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Maria Juanita Goeser interview for a Wright State University History Course

Elise Kelly

Maria Juanita Goeser

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Maria Juanita Goeser was born and raised in a small Midwest town in northeast Ohio. Her mother was from Mexico while her father was from the southern part of Texas. They both traveled frequently up to Ohio during the 1930s and 1940s as seasonal farm laborers. They settled in Urbana, Ohio in the 1950s when Maria was still very young. Her father began to work with a railroad company and he was gone for weeks at a time traveling. Spanish was the only language spoken in the house while traditional Mexican food was prepared and eaten daily during Maria’s childhood. She grew up with four
brothers and two sisters. Since the early age of twelve, Maria in the summers stayed and worked in Union City, Indiana with her extended family. There she helped pick tomatoes with several generations of her family. Throughout Maria's childhood she and her family traveled down to Texas to visit friends and family members. They also made sure to visit the San Juan shrine in San Juan, Texas. Here, Latino migrant workers come to pray to San Juan for a safe, healthy, prosperous journey. The Catholic religion played an important role in Goeser's childhood. She and her family attended Mass daily and deeply depended on the guidance of the Virgin Mary. Maria attended a parochial school during her childhood years and a public high school during her adolescent years.

After her high school graduation, Maria attended Bliss College in Columbus where she studied marketing. After completing her studies, she decided to move down to Texas to find her "roots." As she settled in Texas she began to notice the cultural differences between Ohio Latinos and Texas Latinos. She found that many of the older patriarchal Latino traditions and mentalities still existed down South, i.e. women were discouraged to work outside the home. Maria lived in Texas for twelve years and during her stay she married an Anglo Texan. Her husband worked for the State of Texas and Maria worked for the Census Bureau, substituted at local schools to help migrant children, and helped raise her three young daughters. Her experiences of substitute teaching allowed her to see the many pitfalls in large Latino community schools. Many of the children were left behind and Maria did not want that for her own children. Because of this, Maria felt the need to move back to Ohio so that her daughters could be educated the same way she was. In order for this to happen, Maria needed to find a job in Ohio. While her husband and their children stayed temporarily in Texas, she found a position as a migrant outreach specialist for the State of Ohio.

The family settled in Greeneville, Ohio and Maria began to build friendships with all the migrants that she helped. During her career as a migrant outreach specialist, she helped Latinos find work, housing, educational opportunities, medical assistance, and day-care. She relentlessly worked and traveled to find other employment opportunities for the migrant workers when they had no work in the nurseries and farms. This included custodial employment at nearby universities. In 1990, Maria started an agricultural orientation where she "invited in southwest Ohio, all the different growers and farmers to
voice what their concerns were with labor, migrant seasonal farm workers. To voice their opinions on the enforcement agencies and so it started out with INS and I would bring those guys in.”

By creating this orientation, Maria was able to work together with the farmers and the migrant workers and develop an understanding in bureau workers comp, unemployment compensation, housing, and transportation.” She developed many outside contacts with different organizations and agencies that would help Latino migrant workers. One very generous and helpful man was Bill Daggett. Daggett was a lay Catholic missionary from Florida who graciously spent his time assisting Latino migrants.

After working several years at the Bureau of Employment, Maria was then assigned to the Department of Job and Family Services and then to her current position at the Department of Development. She explains that she is “now working with small to medium businesses to retain jobs, create jobs, and bring jobs to Ohio.” She attends several meetings in the area that are centered on job growth and training. Maria has helped former Delphi and GM employees make the transition from factory work to work in the health care field. She has guided and encouraged them to go back to school to obtain new avenues of employment. As an employer of the Department of Development in Springfield, Ohio, Maria is a member of the “Springfield/Clark County Chamber Minority Board, Springfield City Center Association and the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce HITS team.” The HITS team is an organization centered on helping companies hire, invest, train, and make space for local job seekers. When a local company is in trouble the team makes sure to respond and help out any way they can.

Outside of her professional work, Maria is a founder and member of the Latino Coalition of Clark and Champaign Counties. This coalition “works to educate both

1 Maria Juanita Goeser, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Iguadad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Maria Juanita Goeser, University Library, Wright State University, April 15, 2011.
2 Maria Juanita Goeser, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Iguadad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Maria Juanita Goeser, University Library, Wright State University, April 15, 2011.
3 Maria Juanita Goeser, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Iguadad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Maria Juanita Goeser, University Library, Wright State University, April 15, 2011.
themselves and the community on Latino issues.” She and many of the coalition’s members also work to set up health fairs for Latino migrant workers and they work with different healthcare and education agencies to have them provide service to Latinos. She also helps out with the matricula consular and presents at cultural festivals and a global speaker’s series. At these festivals and the speaker’s series event, she discusses and presents Latino culture. During these events she simply explains that she wants to try and “share information and educate people.” Maria hopes these events will help people understand and respect different cultures of the world. She anticipates that the United States will soon follow suit like other countries have in learning more than one language. This would not only help the immigrant but she also believes a comprehensive immigration reform plan would also. Because of her professional work and community involvement, last year Maria was awarded the Ohio Hispanic Leadership Award. But what Maria finds rewarding is not individual accolades for her work but the opportunity to see the people she’s helped become successful, obtain full permanent citizenship, and achieve a piece of the American Dream.

The Goeser family is family dedicated to advocacy and community work. Maria’s oldest daughter works with the Ohio Attorney General in advocacy work, her middle daughter is a bilingual attorney, and her youngest daughter works at Loew’s Home Improvement Store. All three daughters exhibit their mother’s sense of generosity, compassion, and justice. Maria’s husband, Martin, works for the Department of Human Services in Franklin County. He helps people obtain welfare benefits and “he also helps people get jobs and trains them.”

Maria Goeser is a strong, generous, committed, and fearless woman who has spent half of her life dedicated to a selfless profession that is centered on helping people. Justice, community, advocacy service, and hard-work are lessons that Maria tries to instill, teach, and personally carry out. She has successfully done this but she claims her work is not

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7 Maria Juanita Goeser, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Igualdad: Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Maria Juanita Goeser, University Library, Wright State University, April 15, 2011.
done until they “put me in a coffin or something. You have to help people to help people.”

As a community, we must help to educate, train, and empower individuals and communities so that they can help others. Although it sounds simple, this task is very difficult. However, Maria Goeser makes it look easy.

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8 Maria Juanita Goeser, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Igualdad!: Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Maria Juanita Goeser, University Library, Wright State University, April 15, 2011.
Oral History Interview

Name of the Project: ¡Viva La Igualdad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Maria Juanita Goeser

Name of the project director: Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and Geography, Wright State University

Archives or repository

Interviewee/narrator name: Maria Juanita Goeser
Interviewer name: Elise Kelly
Others present
Place: Wright State University, Millett Hall, Small Conference Room
Date: 4/15/11
Length of recording: 1:36:13
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Key words:
Urbana, Ohio
Clark State Community College
San Juan, Texas
Migrant Workers
Mexican
Catholic
Weslaco, Texas
Bliss College
Hispanic
Ohio Bureau of Employment Services
Migrant Outreach
Ohio Department of Development
Bilingual
Latino Coalition of Clark and Champaign Counties
Ohio Hispanic Leadership
Family
Immigrants
Community Activism

Indexed by: Elise Kelly

Index

0:00:00 - 0:00:47 Introduction to the recording.
Information listed above.

0:00:47 – 0:25:36 Childhood
Ms. Goeser explains her childhood experiences growing up in Ohio in a Latino family. She discusses how the Catholic religion played a major part in her childhood and how she and her family made frequent trips down to the San Juan shrine in Texas. She explains her parent’s and her extended
family's experiences as migrant workers and discusses discrimination that her brother's experiences while in the Army. She concludes by explaining the different cultural practices and attitudes between Latinos living in Texas and Latinos living in Ohio.

**Keywords:**
Urbana, Ohio
Clark State Community College
San Juan, Texas
Migrant Workers
Mexican
Catholic
Equal Rights
Discrimination
Family

[V: Family, Faith, Equality, Hard-Work] [E: Joy, Curiosity, Sadness, Excitement] [R: Struggle, Inspirational, Assessment, Appreciation]

0:25:36 - 0:33:50 Educational Background and Settling in Texas
Ms. Goeser discusses her experiences going to a parochial school. She then discusses her time at a public high school and her educational experiences at Bliss College. After graduating from Bliss, she explains her experiences when settling in Weslaco, Texas. She discusses her work experiences and how these experiences and her educational background helped her in her activist work.

**Keywords:**
Parochial School
Public High School
Bliss College
Weslaco, Texas
Employment
Tex-Mex

[V: Education, Work, Culture, Family] [E: Excitement, Confusion, Anger] [R: Critical, Assessment]

0:33:48 - 1:00:40 Work Experience
Ms. Goeser discusses her experiences working at the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services as a Migrant Outreach Specialist. She goes on to speak about her experiences working at the Department of Job and Family Services and the Department of Development. While working at the Department of Development she explains how she tries to help create and stimulate jobs in the Springfield area.

**Keywords:**
Ohio Bureau of Employment Services
Migrant Outreach Specialist
Department of Job and Family Services
Department of Development
Jobs
Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce HITS Team

[V: Community, Justice, Service, Faith, Relationships, Equality, Employment] [E: Excitement, Sadness] [R: Critical, Assessment]

1:00:40 - 1:26:33 Community Work
Ms. Goeser discusses her involvement in the Latino Coalition of Clark and Champaign Counties. She explains by being involved with this coalition, she has been able to help bring about bilingual customer service reps in these areas. She goes on to explain some of her most interesting community programs that she’s created and been involved with and discusses what needs to be done politically and economically to help Latinos.

