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by Judy Cantor

A new planned community for South Dade migrants presents a lifestyle dilemma: Settle in or move on?

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With *Eraser*, Hollywood proves its utter creative bankruptcy. But hey, Arnold totes a BIG gun. By Todd Anthony

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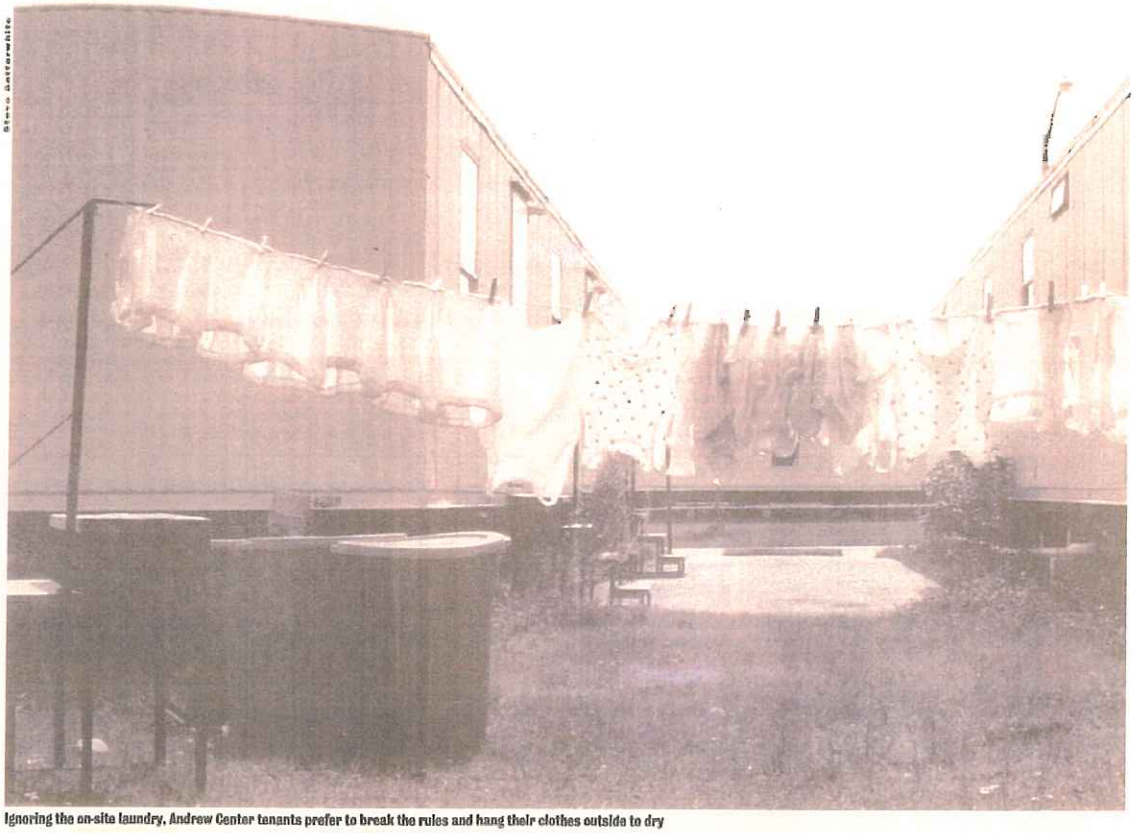

Steve Satterwhite

Ignoring the on-site laundry, Andrew Center tenants prefer to break the rules and hang their clothes outside to dry

by Judy Cantor

After decades of living month to month in trailer parks, some South Dade migrant workers have found a permanent address

A burly man cradling a black-haired baby strides across the empty shuffleboard courts at the Royal Colonial Mobile Home Park in Naranja and walks into the park's management office. He wants to settle his bill. It's barely nine o'clock on a Monday morning in May, but a line has already formed at the office counter. A nervous-looking young mother wearing a Selena T-shirt and Lycra shorts grasps her little girl's hand tightly and studies a bulletin board posted with several flyers printed in Spanish. Hands are needed to pick cucumbers, peppers, and tomatoes in Ohio, and the Mexican League of Childrens' Soccer in South Dade is looking for new players. A notice from the Metro-Dade Police Department offers a reward for information relating to a February bus hijacking that left one Guatemalan farm worker dead and another a paraplegic. On the floor below the bulletin board sits a cardboard box filled with loaves of day-old bread wrapped in plastic bags, a donation for park tenants from a local supermarket.

