

2020 Annual Report



Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, so he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?" The young man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

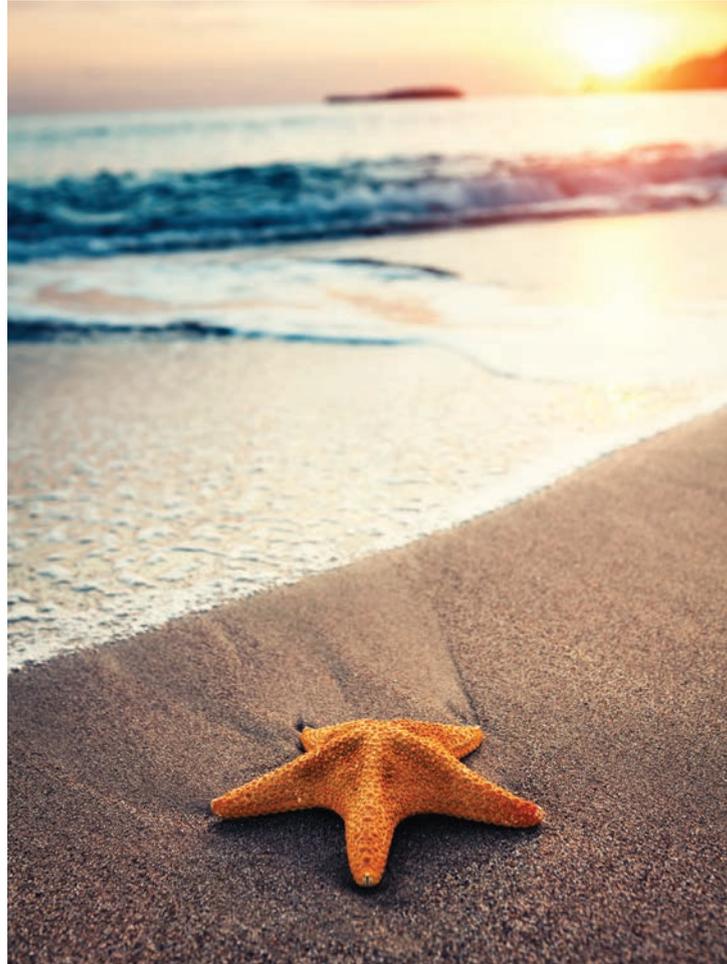
"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled wise man. To this the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

As if he hadn't heard, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he turned, smiled, and said, "Yes, but I just made a big difference to that one!"

— Adapted from *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley

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Our Starfish

Established in 2010, Starfysh was born as a grassroots movement of folks with an audacious notion...that we could, in our lifetime, not only witness the overcoming of desperate poverty and suffering of a people but, more remarkably, might ourselves participate in the drama.

Nothing less than a grand experiment in human compassion, Starfysh asks, "What might happen if a few people and organizations, in gutsy Christian response, came together in synergistic partnerships and collaboration to focus our efforts on an unlikely place and people group? To stay, moving beyond relief and rescue and brief kindnesses to do the harder, sweatier work of development in all its forms? To work to bring the true, lasting transformation that comes when people realize their dignity as image-bearers of their Creator?"

We would choose as our "starfish" the hardest of places. An out-of-the-way, hard-to-get-to place, to work among people hidden from the rest of the world. We would focus on La Gonave.



The Island of La Gonave

They call her La Gonave. Home to 100,000 of the poorest, most beaten down people with whom we share our planet—yet most of the world does not know that she and her people exist. Known as “The Forgotten Haiti,” the island of La Gonave is largely disregarded by her motherland, a place where most people do not have access to close, clean water. A place where meaningful work is nearly non-existent and the ability to hope for a better future has evaporated. Where few children can attend school and where, even for those fortunate enough to attend and complete school, there are no next steps.

Life on La Gonave:

- No running water exists. All water must be fetched from distant sources.
- Water-borne illness/diarrhea is the second leading cause of death.
- Fewer than 10% of families have a household latrine.
- 1 of every 13 children die before their 5th birthday.
- 3 of every 4 children under 5 are malnourished and underweight.
- 1 of every 3 children are infected with intestinal parasites.
- 95% of people do not have access to electricity.
- Fewer than half of people can read.

