

Latino Migrant Teen Journal

Premier Edition, Summer 2016

In this issue, we're exploring our HOMETOWN, Hammonton, New Jersey, where this journal is published. In future issues, we'll explore the hometowns of many of our readers, who are from Guatemala and Mexico and from all over the map!

Read about your favorite sports, music, a book review, and more! Find out about what's going on at migrant camps in South Jersey during the blueberry harvest.



Welcome to the library - page 9



Working in a blueberry packing house - page 14



Your favorite sports - pages 4 & 5.

Publisher's Information

Latino Migrant Teen Journal, available in English and in Spanish, is published once a year by Migrant Worker Outreach (MWO). It is distributed FREE at farm labor camps in New Jersey. There is a companion journal for Haitian American youth, *Migrant Teen Journal*, available in English and in Haitian Creole. The Migrant Worker Journals have been published since 2011.

Latino Migrant Teen Journal

Chief Editor & Translator, Corina Mendoza, Email: coryamh@msn.com; Assistant Editors: Copelia Morales & Ambrocio Mendoza
Youth Editor: Xiomara Perez; Assistant Photographers: Autumn Vasquez & Mitchell McDaniels; Map page 16: Alicia Tate

Migrant Worker Outreach (MWO)

Dory Dickson, Director (609) 969-2480,
Email: DoryDickson@MigrantWorkerOutreach.Org
P.O. Box 123, Medford, NJ, 08055
www.MigrantWorkerOutreach.Org

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info@MigrantWorkerOutreach.org, or call
Dory Dickson at (609) 969-2480

Our FaceBook pages: Migrant Worker Outreach of South Jersey <:~::~~::~~::~ Latino Migrant Teen Journal <:~::~~::~ Migrant Teen Journal

Our mission statement

The mission of Migrant Worker Outreach is to welcome migrant workers and their families to New Jersey. We publish *Latino Migrant Teen Journal* to provide informative and entertaining reading, and to serve as a platform for young voices, particularly from Hispanic communities in the United States.

To submit articles

Youth, ages 12 to 21, are invited to submit articles to our post office box or by email to the editor; our mailing address and email address are listed above. Guidelines for submitting materials are on our website, also listed above. You may contact the editor to discuss story ideas or proposals for articles first, if you wish. We occasionally publish articles by contributors older than 21. We accept submissions for either of our two journals in English, Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole.

MINI-DIRECTORY

1. AtlantiCare Emergency Room

219 N. White Horse Pike
Phone: (609) 704-3360
Hours: 24 hours, seven days a week

2. South Jersey Family Medical Center (SJFMC)

SJFMC sends people out to visit many of the migrant camps.
Augusta Professional Building,
860 South White Horse Pike
Phone: (609) 567-0200
Medical Center Hours: Mon-Wed: 8:30 am - 9 pm,
Thurs: 8:30 am - 8 pm, Fri: 8:30 am - 5pm

3. ShopRite Grocery Store & Pharmacy,

80 S. Whitehorse Pike,
(Across from Walmart)
Store Hours: Mon-Fri: 8 am - 9 pm, Sat: 7 am - 10 pm,
Sun: 8 am - 9 pm
ShopRite Pharmacy Hours: Mon-Fri: 9 am - 9 pm,
Sat: 9 am - 6 pm, Sun: 9 am - 2 pm
Pharmacy Phone: (609) 567-4275

4. Walmart & Pharmacy

55 South White Horse Pike
Store Hours: 7 am - Midnight, 7 days a week
Walmart Pharmacy Hours: Mon-Fri: 9 am - 9 pm,
Sat: 9 am - 7 pm, Sun 10 am - 6 pm
Pharmacy phone: (609) 567-8200

5. PathStone, Corp.

Hammonton Office: #11 12th Street
(609) 567-3500 or (856) 696-1000
Emergency Hotline Number: 800-624-1432
Office hours vary.
Services: This non-profit organization provides short-term job training and assistance with job searches, for migrant workers who would like to stay in New Jersey when the blueberry harvest is finished. Other assistance is offered, to help migrant workers in transition to year-round employment.

