



# HAPpenings !

HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT

We are an organization dedicated to the development of leadership, community organizing, and the provision of key services for the integration of the western Colorado community

September 2016

## Making Immigrant Voices Heard



The HAP team is busy making a difference in the upcoming November elections. HAP is a member of the Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable and as in years past is helping promote civic participation by highlighting the power of the immigrant community and the informed electorate.

Please join us in one of the following projects:

- 1) Help eligible residents in the process of becoming citizens.
- 2) Support voter registration efforts and collaborate with other organizations in educating the community about topics that will be on this year's ballot.
- 3) Help knock on doors and make calls to our friends and neighbors reminding them that each election has an impact on workers, their families and our community's future.
- 4) Participate in forums of candidates and ballot's initiatives.

**More information, please call 970.249.4115.**

**[www.hapgj.org](http://www.hapgj.org)**



## State Assembly on Immigration Issues

Members of HAP attended the annual state assembly hosted by the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC) in Longmont, CO on July 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>.

The group celebrated their recent legislative victories and reviewed advances in the civil rights movement over the past ten years of hard-fought battles. HAP was one of the Coalition's founding member organizations.

An important part of this gathering was to hear about the organizing efforts happening in other regions and the ways in which integration and civic engagement are being promoted across the state.

This year, the participants received trainings in worker's right, GOTV, and to decide the legislative priorities for 2017.

The western slope delegation returned with new ideas in how to improve the collaboration with key organizations working in issues impacting the community.



Bob Norris, along with other founding members of CIRC, spoke about the changes that have taken place in Colorado thanks to the hard work of the leaders in each region.



## Combating the Many Forms of Human Exploitation

This past quarter, HAP became a member of the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (CCASA and CCASV).

According to statistics, domestic violence accounts for more than 50% of the crime recorded by police in some counties. No socioeconomic group escapes this problem, but migrant women are especially at risk of being victims of sexual violence in the workplace. On Saturday August 22, a group of leaders and agency representatives, including teachers, personnel of the School District Migrant Program and the Palisade Center for Hospitality, attended the first training on sexual and domestic violence. The training took place at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Grand Valley. The day before, Western Slope Anti Trafficking (WSAT) had its strategic planning meeting. Lucia Paredes of the Montrose Committee said the training "was very useful for understanding the causes

of the violence, how to identify it and how to help other people who—because of fear and lack of knowledge of the laws—accept being victims for ever."





## A Lost Opportunity for Immigrant Workers and the Economy

Alfredo Espinoza came to the United States for the first time in 1996 on an H2-A Visa to work in agriculture. After five years of coming here as a temporary worker, some friends offered him a permanent job in construction. During that time his mother was hospitalized with serious health problems in his home town of Zacatecas, México. Alfredo decided to stay here in order to help with his mother's medical bills. A little later he met his wife with whom he now has two daughters.

During the first years in construction, Alfredo worked 12 hours a day, including weekends, but in 2008 the construction company closed its doors after the economic collapse. In the following years, Alfredo began to work temporary jobs and that was when he came to a HAP meeting to learn about labor rights. He had worked for a company but had not received 5 weeks' pay for his work. His employer told him if he continued to demand payment for his work, he would call Immigration (ICE) to deport him. At that point Alfredo had one hope: President Obama had announced an administrative measure that would permit him and 4.5 million other workers to obtain a temporary work permit. This wasn't an amnesty, nor was it granting immigration status: it was simply an opportunity to keep working and insure the wellbeing of his daugh-

ters that were born in the US.

A group of legislators blocked the President's executive action, remanding it to a court in Texas. Finally the Supreme Court, in its 4-4 decision, ended the hope of a fair chance for the immigrant workers. Alfred has been contributing to this country's economy for 20 years, he has been a victim of wage theft, he has suffered racial discrimination and after the financial collapse of 2008, he has survived on a salary the is below the poverty rate. Alfredo recalls the days when he had a salary that permitted him to buy his house. Now his main reason to keep working is in order that his daughters can have a better education.



## Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Is Still Available

The Supreme Court's 4-4 on June 23, 2016, does not affect the existing 2012 policy regarding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Individuals who meet the 2012 DACA guidelines may continue to come forward and file an initial or renewal request for DACA under those guidelines.

The Supreme Court decision does, however, mean that the court injunction prohibiting implementation of DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents) and expanded DACA remains in effect.

USCIS reminds the public about the risk of immigration scams, in case scammers try to exploit the situation. Get tips for protecting yourself and your loved ones at [uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://uscis.gov/avoidscams).