But La Gonave’s people are beautiful, created in the image of God. They are a people who love their country, for all its flaws. They are smart people, beautiful people, creative people, and industrious people, whose children love to play and sing. They are a resilient people who desire, more than anything, to make a go of it, and who are willing to work hard to pull themselves and their land out of their rotten situation...if only there were a way to do it.

Mission

Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, and by his model of compassionate servanthood, Starfysh exists to demonstrate Christian love and compassion through alleviating physical suffering and addressing social injustice on the island of La Gonave, Haiti. Starfysh's mission is to bring sustainable transformation to an island. With God's help, we will work alongside the people of La Gonave to bring the vicious cycle of their desperate poverty to a screeching halt.

Vision

Our vision is to reverse the vicious cycle of poverty on the island of La Gonave, Haiti. We'll know our vision has been realized when drinking water is clean, food is abundant, and people are able to provide for themselves, thus building dignity and hope for every person, every family, and every village on the island.

The Benchmark: Sustainability

Bold and gutsy claims must be backed by bold and gutsy plans. We must be smart, inventive, innovative. It is a new day. We cannot afford to revisit failed methodologies (i.e. those that have yielded short-lived, unsustainable outcomes.) Sustainability must be the benchmark by which success in our mission (true transformation) is measured. Sustainability must, therefore, be the measure by which all of our methods (policies, projects, budgets, etc.) are assessed. We will make honest, even painful decisions to let go of things that don't yield permanent outcomes. We must pour our energies into outcomes that will outlive Starfysh, surviving and thriving on their own.

Core Values

Driven and guided by the following core values, Starfysh is resolutely committed to implementing long-term, sustainable, and assets-based initiatives to communities on La Gonave. These values frame all of our planning and are central considerations to each project we implement.

Collaboration: We celebrate the fact that we are but one of many in a world of compassionate people and organizations working to relieve suffering and improve life for the desperately poor. We value the importance of partnerships in our efforts to bring about significant, sustainable change, and welcome the expertise and skills that others can bring to the table.

Empowerment: In all we do, we desire that the recipients of our compassion would be encouraged, equipped, and strengthened toward greater levels of self-sufficiency.

Dignity: We recognize that the dignity of individuals and communities can be diminished by indiscriminate and careless charity. In all we do, we demand of ourselves that we build up the worth of those we serve.

Holistic Focus: We choose to pour all our energies into one place, the island of La Gonave, Haiti, and to address as many of the root causes of her poverty that we can. We are convinced that nothing short of such a focused and holistic approach can reverse the cycle of poverty in any one place.

Sustainability: We regard our efforts as successful only to the point that we can see and measure progressively higher levels of independence.

Measurability: We regard seriously our work and so will not let the outcomes of our efforts to go unmeasured. The stakes are too high. Measurements of project impact and effectiveness will be essential learning tools that will sharpen and refine us as we move forward toward our vision.

Guiding Principles

It is possible for development agencies and charities to have harmful consequences in the wake of their well-meant efforts. Indeed, charity efforts in Haiti have demonstrated abundant examples of this truth. Starfysh is always mindful of the harmful consequences that might arise out of the way we conduct ourselves in Haiti and strive hard to avoid the easy fixes and shortcuts that so often characterize the standard operating procedures of relief efforts. In Starfysh's determination to "do no harm," we abide by the following principles...

Buy Local: When possible we will support the local economy through procuring the supplies needed for our projects in Haiti, preferably right here on La Gonave, even at times when the cost of supplies locally is more expensive than if purchased and shipped in from elsewhere.

No Bribes: We reject the practice of paying money for illegal favors.

Assets-Based Approach (not needs-based): Our approach in finding strategic solutions in a community gives priority to that village's assets and strengths over its problems and needs.

Non-Political: We do not take positions on Haitian politics nor do we attempt to influence political discourse.

Christ-Centered Ethos: In all we do (in governance and strategic planning, in how we relate to people, and in our work on the ground in Haiti), our desire is that the love of God, in Jesus, will shine brightly for all to see and that people will be drawn toward a personal relationship with Him.