6. Goodwill

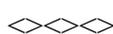
200 N White Horse Pike
Hours: Mon-Sat: 9 am - 8 pm, Sun 10 am - 6 pm



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Announcements



Migrant Education

Gloucester County Special Services School District operates the Migrant Education Program for children as young as 3 years old (if they are out of diapers) up through students who will be entering 12th grade in the regular school year. This summer the program runs from July 5 through August 5. School is closed on Friday, July 15. There is no school on Saturdays and Sundays.

There is also an evening English as a Second Language (ESL) Program, for young people ages 15 to 21 years old who have NOT received a high school diploma or GED. The evening class runs from seven p.m. to ten p.m., four nights a week, Mondays through Thursdays. To find out if you or your children qualify for these programs, speak with the recruiters when they visit your camp, or call (856) 468-6530 extension 1069 to speak with Maria Mendoza. The New Jersey Migrant Education Hotline is (856) 681-6126. The national Migrant Education Hotline is (800) 234-8848.

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes

Classes for English as a Second Language are co-sponsored by Migrant Worker Outreach and Hammonton Rotary Club, along with area churches. The classes, held outdoors in the evenings, are rotated among area migrant camps. If you're interested in having an ESL class at your camp, call Migrant Worker Outreach Director, Dory Dickson (609) 969-2480, or board member Corina Mendoza (609) 214-3175.

Zika virus

The Zika virus is very dangerous to unborn babies. It can cause the unborn baby's brains to stop growing. The baby may be born with a very small head and with severe brain damage, blindness and hearing impairment.

You can get the Zika virus from a mosquito bite. You can also get the Zika virus by having sex with an infected person. In the past six months, have you or your partner lived in or traveled to an area where the Zika virus was found? In this case, if a man has sex with a woman who is pregnant or who may become pregnant, a condom should be used every time they have sex. The condom should be used from the beginning of the sexual encounter until the end.

Some people who have the Zika virus do not have symptoms, so they do not know they have the virus. The virus can live in your body for two months (and for some people maybe longer.) If a woman gets the Zika virus and later becomes pregnant, if the virus is still living in her body it could infect the unborn baby. If a woman is already pregnant when she gets the virus, it can still infect the unborn baby, throughout her whole pregnancy.

Zika has been reported in Mexico, the Caribbean, Central & South American, and other places. If either you or your partner has lived in or traveled to areas where the Zika virus has been found, what's the best thing to do? It may be difficult or inconvenient for a couple to use condoms every time they have sex. But when a couple has sex without using a condom, they're taking a risk that the woman may become pregnant and that the pregnancy may result in a severely handicapped baby. Remember, if the woman is already pregnant and she gets the Zika virus, it can infect the unborn baby then, too.

If you have the opportunity to protect yourself by using insect repellent, sleeping under mosquito netting, or avoiding mosquito prone areas, do it. Pregnant women should read the product information on any insect repellent to be sure it's safe to use during pregnancy. If there is a possibility you'll be in a situation where you might have sex, bring protection with you. If free condoms are being distributed, both women and men should receive them. Don't be shy to ask. Your unborn child would thank you!

At the time this journal goes to press, the state of New Jersey offers free testing for the Zika virus through your health care provider, only for people who meet certain criteria.

