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As we enter the New Year 2016, we celebrate “impact multipliers” – the people, partners, investments and strategies that multiply the impact of ECHO all around the world.

As part of our constant effort to evaluate our activities and effectiveness, we recently conducted a systematic survey of the nearly 10,000 worldwide members of ECHOcommunity. One of the many helpful results of this survey was greater clarity about our network partners and the impact of the ECHO resources that they use. They reported to us that they have directly impacted over 630,000 people with ECHO resources and over 5.8 million people indirectly. (See opposite page for a to-scale graphic) This speaks strongly to both the extraordinary network of partners that we serve AND the value that they assign to the practical and proven plants, practices and technologies that they learn about through ECHO.

We also celebrate Rollie and Barbara Anderson who chose to invest in our capacity to educate and train about appropriate technologies. Their generosity has given birth to the Anderson Appropriate Technology Center at the ECHO-Florida campus – an entirely new venue for demonstrating beneficial technologies and practices in a global village context. Thoughtfully shaped and skillfully developed by Craig Bielema – and his team of workmates, volunteers and advisors – this Appropriate Technology Center will multiply ECHO’s opportunities to both promote and develop technologies that contribute to reducing hunger and improving lives in difficult contexts worldwide.

For some time, ECHO has needed dedicated IT (information technology) workspace and upgraded systems. As more and more of our knowledge resources are disseminated through the internet, we have needed to grow our abilities to develop a steady stream of excellent and readily accessible materials. At the same time, ECHO’s ongoing service as a seed resource continues to be a vital dimension of our work. But embracing the mission of providing trial packets of high quality, beneficial, but less accessible, seeds required a major re-investment in our Florida Seed Bank. In the middle of 2015, a family foundation made a major gift to underwrite both of these impact multiplying projects. The IT build-out has just been completed, and the Seed Bank renovations are underway.

In 2 Corinthians 2:8-15, the Apostle Paul names the reality that God blesses people in order that they can in turn be generous. He continues by saying that this generosity “through us” will result in thanksgiving to God. This is our deep desire – that your generosity will flow through us to bless people around the world in such a way that thanksgiving to God results.

But it doesn’t stop there! Paul continues to say that this thanksgiving will be expressed in prayers and hearts that go out to the givers because of the surpassing grace that God has given them. This sets up a ‘virtuous cycle’ that flows from God’s impetus at every stage. How amazing is that! Paul concludes aptly: “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

Indeed!

David Erickson, President & CEO
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edited by Danielle Flood

Please share your comments about ECHO News. Write: 17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers, Florida, 33917, e-mail: info@echonet.org, or call: 239-543-3246.

ECHO’s Growing Impact

Based of feedback from those who use and share ECHO’s resources, we are able to confidently share that ECHO’s resources and training have impacted 5.8 million people. Each person represented is a success story.
If Rabi’s routine is not your morning routine, it’s extremely hard to understand the daily challenges of providing food, water, and shelter where these resources are scarce.

Now, imagine it’s you pulling the water up from the well and your strength carrying the water? You might wish there were a way that was not so difficult. Fortunately, there are solutions called appropriate technologies. Committed to the training, demonstration, and use of appropriate technologies, ECHO is proud to introduce you to the Anderson Appropriate Technology Center. This newly expanded and redesigned facility will connect trainees and guests with first-hand experiences of the current realities and tools that exist in the areas of food, water, and shelter.

This center will allow ECHO to more deeply engage and educate people about the struggles faced around the world, and develop and share possible solutions to these challenges.

Also new to this space will be the ECHO Appropriate Technology Village Tour. Guests can visit each of the homesteads and see appropriate technologies in place as well as experience how food, water, and shelter resources are used around the world. A trip into the African marketplace features simple ideas for making water pumps and filters. In the Latin American marketplace harvested sugarcane is processed into a final product. The Asian market demonstrates improved cookstoves that increase fuel efficiency while reducing air pollution as well as various types of construction materials.

A highlight of this tour will be the homesites, modeled after rural homes in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is our hope that this new space will inspire and equip people to improve lives around the world through appropriate technologies. We hope you’ll join us and come experience it for yourself!
In January 2016, ECHO celebrated the grand opening of the Anderson Appropriate Technology Center. Over a year before, Rollie and Barbara Anderson caught the vision of ECHO’s mission to reduce hunger and improve lives worldwide and were eager to invest in the expansion and renovation of the facility. Other support came from Kiwanis Clubs of Division 19 and generous volunteers. Preferred Materials Inc. was a generous donor of concrete for the project.