**Keywords:**
- Latino Coalition of Clark and Champaign Counties
- Bilingual
- Agricultural Orientation
- Mexican Consulate
- Global Education Series
- Community
- 9/11
- Cultural Festivals
- ABEL – Advocates for Basic Legal Equality
- Ohio Hispanic Leadership Award
- Latinos
- Spanish
- Catholic Social Action Group
- Discrimination
- U.S. Military
- Mexican Immigration
- Senator Rob Portman
- U.S. Economy
- Education
- American Dream
- Migrants

[V: Community, Faith, Employment, Justice, Service, Culture] [E: Frustration, Joy, Appreciation] [R: Condemnation, Struggle, Frustration, Critical, Affirmation, Uncertainty]

1:26:33 – 1:36:13 Family and Life Lessons

Ms. Goeser talks about her three daughters and her husband and how they are all involved with community work. She explains how she believes it’s important to keep and know one’s heritage and culture. She goes on to explain the life lessons she has learned by doing community work. She acknowledges that working together as a community is a very important aspect in community work.

**Keywords:**
- Mexican-American
- Family
- Hispanic
- Community
- Children
- Department of Human Services
- Government

[V: Family, Relationships, Culture, Community, Service] [E: Joy, Excitement, Pride, Appreciation] [R: Affirmation]
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Transcribed by

Elise Kelly

Interview transcript

Kelly: My first question is, tell me about your childhood and adolescent experiences?

Goeser: I was born and raised in Ohio but everything — we all spoke Spanish, nothing but Spanish at home because my mom was from Mexico and my dad was from the southern part of Texas. But when we walked out the front door it turned into English. Unless of course if you came across anyone who was Hispanic, then you would address them in Spanish, especially if anyone was older than you. That’s just the way we were raised and you worked hard. You studied hard otherwise you were cheating yourself or you were cheating your employer. I’m the seventh of seven; four brothers who all went into the military and two older sisters. They [Goeser’s parents] came here in the 30s, 40s, and 50s as migrant workers and in 1950 the crop was very good so they stayed. Lucky for me because then I was born here in Ohio and I was raised in the Midwest. But it was a trying time, my mom always tells me — my mom is ninety-three and is still alive — she always tells some of the best stories. I went to public school my first two years and then my mom and dad moved into town, a little town called Urbana and they sent me to parochial school up until eighth grade. Then I went back to public school and then went on to Marketing school at Clark State. But as a child it was fun. We went every year, once a year to Texas and my dad was never the type to stop at restaurants. He would stop at a grocery store and get boloney, bread, and milk. We stopped at the park and we never stopped in a motel, you drove straight through. But when we got to the Southern part of Texas you spend your whole two weeks visiting family, friends, and you did get to go eat one time out. But part of that was always visiting the San Juan shrine, in San Juan, Texas. We would spend a whole day there at the shrine.

Kelly: San Juan, the Our Lady of Guadalupe?

Goeser: Yes, but they call it San Juan, the Virgin de San Juan [the Virgin of San Juan] because the majority of migrants that are Catholic go there before they come to go to work up north or when they migrate back they’ll stop at the shrine because they had a good year, they came back safe, and the family’s safe. It is just an awesome place because there’s even a room there with all the different milagros [miracles]. People send pictures or crutches or pieces of their hair because
the Virgin Mary – their promesa [promise] was completed. It’s awesome and so you spend a whole day there and you usually eat at the cafeteria at the school there. I was raised in the Midwest but you still have your Hispanic roots. My parents were really good about not letting you forget. So that was awesome.

**Kelly:** Can you tell me about your parents’ experiences as migrant workers and having to travel – migrating from Texas to Ohio?

**Goeser:** My dad would have been one-hundred years old if he would have lived till today and my mom’s ninety-three. They used to travel every year because in the thirties there was a shortage of workers and lots of work and World War II so that’s when my mom and dad started to come up to the fields and they would come every year, almost the same farmers and growers. At times that grower didn’t have a lot and it was seasonal. They would stop in Arkansas and in Arkansas they used to work in the cotton fields and sometimes they wouldn’t even get paid.

They never argued they just picked up and left. At times they would run out of transportation because the car, or truck, or whatever they were driving broke down so they had to rely on other family members. My mom had seven live births but her one sister actually lost the baby while they were in the cotton fields. They had to bury the baby in Arkansas, one of them. They tell me those kinds of stories. As a kid I remember – I mean they were out of the migrant field because my dad took a job with the railroad in the fifties and decided to settle out and let his kids go to school. My mom ended up working still farm work but it usually was in nurseries or greenhouses. But it was interesting because her and her sister; farmers at peak seasons would contract with them because they were fast at what they did. In the fall at Michael’s Farm, Mr. Michael would come and get my mom and aunt because they didn’t drive and they would grate potatoes. They could grate potatoes faster than twenty-five people. Mr. Botkin, during Easter, would higher them because they could pack the Easter lilies faster than anybody. They were just good at what they did and they taught us the same thing.

I went to work at twelve – actually eleven because my dad would drop me off with my uncle in Union City, Indiana to pick tomatoes two or three weeks a year so that I could help buy my clothing but it was a lesson learned to stay in school. That was basically what it was. It was fun, I remember when my uncle was out of sight having some nice tomato fights and I get hit with a big hot tomato and that was fun. I remember going back to the camp and everyone showering, changing, and someone would set up a projector and we’d have a movie. We really wouldn’t have popcorn but it was just that camaraderie. Everybody kind of got together with more family and photos, singing, and dancing. You created your own activities within the camp. Then that ended and I would go back home and get ready to go back to school. Of course some of the kids that I went to school with would never – some of them were farmers but they never really worked the hardest work. Yes, bailing hay and things like that but things were simpler.

There was more of an honest value there that I don’t see but I try to instill that in my girls. They all three are hard workers but I never let them experience hard – actually working in the fields. They got to see it because when I came to work for the state I was a migrant outreach worker and I took them with me when they were nine, seven, and five. It was really neat because we lived in Texas then and all they knew was Spanish but when we came here it was basically English. Then I took them to the migrant camps and they felt more at home. Over here – first time they were invited to a birthday party they all dressed up and they were the misfits. In Texas everything is a ceremony, it’s special. It wasn’t like that [here] so it was kind of hard to readjust.

**Kelly:** A culture shock?
Goeser: Yes, same with the schools. My one daughter when we were living in Union City they said “oh, no here comes another typical Mexican who isn’t going to know anything.” They actually told that to me but I didn’t say anything I just kind of listened. Then she proved them all wrong and I got the nicest letter from the principle of the school who told me if I was smart I’d pull them out of the school. As soon as we could we bought a house in Greenville and they all went to parochial school. I always tell my girls just wait, just wait; don’t judge a book by its cover.

Kelly: I wanted to ask, did you face discrimination when you were growing up?

Goeser: If I did I really didn’t know what it was because my mom and dad would say “just ignore them, just ignore them.” I remember as a kid I knew I was Mexican, I could speak Spanish. They didn’t know it but it was ok but I remember I was the youngest of seven and my mom was forty when she had me and my dad was forty-seven so when the school would have any type of events they would say “oh, that’s your grandma and grandpa?” No that’s my mom and dad. Really discrimination, I really only figured it out in high school and only because that was the 70s’ and the African American students were walking out and having these sit outs or whatever they would call them. They would ask me to join them and I would ask them, what are we going to this for? Life is good, people are...but because it was that civil rights. My mom and dad didn’t believe in, they said “no, you just work hard, do what you have to do, and there will be people in your world that won’t accept you but that’s ok.” We actually did live like that. One of my brothers did experience some prejudice when he went into the Army but you can be bitter or can just turn the other cheek.

Kelly: What kind of prejudice was it?

Goeser: They would holler at him, call him a dirty Mexican. We weren’t used to being called...no one ever called me a dirty Mexican or spic. They were just like “oh, you speak Spanish,” or “hey, can you bring some more of those tortillas?” But it could be because we lived in a small town. I’m sure there probably was but I didn’t care to hear it or I didn’t care to see it. I really didn’t experience true, true prejudice until I moved back to Texas.

Kelly: Really?

Goeser: Yes, when I moved back to Texas it was an eye opener for me because I had gone back, I had seen the movie “Roots” and I wanted to know where my roots were. So I went down there and I wasn’t Mexican enough and I wasn’t white.

Kelly: So it was kind of like, where do I fit in?

Goeser: Yes, and I was from the Midwest, equal rights and the South wasn’t progressing that fast. It was a struggle but I never lacked a job. I always tried to help people out and people would seek me out. I helped substitute in the schools, I worked for the Census Bureau, and I assisted the Red Cross. Our parents always taught us to give back to the community because we are the community. I’m sure there was prejudice but I didn’t care to give the effort because it was a waste of time, a waste of energy.

Kelly: Yes, I agree. I wanted to ask you I know you grew up in Ohio so you didn’t have to – you pretty much were settled by that time. You didn’t have to move in different places but your family had to move around. So you were pretty much settled by that time?