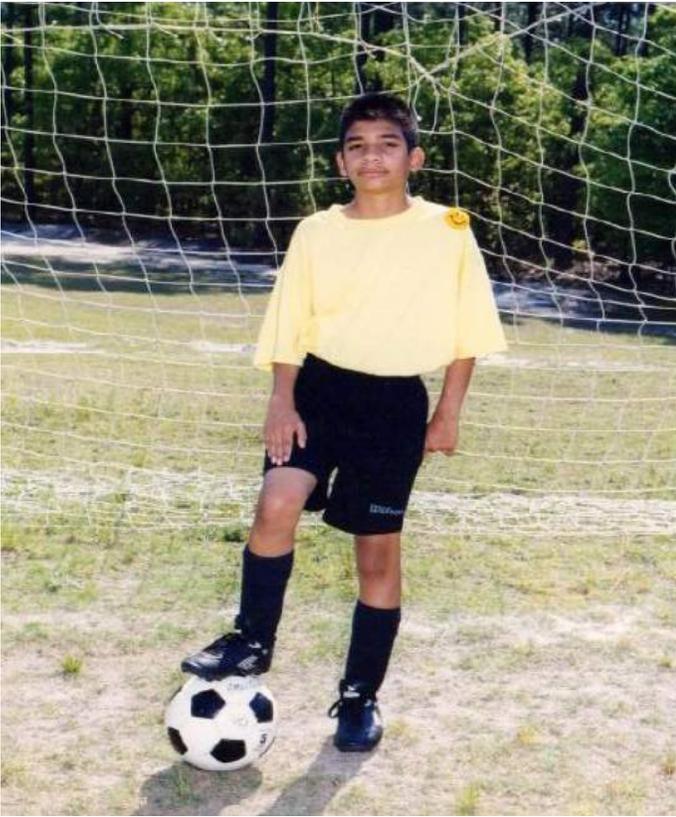
**This article was not written by a medical professional and is not a substitute for the advice of a doctor or nurse.*

**To learn more, call the Centers for Disease Control 800-962-1253 to reach an English or Spanish speaking staff member, or to reach a language-line operator for other languages. You can also go on-line to www.cdc.gov.*

Soccer

by Arturo Garcia, Jr.

I love soccer with a passion.
The game is rough!
Skills are required.
You play with your feet not with your hands.
You do long kicks to get close to scoring.
You can score with your feet or your head.
The goalie uses his hands to prevent scores.
The sport is popular around the world.
Every four years the World Cup is played.
Players represent the country they love.
Fans travel from around the world to support their country.
The crowd goes wild when a goal is scored, and the players celebrate.
The commentator yells out.....Gooooooooooal!!!!!



Arturo Garcia, Jr. (left) at age twelve, and (right) with a friend he met at a soccer match tailgate party at Levi's Stadium, in Santa Clara, California, on Sept. 6, 2014. The friendly match that day, between Mexico and Chile, was the first international game played at the stadium.

My favorite sport



(L-R) Edwin 25, Alex 19, Gerardo 24, and Jesus 30

Latino Migrant Teen Journal asked, “What's your favorite sport?”

Alex: My favorite sport is soccer. I like to play soccer after work. I play offense. I'm a fan of the (National) French Football Team.*

Gerardo: I play soccer every day. I'm good at defense. I played in middle school and in high school, too. It's good exercise and it keeps me strong!



* The France national team utilizes a three color system (for uniforms), composed of colors blue, white and red. The team's three colors originate from the national flag of France, known as the *drapeau tricolore* (three-colored flag). France has brandished the colors since their first official international match against Belgium in 1904. France is often referred to by the media and supporters as *Les Bleus* (The Blues), which is the nickname associated with all of France's international sporting teams due to the blue shirts each team's uniform incorporates.

From Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France_national_football_team

Hammonton Lake Park



(L-R) Xiomara Perez 16, Alan Miranda 17, Autumn Vasquez 17, and Will Fragozo 18, all of NJ

Xiomara: The park is a fun place to hang out!

Alan: I like this park. I have a lot of memories from here, like when I broke my leg going down the slide when I was two years old.

Autumn: My friends and I used to hang out here a lot in the summer.

Will: I don't get here very often because I live on the other side of town, but when I do get here, I usually have a good time.