Board of Directors



Dr. Steve Edmondson | FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

POSITION: Family Practice Physician, Sparrow Medical Group
EDUCATION: BS Biology, Indiana Wesleyan University; Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine



Brian Dykstra | VICE PRESIDENT

POSITION: Managing Director, Oxford Financial Group
EDUCATION: BBA, Hope College



Doug Lockhart | TREASURER

POSITION: SVP Marketing and New Initiatives, HarperCollins Christian Publishing
EDUCATION: BBA, Spring Arbor University; MBA, Western Michigan University



Tim Ulstad | SECRETARY

POSITION: Licensed Counselor, Private Practice
EDUCATION: BS Secondary Education, Spring Arbor University; MA Counseling, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary



Dr. Eli Maxime | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: General Practice Physician, GHESKIO HIV/AIDS Treatment Center, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
EDUCATION: Lumiere University, Port-au-Prince



Cheresse Gordon | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: Mission Team Leader
EDUCATION: BA Communications, Christian Ministry, Spring Arbor University



Jone Destine | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: Export Compliance Specialist, Imperial Clinical Research Services
EDUCATION: BBA, Purchasing & Supply Management, Central Michigan University



Daniel Bertrand | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: CEO, La Gonave Wesleyan Hospital
EDUCATION: Engineering, Wesleyan College



Penny Beatty | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: Special Education Teacher, Forest Hills Public Schools
EDUCATION: BA Learning Disabilities/Reading Specialist, Aquinas College; MA Art of Teaching Elementary, Maygrove College



Joseph Yves | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: Community Health Education Coordinator
EDUCATION: Education, Wesleyan College



Dan Irvine | MEMBER AT LARGE

POSITION: Haiti Country Director, World Hope International
EDUCATION: BA Religious Education, Hope Sound Bible College; MA Leadership, Indiana Wesleyan University

Teams Coordinator, Projects Logistics



Freddy Williams

Formerly a full-time missionary to Haiti, Freddy brings a rich history of cultural understanding and experience, coupled with his gift of hospitality to his role as teams coordinator. Folks interested in visiting our work enjoy working with Freddy to make their visit a rewarding one.

Director of Agriculture



Paul Donn Jean

After earning his BS in Agriculture and MS in Project Design/Development, Paul Donn returned to his birthplace to lead Starfysh's efforts to make La Gonave a land of flourishing trees and productive gardens and farms.

Director of Education



Penny Beatty

Penny comes to us with extensive experience in elementary classrooms and with an intense love for the Haitian people. Her passion is to help children realize their potential and prepare them as future leaders in their country, and to raise the excellence of school teachers creating in them a strong sense of calling as teachers of Haiti's future leaders.

Financials

Fiscal year 2019-20

- Total gifts = \$382,524.06
- Administration and fundraising = \$36,549.53
- % A&F = 9.5%

Starfysh's fully-disclosed financial information (IRS Form 990) can be viewed at:

- IRS.gov (EIN 27-1976856)
- guidestar.org



Life Garden Coffee

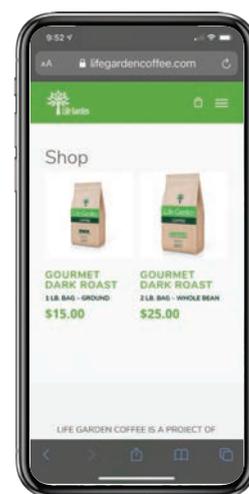
During the past year we were successful in re-introducing Haitian coffee to the American marketplace. It just makes sense that building a legitimate export (Haiti has few) is the best way to ensure future project growth and self-sustainability. Sales benefit Haiti at every point along the market pipeline, from mountainside to the checkout lane. Farmers, organized in cooperatives, are paid for their organically-grown coffee cherries at very fair prices. The beans are sorted, roasted, and packaged in Haiti and shipped immediately to the States for distribution and sales.



Life Garden Coffee debuts on grocery store shelves. Shout out to Bridge Street Market for taking a chance on us.

Life Garden Coffee has received rave reviews since its debut earlier this year, first through person-to-person sales, then through its own e-commerce site: lifegardencoffee.com. We are pleased now to announce that Life Garden Coffee has made it to the shelves at Bridge Street Market located at 405 Seward Avenue SW in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Please check out Bridge Street Market! They have given LGC its first brick and mortar chance and we want to let them know how much we appreciate it! We are hoping that a successful debut at Bridge Street Market (owned by Meijer) will open doors to more of grocery and specialty stores. All profits are funneled right back into Starfysh's agricultural efforts in Haiti.