Goeser: Yes, but every planting season and every harvest season, and we lived in town, our cousins would come with these big old semi trucks and they had their goats and chickens with them and they would stay the night because they were migrating up to New York or wherever they were going. Hospitality so there would be lots of times where there wouldn’t be any walking room in our house because people would be sleeping everywhere. I always remember
that we never ran out of food and you always mi casa es su casa [my house is your house]. When
the harvest season was over they’d come back and we might get a big bushel of apples or
potatoes or whatever it was that they were working in and we get. They would stay the night or
two nights and I’m sure at times they would stay a little longer because maybe somebody had car
trouble or maybe someone was sick and things like that. You just kind of like worked with it. I
was from that age where that was adult talk. You didn’t hear that. You weren’t prohibited to that.
I was there but we, I don’t want to say sheltered, but we respected – whatever my mom and dad
said it was the gospel.

Kelly: That was what Rosa [Caskey, local community activist] was saying in the other interview
that- it might be an older generation, I don’t know or the Latino culture, what your parents say
you obey them. You don’t question, you don’t…

Goeser: We never did. We never did. When they said you had to be home at this time, we were
here at this time. My dad was notorious about – I’d say well, I’m going to go skating and [he’d
say] “do you know how to skate?” No. “Well then you can’t go skating until you learn how to
skate.” Or I want to go swimming. “Do you know how to swim?” No. “Well then you can’t go,”
and my dad would always do stuff like that and I would go like well how am I going to learn
how to do that? But what he said was – he was the man of the house. I would answer to my mom
if my dad wasn’t there and a lot of times he wasn’t because he worked for the railroad and there
were derailments or whatever. He wasn’t home but… It was a simple life and if you didn’t have
the money for it you just didn’t get it, no big deal. Everybody around me was the same and I try
to instill that into my grandkids now that it’s not all about T.V, computers, and technology. I
said, we look so forward to summers because we’d play and play from sun up to sun down and it
didn’t matter if things were five or six miles away. We’d get on our bikes and it was no big deal,
everybody did it.

Kelly: I know we’ve kind of lost that in our society, unfortunately.

Goeser: I know they don’t want to walk; they don’t want to do this.

Kelly: You talked about the San Juan shrine. Can you explain your experiences as a child with
the Catholic religion? I don’t know if you were…?

Goeser: Actually I remember living in the forest when I was real little because my mom and my
brothers still worked on the farm and my dad worked for the railroad and I guess that was part of
the rent to live on the farm. I remember that it was Father Conley and the sisters would come and
bring rosaries, literature, and pray, and prepare us for catechism because we lived out in the
country and it’s not like my mom drove and to take us into town. So they would come out, that
was their mission. They would come out every other week and bring things. I remember it was
time to make my first communion and I thought ok. The nuns took us to downtown Springfield
to what used to be Ren’s and got us socks and all that kind of stuff. I thought it was pretty cool
and they only took the Hispanic kids, there was like five of us. I would tell my mom, what are
they doing this for? [She said] “because they want to,” and my mom would offer to pay them
because she was a very proud person. I remember the one family they gave me a hammy down
for First Communion; it was a beautiful dress. It came from a real wealthy family and I was like
wow, this is awesome.

Yes, they came out and I still to this day see some of those ladies that would come out
with the sisters and in fact one of them asked me one time “why do you do what you do?” I said,
I guess you planted the seed because you used to come out and do the same things. Why
shouldn’t I do what you taught me? She was like “oh, really?” Of course they’re retired now but
yes, it was always family and your church. I remember going to church every Sunday and I was
telling my grandkids that when I first went to parochial school everything was in Latin but that’s ok because you were supposed to go to church. I remember the nuns when they had these little clickers when we were in school...

Kelly: You had to stand up?

Goeser: Yes you stood up, you genuflected, and you didn’t dare talk. I said I was at church everyday and you had a vale you wore and those were like the things that you kind of looked forward to that. A lot of changes, change is good, but the Catholic religion was a big part of our family. We had crucifixions, [points to a crucifixion] we had the Virgin Mary everywhere because my mom always said “when you need something, you always go to your mom. So we need something we would always go to the Virgin Mary so we made sure that God hears us. I said oh, ok.

Kelly: I noticed – I volunteer with the Hispanic Catholic Ministry and Our Lady of Guadalupe is very important, especially to Mexican people. I’m guessing Our Lady of Guadalupe was very important to your family.

Goeser: Oh, yes, she was La Patrona [the patron] of Mexico. So we – May crowning was a big part and it was an honor to be able to crown Mary. We always gave a lot of flowers, praises, and prayers. In fact to this day I need to take my mom to Urbana to St. Mary’s because she wants to take the Virgin de Guadalupe [Virgin of Guadalupe] a couple of dozen roses for a promesa [promise] that was completed. That’s why we’re going the end of May, first of June to San Juan shrine because we want to take her some flowers and pay our homilies because of all the things that has happened and we’ve been so blessed for her to hear our prayer.

Kelly: That’s beautiful. I’d love to go there and see...

Goeser: It’s beautiful. Would you believe that the parking lot is kind of like where the gazebo is [points to the gazebo across the street from interviewer’s house] and the shrine is about right over here [points to interviewer’s back yard] and people will get out of their cars and they get on their knees all the way up to the shrine. 

Kelly: Like in Mexico City, they get on their knees in pilgrimage.

Goeser: Yes, it is something to see it’s just awesome. In fact until my dad died we always made a point to go at least once a month to go to San Juan and you usually spend the day; light candles, you usually visit the gift shop first to get the medals and stuff like that. We would then go over to the shrine and if we were lucky if Mass was going on. So those were really good times and visiting the outside of the shrine because they have the Stations of the Cross. We got to see it in the process of being re-built because the original San Juan shrine there was a pastor of another church that was very jealous of the Catholics because here’s this shrine that had hundreds of thousands of people that would come and he didn’t have that. So he rented a plane and crashed into the shrine and of course the shrine was connected to the school and the children just left the school. The priest was in there but he was able to go in there and actually get the Virgin of San Juan statue and it didn’t get burnt or damaged but they lost the whole shrine. They raised lots of money quickly to re-build it and it’s beautiful. I still remember as a child going into the old shrine and see the paintings and it was beautiful, of course being a kid I thought it was huge. This big huge shrine and the bell towers still there so you could see that it wasn’t that huge but in my eyes when I was a kid I just thought it was oh.

Kelly: So it’s in Texas. Where?

Goeser: San Juan, Texas.

Kelly: Is that in southern part or southwest part?
Gooser: It’s the southern part over by the Gulf of Mexico which is Brownsville, Harlingen, and then the next big town would be Weslaco and then San Juan. They’re all those little burgs. Yes, it’s really populated now and I lived down there for about twelve years. It was good because I got to know my culture a little bit better, see why they do what they did, and they totally think totally different than the rest of the world. They really do.

Kelly: How?
Gooser: It’s still pretty chauvinistic. Women still get up early in the morning to make tortillas and breakfast, a big huge breakfast, cholesterol heaven. Then the men go out to work and the schools you have like a thousand kindergarteners and thousand first graders so that was – when my kids were born down there I didn’t want that because I was able to substitute many years down there and I saw who was able to succeed and who wasn’t because there were too many children. Not that they didn’t have a good school district because they did and they took very much pride in their schools. I can remember when we lived in Weslaco there wasn’t a child on Fridays that didn’t wear purple, their color. Everybody wore purple from the principle down to the baby with the mom coming in with the stroller because they had pride in their schools and parent involvement. But you had that separation where you had that really, really, small advanced kids and then you had your average kids, and then you had your migrant kids. I substituted the migrant kids because nobody wanted them because they were in and out in and out but they do a lot for the migrant kids that they hadn’t in previous years. So before these they were just kind of passing through and they do a lot now for migrant kids to go on to further their education. Ohio State has a big program, Bowling Green’s got another one, and Wright State is working on something so that’s good.

Kelly: I wanted you to tell me about your educational background.
Gooser: Like I said most of my education was a parochial Catholic school with nuns. All my teachers were nuns and I would say they got me brain-washed because Sister McKreena was still left at Mercy Hospital and we would sit on health fair meetings and when she’d walk into a room and I’d stand up. That’s the way we were taught, same as if a priest would walk in you stand up out of respect. That stayed with you, too bad they don’t do that now but it is what it is. Then I went on to after high school because I went to public school which was a very culture shock for all of us kids that left St. Mary’s because we believed you raised your hand to talk, you stood up when a teacher walked into a room, and what they said was gospel. I thought it was chaos, chaos and that lasted about a year and then we were just kind of... but we were good but it was so cute because people would say “hey, you’re one of those Catholic kids right?” I would say what’s wrong with that? Then I went on to marketing, it was called Bliss College in Columbus and I studied marketing for a whole year. I got to go to New York City and I got to visit Anne Klein studio, the Glamour magazine in the back, and Saks Fifth Avenue. I got to go to the Trade Centers, the Statue of Liberty, it was also the first time I rode in a plane too. It was good and then I came back home to work retail some more and then I decided I was going to go to Texas because I wanted to find out where my roots were and that was an experience. I drove cross-country, me, my friend, and my nephew, I took my nephew with me and I drove fifteen hundred miles and it was very hot.