**USCIS, Press Release on August 27, 16**



## H-2A Visa Range Worker Abuses Due to Weak Federal Regulations

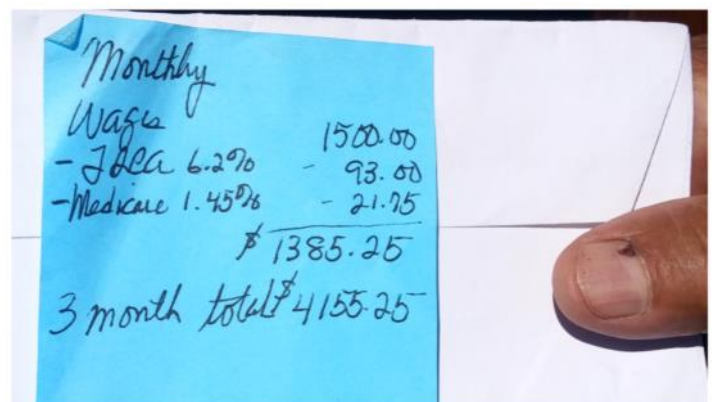
Rafael and Francisco came to the United States to work with the H-2A Visa in the sheep industry in January of 2015. With the hopes of improving their living conditions they paid \$2,000 in Peru to get a recommendation to work in the United States. They arrived with a debt so they could work in the United States. They knew about the salary increase from \$750 to \$1206 a month that HAP had won in favor of the workers through their suit of the Department of Labor in October of 2015. Even though their experience here was much harder than they had imagined, they were happy to be able to get the salary increase at the end of 2015. However these workers never received their salary increase. When they asked about the raise, the boss responded that he had never heard about that and so their salary would remain the same as before. They kept demanding the salaries that the law required and the boss decided to cancel their visas and send them back to their country of origin. The employer not only kept his workers' salaries at \$750, he also kept the airplane fare (the law requires that the boss is responsible for the cost of travel including the return airfare to their country).

**In their last annual meeting, the sheep industry insisted that due to the harassment by the government (DOL) through its many regulations has made their operations difficult.**



**The wage theft:** Some workers are illegally charged for many expenses. Through discounts in purchase and other charges, some employers are reluctant to pay their workers the wages to which they are entitled by the law.

Photo below, this worker is paying MEDICARE, a service that does NOT exist for H-2A workers in the sheep industry





## I Have Been a Witness to Many Injustices !

Many people come in search of something better, but end up encountering the worst. That was my experience when I came in 1977... I worked with some very bad employers and I warned other people looking for work not to go to those ranches. For example, before we would communicate with family or send money only through the mail. And since we couldn't leave work we would ask the boss to please send the letter with money for us. Sometimes the boss would keep the letters in the truck and let weeks pass before sending them.

At first, I didn't know where the stores were to buy food and things. The rancher took me straight from México to the ranch and I only ate what he brought

me to eat. That still continues to happen on some ranches and it's an injustice because we (us immigrants) who come here come to work and we deserve a better treatment. The first year I came was 1977 when I was 21 years old. I worked from '77 to '89 in shepherding. I entered and left each year crossing the border. In 1988, the rancher maybe felt bad for us, and he said there was a law through which we could obtain papers and he would give us a letter of support. That's how I obtained residency. Near the end of '89 with my work permit I brought my family. In 1998 we returned to México, then we returned to the USA in 2001, where we have stayed through today.

In all these years, I have seen many abuses towards immigrants. There are people who think their ancestors were born here, forgetting that their parents too were immigrants who suffered just like we continue to suffer today...

**Fidel Medina, Montrose, CO**

## Working together for an Safe and Inclusive Society

Recent incidents involving racial discrimination and verbal harassment in Grand Junction are providing us the opportunity to talk about racism and how to address it in our communities.

*The Law Enforcement Latino Alliance (LELA) is a collaborative association of the Latino community and law enforcement throughout the Grand Valley, committed to breaking down fear and barriers to communication between the two groups. Together, we meet on issues of shared concern, and provide periodic educational forums on law enforcement topics of interest to the Latino community.*

Like most citizens, the Law Enforcement Latino Alliance (LELA) was alarmed by recent well-publicized incidents of racially-charged confrontations. We wish to reassure residents that such incidents are taken seriously by law enforcement and other agencies in our community. We also wish to offer resources for reporting any future such confrontations. Law enforcement in our valley is committed to the safety of all residents, regardless of their ethnicity or background. Any suspected incidents of violence, and certainly those that have a racial or hate-crime component, should be reported to law enforcement immediately. Community members should call 911 or, if time has

passed since the incident occurred, the non-emergency number 970-242-6707. Such incidents will be fully investigated by the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction, and criminal charges may be pursued when appropriate. Even if the victim of such a crime does not ultimately wish to pursue prosecution, the incident should nevertheless be reported.

If an incident occurs within a school setting, it should immediately be reported to the school administration, or to 911 if it is in-progress. District 51 Security can also be contacted at 970-254-5172, to report any safety concerns involving schools in our community. Crime Stoppers of Mesa County provides another avenue for confidentially reporting criminal behavior, or to anonymously report suspect information that may help solve a crime. They can be reached at 970-241-STOP (7867).

The local non-profit, Hispanic Affairs Project of Western Colorado, is dedicated to promoting civic engagement and community integration. HAP is also an excellent resource for providing a non-threatening environment for bringing forth safety concerns or making inquiries about how best to handle an incident of concern. They can be reached at 970-249-4115.

**Press Release: Grand Junction, August 31, 2016**

