

# STARFYSH NEWS

NEWS FROM STARFYSH.ORG

SUMMER 2018



STARFYSH IS WORKING TO BRING HOLISTIC, SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

TO THE ISLAND OF LA GONAVE, HAITI



## Starfysh Headquarters

Welcome to the Starfysh House, headquarters for all our work in Haiti and guest house for our visiting work teams. We are so grateful for this facility and for the people who work here to make life on the island of La Gonave better.

### Pray for NGO Status

After four years of working with the Haiti Ministry of Planning, Starfysh continues to wait for the final signature that will give us official Non-Government Organization status in the country, a designation that we believe will be a “game-changer” in our work here. One important example is that we will be able to ship supplies (i.e., that we cannot purchase in country) customs tax-free. Right now we have two brand new all-terrain utility vehicles and three large greenhouse frames staged and ready to move out once we know we can send them duty-free.

Having done all we can do, and having satisfied all the necessary requirements, and even after having our application approved, we find ourselves at the point of simply praying this arduous process across the finish line. The tape is stretched across the finish line. Please join us in praying that we snap the tape soon.



## AGRICULTURE



### Island Agriculture

Starfysh's vision to see agriculture and farming flourish on La Gonave continues to slowly take shape, centering on the establishment of Life Garden, a multi-campus agricultural research and demonstration farm where farmers from across the island not only will get ideas and study techniques for taking care of their land and get the most out of their gardens but where they will discover God's desire and intent that they, too, flourish as they follow His design for their lives.

Our first and main Life Garden campus (*shown below, left*) is situated at sea-level in the village of Anse-a-Galet on property owned by WISH (West Indies Self Help), a Christian relief and development organization with a 50-year history on the island with whom Starfysh is partnering to fight systemic poverty. Up at Life Garden's new mountain campus (*shown below, right*), we have just completed an important first step, tightly securing the entire 4-acre perimeter from marauding goats, and are working on solutions for a consistent, year-round water supply, which will include a well and rainwater harvesting/storage (like we do down at our sea-level campus).



### Farming Goes To School

Starfysh has been in discussions with leaders of several village schools, planning a framework for bringing agricultural learning right to their classrooms. In addition to imbedding agricultural science into their weekly curriculum, we'll also expand their classrooms to include school gardens.

## Nursery Greenhouse Frames Gifted

We have just received a unique gift that will greatly enhance our nursery operations at Life Garden. We are so thankful to Michigan Department of Corrections who preferred gifting them to Starfysh's agriculture work in Haiti. The greenhouses, previously slated for demolition, are now staged for shipping to La Gonave where they will be put to good use in nurturing seedlings for distribution across the island. Kudos to Jone D., Rick W., Rick C., Doug L., Ed V., and Gary P. for giving up a Saturday to go to Jackson State Prison to disassemble and pack and transport and unpack the frames. Thanks to Jason and Lisa for donating their barn space until we can ship it all to La Gonave.



You Can Help!



## Adopt a Family Garden

Interested in adopting some banana or papaya trees for a family on La Gonave? You can! Five dollars covers the cost of providing one banana, one papaya, and one moringa tree to a family in need. Make a family or team fundraiser out of it! Provide them for a school! Or even a village! Contact us and we can help you scale a project that fits your group.

## Moringa Dryer Prototype

As we look ahead to producing a high-quality, dry-powdered, Moringa product on Life Garden, we realized that it is important that we enhance and improve the drying process. To that end, we had a new, more efficient dryer shed designed and built. Thanks Bill E. for designing and building prototype #1. We have immediately realized a one day shortened drying time and already see how we can tweak it to make it better. Three more dryers are currently in production and will make their way to La Gonave later this year.



## Moringa Documentary Awaits Funding

Our vision to film, produce, and distribute a film highlighting the amazing nutritional and medicinal benefits that Moringa oleifera can have for every family in Haiti, remains on hold, awaiting funding. As it turns out, this "miracle tree" grows very well in Haiti's troubled soil which makes the vision of seeing every home with a moringa tree a very distinct possibility. More information about Moringa and our vision for this film can be found at [starfysh.org](http://starfysh.org).