Like other mobile home communities that sprang up in the Fifties in South Florida, the Royal Colonial was once home to white-haired snowbirds with plenty of time on their hands. But since 1994 the trailer park, located in a desolate section of South Dade that locals call the Dead Zone, has been populated by tired-looking, Spanish-speaking couples with small children. Many of the Royal Colonial's current residents are migrant farm workers who leave South Dade in the spring and return to pick tomatoes, squash, and beans from November to March. They make, on average,

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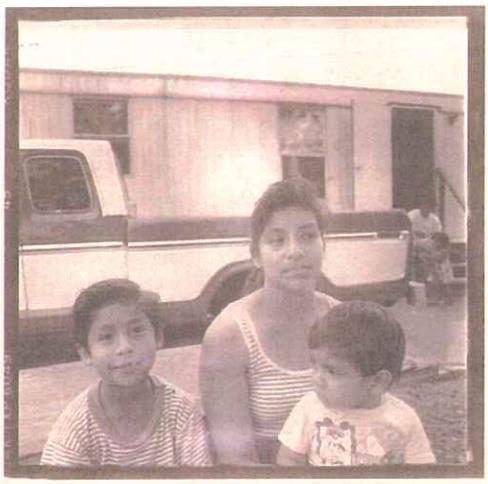
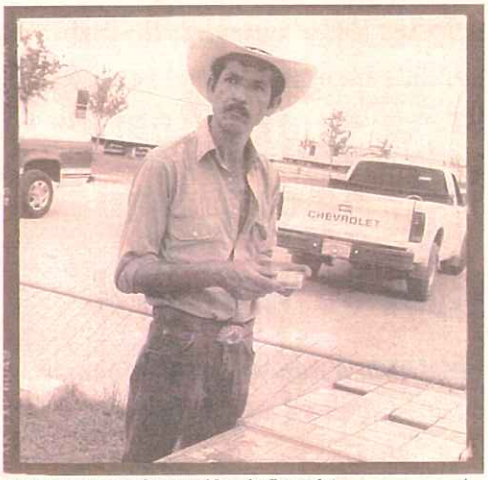
photos by Steve Satterwhite

Carlos and Marta Cruz are ready to settle down in South Dade



Esmeralda Sanchez has taken to migrant life: "We have the basic things we need"

Maria Perez has set up shop at the Andrew Center: "It's like a prison here"



A customer browses at the Perezes' Saturday flea market

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$6000 to $12,000 a year, and pay $63 a week during the winter harvest season to rent a three-bedroom singlewide in *el campo* (as the Spanish speakers call the place). Ninety-five percent of the families are Mexican or Mexican-American, but some come from Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, or Cuba. By the end of May this year, 60 of the park's 312 tenant families had already taken off to pick onions, tomatoes, and potatoes in New York State or cherries in Michigan. Others will pack up their pickups and vans just as soon as their children are out of school.

At the counter in the park office, a patient young Hispanic woman attends to residents' needs from behind a wall of protective glass, where another sign in Spanish is posted:

You can reserve for next year
If you paid your rent on time
If you kept your unit clean outside and inside
If there were no reports of incidents or bad behavior
If you didn't have unregistered guests

Dressed in a T-shirt, jean shorts, and sandals, Esmeralda Sanchez sits on the steps of her trailer, which is set on a grassy corner space in the center of the park. Sanchez has long chestnut hair, and the deep shadows under her eyes make her look like a college student recovering from the ordeal of final exams. Her fatigue comes not from pulling all-nighters, but rather from taking care of her three children — ages seven, two, and one — and waiting around for her husband Oswaldo to come home from his job driving a forklift. This year, like every other, the family will put their clothes, their TV, and their VCR in their red double-cab truck and head for Michigan. (They left in mid-June.) From there they'll go to Illinois, where there's usually work husking corn, and then they'll spend three months in Houston with Oswaldo's family before returning to Florida in November. "You get to see a lot of the country," Esmeralda says of the migrant life. "We have the basic things that we need."

The inside of the trailer is sparsely furnished, mostly stuff left behind by other migrants. The Sanchezes will pass along the sofas and tables and beds to neighbors when they leave. Esmeralda, age 25, grew up in Tamaulipas, Mexico, near the southeastern Texas border. Her father and uncles were migrant workers who traveled each fall to the United States while she stayed home with the other women and children in her family. Her oldest child Jesse finished second grade this year. "I have to put him in school wherever we are, even if it's for two weeks," she explains. "His teachers have advised me to start

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Steve Satterwhite

ECA housing counselor Carmen Rivera in the Royal Colonial's deserted laundry room

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keeping him in one place, but he seems fine to me."

Back in Mexico, Sanchez attended college, majoring in physical education, but she dropped out after her freshman year to marry Oswaldo, who decided he could best support a family with migrant work. "My husband works all the time because we want the kids to have a profession and not to have to travel from place to place like this," she notes with a wan smile. "I think my father had the same thought. But sometimes things don't turn out the way you expect."