Hammonton Lake Park, at the corner of Egg Harbor Road and Park Avenue, features a dock over the water, a short trail partway around the lake, ball fields (which are often scheduled for use), a dirt track around the ball field, picnic tables, plenty of parking, restrooms, and a playground with climbing toys. There are big trees to provide shade on hot days. *For location, see map on back cover.

You can drive there from the Hammonton Walmart in six minutes. It's less than two miles if you walk from route 30 towards the Goodwill Store. Turn right on Broadway, just before you reach the shopping plaza where the Goodwill Store is. Follow Broadway about half a mile; turn left on Central and follow it for a few hundred feet. Turn Right on Park, and follow it for half a mile. The park will be on your left, at the corner with Egg Harbor. When you reach the park, if you turn right on Egg Harbor, you're a few hundred feet from the library.

According to the NJ Wildlife Trails website: *(The) park is a small piece of Pine Barrens habitat nestled in the middle of the self-proclaimed blueberry capital of the world, Hammonton. This park offers a landscape that is used for recreation but also hosts a great array of birds and other animals.*

Clean Up Day at Hammonton Lake Park



(L-R) Emily 13, Jonathan 18, Pedro 18, and Jacob 14, all of New Jersey, helped clean up Hammonton Lake Park during the annual Clean Up Day in March.

Emily: I like the playground where you can play with your friends.

Jonathan: There were so many people here today who came out to clean up the park and help the community.

Pedro: The community effort keeps the park clean and beautiful. I like to take my brothers out to the playground. They're ten years old and three.

Jacob: I'm happy to see the park clean now. I like seeing the people come to clean it up; it makes me happy!

**Editor's note: Over 130 people participated in the park clean up day, the most ever. So many people came out to help that they ran out of free pizza at the end.*



MWO file photo

Hammonton Family Success Center



(L-R) Alan 17, Xiomara 16, Autumn 17 and Will 18, all of NJ

Family Success Centers offer families and individuals convenient access to information, support, and resources that help develop and maximize their strengths and potential.

- Family Success Center website

Hammonton Family Success Center hosts interesting events and activities including cooking, craft projects and movie nights. “We hope to host an event for migrant youth this summer, during hours that won't conflict with their work or school,” reports Center Director, Tricia Mento.

A group of teens from Hammonton High School visited the Center recently, to check out the music room, the game room, the lounge, the mini-gym, the theater, the computer lab, and a little play room for young children.

Alan: I liked the game room, where we played foosball, air hockey, and pool!

Xiomara: I really liked the music room. This is a cool place. The Family Success Center is a nice, fun place for youth to come and socialize.

Autumn: I liked the movie room and the game room. I just really liked the center; it's so cool! I didn't know it existed till we came to visit.

Will: I like everything about this place!



All are welcome at Atlantic County Library in Hammonton

by Autumn Vasquez



(L-R) Autumn Vasquez and Librarian Rachel Simmons



If you are without a library card do not worry! You don't need a card to sign up to use one of the library's computers. But you will need a library card if you want to check out books to take with you. Librarian Rachel Simmons explains, "If you are in New Jersey as a migrant farm worker, bring one of your recent pay stubs to the library, along with other identification, and you can get a library card."

The library is open on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays from nine a.m. till five p.m. and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from nine a.m. till eight p.m.. If you get off work early, due to the heat, come enjoy the air conditioning in the library. If there is rain and the blueberries are too wet to pick, come visit the library. All are welcome! The Hammonton library is located on Egg Harbor Road. For the exact location of the library, see the map on the back cover.

Simmons is the librarian in charge of the youth collection at Atlantic County Hammonton Library. When Simmons was in college she was reading novels by Stephen King and by JRR Tolkien, who wrote *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. She also enjoyed the CS Lewis series. "Books these days are more politically correct, multicultural, and more accepting towards the LGBTQ community," says Simmons. "I recommend the novels *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* which feature strong female characters."