Kelly: Tell me about settling in Texas.
Gooser: Settling in Texas, that was tough, it was really tough because here I came from the Midwest in the 70s and very vocal and equal rights. So I went to go look for jobs in the beginning and I didn’t fit in and there was a shop. I became friends with the owner’s grandson and he said “come and work for us.” I went to go work for this shop in downtown Weslaco and it
was a neat shop and I was in the shoe department and they catered to their customers and I'm going I'm kissing nobody to get them to buy shoes. So I remember the guy's name was Easy and he'd say – an older gentleman, he'd say “oh, Maria you just need to be patient.” It opened up to me that women wore shoes that were two sizes to small because they wanted to look pretty. I was always interested in going with the owners to the buying trips to Houston and Dallas and they wouldn't, no it was a man's job. The owner and grandsons were going to do it and so I was like, I'll keep trying right? Then the grandpa came to me one time and he said “you know you really ought to cut your hair.” I said “you know there is really only one man in my life who tells me what to do and that's my dad and he's not here.” Well I offended him. How dare I offend this Anglo man and so Easy about had a heart attack and he said “Maria, you can't say that.” I said well he insulted me. So I had worked for a little retail shop here in Ohio and called TJNY, it was like a small version of a K-mart and became friends with the guy because he was from the Midwest too and he offered me a job back selling back in Weslaco. I was going to give my two week notice because that was the thing to do because I said I was going to work somewhere else and the grandpa said “well, you can leave now.” He paid me cash money and I said ok I'm gone. So I went back and I told him that I could start earlier than I thought and he said “ok, come in tomorrow.” But it was cute because it was working in this store they had like a lingerie [section] and this gentleman, this older man, came in and he said he was looking for a faja for his wife. Well I always thought a faja was a belt because especially when you got in trouble your mom or dad was going to get the faja and you were going to get spanked.

Kelly: Is that a Spanish word, a faja?

Goeser: Yes. Actually a faja in Mexico is a girdle so this man- I'm taking him to the belts and he's going like this [making a wrapping gesture around his waste] and so it was funny. Then I was in another department and a little boy came in and he was going to buy matches for his mom and he said that he wanted cerillos [matches] and I'm going like what's that for. So he started to tell me what it was for and I go oh, metchas. He's going, “metchas?” There is no such word as metchas but we were so Tex-Mex and so that taught me, there were a lot words that I mispronounced or made up words and things like that. So that was very interesting living in Texas but I really appreciated it because I got to spend time with my grandmas before they passed away. I got to spend time with my cousins and still to this day I think their nuts because they just don't believe what the real world is out there like. They have their own method of madness but they never really worked, they sewed and made dresses for next to nothing. I'm going, man you guys got something going on here you can make some... [they said] “no, no.” This is like a neighborhood and people would come to their house and knock on their door and say “hey, we want to buy a Coke or 7-Up,” and they'd sell them because you did things like that. Easter they always sold Easter eggs already painted with the little flower or the confetti inside. At Christmas time they made Poinsettias and sold those. It was really cute because when I first moved to Texas no one knew what a yard sale was or a garage sale. I was like you guys are kidding right, you're kidding? I said you get rid of your stuff, you do this and slowly everybody started to get...I really loved the part where you could barter because I lived out in the country and we had cactuses and my mom and I would sit down with the girls, when the girls were little and we cut the cactus up and take the little spinas off of them. We would cut them up, put them in baggies, and we would talk and tell stories for about two to three hours and you'd load up into the car and go to the farmer's market and you bartered. No money was exchanged. So that was kind of like simple, simple life. With working with the state now I talked to a lot of customers that would come in [saying] oh, you just don't understand what it's like not to have health
insurance.” I said, yes I do, I didn’t have it for years and I said it was called the payment plan. I
said my three girls I paid on the payment plan. You just did that. [They said] “You mean you
didn’t go on welfare?” I said I didn’t know what that was, my mom and dad didn’t believe in it
and they had a philosophy, if you couldn’t pay for it you didn’t need it. Simple.
Kelly: Yes, unfortunately people pay for things they shouldn’t have if they don’t have it, if they
don’t have the money. Do you think your educational background in marketing helped you to do
what you’ve done with your activist work?
Goeser: I think so. I think my twelve year vacation in Texas helped me be more humble, see
what their trials and tribulations are, and what’s the reason why they really do come up. They
come up to work and I can still hear my dad saying “you’ve got to give one-hundred percent to
your employer because if you’re not, you’re stealing.” You just build a friendship with people
and through that your network gets bigger and bigger. If you could just help one person then that
person can in turn help somebody else and it’s just a domino effect. I think with the marketing,
just getting the ability to be able to say hey, this isn’t right because I worked with employers who
didn’t pay their people in the twentieth century. I wasn’t afraid to say hey, buddy what’s the
problem here? I actually never had any problems, the people would get paid. I guess [I was]
lucky but not really lucky, the faith. God always took care of us and I had two friends that we
tried to – we all lived around Greeneville and we would reach out to the different areas,
Hillsboro and things and we would get up in the morning and travel all day long and sometimes
we wouldn’t get home until twelve and we were so blessed because nothing ever happened to us.
People were always respectful to us but we were respectful to them and I believe that you’re
going to be treated like you treat them. I think a lot of it has to do with my mom and dad. My
mom and dad would give their last dollar because they always said “don’t worry it will come
back to you tenfold.” It’s true, it’s true.
Kelly: That’s a great outlook to have. I am aware that you have worked for the State of Ohio for
over twenty years or at least twenty years. Tell me about your work experiences with that.
Goeser: I came to work for the State of Ohio in 1989 and the way it happened is that my
husband was working for the State of Texas and I kept telling him that I wanted the girls to be
educated in the Midwest like I was. I think they would be the minority instead of the majority
because I was always afraid they would get lost in the shuffle and so he said “well I’m not going
to leave my state job unless you get a state job.” Well I was busy raising the girls, working for
the Census Bureau, and substitute teaching and just what you do worked. So he applied for me
for a migrant outreach specialist position in Greeneville, Ohio. I didn’t even know where
Greenville, Ohio was and so I got a letter because everything was on paper then and it said that I
had an interview in three days. I couldn’t take all three girls with me so my husband and I took
the youngest and we drove in October of 89’ and made it to where my family is in Urbana and
five hours later I had an interview. So we were leaving Urbana driving to Greenville and it was
snowing and I said ok God, you are trying to tell me something or you’re trying to remind me
why I left Ohio in the first place. So I get there and I interview and then I realize in the interview
that I am interviewing against a person that’s had the job for five years. So I said ok, whatever
will be will be and I got a letter the first week of December that I had the job and I would start
December the 18th. It took a while for my husband and girls to come meet me but I came the first
week of December and I tried to find rental. That was tough because nobody wanted to rent to
you. I didn’t know but it was because I was Hispanic and two, no one knew me, I was from out
of the area. I was a Texan trying to take an Ohioan’s job; all those little discriminations that I
never had gone through and I'm going like, wait a minute, I was born and raised in Ohio, and what do you mean.

The bank was friends with my boss and rented me a house in Union City, Ohio side because you had to live in Ohio. I lived there for four to six months and my kids went to Mississinawa Valley which is a very small village school and not very good education. Then we lived there six months and it was just like a fluke, I was taking job orders and I got a call from a person who needed their yard cut and so working with the Hispanics they do landscaping and I went to go see how the job went and the house had a “For Sale” sign. But it was from out of Ohio so my husband says “Call, see what happens.” They sold it to us on a land contract and so we lived there for six months and of course then Greenville bank said that ok we will lend you money to buy the house. We lived there for four and half years but the migrants got to know me but I'd also go to baby-showers, birthdays, and fiestas so they would know that I’m not just a government worker that's not going to do what I say I'm going to do. I want to be your friend. I need to know you because when I know you then I’m going to know how to help you. It’s that confianza [trust] and so we would still go to Texas because my mom was down there. My dad had already passed away and my in-laws were down there so it was so funny because when we we’d go to Texas in the winter we’d run into the migrant workers along the way. So it was fun and it was like everything was supposed to happen. I became friends with some and they would come to my house or I would go to their house and I remember this one time [Abel and Evita] we became good friends with them and their kids were the same age as mine and I had gotten him because he wanted to settle out I had gotten him a permanent job at Corning Glass in Greenville.

Paying him like seventeen dollars an hour, crazy money that they had never seen before and so we left church and we were all talking and everything and Abel says “well, we need to go because you need to make my lunch because I’m going to work tonight, third shift.” I said, well Evita and I were involved in something and I said, well what’s wrong with you hands can’t you make your own lunch? You know they didn’t come over for six months. His wife said “you insulted him,” and I said how did I insult him? He can make his own sandwich. I just said it but its little things like that that you have to remember oh, wait a minute I’m in Ohio and their mind is still in Texas. Then when you would get people that would come in to register to work that you knew were illegal, that’s the one that would break your heart. I would say I can’t refer you but I can’t keep you from going to that employer, I can’t. So they would end up getting jobs but that was the ones that were the toughest because in my mind I never knew there was such a thing as illegals. I didn’t, I wasn’t raised like that. For god sake’s my mom was an illegal for years till she finally got her green card. I just recently learned from my older brother that in the fifties immigration came to my mom and said that they were going to deport her and she said well if you’re going to deport me then you need to bring back two of my sons who are in the military right now during Vietnam. [She said] “when you bring them home, then we’ll all go to Mexico,” and then my mom ends up getting her permanent residency.

Kelly: Both strong women!