Marta Cruz, her husband Carlos, and their two children will also be leaving their trailer soon, but they won't be coming back to the Royal Colonial. The Cruzes, who have lived in the park for the past year and a half, are among 25 families who are scheduled to move next week to the Everglades Farmworker Villages, a federally subsidized rental housing project in unincorporated Dade near Florida City, just south of the Royal Colonial off U.S. 1. The new pastel houses stand on the former site of the Everglades Labor Camp, an older trailer park for farm workers, located on a lonely stretch of land just across from the Dade Correctional Center.

> "There's a lot of young people like us who don't want to migrate. We want to live in a house."

Notorious for its crime and squalid conditions, the Everglades camp was set up in 1973 with trailers furnished by the U.S. Department of Labor. They were already dilapidated when Hurricane Andrew blew them to kingdom come in 1992, paving the way for the new homes. Later this summer additional tenants will move into the 240 Everglades Villages houses currently nearing completion. By 1998, 520 homes are slated to be built on the 110-acre plot, which also encompasses the Andrew Center, a still-active encampment of 532 trailers adjacent to the old Everglades camp.

The new housing complex, developed by the Everglades Community Association (ECA), a nonprofit agency that maintains both the Royal Colonial and the Andrew Center, is being paid for with $41.2 million in grants and loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service; additionally, the We Will Rebuild Foundation, a private nonprofit group founded by local business leaders to help fund recovery in the area after Hurricane Andrew, kicked in a one-million-dollar grant. The finished project will have a population of approximately 2500 people, making it the largest planned community for farm workers ever built in the U.S.

Like Esmeralda Sanchez, Marta Cruz, a vivacious 26-year-old who wears her straight black hair in a smart, blunt-cut style, comes from a family of Mexican migrants. She grew up traveling from state to state in the U.S. but says she now wants to put down roots, a desire made apparent by the suburban-style décor of the living room of her immaculate trailer. China figurines and seashell sculptures crowd onto shelves around a large television set and stereo system. An aquarium filled with tropical fish sits in one corner. A matched set of plush furniture was store-bought in Miami.

"A lot of people here throw everything out and move on, but I couldn't do that," the young homemaker explains as she sits on a French colonial style sofa holding her baby Carlitos. Her toddler Laura points at the fish in the aquarium and burbles "Kmart."

Cruz's husband works in a Homestead packing plant, and the couple has already lived in South Florida year-round for four years. "There's a lot of young people like us who don't want to migrate because they don't want to move the kids," Cruz says. "We want to live in a house."

Architect Robert Chisholm designed Everglades Villages' two-, three-, and four-bedroom homes with the future tenants' wishes in mind. These agricultural workers are rural folk who come from small villages in Latin America, where they were accustomed to wide open spaces. They prefer to live in low-rise detached houses with small lawns. When queried on what they'd like in a new home, the men asked for driveways that extend right up to the front door, the better to keep an eye on their valuable trucks; the women wanted large windows in the kitchens so they can watch their children playing outside. The completed development will also include a soccer field, a community center, three child-care facilities, and classrooms for various educational programs, including English-as-a-second-language courses. Security guards will patrol the grounds from dusk to dawn in an effort to dis-

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courage the kinds of crimes that typically plague low-income housing developments — robberies, drugs, gang violence.

All of this is somewhat atypical. For more than twenty years, many South Dade farm laborers have lived in trailer camps. Now, if everything goes according to plan, the completion of Everglades Villages will do away with such camps, marking the end of an era for Dade County's migrant farm workers. "We've lived with trailers for too many years," asserts Juanita Mainster, a former migrant worker who serves as ECA's director of resident services. "The problem is that for farm workers, what's temporary can easily become permanent."

Like other South Dade agencies that serve migrants, ECA wants to improve the workers' standard of living. The two ECA-run parks (Royal Colonial and Andrew Center) are the only organized trailer facilities for migrant farm workers. The ECA's lease on the Royal Colonial expires in September 1997, and all of the trailers on the Andrew site will be replaced by new permanent houses by 1998. But Everglades Villages is not designed to preserve the seasonal ebb and flow of migrants, which can amount to 25,000 people each year. Instead, it will accommodate the growing number of South Dade residents who are defined as seasonal farm workers. Some labor in the fields in the winter, then find other jobs, such as construction work, during the summer. Those who don't find work get by on their meager savings or they collect unemployment benefits. Other year-round residents work in local nurseries cultivating tropical fruits or indoor plants.

"We're definitely seeing a trend toward settling here year-round," says Arturo Lopez, the director of the Coalition of Florida Farmworkers Organization (COFFO), a nonprofit that provides immigration assistance, substance abuse counseling, and other services for farm workers. "Those who have the possibility to stay here will stay."

Through Everglades Villages, ECA is encouraging its tenants to establish permanent ties in South Dade by providing affordable housing. At the same time, current trailer residents who don't qualify for a house will have to seek shelter elsewhere when the trailers are gone. "It won't be as easy to go and come back," contends Mainster. "Federally funded farm workers housing has very specific regulations. You can't just leave a house empty for long periods of time. You have to keep paying the rent."