One of the many exciting benefits of this newly-expanded center is the ability for creativity, exploration, and innovation of new appropriate technology techniques. Historically, ECHO has primarily gathered appropriate technologies from farmers and individuals around the world who have experimented and found helpful alternatives to farming methods and sustainable practices. These technologies were then shared broadly through ECHO’s network of agriculturalists and development workers, connecting them with good ideas for improving their communities.

With the implementation of space for development, stations and workshops to encourage ingenuity, and materials for exploration, ECHO now has the opportunity to experiment and create new technologies, deepening ECHO’s experience, knowledge base, and increasing the appropriate technology resources ECHO has to share.

Grand Opening Celebration!

Clockwise from top left: Craig Bielema addresses the crowd; Kiwanis Club representatives pose with ECHO President/CEO David Erickson; African homestead; Rick Burnette, Bruce Boyd, and Damon Shelor experience the handmade bamboo bridge.

Watch
Visit www.echonet.org/echoes to watch a video featuring the grand opening celebration, ribbon cutting, and remarks from the event.
Over the past few years, ECHO partner International Development Innovation Network (IDIN) has provided support to a growing network of community innovation centers around the world. Today, IDIN supports 12 innovation centers in 11 different countries.

Twende, in Arusha, Tanzania, is one of those centers. As a key part of the partnership, they collaborate as an engineering shop and training center where ECHO East Africa can send innovators to develop prototypes of their inventions/innovations. They have welding, presses, drills, lathe machine, hand tools and all manner of steel molding and fitting devices to assist an innovator. They, and their partners, train potential innovators in creative capacity building (CCB), a model of teaching based on sparking innovation in participants. Twende has adopted this approach to help students and other community members to uncover challenges and build technologies to improve their lives as well as the lives of others.

These community members are equipped to design and create innovations — usually with a view to reducing hunger, poverty, and time-consuming work.

Innovation Centers function in many different contexts and cultures, but one common theme is the transformation that happens for an individual who learns to create, and the ripple effect in a community when someone starts to see themselves as a problem-solver. It’s similar to a kind of hometown pride that we can all relate to, a positive force in a community. People start to experience hope, and creative change makers can thrive and make an impact on their communities.

Through partnership with IDIN, ECHO is able to coordinate development and dissemination of these technologies to communities in which we work. ECHO also demonstrates innovations at its Regional Impact Center in Arusha. These demonstrations are more robust and diverse as a result of the partnership with Twende and IDIN.
“My wife, Melissa, and I first learned of ECHO and the training courses offered, after we applied for a position in Zambia, with Presbyterian World Mission. My background is in agriculture and banking, but I wanted to acquire more specific knowledge, which would benefit our work. We looked into the various course offerings and made the decision to attend Tropical Agricultural Development I (TAD I). Our expectations were exceeded, not only with regard to the course materials, but also with the new friends we made, friends who are on a similar journey.”

Charles and Melissa Johnson are helping the Presbyterian Church in Zambia expand its ministry of community development and food security. Charles will serve as an agricultural development specialist, and Melissa will support him in this role. They will focus heavily on developing the Chasefu Model Farm, an agricultural project of Chasefu Theological College. The farm feeds the students and also provides opportunities for future pastors to learn agricultural techniques. The intent is for pastors to be able to supplement their income through farming and share their agricultural knowledge with the communities they serve. Chasefu Farm also provides local farmers opportunities to learn innovative approaches to agriculture. The Johnsons will also work on projects related to clean water, micro-credit, health, and education. “It was after seeing the impact of malnutrition on children we met on previous mission trips to Africa that I began to sense I was being called to use my education and experience in agriculture to work with others in an attempt to alleviate these issues,” Charles says.

“Because of our past short-term mission involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, assisting Pastor Jacky (see photos above) with the installation of drip tape garden beds, Melissa and I were aware in many cases, there isn’t access to materials and supplies used in developed countries, either due to availability, or cost. The Appropriate Technology presentation during TAD I prompted us to register for TAD II Appropriate Technology, to delve deeper into some of the topics we discussed.”

“Melissa and I recommend both of the courses we took at ECHO during 2015. Beyond the knowledge we’ve gained, we have made friends who we remain in contact with, sharing information, resources and experiences, to benefit each other in our work,” says Charles.

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“We pray that our work in Zambia will see new partnerships created which will benefit those we go to serve alongside,” say Melissa and Charles.
what’s happening at ECHO

"Curb Appeal” in West Africa

Ken teaches seed storage technology using a vacuum pump made out of PVC.