Simmons brought up the author S.C. Hinton, who wrote the novel *Rumble Fish*, and other stories about teens who were outsiders. Hinton's publisher suggested that she use only initials in place of her first name to conceal her gender from readers of her first book. The publisher felt that since it was a story about boys, it might be better received if the readers assumed it was written by a man.

The library has different new programs from time to

time. They have craft nights and book discussion groups. Simmons confides, "I hope to get funding for more young adult activities which would include things like refreshments, games, drawing, crafting programs, and more!"

Simmons reports that the library's wide collection of manga books is very popular with young adults. Their collection includes graphic novels such as, *Naruto*, *Tokyo Pop*, *Skip Beat*, *Bleach*, *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Blue Exorcist*, and *Ouran High School Host Club*. This section is in front of the children's room.

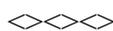
You can find popular novels such as *The Hunger Games*, *Allegiance*, and *Uglies*. Being a fan of the genre myself, I ask Simmons what she recommends. She suggests *Skip Beat*, a story which revolves around younger people in the entertainment industry who face revenge, have dreams, develop friendships, and in the process discover themselves. Another popular book series is *My Love Story*; these romantic novels focus on teenagers who are in high school. Simmons also recommends the *Tokyo Ghoul* series by Sui Ishida. This series is about ghouls who take on human form and who committ murders in their hunger for human flesh.

You might try checking out *Otaku USA*, a magazine that reviews anything within the anime/manga genre. Located on the periodical shelf, you may also find graphic novels by DC Comics and Marvel. At the library, you are welcome to watch DVD's including *Dragon Ball-Z*, *Hetalia Axis Powers*, *Attack on Titan*, and more!

The library is a wonderful place for teens, and for people of any age, to discover new things and pursue their interests, whether on the computer or by reading books, newspapers and magazines, or even by watching DVD's!



*Autumn Vasquez, who interviewed Simmons for this piece, is a 2016 graduate of Hammonton High School. She will be attending Atlantic Cape Community College in the fall and is preparing for a career in event planning. This summer she is working at StoryBook Land and volunteering with Migrant Worker Outreach.



Rhody Caceres's Story

as told to her daughter, Xiomara Perez



MWO file photo

I was 25 years old when I started working in the fields, a job I did for only one year. I worked at two different farms, which I went to with my friends. Seven nights a week I worked in a chicken processing plant and on the weekends I worked in the fields. We would start picking blueberries around seven in the morning. I would work till one or two in the afternoon. Some of my friends worked till five p.m., but since I had another job to go to, I couldn't stay that long.

I had to keep my 18 month old daughter, Yadira on a child safety leash, to make sure she was always by my side. Since she was so young and so small, it was very easy for her to run off. My older daughter, Joemayra, was seven years old. She attended a migrant education program during the summer, so she usually was not in the fields with me.

The hardest part of the job was definitely not picking the blueberries; the hardest part for me and for

the other workers was carrying the trays so far, to bring them to the truck on the other side of the field. Then we would have to walk back and spend time searching for the spot where we left off picking. There's one thing that I think would make blueberry picking easier. Instead of having us carry the trays manually, they should provide each person with a hand truck. A hand truck has a small ledge to set objects on, and the trays of blueberries would fit perfectly on that little ledge. Then the workers wouldn't have so much stress on their shoulders and would be able to move from one side of the field to the other much faster.

Another hard thing about the work was that we were constantly sunburned from being under the sun for excessive hours; that's one of the main reasons I have so many freckles. Many times the temperature would reach 100 degrees in the afternoon. But the most dangerous part about being in the fields was that there were snakes that hid in the dirt and would slither around our feet. We always had to keep an eye out for them.

We received a ticket for each tray of blueberries that we handed in. We would save our tickets until we felt we had enough, and then cash the tickets in for money. The tickets for each tray picked were worth \$1.25. I usually carried 3 trays at a time. Since I was constantly picking, sometimes I would collect up to \$200 a month. (That was in 1982.)