Goeser: Yes, my mom was really – she is very, very strong, strong-willed. What’s right is right and for years she worked at a greenhouse, her and my aunt and they didn’t get paid the same amount as the Anglos did. So my mom found out about it and approached the owner and my aunt’s going like “oh, you’re going to get us thrown out of here and we’re going to get fired.” They all ended up getting raises because what’s fair is fair, they were doing the same work and sometimes even more. So it’s just like what we didn’t merit to get the same paid amount? So I think that helped me when I would go negotiate to employers and I would say, no, no, no. I
would also negotiate; hey you need to give them gas money, hey they’re been traveling for blah, blah, blah, blah. But I was upfront with these people...

Kelly: And your background really helped because you knew what they were going through because your parents went through it.

Goeser: Right and then I became friends with a lot of partner organizations and we all helped each other out. I’m going oh, this is easy, and this is easy. Just yesterday I went out with a lady who does migrant outreach and she says “oh Maria you know everybody!” I said God helped me along the way, he did because I tell you certain situations would fall into my lap like say Friday at four o’clock a family of seven in no housing, I’m not lying to you Elise, and it would all work out. It would all work out. We would find them a place a job, life was good. I was always blessed like that and through good co-workers throughout the state. We would help each other out, we had each other’s back because what we did - sure we worked for the state, but that was secondary. You were dealing with a person, a human being and they are a person first, the job is second. Any other issue from transportation, to day-care, to medical it fell in there and when you assess somebody you just didn’t assess – it was a person first and that helped it. So it puts everything in perspective and it works out for you.

Kelly: What was it like when you first began working at the Ohio Department of Development? Was it difficult or...

Goeser: At the beginning I started working for the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, better known as the Unemployment Office. It was difficult because my co-workers there one didn’t like the idea that I came from Texas and I took an Ohioan’s job and then oh my goodness, I spoke Spanish and I must be talking about them. Then three really to be honest with you I never worked in a government office...

Kelly: Ok, we were talking about the Ohio Department of Development and what your work entailed and how it was difficult.

Goeser: Yes, when I first came to work for the state it was the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services as an Employment Service Interviewer, Bilingual, and Migrant Outreach Specialist. [I was] working with farmers and working with migrant and seasonal farm workers. They would come into the office searching for work. I learned the seasons and in Texas everybody was working all the time, well you don’t work here in the snow. But it was interesting because when working with employers we would want the people to come sooner because your nurseries start sooner. Your nurseries not only have planting seasons, they also have harvest season so there would be down time. So I also had to wear different hats and say what kind I do to keep them busy, to keep them here in our area because we don’t want to lose that labor. I would go out and just talk to any farmer and sent a lot of them to corn de-tassling for two to three weeks. There was germ status for a while and they would go and clean that, pumpkin work, strawberries, raspberries, and from even cleaning UD [University of Dayton] because just thinking out of the box. It doesn’t have to be field work let’s just keep them busy. But breaking into some of the nurseries was very difficult but I was very consistent. One of the nurseries in New Carlisle threw my butt out of there all the time and I would come back and I would say, you keep telling me to leave but one of these days you’re going to listen to me. Finally he said “well why should I listen to you?” I said well I’m a state worker and your taxes pay for me and why wouldn’t you want to listen to what you pay for? So he said come here and we became really good friends. We help each other out with different situations and issues and if I ever need a speaker or whatever they’re pretty good at it because I also started an agricultural orientation back in 1990, where I invited in southwest Ohio all the different growers and farmers to voice what their concerns were
with labor and migrant seasonal farm workers. To voice their opinions on the enforcement agencies and so it started out with INS and I would bring those guys in and I said no, listen to them. They are the ones that are feeding us. We need to work together and the farmers call me every year [and say] “when are you going to have it?” They appreciate that and we kept them in compliance with bureau workers comp, with unemployment compensation, with their housing, and with their transportation. If there was a bad apple out there we were very vocal. We did the communication out there before there was email. We let people [know] beware, this is what’s going on because with every good there is a little bad and we wanted to cautious, keeping everybody in compliance with policy and procedure because we are government. But let’s make it easy, let’s become friends first because we all want the same thing. So it helped me a lot because it brought them together and at lunch time we would all sit together and sit chat but now I’m at the point where some of those growers are older. We’re doing succession planning now because they’re at that point now where they can no longer...and their kids don’t want to take over the farm. Somebody’s got to do it. We still need farming and so that’s what I’m doing now working with the Bureau of Employment Service to the Department of Job and Family Services to now the Department of Development; I believe God puts me where he needs me to be.

Now it’s working with small to medium businesses and retaining jobs, creating jobs, and bringing jobs to Ohio. Well the number one industry in Ohio is agriculture and it is and there are jobs that revolve around that. So I look at it in different eyes, [I]still do the same because once you worked with migrant seasonal farm workers you can never divorce yourself. When my job would change I was told I couldn’t speak Spanish, I couldn’t do this and I couldn’t do that and I said you can’t do that to me. You can’t divorce yourself; [they said] “well you have to. [I said] I don’t have to do anything, die and pay taxes, ok. But other than that you’re not going to tell me that I can’t speak Spanish to a person I’ve been serving for ten to fifteen years; it’s not going to happen.

**Kelly:** Why would they tell you that to...?

**Goeser:** Whatever, anyway. So I was consistent and persistent and got into trouble a lot. I always believe in proceeding until apprehended. It’s better to ask for forgiveness. You can’t not stop and help somebody because oh, I’m going to get into trouble. You just do it and God will take care of you. There are some situations that I will walk away because I know it’s not kosher there but the state has been good to me. They have provided for me, for my kids to go to parochial school and they’ll all get good educations and that’s what it’s all about, your family. My oldest one worked for the attorney general’s office in advocacy work.

**Kelly:** Following in mom’s footsteps.

**Goeser:** The middle one is an attorney, bilingual and the youngest one is – she works for Lowe’s. She’s into construction and that’s good. So I tell my kids my oldest is my strongest, my middle is my smartest, and my youngest is my free-spirited. So I am so versatile but I try to instill to them that you have to give back and I remember living in Greenville helping different agencies making sure that the cultures out there. You share, you educate, and I would make them dress up in their Mexican attire with music and sit in the back of a truck in December in the freezing cold to be in a parade. I remember during the first desert storm parading down in city hall freezing and singing to Lee Greenwood’s song. But it was lessons that I had to teach them, they had to get it from somewhere. So now I see them do it and I love it, I love it. I guess I should have really kept a journal for the different situations. There was a time when I had a
budget of like five hundred dollars a year that if I knew someone was struggling to get to work, I could pay for a gas a tank, a gas

Kelly: A gas card?

Goeser: Yes, or their car broke down un-expectantly and we could fix it, or they needed a tire. But I was very frugal, I always had money left over because- and I didn’t give them money, I would go to the gas station or I’d go the mechanic shop because I didn’t want anybody to ever say that we were miss using the money because it wasn’t going to happen. So there was no money left over for that and there were other agencies that had money so that was good because whenever you lost money you could get it somewhere else. I don’t know if you have ever met Bill Daggett?

Kelly: No.

Goeser: He started the Hispanic Ministries and with Sister Purisima and she passed away. It was so cute because I was in Greenville, Ohio and I get this call from this man in Kissimmee, Florida. His name is Bill Daggett and he said that he wants to come and work with all the migrant camps and get to know all my connections. I said ok and he said “can you send them to me?” [I said] certainly and I spent a day putting it all together sending him a big packet to Florida thinking that this man will never – it will be too much for him. Man, the next spring he came with his wife Evelyn, Sister Purisima, and these two other gentlemen and it all started. I showed him all the camps and he took good notes and he started to bring missionary work to the camps and [since] I worked for the state even though all the people knew I was Catholic, there was a division there. I had to be real careful but that doesn’t mean that in some migrant camps’ houses we didn’t pray or cry together because we did. It was life, it was part of life and you’re human. So Bill could take over where I couldn’t or he could go where I couldn’t and he did. Everybody would call him Don Bill and he was just awesome. I would see this man give out of his own wallet. He even gave this one couple a suburban. But the challenges were you had young couples that wanted to get out of the migrants dream because they wanted their kids to go school year round, they wanted to get out of the migrants world, and they wanted to succeed. There was this one family, young couple and their name was Valverde and they didn’t know any English. Her name was Flora and his name was Marcos and they had two kids and just by the grace of God this excavator guy came to see me in Piqua and he says “I’m really looking to train somebody to excavate.” I said well, this is what I do and I have a person that wants to stay and he says “well, I can’t pay for their housing or anything.” I said no, no, no if you promise to hire him and give him a chance, I have another program that can help him with the first month’s rent. Paid him twenty-two dollars an hour, it was awesome. So him and Flora moved and bought a house in Covington, Ohio and the kids went to school there and grew up.

It’s just things like that or a businessman Martinez, I can’t remember his first name, he was at the migrant rest center in Liberty Center and he needed a job. He was real good in landscaping and irrigation and there was a nursery in New Carlisle, another nursery and they said “well Maria, if you say he’s good let’s give him a shot.” So my co-worker brought him on a Saturday illegally, because we were never supposed to transport anybody. Lay people don’t transport liability. She brought him all the way from Liberty Center to New Carlisle and we got him settled at the camp and everything and they just loved him. He became friends with this one girl and he ended up marrying her. They now have their own business up in Marian County. So it’s just little success stories like that just make it all the worth while of where you’re supposed to be. I was in Columbus last June and ran into a lady who told me that I helped her twenty years ago. I can’t remember who she was and here she was at this event and she said “yes you gave me
you counseled me, you to do this, this and this. I did what you said and my life has just been just awesome.” I’m like I’m glad I helped you out but I still don’t – I couldn’t remember who she was. I’ve worked in Greenville, Ohio, I worked in Piqua, Springfield, Bellefontaine, Sidney, Dayton, so you get to...

