Class of 2015 and candidate for University of California - Davis PhD Program in Human Development

As the daughter of seasonal farmworkers, I am part of an often-forgotten population of hardworking people who are deeply rooted in many communities across the country. It is programs such as Migrant and Seasonal Head Start that have changed my life, and are continuously changing the lives of many low-income families across the country.

As a young girl growing up in Sunnyside, Washington, I remember my parents having to take my siblings and me with them as they worked in the fields— my parents could not afford childcare or preschool, and had no other option but to take us to work with them. My mother was thrilled when she learned that we qualified for an early learning program called Head Start. She could now have the peace of mind knowing her children were in a safe place while she was at work.

Like many young children in Spanish speaking migrant and seasonal farmworker households, I

entered Head Start with little to no knowledge of English. In the Head Start classroom, I not only learned English, but I also gained a strong understanding of the alphabet and numbers. Head Start taught me patience, manners, resilience, and, above all, a love for learning. The program also encourages family involvement, engaging my mother and giving her the knowledge and resources she needed to ensure we had a healthy learning environment both at school and at home.

For these reasons, I feel it is my responsibility and commitment to ensure no child is forgotten and all have the early educational opportunities they deserve. Today, I am a proud graduate from Washington State University pursuing graduate studies at the University of California, Davis because I was fortunate enough to have the support many families seek.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A GROWER

Dan & Kay Ericksen, owners of Knob Hill Orchards in Oregon

The buses are often unseen by the general public because they pass by earlier in the morning than most people rise. But their passengers on board are headed for a safe, secure place to spend the day while their parents and older siblings are able to earn a living for the family. The Oregon Child Development Coalition MSHS services that make this possible are often taken for granted, but are actually invaluable to farmers like me, to the migrant families, and especially to their children.

The migrant families that come to pick cherries at our farm return year after year, often leaving many of their belongings in their housing units knowing that they will be back for the next harvest. Part of the incentive that attracts them to return annually is the fact that while the children are well-cared for, both parents are able to work together harvesting the crop without having to leave someone home to babysit. This allows families to make significantly more money for the short time they are living here with us on the farm.



And for those of us that are raising the crop, each employee is a valuable asset. As the supply of labor becomes tighter, it becomes increasingly important to have a full crew to get the fruit harvested in its prime. When the whole family is available to work it improves productivity for both the family and the farmer.

Our workers appreciate the effort we make to have a good, safe living environment for them and that includes the services that they rely on for the care of their children. The Coalition not only provides care for the young, but it has become the focal point for the provision of medical services, dental services, health screening, vision, and nutrition. The provision of services has become a community-wide effort due in a large part to the presence of the Oregon Child Development Coalition.

And as the buses return with their precious cargo in the afternoons, the parents are there to greet the smiling faces, happy to have had a fun day and happy to be back with Mom and Dad.

Endnotes

1. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (Last updated 2018, Feb. 7). *Farm Income and Wealth Statistics: Cash receipts by commodity [Data file]*. <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17831>
2. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (Last updated 2018, May 2). *Farm Economy: Farm Labor*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor>
3. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Farm Income and Wealth Statistics (2015 receipts)*
4. United States Department of Labor (2016, Dec.) *Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 2013-2014*.

Special thanks to Christopher Harding for the research provided for this paper, and to Celia Roberts for the photography provided.

"When I was five, my parents migrated from Mexico to work the fields in the United States. There they enrolled my siblings and I into a Migrant Seasonal Head Start program. It was there that I began to master a new language and there that set the foundation for my school readiness. The MSHS program also connected my family with the Shriner's hospital for my physical health needs and after many years I was finally afforded the proper health care needed to address my needs." - Armando Garcia, MSHS graduate from Inspire Development Centers in Washington

"Hundreds of children in our community have been receiving bilingual education, health and developmental screenings, transportation services, USDA meals and multiple classes and activities for their parents. Our workers feel very satisfied knowing that while they are working their children are in good hands being under your [MSHS] care."- Angie Roloff-Roloff Farms, Inc. member of the Oregon Child Development Coalition

"From my experience as the participating parent, I learned that we are the teachers of our children and we need to support our program so our children are in a safe environment and that education is their number one goal in life. The program has prepped me and my husband on what is to come when our children enter the reality of public education. Our son Ivan will enter kindergarten this year and we are ready for what is to come."- Angelica Castro, parent from the Central California Migrant Head Start Program



National Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Association

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