> "It's very difficult because here, in South Dade, it's not like the United States. They feel like they're in Mexico."

Although undocumented immigrants reside in both the Royal Colonial and the Andrew Center parks — "We sort of have a don't-ask, don't-tell policy," notes Mainster — illegal workers will not qualify for the new housing. At least one family member must be a permanent resident alien or a U.S. citizen, and families must earn close to half of their income from farm work in order to be accepted into Everglades Villages. Priority is given to those who make between 80 to 100 percent of their living from agricultural employment. Once established in one of the houses, the family must bring in at least $2600 a year from farm work.

"One of our goals is to integrate farm workers into the community," explains ECA executive director Steven Kirk. He's strolling through one of the new tan stucco homes: three shoebox bedrooms and a slightly larger master suite; central fan system and several large, low windows to provide cross ventilation; a refrigerator and a gas stove. The house stands on a small grass plot landscaped with a row of plants bordering a square cement front porch. "The perception that these people are different is probably more fiction than fact," Kirk adds. "Migrancy makes them different, but year-round farm workers are regular working-class people. We envision the Everglades Villages as a stepping stone for home ownership. We think we have a model community here."

Carmen Rivera, an Everglades Community Association housing counselor, slows for a speed bump as she steers a white golf cart down one of the narrow streets on the grounds of the Royal Colonial. Rivera spends most of her days in her office listening to residents' problems and screening new applicants for trailer rentals. Prospective tenants' police records must be clean of felonies, while serious misdemeanors — like carrying a knife — can be overlooked if the candidate appears responsible and hard-working. Sometimes a single man will show up with a woman he barely knows, someone he has asked to pose as his wife, so that he can be eligible for a family trailer. Rivera usually exposes these pretenders with a few pointed questions, and turns them away. About one in twenty applicants is rejected.

Certain days in the office are especially busy. For example, if a report on government proposals for tightening immigration laws appears on the evening television news in Spanish, she'll arrive the next morning to find a room full of people. "They ask me will I take care of their children if something happens to them," she sighs.

Rivera, an attractive dark-haired woman who wears a heavy-looking silver cross around her neck, is Mexican herself. She arrived in San Francisco after graduating from college in Durango, then moved to Miami in 1987 with her husband, who was born in El Salvador. (The couple met in San Francisco.) Once settled in they started a service at Miami International Airport that delivered lost luggage to passengers, but it was tough going. Their customers were various airlines, some of which were slow about paying their bills — or didn't pay them at all. In 1993 they decided to fold the business. Her husband went to work for the U.S. Postal Service, while Carmen sought a job in Dade's Mexican community.

As she tools through the facility on this quiet morning, dueling ranchero music drifts from the open doors of several different trailers. The tinkle of bells from a faded ice cream truck joins in as it rounds a corner, just in time to snag some youngsters and their mothers as they emerge from a doublewide trailer at the front of the park. The group, which includes Marta Cruz and Esmeralda Sanchez, takes part in Dade County Public Schools' adult education and First Start programs; these provide English

classes for mothers while their kids go to a special daycare facility designed for "at risk" children — all on the Royal Colonial's grounds.

Farther along the golf cart catches up to a white sedan. A boy of about ten sits in the back seat, behind his parents. "You have to stop driving," Rivera tells him. She chides the parents for letting the child take the car out by himself. She's seen him zooming around the park at high speeds. His parents feign surprise.

"They think it's funny," clucks Rivera, after they've gone. "I tell them, 'If you live here, you have to have a driver's license, you have to get a car seat for your kids.' These people don't know the laws in the United States. It's very difficult because here, in South Dade, it's not like the United States. They feel like they're in Mexico."

Rivera continues on, passing one trailer whose steps are covered with AstroTurf and plastic flowers. "The woman who lives there wanted a trailer really badly," Rivera explains. "She said she'd take any one we had, and she'd fix it up nice."

Other sights dismay the housing counselor. She spots a clothesline from which work pants, baby T-shirts, and men's jockey shorts stiffen in the sun. She frowns. Clotheslines are against the rules at both the Royal Colonial and the Andrew Center. Residents are supposed to wash and dry their clothes in the on-site laundromat. "That's part of their culture, to hang their clothes outside," Rivera acknowledges. "But when we go to the houses they won't let them do it at all. Then they'll have no choice." She also points out several trailers where cars are parked on the grass instead of on the cement slabs provided for parking. Another no-no.

Just then a woman with permed, bottle-blond hair flags down the cart. She holds up a black box full of costume jewelry: rhinestone earrings and gold chains like the ones she is wearing — *fantasía* she calls it in Spanish, shaking her curly head so her earrings jingle. Her smile reveals two gold-capped teeth. Rivera gently admonishes the woman. It's illegal for residents to do business out of their units, she whispers, and sends the woman on her way.

