

Un Adios a David - A Goodbye to David

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When a loved one dies, grieving family members are faced with a multitude of decisions to be made regarding funeral arrangements. What kind of funeral should it be? What funeral provider should we use? Family and friends need to be notified. Flowers need to be ordered, etc. etc. Funerals rank among the most expensive purchases many of us will ever make. A traditional funeral, including casket and vault, can cost about \$6,000.00, not including any of the “extras” which could add thousands of dollars to the bottom line.

Now imagine a migrant farmworker who leaves his or her family behind and migrates to the United States either by themselves, with other family members or friends, all to find work in order to support themselves and/or their family. Accidents, whether job related or not, occur frequently and sometimes they can be fatal. Unfortunately, the majority of the time they do not have the support or financial means to make such choices regarding funeral arrangements, especially if the deceased’s body needs to be returned to their country of origin.

Call for Health received a phone call from Luis, a farmworker in Florida, calling about his 23 year old brother who was involved in a head-on collision and was killed instantly. Luis told the *Call for Health* Specialist that his brother, David, was driving home after dark when he was struck by an oncoming RV that veered into his lane due to bad weather conditions. The brothers had been in the United States a little over a year and had worked the blueberry fields in New Jersey and were currently picking oranges in Florida. Luis contacted *Call for Health* the morning after the accident but the only information he was able to provide was the phone number to the local Sheriff’s Department. Luis understandably was still very emotional and confused. He had difficulty understanding all the information that was given to him by the officers on the scene, as well as the location of where his brother’s body was to be taken. The *Call for Health* Specialist asked Luis for the phone number and told him that we would call on his behalf to get further information. Before the phone call ended, Luis made sure to tell the Specialist that their parents, who were still in Mexico, had asked that if anything tragic ever happened to them, they wanted their son buried back home. Luis wanted to honor that request if at all possible, he just didn’t know where to start.

After several phone calls to the sheriff’s department, medical examiner and funeral home director, the *Call for Health* Specialist was able to inform Luis that the Mexican Consulate had been contacted and was already working with the funeral home director to have David’s body sent back home. In cases of citizens of Mexico, the Mexican Consulate can assist in arranging transportation back to Mexico.

According to the latest NAWS, 78% of farmworkers are foreign born. These men and women often leave their families and friends back home to travel and work in the United States. Unfortunately, when a farmworker becomes injured, sick, or in the case of Luis, killed, it can be difficult for them to return to their home countries. This process of returning home after accidental injury or illness is called repatriation. For those who

work with farmworkers, it is important to understand this process so you can better assist workers and their families if any of these unfortunate circumstances occur. For more information, please contact the nearest Mexican Consulate in your area. For a phone directory of the Mexican Consulate offices in the United States and Canada, please visit www.mexonline.com/consulate.htm.