



# RCMA HOY

Redlands Christian Migrant Association

We Can Make  
A World of  
Difference

## Helping Our Youth



October 1999

Issue 78

OUR MISSION: Helping Parents Restart, Giving Kids a Head Start, Helping Staff Develop

## This team works

By Mike Clark  
Staff Writer

The word "association" in our name means that we work together. Working together seems to be a way of life at the Zellwood Migrant Head Start Center. Velia Muruaga, Dina Cedillo, and Susan Vega have a combined 33 years of experience working with RCMA. Their dedication and experience show in the way they form a seamless team. Each one has different skills and responsibilities, but they seem to flow together as one efficient unit.

Velia creates an attitude of professionalism as the team leader. She and Dina, the outreach worker, have developed working relationships with representatives of the agriculture employers in the area. The labor supervisors take Velia and Dina to where their workers live. They have had to go to new areas to recruit after several large farms were bought out by the state last year. Their willingness to share the responsibility has made that change easier.

Velia came to RCMA as a family support specialist after working at the University of Central Florida as an admissions officer. Her mother works for RCMA, so she knew our mission and what we did. She picked RCMA as a place where she could do good work.

Dina started with RCMA in 1984 as a high school student. She and her husband decided to quit migrating each year after the freeze of 1987 left them without work. Since returning to RCMA, Dina has earned her G.E.D., CDA and



**THE JOB GETS DONE WITH TRUE TEAMWORK:** (from right to left) Susan Vega, early childhood specialist, Dina Cedillo, outreach worker, and Velia Muruaga, center coordinator proudly stand in front of the Zellwood Child Development Center. They have managed to combine the necessary ingredients to create an effective team approach that benefits all whom they serve.

gotten her driver's license. She began as a teacher trainee, and has held positions as teacher, health coordinator, and outreach worker in different centers. She currently takes classes during the summer to improve her computer skills.

Susan Vega is the early childhood specialist. She has been a leader in RCMA and the community since starting in 1981. She teaches Early Childhood classes at the local vtech school in the evenings and has been a CDA advisor for the whole county. She has been in many other centers to assess CDA candidates. That exposure to other programs makes her appreciate RCMA even more.

She says, "What RCMA has is state of the art. Our training is phenomenal. That is what I missed when I left for two years. They encourage us to grow." Susan gave us some insights about teamwork. "I don't go into the fields, but we share information often. We talk

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**FROM  
THE  
DESK  
OF  
OLGA**



"She wanted the group of teachers, and administrators who were present to understand that it is not that parents don't care about their children, it is that parents are too tired after a day working in the fields and have very little to give at the end of the day."

**DEL ESCRITORIO DE  
OLGA**

"Ella queria que todos los presente comprendieran que no es que a los padres no les importe sus hijos, sino que llegan muy cansados despues de trabajar todo el dia en la labor."

**"YOU STILL DON'T GET IT"**

**"y**ou still don't get it! My parents don't have the time nor the energy to come home after working in the fields all day to help us with our homework."

These are the words of a high school senior as she expressed her disbelief that educators and administrators still do not understand what children of migrant farm workers go through.

I met with the young lady and her parents. We talked about her concerns. She wanted the group of teachers, and administrators who were present to understand that it is not that parents don't care about their children, it is that parents are too tired after a day working in the fields and have very little to give at the end of the day.

She wanted them to understand that she feels it is the school's responsibility to work with the children. They are the educators and not the parents. Many parents don't have the formal education, do not speak the language and therefore cannot help their children. She was pleading and demanding at the same time, "that is your job."

I hope the teachers, administrators and community members were listening.

*Olga Hernandez, Deputy Director*

**"AUN NO ENTIENDEN"**

**"A**un no entienden," dijo la estudiante de la escuela secundaria. "Mis padres no tienen el tiempo ni la energia cuando llegan a la casa despues de trabajar todo el dia en la labor, para ayudarnos con nuestra tarea.

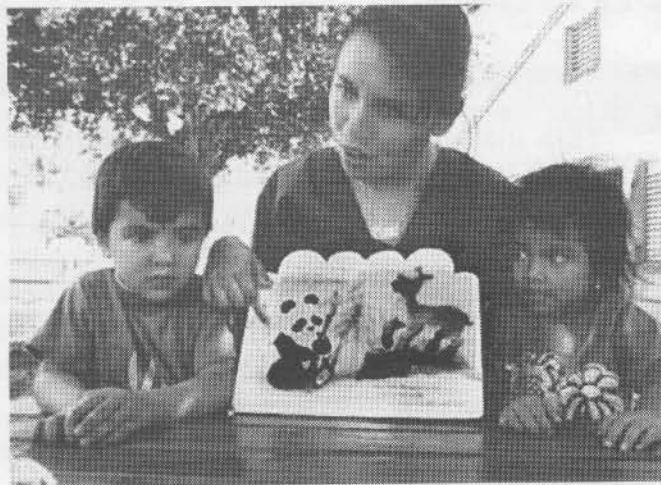
Estas son las palabras de un estudiante en la escuela secundaria al expresar su asombro que maestras y administradores no entienden la vida o por lo que pasa un nino de padres migrantes.

