

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PROJECT SOLIDARITY 2006

## **1. What will be my responsibilities as a volunteer?**

As a volunteer driver with Project Solidarity, you will be paired with one to three migrant labor camps whose residents are members of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). One Sunday a month, your job will be to drive to your designated labor camp(s), pick up the elected camp representative(s) and drive them to the worker leadership meeting. While the workers are meeting, you will participate in a workshop for the volunteers and then you will drive the workers back to the camps.

## **2. Will I have to go to more than one labor camp?**

Probably. It all depends on where the camps are located, how many worker leaders there are at a particular camp or camps in an area, and how much room you have in your car. We will try to send you to camps that are close to each other.

## **3. When will I find out which camps I'll be going to?**

Because workers' schedules are subject to change based on so many different factors, we won't know which workers will be going to the meetings until just a few days before the Sunday meeting. We'll let you know as soon as possible, but probably the Friday before the Sunday meeting. Because farmworkers' schedules often change based on weather or working, occasionally there will be last minute changes, but we'll do our best to inform you as much in advance as possible.

## **4. How will I know how to get to the camps?**

FLOC organizers will provide detailed directions for each camp, which will be available on the National Farm Worker Ministry website, NC page ([nfwm.org](http://nfwm.org)). We are also working on plotting labor camps on a map program which we hope to be able to load on to the web also. Even with detailed directions, finding the camps can be a challenge, but we'll also give you the regional organizer's cell phone number that you can call if you have any problems. You may want to do a "trial run" before the meetings actually start, or ask to go out to some camps with a FLOC organizer to make sure you are comfortable finding labor camps.

## **5. What if I can't drive for each meeting?**

We'd love to find folks who can commit to driving each month, but we know that's not always possible. Sign up for the dates you are able to drive, and help recruit other drivers for the other dates. If you sign up to drive, but your schedule later changes, we would ask you to find someone else to drive your route. Either way, please notify FLOC or NFWM in advance.

## **6. Do I have to speak Spanish?**

While speaking Spanish is certainly helpful, since all the workers do speak Spanish, it is by no means required. We will prepare you with a "cheat sheet" of Spanish terms that will be helpful. Most of the workers are very interested in learning English, and the car rides can be a good opportunity to practice either language or just listen to music.

## **7. How far away are the camps? How long will the day be?**

Be prepared to drive about 2 hours from your home to the labor camps and then to the meeting site. Some individuals will have to drive slightly longer and some will have shorter routes. The meetings

will start at around 4pm, so depending on your route, you will probably want to leave your home around 1:30pm, to ensure time to pick up the worker and make it there by 4. The meetings should end by around 7pm, and you should be home by 9. We know this is a full day commitment. But your sacrifice makes possible the empowerment of farmworker leaders. Without you, this cannot happen.

**8. What will happen once we get to the meetings?**

The workers will attend their business meeting, and the volunteers usually gather for an educational workshop about current farmworker issues. There will usually be a meal.

**9. How can my friends, family and other congregation members help if they can't drive?**

We would like to provide a meal for each of the meetings. Those who cannot make the commitment to drive can still help out by preparing food for the workers and the drivers to share.

**10. What is the number 1 rule of working with farmworkers?**

BE FLEXIBLE!! Farmworkers' lives are subject to the whims of the weather, needs of the growers, getting a ride to the store for groceries or to the Laundromat. And since most workers do not have phones, communication is difficult. Occasionally you may arrive at a labor camp and find that the worker you were supposed to pick up is not there, and instead someone else will go in his place. Occasionally, you may have to wait until the workers arrive from the store. **Therefore, above all else, please remember to be flexible in all ways during Project Solidarity.**

**11. What is the point of all this?**

We depend on farmworkers to harvest the fruits and vegetables that sit on our tables. Farmworkers depend on consumers and people of faith to lift up their struggles to the wider community and to help achieve justice where they cannot do it alone.

Since FLOC won its historic victory with the NC Growers Association and the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, H2A farmworkers now have a union in North Carolina through which they can have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. However, these workers still do not have any transportation. We need you to help farmworker leaders get to their monthly meetings where they can really participate in their new contract.

FLOC recognizes that the support of people of faith through the National Farm Worker Ministry and other community members helped to win its historic victory. And now, FLOC recognizes that farmworkers need the continued support of the community to ensure the success of this contract. The point of Project Solidarity is not only to provide transportation, but also for volunteers to learn about farmworker realities and the farmworker struggle in an up close and personal way. We hope that you will build relationships with the workers you will be transporting and learn the issues present at their labor camps, as well as learn about their lives in Mexico and the families they leave behind. And this solidarity will be a gift both to you and to the workers.