Kelly: Know a lot of people and help a lot of people.

Goeser: Yes and then assisted a lot of – Lebanon has some farmers down there and if I couldn’t travel down there I would do the best I could on the telephone. I would help a lot of farmers via the phone down there and connect with people. I was telling a story the other day and I had made friends with this mulch company in South Charleston [Ohio] and they have a company on the east coast this was like five years ago and he said “I bet you can’t help me with getting people.” I think it was in New Hampshire and so [I said] what do you got? [He said] “Well, I got a mulch company paying seventeen dollars an hour. But you’ve never been up there, how can you tap into the Hispanic market?” I said you’d be surprised. So I call our local one stops or our local unemployment offices and talking to them I said, do you ever have any migrant labor or Hispanic labor because some people don’t know what a migrant is. So they said “yes!” I said can you give me a name of anybody just anybody and they said “well I don’t know if we can do that.” I said I’m telling you I’m from the state over her I’m just helping another state about jobs; it’s all about job creation. He says “ok, well in that case” and he gives me this name and so I call him. I said I’m Maria Goeser and I work for the department of blah, blah, blah and I’m really looking for ten people to work this job at a mulch place and such and such. [He says] “oh, este lugar.” [this place] I said yes, do you know anybody? I said this is the case, you got to have at least one person who can speak English and it was a lady. She said “well, I can do that!” She says “I’m nine months pregnant, do you think they will hire me?” I said well let’s just give it a try. When the recruiter and this vice president of this company flew over there, there were a hundred people waiting for him (laughs). So he comes back to our Ohio and he says “how did you do that?” I said it’s all about helping people out.

Kelly: That’s amazing.

Goeser: Yes and the connections you make. You end up running into people like, hey, yes, I know that person, and I know that person. I was just talking to a landscaper yesterday and we got to talking and he was in Xenia. We got to talking about the different areas of landscaping that the economy has really hurt them so they’ve had to sell all acreage, and some farms have gone out of business. Then he said something about Phillipsburg and I said oh, yes the Browns. I said yes, they have migrant... and he said “yes, yes.” I said yes, I worked with them for years too and I said the sister’s a nun. [He said] “do you know she retired?” I said yes, she was at my agricultural orientation this year and so we got to talking and I said wasn’t that sad about the one brother who got murdered at the nursery. They were trying to rob him. I think it was on a Saturday early, early in the morning and he sent the night there at the landscaping place and caught the robbers off guard. So it’s those little things that - I used to be, I’m going to be, and I can be and as I’m looking at this place, this landscaping place he’s sitting right there next to this big huge retail commercial area. So I’m already thinking that I work for the department of development and I’m seeing development. I said so, Mr. Sosberg, what do you think? Do you think you’ll ever be bought out of here? Look where you’re at, right there by the highway. He says “well, I got a price.” I said well – because he said he was seventy four years old and I said really, I don’t know, you’ve got Applebee’s breathing down your throat. He says “I know I know it.” So eventually that will probably be all commercialized but I look at things totally different. Working with that migrant that needed day-care, needed transportation, needed gas, and most of
all needed a job to learn unemployment compensation; to if you got hurt you deserved your worker's comp, social security, disability. So all those little different stages that I have learned and I was able to keep those connections, now a lot of those connections have retired now. Some of their replacements are not as knowledgeable or as kind as these other people were. So there's a little break down there. Am I saying that's bad? No, it's just change. Same with your migrant workers are different now too. Your Y generation migrant workers are not going to do half of what your baby-boomer and early GI generation did. They're not and they will tell you. They're out there in the fields working with their [pretends to play with cell phone].

Kelly: Cell phones.

Goeser: It's just like wow. So they're connected; they know the internet, they know where to go and how to go. Before they did know too, they could navigate. It's like you got a built in GPS. We went to a meeting in Celina last October and I went with another agency and we had a family of migrants with us. We were going to Celina and I said oh, I know how to get there. My sister lives there. So I took them all the back roads and so the joke was that I was a Mexican GPS because I could find my way. But if you work the area for so many years you tend to know where you're going. Sometimes when it's during harvest season and everything's so tall roads don't always look the same. Or the middle of winter when there's ice, things don't always look the same. But I mean that's our life, there's changes. God gives you lemons, you make lemonade. That's just the way it is.

Kelly: Tell me about the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce HITS team.

Goeser: Oh, the HITS team. The HITS team which the HITS is Hiring, it's like an investment, like a company who will want to invest, and also part of the investment is the "T" for training. You want to train your workers because what used to be your workers back in the twentieth century is not now. People need to be trained and their skills need to be upgraded I say twice a year. The "S" stands for space because again the department of development we are helping companies retain jobs, create jobs, and bring jobs to Ohio. So our HITS work the same way.

We're out there talking to companies and when talking to companies sometimes we like have a company in Springfield who are closing its doors. So we go in there right away and we call it the rapid response, what can we do to help you? I got the call, just again, by the grace of God and I call the company and I tell them hey, this is what the one stops can do for you. [They said] "well if I had known that earlier, we already hired a company to do interviews and resumes. But that's ok." So I said we can help also help you with unemployment but first of all let's talk about why you're leaving Springfield. Well, they lost a huge Medicare contract which that happens. But we want to help those people transition to another job so they won't have to get on unemployment. It's good that there's unemployment but there's a lot of jobs out there but people don't want to work because they don't want to give up their unemployment. Some people not all people and I tell people all the time, I know you're making good money on unemployment but it's going to run out. It's going to run out and you're competing with so many other people and so you get some. Help people - I also help people go to training. Some of the Delphi people, GM people, some of the toughest people and that was a challenge for me and I loved it because it's like I can't do it, I can't do it; yes I can do it, I am doing it, and I'm succeeding. From whatever they did in the factory to now working at Miami Valley Hospital. It's awesome to see that. That's like wow! Not everybody wanted to go to school and not everybody should go to school to be honest with you. But everyone needs some kind of technical skills or something where you can get upgrading skills. You got to learn and grow because in five years we will see jobs that we never even heard of.
So that’s what we work with all the time and it’s interesting. From the center over here in Kettering, oh what is it? I can’t remember, it’s the old, it was an old base and they’re doing a lot of good things over there with polymers and all this through the University of Dayton Research Institute with their little sensors, to I go to meetings over here at Wright Patterson Air Force Base at the Hope Hotel with the Defense contractors, to your little mom and pop’s that are trying to keep their restaurants open, and to tearing down buildings to build new buildings. Right now I’m in a meeting and I’m going you know we have a lot of intelligent people here in the United States and we’re hurting right now. We’re feeling what happened to Japan. Why can’t we take all this labor and all these empty buildings and start building those parts here until Japan gets... I’m not Washington so... But it makes sense to me and I’ve talked to some people and they’ve said “it’s not as easy as it sounds.” But I mean you try something otherwise you got your Hondas that are working four hours shifts now and it could be until the end of July. If you don’t go out there and help yourself and I always love that one where the guy was drowning and he prayed to God to save him and they sent the boat and he says no, God is going to save me. Then they sent the airplane, no God’s going to save me.

Kelly: Yes I’ve heard that one before.

Goeser: Yes, it’s like come on now people! So it’s only common sense. If you’re hungry you’re going to feed yourself right?

Kelly: Yes.

Goeser: I mean it’s just common sense.

Kelly: I agree and I know in your work you help a lot of Latinos. How did actually get involved with the Latino Coalition of Clark and Champaign Counties?

Goeser: Actually it was myself and Marilyn Lucafall. She was a supervisor at the, it used to be the Department of Human Resources, the welfare office. We saw a need there because we had the Hispanics come in to Clark County or Champaign county and they needed assistance and we couldn’t give it all to them because we didn’t know who these people were. We knew the services were out there but we didn’t know what the eligibility pieces were. So we decided let’s just send a letter out there and any interested person can come to the unemployment office and we just started it. People came and that was like in 2001 because everyone wanted to help the Latinos. Well, not everyone but some of them but then these other agencies saw all this money that would assist Hispanic customers and so they started applying and they would come. So we had from the Girls Scouts, to the epileptic [centers], to the health departments, to the educations, to the hospitals and clinics, to now we even have Molina Care Source and Amerigroup to just help each other. We used to put on some of the best health fairs at Michael’s Farm in the New Carlisle area through Sister McKrenna who had a vision and a mission. All these partners, you wouldn’t even have to bug them to volunteer, everyone wanted to volunteer. I still remember this couple. David Smitty is now the director of the literacy center and his wife now works for social security in Piqua, both bilingual missionary workers in Chile. We were at the health fair and David says “Maria, that’s not the proper Spanish.” I said ok David, whatever. He was at the health fair and he says “Maria, she’s saying something to me and I don’t understand.” I said well, what is she saying? [He said] “she’s saying the por norte. She’s going north?” I said no, she’s pregnant. And he said “what are you talking about?” [I said] what’s the proper Spanish David? So then he learned Spanglish. It’s the way we communicate and we’ve become friends. But now it’s going to see that Rebecca [who] works at social security because she’s able to help a lot. I’m working on a situation that I have and I referred an employer to her and whoever answered the phone over there said “well, no, you’re not from Miami County so you have to stay in Clark.
County.” That’s not the case. I got to get a hold of Rebecca and see what’s going on. I said I can refer these people over here because you are easier to work with. It’s good to see — and when I first worked for the unemployment office and migrants — I would tell the migrants to come and file for unemployment since your work is ending and so they started to do that. Then if they had to file appeals the appeals would come to them in English.