Steve Easterwhite

When the kids finish school, migrant families pack up their pickups and head out

A Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department truck stops to ask directions; a water heater has been reported stolen in trailer 1706. "Every day it's something different," Rivera shrugs, steering back toward the office. Sometimes the tenants come to see her for help dealing with alcoholism and domestic violence. Or they suspect that their teenage children have gotten into drugs. Most often they have trouble making the rent and come to negotiate some kind of a payment plan. She'll give them as much time as she can before evicting them. When a family is thrown out, it's usually because its members had been continually disruptive, allowed unauthorized relatives or friends to stay in its trailer, or engaged in some other verboten activity.

"This is housing for migrant families but not any migrant families," Rivera explains. "We give them a nice, clean decent place to live and we expect them to obey the rules. I truly believe that if you give them a nice place to live, they keep it up. If it's ugly, why should they care?"

Leaning forward in a worn easy chair that sits just inside the open door of his trailer, Vicente Sanchez (no relation to Esmeralda) carefully raises one leg. The skin between his dusty trouser hem and the leather straps of his brown sandal is red and swollen. His calf looks as fat as a grilled *chorizo* about to burst from its casing, and just as tender. Seventy-six years old and one of the Royal Colonial's two oldest tenants, Don Vicente, as he is respectfully known, was recently released from Homestead Hospital. "They took one of the veins in my leg and put it up here," he explains, pounding his chest. "I can't work."

His large frame sinks heavily into the chair as he stares absently at the snowy screen of a small TV tuned to an afternoon *telenovela*. The trailer's wood-paneled walls are crowded with school and wedding photos of Sanchez's ten children and their offspring. A straw cowboy hat rests within easy reach on the sofa. A few feet away, in the kitchen area, his wife María stirs a pot on the stove while a little boy in diapers, their grandson, plays at her feet. The musty smell of beans thickens the air.

"My life has been very sad," Sanchez murmurs. "All I've done is work and work in the fields because I didn't know how to do anything else. I didn't have an education. I've worked the land, that's all I have to say about what I've contributed to the world. And there's pain and suffering in this life."

Orphaned at age six, Sanchez started doing farm work soon thereafter in his native Michoacán, Mexico. Later, when he was married, he and his growing family crossed the border into Texas where they picked cotton. They kept following the crops, arriving in South Florida in the fall of 1969. "There was plenty of work then," he recalls, stroking his gray mustache. "And not so many people. Now there's people from South America, from Haiti. It's all filled up."

That first season Don Vicente and his family lived in a wooden cabin in one of the

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dozen or so private labor camps set up by farm owners for South Dade's winter harvest season. The camps were maintained by the growers themselves or by independent contractors, foremen who gathered together incoming field workers and offered them jobs. Other migrants lived in the Redland Farm Labor Camp, a Homestead Housing Authority facility that today is populated by former migrants who work year-round in agriculture and other jobs. Mostly these camps housed men who had come to South Florida alone, men who had left behind their families. Accommodations were rudimentary; the cabins had no indoor plumbing and no electricity.

Back then Mexicans had begun to arrive in the area from Texas, where cotton-picking machines had started to replace human hands in the fields. In the Fifties and early Sixties, the migrant pool in South Dade was made up of Puerto Ricans and African Americans. By the late Sixties many of the

> "I've worked the land. That's all I have to say. And there's pain and suffering in this life."

Puerto Ricans had moved north to settle in New York or had returned home, creating a need for farm workers in the area, one that Mexicans would fill from then on.

In 1973 the U.S. Department of Labor plopped down 400 trailers on land near the entrance to Everglades National Park, creating the Everglades Labor Camp. The facility was run by the county, which in 1980 paid about one million dollars to the federal government for 200 additional trailers; these had been used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to house people left homeless by floods in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania in 1972. Under county management of the park, workers paid $17 to $35 a week to rent a trailer.

Federal officials had discussed plans to build subsidized housing for farm workers in the Homestead area since 1971. Finally, in April 1981, Metro-Dade's Department of Housing and Urban Development ("Little HUD") began construction on 66 permanent homes on the Everglades site, using $3.15 million in grants and loans from the federal Farmers Home Administration (now the Rural Housing Service) to finance the project. County officials subsequently applied for federal money to build 96 more houses on the site, but that request was denied. The existing structures are now managed by ECA.