Life Garden Coffee will make great Christmas gifts and would also be perfect for your group's fundraising efforts. Wins all around! Contact us if you want to explore fundraising opportunities for your group.



Purchase coffee online at www.lifegardencoffee.com



The island of La Gonave (seen in the background) expectantly awaits the arrival of coffee tree seedlings.



Safely arrived, the seedlings are moved by truck to Life Garden nursery.



Coffee seedlings awaiting planting on the island.



Coffee tree seedlings are usually planted in the shade of a nearby, established plant, in this case, a banana. We expect these seedlings will start fruiting two to three years after planting and mature to yield full yearly harvests by year five.



Agricultural Growth

Progress continues to be made at both Life Garden campuses (sea level and mountain). After stalling for several years, our vision to host large gatherings of farmers for 2-day conferences is, at last, coming to reality, with all the necessary capital improvements to our outdoor learning center finally in place. Our first two 100-attendee conferences are slated for March, 2021, before the Spring rains arrive.



Life Garden nursery continues to be a place of tree propagation, nurture, and distribution. We have outgrown our current shade space and are adding a new one which will expand our capacity to house some 25,000 seedlings at any given time. We are excited for the difference that these plants and trees will have in the thousands of farms and gardens across La Gonave and for the health and nutrition of the island's 100,000-plus people.

Over the past twelve months we have...

- planted/distributed 4,900 fruit trees
- planted/distributed 32,761 vegetable seedlings
- planted/distributed 1,800 sweet potato and cassava cuttings
- planted/distributed 3,067 papaya plants
- distributed 1,124 banana plants

Early reports on our biochar soil remediation research is demonstrating a significant impact on plant vigor and yield. We continue to ship biochar research supplies to the island to expand our research and we're also researching the feasibility of small/medium-scale biochar production right on the island.

Starfysh is fortunate to have two full-time degreed agronomists on staff: Paul Donn Jean, Starfysh's Director of Agriculture, and Natalie Matthieu whom we hired right out of her agronomy internship last year. Five more agronomy students are currently studying and working at Life Garden. Their activities include teaching basic agronomy classes at elementary schools in the area.

The people that make Life Garden flourish

Life Garden's hard-working staff and interns having a huge impact on the quality of life on La Gonave.

(Left) We continue to provide internships for senior agronomic science students. These five students started in October, studying at our two Life Garden campuses and teaching basic gardening/farming concepts at our area schools. (Center) The Life Garden staff. (Right) The Life Garden staff at the WISH Campus.



Gardening education and seedling distribution

Life Garden aims to provide the seedlings and know-how that will help local farmers flourish and village residents establish home gardens.

(Left and Center) Farmers receive sweet potato vines for their gardens. (Right) This happy farmer got a dozen mango trees from Life Garden to add to his property.



Small-space gardens on the salt flats

Life Garden has helped residents living along the once barren Salt Flats grow home gardens filled with nutritious, life-sustaining food.





Back to School

As in the rest of the world, the coronavirus pandemic forced the shutdown of schools in Haiti last Spring. We are thankful that schools were able to reopen in September, and to date we are seeing no consequence in apparent uptick in covid-like illness. Starfysh currently supports, at different levels, six elementary schools (pre-K to 7th grade), four that receive total operational support (teacher salaries, etc.). We are able to provide daily meals to kids at three of these schools. The other two schools receive partial support (salaries, capital improvements, classroom supplies, etc.) and we are praying that we will someday be able to support them as fully as we do our other four schools.



A recent addition: ESL (English as a Second Language) Class



Jordy Joseph, 23, is currently in his 4th year of medical school. He plans to specialize in pediatrics and then return home to La Gonave to serve his people.

Education will continue to be an important emphasis in Starfysh’s strategy to lift La Gonave out of desperate poverty. Not merely through our funding of schools but by raising up quality, called educators who, in turn, will raise up future Haitian influencers and leaders.