Kelly: So would you have to translate it?

Goeser: Yes and my one friend told me “this is what we’re going to do Maria. I’m going to write the appeal in English and I want you to translate it in Spanish and we’re going to send it to Columbus that way.” Boy did we get the attention. [They said] “how dare you send this! We don’t understand what you’re saying.” I said exactly, you’re doing that to the families. They don’t know what you’re saying.

Kelly: Wow, that’s good.

Goeser: And now we have bilingual customer service reps and we have bilingual customer service reps for the consumer counsels, the utilities department, bureau workers comp and it’s just awesome to see that you now have bilingual people. It’s not just the United States, we’re a global world. There’s no — and I always talk to co-workers and ex co-workers about the boundaries. I was a meeting the other day and the two tables met and I said I’m going to sit there, always on the border, always teetering. They just laugh because they know me. I’m going to challenge it and if I can challenge it I’m going to challenge it and I’m going to ask you why not. I mean why not? So there were things that we had to do to make people move and it took years. But is it picture perfect? No, we have a long way to go but we’ve come a long way. My mom says “you’ve never even seen what we used to go through. The housing was awful; the working conditions were — well when I was a kid I sat on the wagon all day long eating strawberries. Now who knows if they had pesticides on them, I don’t know. There was no babysitter so it has changed. We’ve come a long way and some other issues that bother me a lot as I get older is the Hispanics that come here illegally and have brought children with them and are in our schools. I know that those children that speak perfect English and are intelligent are going to struggle because when they get to eighth grade are they going to be able to go the Washington trip? No.

Kelly: And they can’t go to college.

Goeser: Nope. I know one; I went to her quincinera and cried with her mom because she couldn’t go to Washington D.C. and get her quincinera. Now she’s going to like the vocational part of it as a photographer and so I talked with photographers and said hey, do you ever think about having a student co-op? No pay just learning to try get her to start her own business. He said “she can start her own business.” Can’t work for nobody but...

Kelly: Yes. What are some of the most interesting programs or events that you’ve been involved with?

Goeser: I guess one of the one’s that I really enjoy is the agricultural orientation that we have every year, which I told you about. That’s exciting when they tell you thank you, this was the best year ever. You always want to out do the year and the next year and the next year. Other events our coalition, our migrant coalition in Clark and Champaign Counties is that we’re struggling because a lot of agencies have dropped off because of funds and lack of staff. But I don’t ever want ever to see it go away because we have the attention of the sheriff’s department, we have the attention of the police department, and we have the attention of the schools. There was a time when schools would not allow migrants to go to school ever because they don’t have a social security number. I said it’s against the law. Primary education says every child should have the opportunity to go to school and so I said I’m going to have to take it to my attorneys.
The attorneys aren’t going to, well the attorneys aren’t God, and they don’t know everything. But the kids ended up going to school. You have to have people who are going to challenge. Title VI, if you’re federally funded you should provide an interpreter. But if you’re not telling them that that agency or organization—you’ve got to challenge them, you’ve got to educate them. They don’t know. They don’t know what they don’t know and if they know and are not doing it then shame on them.

But some other events I have attended metricula consular [issuing id's to immigrants]. Those are just exciting to work and everything. You get really, really tired but it’s kind of depressing too because some of the folks think that with that passport and id. they can go to work and they can’t. That’s sad. I love going to the cultural fest every year in Springfield where we’re trying to bring the community together and we have. One of the first years I started on the group I brought my daughters Latino dance group from Ohio State. The third year coming in the c.d. didn’t work for the Mexican hat dance so my other friend went and got the mariachis. They were strolling and they played the music. So everything works out. I always say don’t worry it will work out, don’t worry it will work out. “How do you know that?” Because it will and so you just don’t – when you can’t God can. And if I didn’t happen then it wasn’t supposed to.

Kelly: Tell me about the Global Education Speakers Series.

Goeser: That’s a series that was founded after 9/11 and Nancy Flinch spear heads that in Springfield. We try to focus – I think the first year we tried to focus on that county and those folks. I think the following year was focused on the foods and I did the foods, tamales. I paid my sister to make tamales and we focused on food, we talked about the posadas [accommodations], and we sang the mañanitas [birthday song] and things like that. So everyone did like a different culture or food. This last year we talked about why do they do that?


Goeser: So I spoke about that and at that time ABEL the advocates for basic legal equality, we had Mike who was the advocate outreach worker and then we had the attorney, Heather, who speaks perfect Spanish. Our audience was of course professors, some judges, and we were reaching out to everybody but most of the people there were mostly educated. So we were kind of preaching to the choir but I want to people that you need to educate because we’ve had events at city hall where we’ve gotten calls [saying] “why are you doing that? You’re all illegal.” We brought together say the superintendent of the schools, the commissioners, the commissioner of health, and some of your top leaders to address those different issues. Yes, were all Latino but we have the right to be here too. Were just as legal as you are and so those are some of the events. Last year one of the events in Columbus I went to was the Ohio Hispanic Leadership and I got an award for that and that was awesome. Of course that evening my husband has a heart attack and so we really didn’t get to celebrate but that was awesome. Here I am with a lot of my peers and it was like wow, this came unexpectantly. There weren’t a lot of attendees but this next year is going to be better and there is a lot of Latinos out there that have done a lot.

Kelly: How did it make you feel winning such a prestigious award?

Goeser: It was awesome. I was going like I won this, but I didn’t do it myself. No one ever does anything by themselves. I was like wow and we were going to celebrate but my husband has a heart attack that evening. I work and I’ve changed jobs through the state and then have had all these horrible personal... because I had a grandson who had cancer and he survived a liver transplant and he’s going to turn five in August and he’s in remission, to my in-laws we moved them up here to Ohio to be closer to help them and they passed away, to my mom having strokes in Texas and having to fly down there to get her, to having to go down several years in a row to
close down houses and sell stuff and come back. People say “how do you do it?” I say God takes care of me because I couldn’t do it by myself. I still have my mom and I checked her blood pressure this morning and she’s doing super good and all because she fell and broke her neck. She was at my brother’s in Michigan and fell down a flight of steps and broke her neck. [They] took her to the Michigan hospital to and brought her back to Ohio to try and nurse her back but her neck has never fused back because of her age. She ends up having gall bladder surgery. She got sick the twenty- ninth of December and she had surgery on the third. [She got] gout and her health is failing and so what I’m hoping to do is at the end of May fly her down to Houston and go up to my cousins so she can see her two older sisters.

Kelly: Their…oh, my gosh.

Goeser: Aunt Mary is ninety-nine and Tialaha is ninety-six.

Kelly: Wow, that’s wonderful.

Goeser: I know. They’re pretty strong. Strong ladies, they’ve experienced a lot of stuff. My mom had a little fall and I took her to the emergency room and she fell and got stitches in her head and I told the doctor I can’t get her to settle down and not do blah, blah, blah. He just stops, he’s pushing her down the hallway and he said “well, you know what; someday you’ll be just like her.” I’m like no one ever told me that (laughs). But my mom can be real cantankerous.

Kelly: That’s wonderful.

Goeser: And she’s the baby, can you imagine. I call her and my two aunts the Latino Golden Girls because they dress up with jewelry.

Kelly: So as a member of many organizations, what are some of obstacles and frustrations that you have faced and still face today doing community work?

Goeser: A lot of times people do not know that I am Latino and they make comments. I just let them do it and then I tell them like oh, really? I was sitting on the board for the Catholic Social Action Group and there was a gentleman in there and he [saying] immigration is broken and they just need to ship all these Mexicans out of here and he just went on and on and on. The deacon’s looking at me and I’m just holding my time and Sister McKenna, I know she’s praying. So when he was done talking I said I just want to let you know that my brothers all went and served in the U.S. Military and I have a nephew in Iraq right now and we’re all Mexican. I said so you’re saying because we’re Latinos we should all leave and where did you come from?

Kelly: We’re all immigrants.

Goeser: Yes. So two, listen to politicians like on legislative night say this, that, and the other and whatever flavors is being eaten that day is when they change. Those are the ones that are kind of like, you know, you really disappoint me. Those little things that set you back to – I see racism more now than I ever did before because it’s like a race out there. Let’s get rid of all these Latinos because they’re going to take over. We’re allowing them to take over and we’re going to have to speak two languages. Well, what’s wrong with that, speaking two different languages? They did it to the Irish, they did it to the Germans, and they did it to the Italians and so it’s our turn. But does it feel good? No, it doesn’t feel good and I’ll say you get more with sugar. So I try to educate and if I can’t educate then my husband’s favorite word is “you just can’t fix stupid. Walk away.” Sometimes there is a little truth in that and I’m not going to sit there and argue with him. No I’m not.

Kelly: Because he’ll never…?

Goeser: No he’ll never process it but somehow, someway they will be touched somehow. To “I can’t stand those illegals, well wait a minute, don’t do anything to my nanny.”