## AGRICULTURE



## Biochar Supplies Arrive

One of Life Garden's topics of study and teaching will be rejuvenating tired soil (e.g., composting, vermiculture, biochar, etc.). Our container of biochar study supplies has recently cleared customs and is now staged and ready for us to begin our study project, now set to start on August 1. See [starfysh.org/agriculture](http://starfysh.org/agriculture) for more information about why we believe biochar could be an important (and permanent!) component of the overall solution to Haiti's troubled soil.





(Top left) Plants are grown in Apopka, Florida. (Top center) Plants are packaged for flight to Port-au-Prince. (Top right) Plants stored in Port-au-Prince airport office awaiting next leg of the journey. (Above) Plants fly from Port-au-Prince to La Gonave island where Freddy supervises their transportation to Life Garden. (Below) Plants are unloaded and transplanted into larger containers. Soon they will be ready for distribution to the villages of La Gonave.

## Plants Delivered

Life garden has just received a shipment of 5,543 young vegetable and fruit plants and trees (3,600 banana plants, 288 pineapple plants, 1,295 sweet potato plants, 144 fig trees, 144 katuk plants, and 72 yacon plants). The shipment was the result of a collective effort between Agri-Starts (the high-tech nursery in Apopka, Florida where the plants were propagated in test tubes from tissue culture), MFI (Missionary Flights International) who flew the plants from Florida to Port-au-Prince and whose agents worked to secure our import permit paperwork, and MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) who graciously stored our precious cargo in their air-conditioned office at the Port-au-Prince airport before flying the plants out to the island the following day. A huge thanks to Freddy Williams who coordinated the entire process and worked the plants through customs. Thanks, too, to all who prayed this process through. Here's the miracle, the plants left the nursery in Florida on Tuesday evening and were safely received in our gardens by mid-day Friday, less than three days later.

The plants were immediately transplanted to larger seedling containers. We also received over 6,000 papaya seeds of several varieties, that are being planted. Soon, over 10,000 plants bananas, pineapples, papayas, and sweet potatoes will find their way to family and school gardens across the island. Many of them will be incorporated into our biochar study. One can only imagine the wide benefits that these thousands of plants (their fruit and their offspring) will produce, nutritionally, economically, even ecologically for the people of La Gonave.





# CLEAN WATER



## 2000+ Homes Receive Clean Water

By the time this newsletter reaches the mailboxes of our partners and supporters, Starfysh will have just completed the task of seeing to it that 100% of the homes in eight villages on the island have clean water to drink. Village sizes ranged from 52 homes to 450 homes. We have identified our 9th village and will start installations there this Summer. Our follow up visits to these villages continue to confirm that these biosand filters are being consistently used. More importantly, the cases of diarrheal illness

in these villages have been cut down dramatically. The hardest decision when we finish up a village is which village to go to next. Our boots-on-ground community health educator always has a very good sense of where the need for clean water is greatest and our decision is generally made when we find out from him where it is that he knows diarrhea is a big problem. We have identified our 9th village, as coastal town where installations begin on July 5th.





# EDUCATION



## New School Added

We are so excited to announce that Starfish is now able to add another rural elementary school to our list of supported schools, thanks to a church in Williamston, Michigan. The church recently sent its first delegation to the village of Nan Mango to meet and spend three days with the teachers and students.

The model of this partnership is a true win-win. For the school.... The building will get much needed repairs (leaky roof, dirt floors). Teaching resources will be added (new blackboards, etc.). Agronomy (classroom and garden) will be added to the curriculum. Kids will eat a nutritious meal every day (they do not eat currently), receive health assessments and anti-parasitic medication. And the teachers will be invited to participate in Starfish's yearly Summer teacher training seminars. And the school children will be regularly prayed for by their supporting church family.

