

STARFYSHNEWS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM STARFYSH.ORG

SPRING 2015

STARFYSH IS WORKING TO BRING HOLISTIC, SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION TO THE

ISLAND OF LA GONAVE, HAITI



EDUCATION

A MOVE TOWARD SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

Except for their meeting place, our school in Makochon thrives, with a total enrollment of 126 students, from pre-K to 5th grades. Our teachers continue to teach with passion and energy, using skills they have learned in many teacher training seminars that either we have conducted or to which we have sent them. In the early years, children receive instruction in their spoken language, Haitian Creole, a practice which, though officially endorsed by the Haitian government, is not the norm across Haiti. As children progress through their primary education, French is gradually introduced so that, by the time they reach the secondary level (7th grade), they will be ready for the French instruction of higher education.

The teachers and children of the school have risen to the challenge we gave them of writing and illustrating stories, many of which are in the pipeline for publishing. Not only will they be able to use them, but they can also sell them to other schools creating an income stream back into their school. A move toward self-sustainability.



Left: Makochon teachers Right: Excitement during report card day

"In a land of scarce natural resources, shouldn't we consider the imagination and written stories of the people of La Gonave as no less a natural resource, one that can be developed and exported?"

-Stacy Oldenberg, Director of Education Development

Two teams of teachers are currently preparing for visits to conduct teacher training seminars this Summer. In June a team of elementary teachers will travel down to conduct a week of reading and writing workshops. The August team is a group of art teachers who will travel down to conduct workshops on how to integrate art into the elementary curriculum.

Sadly, the school facility situation in Makochon has not changed. It has been amazing to see how well the school has done and how learning has thrived in the building where they continue to meet. However, it is clear that a school building needs to be built if they are to survive.

THIS IS AN URGENT NEED

If you, your organization, or business would like to partner with us to provide a school to a village that has proven they can do it, please contact us.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DONATE, VISIT Starfysh.org --> Donate

DEAR FRIENDS,

Time flies. Five years ago, four friends met me for breakfast where I shared with them an idea of what could be. A few months and an earthquake later I gathered more friends, this time at my house, where I shared an idea for what could happen if a bunch of us focused our energies on helping an island crawl out of poverty. Here in my living room, where I now sit writing this letter to you, the idea took root. We would call the idea Starfysh.



It was cool and appropriate, I think, that Starfysh was born in a living room, not a lecture hall or how-to book. Among friends, not competing classmates. Over coffee, not No.2 pencils. For Starfysh has been anything but theoretical. It has been sweaty, and messy, and hard. Busted radiators, broken bones, and backaches have marked the way.

And it has been so worth it! For through brokenness and bustedness we've seen lives mended. Physically and spiritually. Clean water. Quenched thirst. Trees planted, Good News planted. Kids in school who otherwise never would have had the chance. Abscessed teeth yanked, burns dressed, roofs repaired.

This October I'm inviting you, my friends, to join me again where we'll celebrate these past five years and where we'll cast a vision for the next five. This time, my "living room" will be the Grand Rapids International Airport where I'm pretty sure we can fit more people than my house. Please make plans to come. It's important to me that you are there.

Blessings!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Edmondson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Edmondson

*Time
Flies*

SAVE THE DATE

10/22/15

Gerald Ford International Airport
Grand Rapids, Michigan

LIFE GARDEN

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."

—Chinese proverb



Good progress is being made in developing Life Garden (in Creole, Jaden Lavi), Starfysh's agriculture research and demonstration farm, a place where farming techniques that address the unique and harsh growing situations faced by La Gonave's farmers will be studied and taught. The first phase in making Life Garden a reality is the development of an anchor campus in the village of Anse-a-Galets where WISH and Wesleyan Mission have loaned land to Starfysh for this purpose. For the last several months, workers have been clearing the land of brush and weeds. The arrival of Spring rains will allow us to move to the planting phase. Life Garden artwork has been created and will soon go up at the entrance of the future gardens, serving as an announcement to the people of La Gonave of what is to come.