Me reuni con la muchacha y sus padres despues de la reunion y hablamos acerca de sus preocupaciones. Ella queria que todos los presente comprendieran que no es que a los padres no les importe sus hijos, sino que llegan muy cansados despues de trabajar todo el dia en la labor.

Tambien quiera que entendieran que es la responsabilidad de ellos de trabajar con los ninos . Ellos son los educadores y no los padres. Los padres no tienen la educacion formal, no hablan la idioma y entonces no pueden ayudar a sus hijos. Estaba rogando y al mismo tiempo exigiendo "ese es su trabajo."

Espero que todos escucharon.

*Olga Hernandez, Directora Deputiva*



## Portrait of a Teacher

"Growing up in Mexico, my dream was always to become a teacher. I never thought I could do it when I came to the U.S. with my parents to work in the fields. I am realizing my dream here at RCMA."

Martha Camargo is a young teacher from Everglades II CDC who has been with RCMA for only three years, but she has already made her mark as a dedicated care-

giver. "She is a natural teacher," says her center coordinator. Martha's dream of being a teacher was unfulfilled while growing up because she had to help her family by working in the fields and could not attend school. Martha is now in an environment that allows her to grow and realize her true potential.

Martha is especially happy to be in an organization where her role models are people much like herself. She is working on her high school equivalency diploma and says that after that she will go for her Child Development Associate credential and "all the education and training I can get." As one of the youngest teachers in the center, Martha represents the future of RCMA, and the future looks bright indeed!

### TEAM *continued from page 1*

about the ages and needs of the kids that are recruited. I will adapt the classrooms to fit the kids. We work together to identify needs in development."

"We each live in a different community, so we share what is going on and where people live in the communities. We have regular team meetings to share our progress and concerns. There is nobody who is not involved in everything. We don't own jobs, we share them."

"We are all self-motivated. We have very different personalities and yet get along very well."



## 4 Steps to Fighting Breast Cancer

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Every three seconds a woman learns she has breast cancer. The following steps can possibly lower risk and promote early detection—the key to successful treatment.

- 1. LIMIT alcohol.** Some evidence suggests that as little as one drink a day raises breast cancer risk.
- 2. WATCH your weight.** A study showed that women who gained more than 44 pounds since the age of 18 had a 40% greater risk of developing post menopausal breast cancer than women who gained five pounds or less.
- 3. PERFORM monthly breast self-exams.** Most breast lumps are found by women themselves during breast self exams.
- 4. GET screened** — The American Cancer Society recommends that women over 40 should have a mammogram annually and a clinical breast exam annually. Women 20 –39 should have a clinical breast exam every three years.

# Just what are our children learning?

By Nancy Zachary  
Health Specialist, Highlands & Hardee

Sometimes we wonder is it all worth it? Do we really make a difference? Well I found the answer last night at the Avon Elementary School PTO meeting.

Avon Elementary has started a program called, "Character First", which stresses the development and fostering of moral values. The value that was highlighted this month was compassion. Throughout September teachers were on the look-out for children showing compassion to others. If the children were "caught" exhibiting compassion the teacher would write a compassion coupon and give it to the principal.

Near the end of the PTO meeting the principal explained the Character First program. He went on to say that there are many compassionate children at the school. The principal then said "Porsha, would you please come up here". Porsha, a former student of RCMA's Avon Park Head Start went up and collected her certificate. The principal said that Porsha was the first student in the entire school to receive recognition for demonstrating compassion. Porsha had shared her lunch with a student who had forgotten his.

The principal went on to call out more names of children who had shown compassion for others. My own heart swelled as I heard several names of former Avon Park Head Start children - Rose, Rakeem, Christopher, Jasmine, Demetrius, Raynard, Ashley, Shanika and Thomas. These children had shown compassion by acts such as helping a child who fell, helping a child find the right bus, helping a child with disabilities do homework and even sharing school

supplies.

Now these children are not all kindergarten students, the group included children in kindergarten through the fifth grade. Some of these compassionate children have not been involved with Head Start for many years, but still show values that their parents and we helped instill. How can that be? It means that our partnerships with parents have also worked. Our parents continue to be involved and serve as positive role models for their children.

The principal also noted that since implementing the Character First program discipline referrals have drastically declined. Last year during the month of September there were 26 discipline referrals - this year there were only 4!

Is it all worth it? Do we make a difference? You betcha!

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## ☆ **APPLAUSE** ☆

☆ Congratulations to Diane Judge, center coordinator, South Highlands who has completed her first year TEACH contract. Her reward goes beyond her own self satisfaction about working toward her A.S. Degree in Early Childhood. She will also receive a 2% increase from RCMA and a \$375 dollar cash bonus from the TEACH Scholarship program.

☆ Carmen Sanchez, center coordinator at the Indian River Early Education center has received her High School Diploma. She is not stopping there -TEACH is in her future too!

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