Also in 1981, a freeze wreaked havoc with the local tomato crop, resulting in hardships for both growers and migrant workers. To make matters worse, officials in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana were trying to prevent an overflow of migrants coming from Florida; they warned workers not to make the trip unless they had written confirmation of a job and lodging. Many migrants decided they'd do better to stay in South Dade and attempt to get by on their savings. County officials, who had agreed to keep the Everglades Camp open year-round for the first time in

1980, said they would not do it again because the previous year's summer months' expenses had amounted to $100,000. They also argued that the Everglades Camp was not public housing for farm workers living year-round in Dade; the facility was intended only for seasonal migrants. But the desperate workers would not take no for an answer. They staged a "live-in" at the camp, demanding that the county let them stay in the trailers for the summer. The workers triumphed, and since then some families have lived there throughout the year.

But county officials continued to complain about running the camp, maintaining that it was costing more than $300,000 a year in public funds. In June 1981 the county announced it would close the facility that October. By July, local growers, who had an obvious interest in keeping farm workers in South Dade, announced a plan to take over management of the camp. And migrant advocates, sensing the potential for exploitation if farm owners controlled living conditions,

> "This is a Third World place in the middle of what's supposed to be a tourist mecca. You won't find it in any guidebook."

announced their own plan to operate the camp.

A series of meetings between growers, workers, community organizations, and government officials ensued, with the cooperative Everglades Community Association emerging to take over management of the trailers and the site's HUD housing; the association was run by a 21-member board of directors that included representatives from migrant groups, county government, church organizations, growers, and local bank officers. Under its first director Enrique "Kiki" Vazquez, the ECA eventually lifted the Everglades Camp out of the red, operating it on a break-even basis with no funds other than rents collected from residents.

"It was a combination of a good crew and good management," explains Vazquez, a former migrant farm worker from Puerto Rico who has lived in Florida since 1955.

In 1990 the ECA hired Steven Kirk as a development consultant. A self-described "poverty expert," Kirk, 42, relocated to South Dade from Washington, D.C., when he became the association's director last year. He previously lived in South Dade from 1982 to 1985 when he served as the founding director of COFFO. Once onboard in 1990, Kirk and then-ECA board officer Steve Mainster (Juanita Mainster's husband and founder of Centro Campesino, a migrant-rights organization that assists farm workers in buying their own homes) worked to come up with a plan for replacing the trailers at the Everglades Camp with permanent houses.

"The strategic plan at that point was that

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we'd probably get two and a half to three million dollars from the federal government for phase one," Kirk recalls. "We'd be building 60 units at a time. We thought it would take us a decade to build and that we probably wouldn't get more than 300 units."

Hurricane Andrew sped up the process; the Everglades Labor Camp was almost totally destroyed by the storm. "When the hurricane happened, it placed the need for migrant housing development higher on everyone's agenda," Kirk points out. "Because South Dade was devastated, the growers were putting real pressure on the government. They were prepared to plant, but the workers needed somewhere to stay."

After the hurricane, about half of the 400 trailers that had been destroyed at the Everglades camp were replaced using insurance monies (those trailers now stand on the Royal Colonial site). Also, as a temporary and partial solution to the post-hurricane housing problem, the county purchased 532 additional trailers and created the Andrew Center on land next to the Everglades camp. Then in the fall of 1993 the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed to allocate $41.2 million to create the first phase of permanent housing on the Everglades and Andrew sites.

Once it had received the go-ahead from the feds to build new housing, the ECA needed somewhere to place the farm workers who had been living at the Everglades Camp. The Royal Colonial, which had been abandoned after Andrew, seemed a likely choice. But the residents of several condo buildings and mobile homes near the Royal Colonial made it clear they did not want poor migrant laborers as neighbors. In 1994, after a fierce battle between migrant advocates and Naranja Lakes residents — who were backed by then county commissioner Larry Hawkins — the Metro-Dade Commission voted to purchase the devastated Royal Colonial facility for four million dollars from owner Thomas Vellanti, then turn around and lease it to ECA for three years. (The county has plans to make the site a public park when the ECA lease is up).

> "We have to supplement our income. If it rains, we don't have work in the fields, but we still have to pay the rent."

The completion of the first phase of Everglades Villages represents a victory for people like Kirk and Mainster, who have fought through the years to provide quality housing for South Dade farm workers. But the new homes are not a solution for everyone. Vicente Sanchez, who served as a resident ECA board member for four years, doesn't share Kirk's enthusiasm about the project. "The houses are too expensive for us," Don Vicente laments.

Rents at Everglades Villages range from $350 to $390 a month; with financial assistance from the federal government, tenants pay an average of $250 or one-third of their monthly income. "Everything's gone up," Sanchez notes. (He now receives Social Security payments and food stamps, and points out that the $63 a week he pays to rent his trailer is more than he can afford.) "I remember a time when I paid seventeen dollars for two trailers for my family. Now nobody gets two trailers. With the Americans it's just, 'If you can't pay, get out.'"

He sits back in his chair and thinks for a minute. "I have a son in Georgia. When I get better I'm going to take a trip to see if it's any better up there." (True to his word, just a few days later, during the first week of June, Sanchez packs up his family and vacates the Royal Colonial, leaving no forwarding address.)