With my pay, I would go to secondhand shops, like Goodwill, and buy school clothes for my little girls. Even though the clothes were used, they were all I could afford. The teachers would always compliment my girls on how nicely they were dressed. This is why I was never a fan of name brand clothing; one can look presentable like my girls did, with shirts and skirts that cost only a couple of dollars.

When I came to New Jersey, from Puerto Rico, I didn't speak English. I moved into a trailer with a lady named Cameron and her boyfriend who was the crew leader and in charge of the farm workers. Because he was the crew boss, he had a trailer of his own that was right next to the field. Cameron had three little girls; I had two. There were eight of us living in this two-room trailer in an area called White Horse. I lived there for the first year that I was in the United States.

Working in the United States



Manuel Lara (50)

I'm a United States citizen. I was born in Zacatecoluca, La Paz, El Salvador. I came to the United States when I was 25 years old because there was fighting in my country. Seventy-five thousand people died during those twelve years (of civil war.) Fighting was between the military and the guerillas.

In El Salvador I began school at age seven. I learned to read and write. Later I attended night school here.

When I came to the United States, I came with my brothers and my sister and many cousins. My first job was restaurant delivery. I did not drive the truck but I loaded and unloaded the boxes. A friend had a friend who got me that first job.

I've done landscaping and I've worked in a car wash and in restaurants and factories. This is the first time I've worked picking blueberries. It's not for me. In El Salvador I didn't do field work.

I want to go back to New York now, but I don't have a specific job there and I need money to pay the rent. I have family in New York, but my sister's apartment there is full, so I would need to rent my own apartment.

Music notes



Prince Royce

by Xiomara Perez

When I was young, my mother would always watch the morning talk show, *Despierta America*. I was about twelve years old when they showed a clip of Prince Royce performing the song *Corazon Sin Cara*. This was the first time I ever heard his voice, and his lyrics caught my attention instantly. I rushed upstairs after school to search him out on the internet, and I learned the lyrics of the song within a couple of hours. I listened closely to each word and even though I was so young, Prince Royce made me realize a lot about love in that one song.

Prince Royce showed the world through his lyrics that love has no face. He sang about a girl and mentioned how pretty she was without makeup and how he didn't care whether she was slim or heavy, or what color skin she had. He simply loved her for who she was. This is what makes Prince Royce a true romantic. *Corazon Sin Cara* taught me how important it is to love myself and to love how I look because one day, someone else will too.

As I grew older, I became more confident. When I was fifteen, my mother and I got to see Prince Royce live in Atlantic City for the first time. When I heard Prince Royce perform *Corazon Sin Cara*, I noticed every girl in the crowd singing along with passion in their voices and faces. At that moment I felt love spread through the entire concert hall, in a way that seemed to connect us all. It was an unforgettable experience that I will cherish in my heart forever!



**Note: Prince Royce, 27 years old, and an award winning bachatero, is proud of his Dominican heritage. His parents immigrated from the Dominican Republic, and he was born in the Bronx, New York.*

Everglades Snow Globe

by Sabrina L. Diaz

You gently turn it upside down.
You watch the snow slowly fall in a suspended manner.
Gravity and time seem nonexistent.
It's hard to say where sky, water and land meet.
The spherical expanse is endless.
In that suspended moment in time life is perfect.
War, famine, disease, and hate do not exist in a snow globe.
The challenges of modern day life belong to another dimension.

Inside the snow globe we are filled with a magical silence
that exposes the deepest parts of our imaginations to a place
that we did not know existed.
Outside the snow globe someone is shaking us
as hard as they possibly can.
They want the snow flakes to fall faster and harder,
to swirl in a turbulent fury.
In this frozen moment in time they can shake it as hard as they want.
We are encapsulated within this dome of stars,
where sky and water bleed into one,
while the snow drifts slowly down.