Kelly: What are the Latinos main concerns in terms of business or employment or immigration?
Goeser: Well, immigration, that’s a hot topic right now. Immigration is broken and it’s been broken for a long, long time. We’ve been in a recession and we were in a recession in the eighties and I was living in Texas because I left the recession because Texas was booming at the time. But it was Reganomics and stuff but when he gave amnesty recession, we came out of the recession. [I went] to a wonderful luncheon with Senator Portman who sat on that committee and he said there are three things that we were going to do to fix the immigration that was broken in the eighties. One was to grant amnesty which they did, the other was to enforce our borders which they didn’t and I can’t remember what the third thing was. He said “we failed the two, of the three we failed two of them and that’s why were in the predicament that we are in now.” It’s not going to go away. We were going places before 9/11, so we have just gone backwards and that’s a big thing. We need – come on, we are educating all of these foreign students from foreign countries and educating them with a lot of knowledge and then sending them to other countries so that what? They can take our jobs form us. If we are going to educate foreign students, let’s keep them here.

Latino businesses, they’re all going to tell you that they’re doing good. You hope they do good because they are very proud and the ones that don’t succeed really shouldn’t have succeeded because they were doing things that they weren’t supposed to be doing. So I try to stimulate the economy. I tell my husband that I spend money at different places but it’s like you have a bushel of apples and they’re all good apples but then you get one with a worm in it and it means that the whole bushel is bad. That’s how I see people’s see well one’s illegal, it means they’re all illegal. But that’s not the case. Again judge me as a person not as a race and get to know me before you… and unfortunately people are so cautious and scared. They think we’re just going to take over and I’ll joke around sometimes and say well, you know Texas did belong to Mexico. I don’t have a problem with that. But it is true; every child in this country should know two languages. Come on now, do not the other countries?

Kelly: Oh, yes. I think we are like the only, one of the only countries that only knows one language.

Goeser: Yes because we think we are all that and superior. You know we’re not. I saw a powerpoint the other day and it had the United States here [points up] and Japan right here [right below], this was before the earthquake, China, and all these different countries. In the seventies we were here and everybody was over here but now this is 2011 and they’re like right here [very close]. Now Japan has gone now backwards because of what happened and our currency isn’t the same value as it was before. We can’t continue to print money. There are lots of things that are broken that need fixed; I mean the president has a hard job. But the immigration come on now, we have a lot of smart people in this country. I’ve tried to put together an immigration summit in Springfield through the coalition and they don’t want it. They don’t want to touch that, they’re afraid to touch that. Well, why are you afraid to touch it? Let’s fix it, let’s try to fix it. If you’re tires got a flat aren’t you going to fix it?

Kelly: I agree. What motivates you to continue doing this work?

Goeser: I think I am supposed to do it and talking and doing it until I can’t do it anymore. So I pray that I can reach to all. Put me in a coffin or something but you have to help people to help people. It takes a community and if you educate, because you have kids are not born to know what discrimination is, so come on now. I tell my grandkids who are a quarter Mexican not to forget that and they don’t. I talk to them in Spanish and you can’t let them forget that.

Kelly: What are some of the most gratifying and accomplishments for you?
Goeser: For me, is seeing the migrants and seasonal farm workers sell a lot. A full time permanent citizen and contributing like everyone else does, the American Dream. Another example is the kids that used to come here and not speak any English and you said you have to go to school and they would cry and they knew they were going to be failure and they weren’t going to succeed. Now they are your best teachers at the TMC centers and I’ve gone the last two years to their Christmas party and seeing them all stand up with those children and I’m going wow! These guys said they would never succeed and now they’re educators. How awesome is that and it’s like full circle. It’s good to see things like that. It’s good to see the students apply themselves and say I can do it, si se puede [yes we can] and going to college and open up their own businesses or become administrators in nursing homes, or become teachers, professors, and attorneys. The sky’s the limit; they just need to have somebody telling them si se puede, si se puede.

Kelly: Only about two more questions. I know you mentioned a little about your family but I wanted to ask you to tell me about your family and the impact of your involvement in the community on your family. They might have been grown by the time; I mean you were working with the Ohio Department.

Goeser: My daughters you say?

Kelly: Yes.

Goeser: Ok, they are very community – for example the middle one that went to Ohio State went on a free ride. I didn’t believe it, they had to call me and tell me. She got a free ride and I said well Megan, nothing is free. You need to give back to the university whenever you can. So she joined the dance group and performed for whatever events they had. She was in the Boys and Girls Club, and she was in a group that would feed the homeless. The oldest one, like I said she is in advocacy and also sends her kids to parochial school and gives her time and money and whatever resources. I’ve seen her just give away good clothes to whoever needs them. When the baby outgrows something whoever needs it she gives it to them. Whatever she has she gives it. She pays for it but I said the more you give the more you get back and it’s true. The two [daughters] they are very proud to be fifty percent Hispanic and if you tell them, they are Mexican-American first. That’s awesome I think, they’re not going to forget their roots hopefully never as they grow older and teach their kids as long as I’m still alive. But I don’t think so because they’re pretty proud of who they are. To see my youngest, she’s my free-spirited. Oh, boy she’s sometimes of a challenge but yes, she gives how she can. She one time and she’s the only one with common sense and she saw an accident happen so of course the police didn’t get there fast enough and the guy took off and she followed him (laughs). I said you don’t do that. She’s like ninety pounds all wet, four foot nothing but she stayed on him and the police were able to capture him. So they know between right and wrong and they know what they should do and what they shouldn’t do. Do I have control of everything? No, but I’m not supposed to because I told them that from now on you guys are adults now. I did what I could so it’s me and your dad now. We take care of each other because some day when you’re really going to need us and when we’re not here to help you, how are you going to get help? So far it’s worked (laughs). So it’s little situations like that that you try to instill in them. I can think of different situations when I was young that I did the same thing and I’m not stupid and I know were in a new different world and we have all this technology and we need to know and we need to educate. Even myself, I’m going to do it, I’m going to process my income tax electronically. I’m going to do it. I’m going to push that enter because usually I do it on a computer and I print it out and I mail it.
Kelly: But you're just going to do it electronically.
Goeser: Right and I'm going to bank online. I'm going to try it.
Kelly: Tell me about your husband.
Goeser: My husband is a German-French and his dad came from St. Louis and his mother had always lived in Texas. Her dad was a Texas Ranger and they hated Mexicans. So when I met my husband we decided to get married in two weeks so he lost a lot of his friends because I was Mexican. I didn't know understand that and I'm going like well, I'm human first. What's the big deal? So all of that prejudice that's in the South but he like I said he's in social work too, he works for the department of human services in Franklin County in the welfare department. He also helps people get jobs and he also helps train people so we're kind of like a social service family. We give back. I'm more involved than he is now because he's taking it easy...
Kelly: Because of his heart attack?
Goeser: Yes and there wasn't a person that he wouldn't help. Your just that way, you're just brought up that way. If somebody needs help you wouldn't be put into that situation if people weren't supposed to help. So that's the way he is.
Kelly: That's great that your children had role models, not only you and your husband but their grandparents.
Goeser: Oh, yes they often kid because when they were in school people would say “my grandma or grandpa is in nursing home,” and they said “ours live with us,” and they said “what do you mean your grandma lives with you?” “Yes, what's wrong with that.” So that's what they knew.
Kelly: And a lot of Latino families, they want their parents to live with them and they want to take care of them. I think that's wonderful.
Goeser: Yes, and the girls do help me with their grandma and stuff but my mom is more comfortable with me or my oldest sister. I always tell my husband that they'll probably throw us into county.
Kelly: What lessons do you carry away from your involvement in community and community service?
Goeser: Well, what is it, it takes a village. You have to give but you can't ask anybody to give what you wouldn't give. I mean I always try working for the state government and people come to me and say the government, the government, the government and I say you need to step back because you are the government. You want to change; it's got to come form you first. It's not here to give you; it's not a hand out; you have to give. I say just picture this, the pioneers. Did they get food stamps? I don't think so. Did they get health care? No, but they sacrificed a lot so that we could be where we're at today. But we have to make major changes because we see it's not working. It's going back to pupil don't know what they don't know unless we take the time to teach them. Will they all listen? No, but like I used to tell people that I tried to get a person a job one at a time. So it's helping one Ohioan make a difference. If you help that student, help that sick person, help that job seeker, help that employer one at a time. I remember back that seventy percent of this country is from rentals from all businesses. So it's not the big conglomerates that run this country, they think they do but seventy percent of this country is run by small to medium size businesses. We just can't sit back anymore and think somebody's going to take care of us because they're not. It starts with you and I'm a big advocate of when you turn eighteen you register to work. You do not drive in this country until you figure it out that it's a privilege. Don't ask me to give you something if you don't have anything to give. It's a give and take. That's been my philosophy and again my dad said “just works your hardest,” and my
mom’s said “thank God and know that when you can’t do it God’s going to be there for you and he’ll do it for you.”

**Kelly:** I agree. That was a great interview. I’m just wondering did you have any questions about the release form that I had you sign?

**Goeser:** No, I’m good.

**Kelly:** Alright. Well, I’m going to stop this.

END OF INTERVIEW

**Glossary** (Any special terms, events, people referred to in the interview and/or transcript)

- Urbana, Ohio
- Clark State Community College
- San Juan, Texas
- Migrant Workers
- Mexican
- Catholic
- Weslaco, Texas
- Bliss College
- Hispanic
- Ohio Bureau of Employment Services
- Migrant Outreach
- Ohio Department of Development
- Bilingual
- Latino Coalition of Clark and Champaign Counties
- Ohio Hispanic Leadership
- Family
- Immigrants
- Community Activism