Although the Royal Colonial now houses migrants instead of retirees, it still retains the pleasant air of a place designed to get away from it all. The Andrew Center, on the other hand, was specifically built for farm workers. It's a bleak place, an army barracks — more than 500 trailers laid head-to-toe on a field of concrete.

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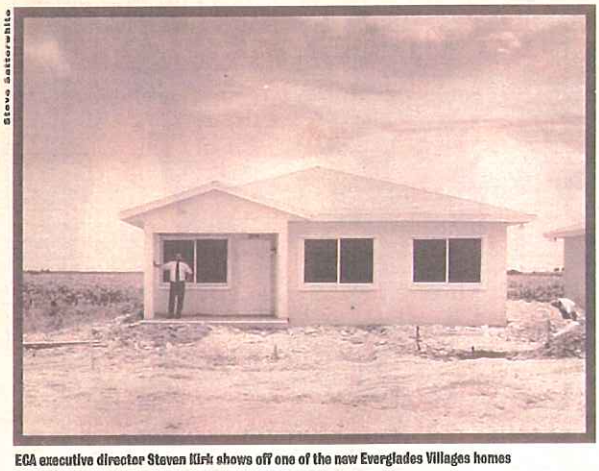
Steve Satterwhite



ECA executive director Steven Kirk shows off one of the new Everglades Villages homes

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An old dog sleeps outside the center's guardhouse, where a pistol-packing security officer is always on duty. Beyond the chainlink fence that surrounds Andrew, there's not much to see: the Dade Correctional facility across the street, with its silver barbed wire glinting in the sun; the colorful new Everglades Villages houses that rise to the west. Otherwise there's just the great expanse of the Everglades itself, plus some remote groves cultivated by local nurseries. The nearest store is a Circle K grocery in a gas station about a mile north on Redland Road; it stocks "*todos sus productos Mejicanos*," even Coca-Cola bottled across the border.

"Tourists pull into the camp and they don't know what it is. They think maybe it's part of the prison and they take pictures," laughs Mariana Anguiano, the Andrew Center's housing counselor. Anguiano stands outside the doublewide that serves as her office. "This is a Third World place in the middle of what's supposed to be a tourist mecca. Well, you sure aren't going to find it in any guidebook."

Anguiano deals with the center's 500 families, plus the residents of 32 additional trailers that serve as dormitories for single men. As is the case with the Royal Colonial, the tenants here are predominantly Mexican, with many hailing from Oaxaca, what Anguiano refers to as *deep* Mexico. Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans also live in Andrew, plus three Haitian families, and one black American man.

"The Royal Colonial residents are more sophisticated," ventures Anguiano, an easygoing blonde with a lusty laugh. "They've been here longer. In this camp I have the true migrant farm workers, the ones who pick tomatoes and cucumbers and beans. The ones who follow the crops."

Because of the large number of residents at Andrew, the serious problems that affect the farm worker population as a whole are likely to crop up here more often than at the Royal Colonial. "I looked out the office window yesterday and I saw a guy who was so drunk he fell down," relates Anguiano. "Right in the middle of the day."

New Paths, a substance abuse program sponsored by COFFO, is based in a doublewide trailer next to the center's office. People in the program receive group and individual therapy. Most are men referred by the Metro-Dade police after DUI or domestic violence arrests. "Alcohol is a cultural problem with this community," asserts Dr. Oscar Danilo Pozo, who runs the COFFO clinic. "We have to show them that drinking brings economic problems, domestic violence problems, legal problems, housing problems."

Anguiano is more direct: "To most of these people drinking is a matter of survival. That's the way it is. The men work in the fields all week and on weekends they drink and they beat their wives — and they think it's nobody's business but theirs."

Originally from San Antonio, Texas, Anguiano talks knowledgeably about the farm workers because she was once one herself. She was able to move on, to "get out of the system" as she puts it, by joining the army. When her service hitch ended, she worked for Texaco in Texas and then for a cellular phone company in Homestead that blew away with the hurricane. Although her current job is to enforce the rules at the Andrew Center, she admits she can't help but see things from a migrant's point of view.

"They expect people to come here and follow the rules and regulations," she says. "But there are things that we take for granted that they just don't know. They're used to leaving their kids at home, because in their villages they have extended families; there's somebody to take care of them. Here someone will call the HRS on them if they find the kids at home alone. If their kids have lice in their hair, they sit 'em between their legs and pick them out. Here, the doctor sends them to buy all this stuff that they don't even know how to use."