Life Garden is envisioned to be a place where farmers from all across the island will come to learn about crops and trees that can be grown in their own particular situations. During their visits, farmers will follow walking paths through the gardens, taking them by demonstration pods where they will learn about things like soil reclamation, food and seed harvest and storage, weed and pest control, water catchment, storage and

irrigation, erosion control, and slope gardening principles and techniques. It will be a place where farmers can learn about which species of plants and trees could thrive in their situations (e.g., seaside/saline soils, etc.) and where they can obtain tree starter seedlings. It will also be a place where they will learn about the nutritional and medicinal value of many varieties of plants and trees, serving as a motivation for farmers to consider growing crops they may otherwise not consider. We envision Life Garden to be a place where schools will want to bring their students for field trips.

Starfysh's long range vision is that Life Garden would consist of many study/learning campuses, in a variety of growing situations across the island. And, it is safe for us now to announce that the second such campus has been identified in the mountains of La Gonave. We expect to take possession and start developing this property in August.

The grand opening of phase one of Life Garden is targeted for Spring, 2016.

CLEAN WATER



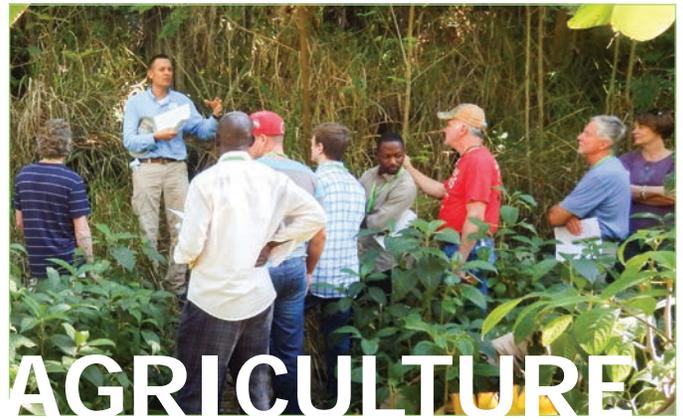
In-home installations of biosand filters continue at a good pace, with 250 more families receiving the gift of clean water in the first quarter of 2015. Demand remains high with the specter of cholera still on people's minds. As we determine which villages to go to next with filter installations, we lean heavily on Community Health Educator Joseph Yves whose days are spent in villages all over the island.

We are extremely grateful for the significant role that Rotary is playing in our efforts to provide clean water to the people of the island. The exciting way we see Rotary taking part is that, in addition to providing significant dollars (via a recent \$83,800 grant), they have put feet on the ground, partnering members from the States (Lowell, Michigan club) and Haiti (Delmas/Aeroport club). The strength of our three-way partnership will make it possible for us to make clean water a reality for 694 families during the 2015 calendar year. The project, heavy on education and post-installation metrics, provides for education and training for recipient families as well as follow up visits and data collection for three years post-installation. The project was inaugurated in February, with members of both clubs in attendance. The Lowell Rotary Club contingent then spent the balance of the week installing filters in the villages of Mapou and Plaine Mapou.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL TEAMS



The remote seaside village of Petite Anse recently enjoyed visits by two separate Starfysh teams. In response to a request by La Gonave Public Health Director, Dr. Ferdinand, medical and dental teams were dispatched to the village to care for the sick. Hemmed tightly to the ocean by the mountains, the only way to get to Petite Anse is via the sea. No motor vehicles, not even motorcycles, can access the village because of steep and rocky terrain. Thanks to the grit and determination of these teams—both of whom were drenched while churning through choppy seas to get there—hundreds of people who have never before seen a doctor or dentist were able to receive care.



AGRICULTURE

TROPICAL AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

In January, Dr. Steve and Starfysh's Agriculture Project Director, Paul Donn Jean, traveled to Fort Myers, Florida to participate in an intensive, week-long Tropical Agriculture Development conference at ECHO, an organization that provides agricultural and appropriate technology training to development workers in 165 countries. ECHO figures to be an important partner and invaluable resource to Starfysh as we move forward in our agricultural initiatives.



COFFEE

Starfysh has just launched a study on the feasibility of finding and growing a high-value coffee (e.g., "Haitian Blue") on La Gonave. In fact, we hear rumors that coffee bushes of such quality may exist in Haiti, perhaps even on the island. If so, we hope to find them.



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