

STARFYSH NEWS

NEWS FROM STARFYSH.ORG

FALL 2021



STARFYSH IS WORKING TO BRING HOLISTIC, SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION TO THE ISLAND OF LA GONAVE, HAITI

Dear Friends,

I'm currently en route back to La Gonave where I'll connect with staff and visit some of our project sites. I typically doze on planes but this time my mind won't relax so I thought I'd use the time to write my letter for our upcoming newsletter.

The seat next to me is empty. I wish you were in it! I wish I could take each of you, one-by-one, with me to La Gonave to show you, in-person and on-site, the difference in people's lives that your partnership is making. Farmers, farms. Teachers, classrooms. Kids in school, learning and fed.

We took time at our last board meeting to reflect on the past eleven years and how Starfysh has grown from nothing but an idea, a vision of what might be. We celebrated our wins, recounted the growing pains, and marveled at where God has brought us to today. We are at a much different place than we were when we started, with a strong network of people, businesses, and organizational partners both here and in Haiti. We are significantly more effective and efficient in getting things done. We have momentum. We then pivoted our discussion to consider: how might we now leverage these strengths and momentum to accomplish something big, mountain-moving even, over the next decade?

We are excited for our upcoming event and hope you will make plans to come. It will be a great night, an in-person opportunity for us to look ahead and imagine what mountain-moving ways we will, with God's help be able to bring transformation to this island where 130,000 people struggle to survive. It will also be a great opportunity for you to introduce your family, friends, and co-workers to the work that Starfysh is doing.

I stand amazed at where we've come. Thank you so much for your partnership in helping us get here. Now let's get to work. We have a mountain to move!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Edmondson".

Steve Edmondson

President, Starfysh



**MOVING
MOUNTAINS**

2021 FALL FUNDRAISER

Tuesday, Nov. 9 | 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Prince Conference Center, Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

\$30 per person
\$240 per table (includes 8 tickets)

Tickets available online at starfysh.org

Earthquake

The nation of Haiti suffered two major blows this past Summer, first with the assassination of their President which was followed by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake killing thousands of people and destroying homes, schools, and businesses. The quake destroyed 50,000 homes. It destroyed 173 schools and severely damaged more than 270 others. Access to clean water and sanitary bathrooms is limited which raises the concern for a resurgence of water-borne disease. We are thankful that the earthquake did not result in death or injury on La Gonave, and that we sustained only minor structural damages (cinderblock wall collapses, etc.). The quake did rattle the nerves of all Haitians who remember so well the 2010 earthquake that killed a quarter million people and sent over a million homeless into refugee camps.

One of the great stories of the Summer has been La Gonave's response to the crisis in sending hundreds of thousands of gallons of clean water from her new solar-powered seawater desalination plant over to the earthquake zone. The desalination plant is the result of a partnership between World Hope International, Give Power, and WISH, and we congratulate them for their efforts. La Gonave, traditionally on the receiving end of humanitarian aid efforts is, herself, doing some lifting of her own!

It is our vision to raise the island of La Gonave to a point of self-sufficiency. That she would begin to have the capacity to help raise up her countrymen in times of need is a good indicator that La Gonave is moving in the right direction.





EDUCATION



Summer Teachers Conference

Seventy teachers representing ten schools on the island participated in Starfysh's 2021 Summer Teachers Conference during the week of July 12-16. Despite challenges along the way, including the closing down of entry into and exit from the country in the days prior to the conference (due to the assassination of Haiti's President), the event was conducted on time and without a hitch. Director of Education, Penny Beatty, and International Ministries of Hope Director, Dominique Guerrier, teamed up to lead our most well-attended teachers conference to date.

We started holding teacher trainings in the Starfysh guesthouse several years ago. From the very beginning we realized the high value that La Gonave school teachers place on their own education in their hunger to be more effective in the classroom, preparing students for a more prosperous future. Over time these conferences have grown in size and popularity. When participants began to pack into tight quarters of the guesthouse and spill out onto the guesthouse balcony we knew a move was necessary.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic prevented us from conducting our Summer 2020 event. But by the time this year rolled around we were ready, and with the completion of Life Garden outdoor teaching pavilion we were able to grow the event. The decision to proceed with the conference in the immediate days following the assassination of their President was made with much care and, ultimately, was the decision of our Haitian counterparts.

Each day had a different emphasis in equipping teachers to teach better. Day 1, for example, focused on methods for teaching reading. Penny shares the following account of how the conference began:

"After welcoming everyone and making introductions, we started off with giving condolences for the murder of their President. We talked about how difficult the 2020-21 school year likely was for each of us, but that in all the Covid mess, there were reasons to celebrate. We did something called "Chalk Talk " where we wrote the word "Celebrate" in the middle of a big sheet of paper on each table. The main rule was that teachers could not talk!!! They could just write some things they could celebrate about the past year, they could respond to what others (at their own table) wrote by writing a response to that writing. Finally, when they were done at their table, they then got up, marker in hand, and walked around to READ what others wrote. They still could not talk, but could read and respond in writing to what others had written. There were 10 tables and so people walked around for some time, quietly reading and responding to what they read. We hung these sheets up around the venue and then talked about this activity. It was only meant to be a short conversation around this activity, but it actually started a debate about the value of an activity like this in a classroom and how teachers might use this with an academic concept. It was a much better conversation/debate than I could have planned. At first, some teachers said that they would not use this in their classroom. But then some deep thinkers came up and talked about how this would benefit shy students less likely to share their thinking verbally. Others talked about how an activity like this might deepen the thinking of their students. Others talked about how this could be used as an assessment of student understanding of concepts. What was supposed to be just an opening activity turned out to be so much more than that. This also brought us into the day's topic of reading because it came up how much reading and writing was done in one simple activity."

Other topics of the week included teaching handwriting, phonics, phonemic awareness (sounding out letter to form words, etc), positive discipline, the use of teaching "tools," etc. Life Garden agronomist, Natalie Matthieu, presented a talk about the importance of school gardens which was followed by a field trip to one of our nearby schools that has a handsome garden space and chicken hatchery.

Today, these teachers are back in their own classrooms, preparing young minds for future success in academia, business, and, for some, public service and leadership.

AGRICULTURE



La Gonave, seen faintly in the background, waits expectantly for the delivery of her new fruit tree babies.



Agronomy Interns: We were pleased this past Spring to graduate these six agronomic sciences students from various programs in Port-au-Prince after their 8-month internship experiences at Life Garden.



We are happy that Life Garden has become a popular field trip destination for local students.



432 highly prized breadfruit tree seedlings arrived safely to the Life Garden tree nursery where they will be cared for until they are given to families to plant in their yards and gardens when the rainy season starts next Spring.



If we don't have your email address then you've been missing out on our monthly updates. Send us your email addresses so we can keep you in the loop and you won't have to wait for our Starfysh News newsletter to catch you up.



6757 Cascade Rd. SE #207
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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

www.starfysh.org

 Stay connected. Follow us on Facebook.