Sabrina Diaz

**Sabrina Diaz is a Park Ranger with the National Park Service. She wrote this poem when she was stationed at Everglades National Park, Florida, the largest subtropical park in the United States.*

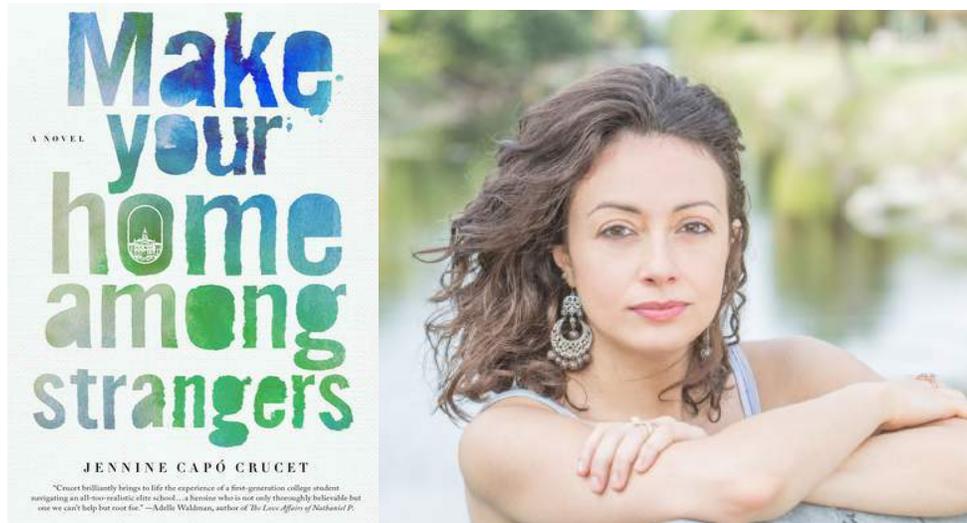


Bryan Grimaldo 18 and Vanessa Torres 18, both of NJ

Book Corner

Make Your Home Among Strangers

by Jennine Capó Crucet



This is the story of Lizet, who is trying to succeed in her first year of college, as the first one in her family to go beyond high school. Her goals are not appreciated by her sister or her mother. She has a full plate of challenges to face as the year progresses. Flashbacks fill the reader in on Lizet's relationships with her family and her boyfriend.

The story is finely crafted, and one of Crucet's special gifts is the pace at which she introduces characters, allowing the reader to gradually become acquainted with each one. Lizet's father and her older sister both appear in the opening chapter, but her mother, who drifts farther and farther away as the school year commences, doesn't appear till the fourth chapter.

When Lizet returns home for Thanksgiving break, she finds her mother consumed with the t.v. coverage of Ariel Hernandez, whose rescue is front page news for months. The character of Ariel is based on the true life story of Elian Gonzalez, found on Thanksgiving Day in 1999, floating in an innertube, after his mother drowned trying to bring him from Cuba to America.

Like the real life Elian, Ariel's American relatives want to gain custody of him, while his father in Cuba fights for his return. Although Ariel himself is peripheral to Lizet's story, his situation, and people's

attitudes towards his plight bring into focus many of their attitudes about Lizet's own Cuban-American heritage. As Lizet's mother becomes more and more fixated on Ariel, she withdraws further and further from her own responsibilities to her daughters. Eventually she even stops going to work, putting an additional burden on the financially stressed household.

Lizet's father is not in the picture initially, except in a series of flashbacks, including the day he deserted them. Lizet's older sister has a young toddler and is not married.

Everyone, including Lizet's boyfriend, Omar, accuses her of being a snob about attending college. And there are complications at school, too. The tenacity that got Lizet through high school, and brought her to a very good school, far from home, is not sufficient to protect her from calamities in this new place where she hasn't yet made friends.

At college, and during her visits home, Lizet is confronted with painful moments which she faces with determination. The reader will be rooting for her to succeed, even while turning the pages to see what happens next.