Starfysh’s current investments in educating La Gonave’s future leaders:

- Scholarship for 1 medical school student. Native to La Gonave, Jordy is currently in his 4th year of medical school and, following graduation in 2021, plans to apply to a pediatrics residency. After completion, Jordy has committed to returning to La Gonave to provide medical care to his people.
- Agronomist internships. After a very positive experience in 2019 in providing an internship for an agronomy student (Starfysh ended up hiring her!) Starfysh received another request from the University of Agronomic Sciences in Port-au-Prince, this time for five agronomic internship positions, all of the students from La Gonave. Their term of study with us began in October and will run through May, 2021.
- Two years ago Starfysh began providing entry-level ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. Each class is comprised of approximately 20 students.
- Yearly continuing education seminars for teachers of Starfysh schools. Unfortunately, we were not able to conduct our seminars this past year due to travel restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Village of Makochon

Students

89

Teachers/Staff

9



The Village of Nan Mango

Students

150

Teachers/Staff

13



The Village of Sousaline

Students

37

Teachers/Staff

6



The Village of Troulligene

Students

142

Teachers/Staff

13



The Village of Pikamebe

Students

85

Teachers/Staff

8





One Village at a Time

The large majority of people living on the island live in remote regions, some in the mountains, others along the sea. There is no easy way for those people to get to us. To do so would require several days' journey on foot or by burro. A significant facet of our work on the island, therefore, takes place by "extension," where we go to them. "Community Health Education" is the model that works best in taking education to distant villages where people learn about nutrition, farming, health and hygiene. It is here, too, where people seem most receptive to our message of hope that comes through Jesus Christ.



Over the past twelve months, our community health education efforts have resulted in....

- 696 home visits
- 50 families received a Haitian Creole Bible
- 228 new family latrines constructed
- 100 Creole-language health books distributed
- 20 "Tippy Tap" hand washing stations constructed
- 60 people rejected their voodoo religion and turned their lives over to God.

Tippy Tappy

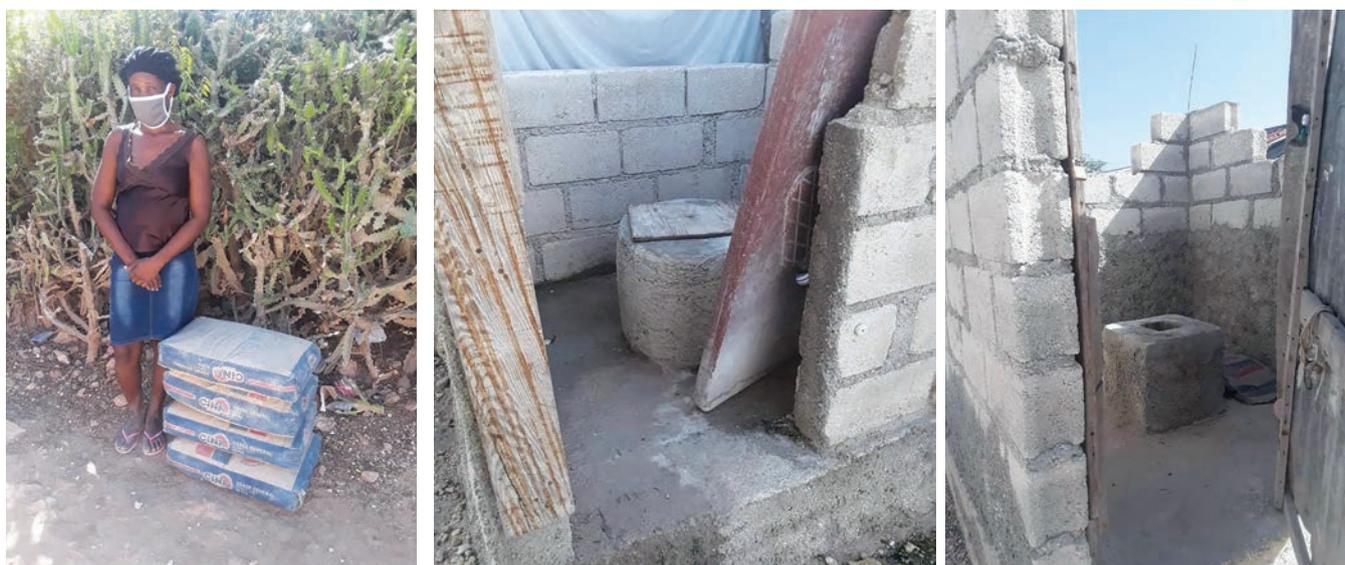
Frequent hand washing is hard in a place where there is no running water. The people of La Gonave must fetch their water from fountains and wells, many walking miles every day to get water. Household water must, of course, be rationed carefully in order for it to last the day. We have been demonstrating the use of "tippy tap" hand washing stations that people can build very easily and inexpensively. Tippy taps make it possible to wash hands using a minimal amount of water.