Their supporting church will also be significantly impacted as they step out in brave obedience to God's calling as their church family corporately serves "the least of these" in a place otherwise unknown to the world.

## Teacher Training Seminars Set for Summer 2018

Dates have been set for this year's Summer teacher training seminar. Teachers from four different schools on the island will gather in August at the Starfish House for three days of teaching workshops, encouragement, and team-building. This year's team of educators is in place and will join Starfish's Education Director, Penny Beatty, in conducting the seminar.



Education Director, Penny Beatty, visits as many schools as she can during her times on the island, supporting and encouraging teachers, including the ones here at Tears to Smiles School in the coastal village of Troulligene.



# DEAR FRIENDS,



Putting our bi-annual newsletters together is increasingly difficult. It is impossible to include “all the news that’s fit to print” when we have to squeeze six months’ worth of it in four pages. There are other ways, of course, to share updates (emails, social media, etc.) but our best response, by far, comes from our printed and US-mailed format. Our options might be to lengthen our newsletter to six pages, not four, or to send them out quarterly, not bi-annually. Maybe we should produce a magazine. Ha.

At any rate, you will see, in looking through this Summer edition, that God continues to bless our work here on the island of La Gonave, Haiti, where desperate poverty, in all its ugly forms, makes struggling to survive the predominant way of life for 120,000 people that live here. No infrastructure exists on the island that you and I would regard as essential: no running water (all water is fetched from distant wells and ground springs), no electrical grid, and no improved roads. Traveling very short distances across mountain roads can take many hours. Many village schools have dirt floors. Hunger and malnutrition are prevalent.

Yet, in the middle of this difficult place, hope is glimmering a little brighter, arriving in various forms, like water filters that prevent families from getting sick from their fetched water. Hope glimmers brighter when they see their garden coming alive with bananas and papayas and vegetables. It glimmers brighter when children can attend school and get a meal every day.

The amazing thing to me is that God’s plan would be to use His people, normal people, you-and-me-people, to be hope-bearers in places like this where all seems hopeless. And yet, we are seeing that that’s exactly how He operates. I can tell you from first-hand experience that God’s Kingdom is evidenced through ordinary folks who follow His lead. Our many guests that come down to visit can tell you that, too.

Much is in the works here, as you’ll see. I’d like to believe it’s because God is trusting us with more because of our faithfulness and stewardship early on. At any rate, we are daily being presented with new opportunities to have greater impact here. The cold hard fact is, however, that it takes cold hard cash to say yes to these opportunities. Call me blunt.

Now, the conventional rhythm for fundraising is to make your bold appeal near the end of the year, when people are more apt to be thinking of their tax strategies. In the past, we have fallen into this rhythm. It makes sense. But today I’m breaking with tradition and I’m gonna put it right out there... if what we’re doing resonates with you, would you prayerfully consider digging deep this time around so we can continue to boldly move forward? We are experiencing tremendous momentum in our effectiveness right now, not only in our project initiatives but in our ability to speak into people’s lives. As we follow God on mission here, He is rewarding our stewardship and our persistence and our hard work not only with success but with opportunities to take even bigger and bolder steps.

Thank you for hearing me out. Frankly, I’d rather spend my days planting bananas and installing water filters and driving dangerous mountain roads than I would in raising funds. I believe so strongly in this work, though, that I’ll do it, knowing God wants to bless this precious island through you all. He gets the glory that way.

Please continue to pray for Starfysh and for the beautiful people we serve. I’d love to show you, first hand, the effectiveness of your prayers. Come down and see us sometime. We’ll show you around and maybe even put you to work. We’ve got plenty to do!

Blessings,

Steve Edmondson

## STARFYSH.ORG

To learn more about our work, our organization, or to support our projects with a donation, visit our website.



6757 Cascade Rd. SE #207  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
[starfysh.org](http://starfysh.org)

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