** Editor's note: This book is available at Hammonton Library.*

The Blueberry Packing House

by Guillermo,* as told to L-MTJ

In my family I'm an anchor baby, a first generation American Citizen. My parents came to the United States to build a better life. I live in New Jersey year-round. When I graduate from high school this June, I plan to attend Atlantic Cape Community College before transferring to a four-year college.

I worked in the packing house for three years, starting when I was fifteen. I found out about the job through a family member. I had to fill out an application, and I got trained on the job. We watched a safety film about *Situational Awareness*, so we wouldn't get hit by a forklift, or have some other accident.

Most days there were about fifteen of us working in the same room in the packing house. About half of us lived in town, and half were migrant workers who lived in the migrant camp. The people I worked with were nice.

There was a guy who worked with us, whom everyone liked. He had an entertaining personality and once in a while he would be joking around and accidentally knock over half a stack of empty boxes. Then he would cry out in a soft voice, "Uh-oh! Watch out!" We always laughed.

At the beginning of each summer, my feet hurt the most because I was standing on cement all day. When I would sit down on my lunch break, it was like heaven! We also got fifteen minutes off after working two or three hours straight.

It wasn't too noisy in the packing house, but there was the sound of ventilation fans and machinery. The packing house was about sixty to seventy degrees fahrenheit. In the morning it would feel cold, but the sun would warm up the roof and walls and then it would warm up inside, too.

We got an hour off for lunch. During that time the ventilation fans kept the work area cool, but the conveyor belts and other machinery would be turned off. Most of us brought our own food to eat.

Here's how the packing house is set up. Two workers pour trays of berries onto a conveyor belt, a single layer of berries deep, and the belt carries them through the sorting machine. In the sorter, lasers identify twigs and green berries and soft or over-ripe berries. Puffs of air shoot the twigs and green berries

onto another belt which carries refuse to a collection bin. Soft berries are shot onto a belt which carries them to a collection bin where they await further processing (as juice berries.) The bulk of the berries, which will be sold fresh, continue on the main conveyor belt. The machine misses some of the berries that need to be removed and another group of workers (mostly female) stand on both sides of the belt, picking out the green berries or whatever the machine missed.

The main conveyor belt drops the good berries down onto a smaller belt which carries them to a funnel. The funnel guides the berries into individual clear plastic pint containers sold at grocery stores and markets.

The filled pint containers are also on a conveyor belt which carries them to an area where four workers pack them into cardboard boxes, 12 pints in a box. The boxes are hand packed onto pallets, in layers reaching above head height. A forklift is used to lift the pallet (with its high stack of boxes) a little bit off the floor, onto a platform which spins the pallet while shrink wrapping it in plastic. The forklift then moves the shrink wrapped pallet of boxes into the trailer which will be used to transport it to market. The berries have to be quick-chilled before the truck driver closes his rear trailer doors and takes off. To quick-chill the truck load, a powerful air-conditioning unit and large fans are employed.

My job on the line was to unwrap stacks of new cardboard boxes and mark them with a labeling gun. I then put the boxes onto a belt which carried them to where they were packed with the pint containers of berries.

Sometimes it got a little challenging to keep up the pace on high volume days when there were a lot of berries to process. If I got a little bit ahead on my work, I had to use a pallet jack to move a pallet of emptied berry trays out of the way of the work line.

Before I started this job I had no idea what to expect. I didn't know what was coming. My advice for anyone who's going to work in a packing house is, *Expect to be on your feet and prepare for a long summer!*

** Continued next page.*

The blueberry packing house, continued

*Editor's note: Even though the load will travel in a refrigerated trailer, called a reefer, the berries have to be chilled before they go into the trailer. The refrigeration unit in the trailer isn't strong enough to cool the berries down quickly. It's the rapid chilling that increases shelf life so the berries arrive at the market still fresh.

*MWO file photos on this page were not taken at the packing house where Guillermo worked.

*Guillermo is a pseudonym.



Map showing Hammonton Lake Park and Hammonton Library

