Celebrating farmworker victories

May 19, 2011 by Margaret Reeves

May has been a good month for farmworker advocates across the country — a fitting celebration of international labor day, celebrated on May 1st around the world. From California to Oregon to Florida, several hard-won and important victories deserve recognition.

Here in California, we're celebrating a legislative victory moving the Fair Treatment for Farmworkers Act to the governor's desk. Thanks to our California supporters for your calls to Sacramento; you helped keep this important bill moving. We'll keep you posted on the outcome.

In Florida, the second largest agricultural state in the U.S., the Farmworker Association of Florida celebrates a win that will make their work to improve the living and working conditions of Central Florida farmworkers much more do-able. With some much-appreciated help from PAN's facebook followers, the group won a needed minivan through Toyota's "Cars for Good" contest. They're thrilled, send thanks to all of you who logged in to vote for them last Saturday, and will put the van to immediate good use!

In another part of Florida, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and their supporters moved forward with efforts to improve working conditions in the state's tomato supply chain. They launched a month-long campaign to convince retailer Trader Joe's to join the other companies — McDonald's, Burger King, Aramark, Yum Brands (KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut) and Whole Foods — that have already signed the Fair Food agreement. The agreement sets aside one penny per pound of tomatoes to support better wages and safer work conditions for workers.

Strengthening farmworker leadership

We wrap up the month with an upcoming event here in Oakland supporting farmworker leadership in the Northwest. The May 26 event is organized by Oregon-based PCUN — which goes by the Spanish acronym for Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United.

PCUN is sponsoring the event to top off their overall fundraising push toward the $750,000 needed to establish the CAPACES Leadership Institute. CAPACES, scheduled to open this fall, will provide a permanent home for community-based farmworker leadership development and training.

Nine organizations joined forces to form the CAPACES network in 2003, and have since worked together to promote progressive social change in workplace rights, immigration and education

reform, and immigrant integration. If you're in the area, come join us! I'll be there.

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