Steve Satterwhite

Mariana Anguiano counsels Andrew Center residents: "Here we have stoves and refrigerators; we also have the law"

Anguiano greets a small hunched woman dressed in men's work clothes and a bright striped rebozo. It has started to rain hard, and the woman has been sent home from her job. Soaking wet, she smiles and waves and keeps walking determinedly through the downpour. "The fact is that here [in the United States] we're different," Anguiano continues. "We have stoves and refrigerators; we also have the law. We try to show our people that you can be poor but you don't have to live in a ghetto."

On this Saturday afternoon, a parade of cars and pickups passes by the Andrew Center's guardhouse as families return from the grocery store or head out on their way to lunch at El Rodeo, a nearby roadside tortilla stand. Strings of laundry, displayed here and there during the week, now flap outside most of the trailers. The Mobil Market, a truck stocked with candy, meat, milk, and all manner of hot peppers and spices, makes its rounds, honking on each block.

Surrounded by racks of shirts, jeans, shoes, shampoo, and a table full of ripe melons, María Perez sits on a chair in front of

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her trailer. On weekends Perez and her husband Magdaleno set up this open-air market for Andrew's residents. Neighbors pay on a credit plan. Magdaleno oversees a table stocked with audio cassettes by Selena, Vicente Fernandez, Gloria Estefan, and other popular Latin artists.

The Perezes' tiny patch of lawn is decorated with statues of elves and angels, and the couple has stretched a chainlink fence around "their property." Management doesn't appreciate such initiative, however, and has asked María and Magdaleno to remove the fence and statuary. "I don't understand it," shrugs María. "They want it nice but they won't let us make it nice."

Nor can she comprehend why it's against the rules to set up her own shop. "We do agricultural work but it's not enough," she insists. "We have to supplement our income. If it rains, we don't have work in the fields, but we still have to pay the rent." Perez feels that a house in the Everglades Villages is not for them. "It's too strict *here*," she sighs. "We're not going to live in one of those houses — it's like prison with all those rules. We're going to look for a place to rent in Homestead."

In a far corner of the Andrew Center, Josefa de Leon is crocheting a shawl, quickly wrapping thick white thread around her crochet hook with her strong weathered hands. The old woman worked in the fields alongside her husband for decades, right up until he died last year. De Leon is dressed in a simple black cotton dress, and she wears her waist-length gray hair pinned up in a twist behind her head.

She is visiting her son Jesus and his family. Her daughter Rosa lives in the Royal Colonial. They will all leave soon for Monterrey, Mexico, where they return for the summer each year. Jesus de Leon, a 30-year-old tractor driver, plans on coming back to live in the Andrew Center with his wife and two daughters next year. But he's not sure what the family will do when the trailers are replaced by houses. "We qualify for a house but it's not worth it for us," he says. "We have a house in Mexico, in the most beautiful place of all. We spend our dollars there. If we could work there, we would. But there is no work. We don't come here to be part of a community. We come here to make money."

Steve Satterwhite

Window treatment: Migrant families furnish their trailers with whatever they can find

Over at the Royal Colonial, Francisco and Delia Alvarez are waiting to find out the date for their move to a house in Everglades Villages. "We've never had a house before," Delia notes. "We've always lived in a trailer." A petite woman with long hair, Delia and her husband sit in the living room of their neat but crowded trailer. Several of their eight children, who range in age from 5 to 21, play noisily in an adjoining bedroom, ignoring Francisco's suggestion that they should put a movie in the VCR and watch it.

Actually, Francisco isn't supposed to be here. He had planned to go to South Carolina to pick beans but nixed the trip when he heard there wasn't much work. A robust, handsome man with a mustache, he sits quietly on the couch studying the callouses on his hands. "They keep shutting the door," he says softly. "It's not so easy to make a living." On the wall above his head are several plaques that commemorate his coaching winning teams in Khoury league baseball. More baseball trophies sit on a cabinet next to two parakeets in a cage.

The whole family used to spend the year moving from place to place — South Carolina to Virginia to Washington — but now that their fourteen-year-old is an honors student at Mays Middle School in Cutler Ridge, they've decided that, in his best interests, they should stay put. To help make ends meet, Delia has started studying to be a legal secretary. She talks animatedly about her word-processing classes at a Homestead technical school.

Back in the ECA management office, Steven Kirk stresses that families such as the Alvarezes can thrive only in an environment like Everglades Villages. "We have an established Hispanic community here in South Dade," he states. "It's a good place for people to move from marginal to being working-class." But for families that do not qualify to rent a house, or that don't want to put down roots here, Kirk doesn't have an easy answer. "With every solution comes a problem," he admits. To deal with those people who won't move into a house, ECA's board of directors has voted to look for land to maintain a temporary facility of 50 trailers when, in 1997, the Royal Colonial lease expires and the Andrew Center will be gone.

"Essentially we're landlords, providing basic shelter to the poorest members of the community," he says. "The reality is that if they don't succeed here, we have to realize — unlike most landlords — that they may have no place else to go." NT