

## FEATURE

*The apples are picked; the Jaimes family moves on*

Reymundo and Marcella Jaimes have three homes: one in New York, one in Florida and one in Mexico. While this may sound like the lifestyle of a wealthy family, they are anything but. The Jaimes are migrant workers. Reymundo, 39, and Marcella, 37, travel three to four times a year with their four children, two sons-in-law, two grandchildren and friends. Originally from Guerrero, Mexico, the Jaimes come to the United States for work to survive.

Since August the Jaimes had been living in the Alton area in Wayne County. Early this month they packed up and moved back to Wimauma, Fla., where the family picks oranges for a living.

They will live in Wimauma, about 30 miles from Tampa, until August. Their only reprieve from picking fruit comes in December. Then they go home to Guerrero for a month for Christmas because there is no work.

"I like it here," Marcella said in Spanish, while sitting at her kitchen table in Alton. "There is not a lot of work in Mexico." She says she misses her family and friends in Mexico, though, and her own home. "I am content in my house in Mexico," she said.

In Alton, Reymundo and Marcella live in a two-bedroom trailer with three of their children, Lorena, 22, Reymundo Jr., 13, and Adan, 2, along with Lorena's husband, Oscar Olguin, 30, and their friend, Guilbaldo Torres, 51. Their other daughter, Yvonne, 20, and her husband and two children live in Wokout. The adults work 10 hours a day, seven days a week, while Reymundo Jr. attends school in North Rose and Adan goes to day care.

The workers only receive a day off when the weather is too bad to work, but are only paid when they work. There are no vacation days or sick time. In Florida, they are paid around \$7.50 per crate of oranges; in New York, \$9 for a crate of apples about 40" x 48" and 30" tall and weighing more than 1,000 pounds. In an average week, Reymundo and Marcella fill approximately 40 crates, which pays \$360 for both or about \$2.50 an hour.


Despite the low wage, Reymundo, Marcella and Guilbaldo prefer New York to Florida. In Alton, the farmer who employs them, Donald Bartleson, provides trailers to live in rent-free, including utilities. In Florida, their rent costs them around \$400 a month.

They expect to be back again next summer to harvest New York apples.



Marcella Jaimes sorts through beans for dinner in the streaming afternoon sunlight at her kitchen table in Alton. Her daughter, Lorena Olguin (right) stuffs peppers for the meal.

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Marcella reaches for an apple to fill the basket she carries around her waist. "I am very tired," she said, from manual labor 10 hours every day.