Latrines

Three out of every four families living in rural Haiti do not have family latrines. The implications are significant in a country where waterborne diseases caused by poor hygiene and sanitation practices are responsible for 20 percent of deaths of under-five children.

In addressing the problem, our strategy is to raise awareness of the serious health consequences of open defecation. Once a family has demonstrated a serious desire for a household latrine by digging a substantial pit, we then provide them with the concrete needed to construct a pit cap and toilet seat. To date, five villages on La Gonave can now boast that 100% of its families have a latrine. This is significant! In addition to the obvious health benefits, research has shown that each dollar invested in sanitation produces over seven dollars in return through improved health and productivity.





Food Insecurity

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, the nation of Haiti was fearing that 2020 might be a year of famine (defined as large populations dying as a direct result of starvation). The past year of civil unrest led to rapid inflation in all economic sectors, especially the food sector. Add to this the COVID-19 pandemic and the delayed arrival of Spring rains, the resultant perfect storm made Haiti's baseline problem of food insecurity (one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world, according to the United Nations) much worse this year.



Starfysh has experienced a significant increase in the number of donations coming in designated for "relief" and, whereas the bulk of our efforts typically center on development projects, this year we could not ignore those who were experiencing severe daily hunger. Planting trees is good and it is important, but it doesn't fill a hungry child's belly.

Over the past 6 months Starfysh distributed sweet potato starts to hundreds of families to plant in their gardens and provided many thousands of nourishing meals to families across the island suffering from severe hunger, tiding them over until their gardens started producing.





How You Can Help

Support comes in many forms, from prayer and work groups, to financial gifts big and small. As we have seen, God brings them all together for enormous combined impact. We value your prayers, support, and generosity as we strive to bring meaningful change to the people of La Gonave, Haiti. Truth is, we have made bold steps of faith, so bold that, unless God shows up, we will certainly fall short of seeing our vision come to reality. Pray not only for Starfysh and for project successes, but also for the people of La Gonave, that they would experience God's mercy and kindness through our presence and our work.

Painless Giving

- **RoundUp App** — Starfysh has partnered with a new mobile app and website that allows you to automatically round up and donate the change from your card purchases to support our work in Haiti. For example, if you were to spend \$1.80 on a cup of coffee, \$0.20 is added to your running tally within the app and donated at the end of the month to the charity of your choice (hint: Starfysh). It's small change for you, but a game changer for us! You can check it out at roundupapp.com or you can search for RoundUp App in the App Store or Google Play Store to download.
- **Amazon Smile** — Shop Amazon? If so, please consider shopping on smile.amazon.com rather than amazon.com. Just login to smile.amazon.com as you would normally do on the regular Amazon website. Designate Starfysh as your charity and shop as you typically shop. Amazon will donate 0.5% of all purchases to Starfysh. No extra cost to you as the shopper. Each time you visit smile.amazon.com from then on, Starfysh will automatically load up as your charity. 0.5% may not seem like much, but multiplied over all of your year's purchases AND knowing that hundreds of Starfysh supporters are doing this it's easy to see how it would add up.
- **Starfysh Website** — Visit our website for online giving, including a monthly giving option which helps us budget and manage regular expenses.

www.starfysh.org



Kay Starfysh

Located in the outskirts of Anse-a-Galets, "Kay Starfysh" serves as the epicenter of our work, where various projects are staged, supplies are stored, and work teams are hosted. It is a large house, comfortably sleeping up to 24 people. We lease the house at the cost of \$9,000 per year, the cost of which is covered by our charges to teams who spend time here. Unfortunately, due to the extraordinary events of 2019-2020 we have not been able to host teams and the annual lease has become an added burden to our expenses. If you or your group would like to underwrite the cost of this year's lease we would be so thankful and it would free up this much more of our normal operations budget to be channeled directly into project efforts.





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Non-Government Organization Status

Fewer than one-in-ten charity organizations in Haiti are officially regarded by the Haitian government as a Non-Government Organization (NGO).



Guidestar Gold Seal of Transparency

Starfysh was awarded the "Gold Seal of Transparency" by Guidestar. Guidestar gathers, organizes, and distributes information about US nonprofit organizations which is made available to potential partners and donors.