Follow us on Instagram for pictures of ECHO’s work all around the world. #echofightshunger

The West Africa Impact Center staff with ECHO President/CEO David Erickson in their curbside demonstration garden. Passers-by are noticing the verdant roadside and are stopping in to find out more about ECHO’s mission!
Spreading The Word

A training and demonstration workshop was held at Ntuk Nti in Cambodia to engage community members in seed-saving techniques, a demonstration of low-cost improved technologies, and a seed swap. 56 participants and 8 ECHO and partner organization staff were involved in the training.

Project Mercy Co-Founder visits ECHO

Deme Tekle-Wold and Bete Demeke of Project Mercy visited ECHO’s Florida Campus to reconnect with ECHO staff, update ECHO on their work with the fruit trees, and share some of the promising results of avocados in the area. The Hass variety does extremely well for them, bearing in less than three years.

2015 Agriculture Conference

Dordt College student Renee Ewald was one of 200 delegates at the 22nd Annual ECHO International Agriculture Conference. She shared, “Thank you for a wonderful conference and a great learning experience. The three days of conference had a profound impact on my perspective towards missions, community development, and agriculture.”
The word permaculture is mentioned with increasing frequency in speeches, books and magazine articles on sustainability and food security. What is permaculture? Is it a movement? A philosophy? Simply a set of design tools?

For almost 35 years, ECHO has highlighted various agricultural approaches — including Foundations for Farming, the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) — that contribute toward improved food security for smallholder farmers. Most recently, an approach known as permaculture, was described by ECHO staff member, Brad Ward, in EDN 129.

The word permaculture, coined by its co-founder Bill Mollison, is formed from the words “permanent” and “agriculture.” The concept of permaculture is difficult to explain in just a few words, because the term is used to describe both a worldview/philosophy for living on the earth and a set of design principles and practices. Bill Mollison emphasized the philosophical aspect in his definition: “Permaculture is a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a single-product system” (Mollison 1988).

Permaculture practitioners and teachers think deeply about natural systems, and especially about human interaction with those systems. Because technology has increased the capacity for humans to make large-scale and rapid changes to entire ecosystems, permaculture practitioners often find themselves on the front lines of a debate that pits extractive greed against the long-term health of the planet. In this way, permaculture joins the larger movement of those who wish to conserve natural systems and mitigate/restore the damage done by decades of unbridled exploitation. Permaculture’s voice in this movement is valuable because it offers positive, actionable design alternatives to the status quo.

Brad’s Story:

My own embrace of permaculture, as both a design tool and a paradigm through which to view good human development, started 11 years ago. As I embarked on a new career as a “community development/agriculture missionary,” and uprooted my family to a new culture and environment, I began to ask myself a very basic question: “What is development for?”

Permaculture is part of the growing community of eco-agriculture disciplines.

I was unsatisfied with initial answers that were based on experience. I could see the truly unsustainable nature of so much that was being called sustainable. I began to look for a different answer. Permaculture provided a new way of thinking about how man could live a productive, abundant life, while nurturing and stewarding creation. I saw that, rather than just sharing a vision, the permaculture literature gave step-by-step instructions for evaluating the natural systems around me and systematically bringing resilience and abundance into those systems. Permaculture design gave me an organized way to look at the big picture, and to plan and test small incremental changes.

Permaculture is good stewardship. For me, it is also a way to work for God’s kingdom. I view permaculture’s ethical pillars through different lenses, so that they become the following: 1) actively love God’s image bearers; 2) diligently steward God’s creation; and 3) live contentedly and joyfully share God’s provision.

**Conclusion:**

Permaculture is part of the growing community of eco-agriculture disciplines. It is rapidly gaining acceptance as a valuable design methodology in both non-government and government institutions across the globe. It is adaptable to every ecosystem and culture, and offers accessible problem-solving tools rather than silver-bullet solutions. It considers the ecosystem and social system as a whole, facilitating good stewardship, and providing a pathway to true sustainability, resilience and abundance.
Lisa Munson, a teacher at Dalat International School in Penang, Malaysia, contacted ECHO Asia a few years ago to request information and order seeds for a school kitchen garden project. She formed an elementary garden club and the students successfully grew the seeds into plants, which included moringa, corn, amaranth, and groundnut. Lisa shared that the most successful growing plants were from the seeds received from ECHO Asia, which had 80 to 90 percent germination per packet, while the seeds she purchased locally only had about 20 percent germination. Apart from growing plants, she also implemented aquaponics (integrated fish with vegetables) and hydroponics (vegetables and nutrient solution) lessons.

The elementary garden club meets once a week, and they learn about good gardening practices as well as learning the principles behind the hydroponics. They have been working on a small portable hydroponics unit, with which they grow two types of spinach: local and Brazilian spinach. Both are growing well. Lisa and the students have also provided support for sharing the hydroponics kit to a refugee school in Penang as a way to help the students there. The refugee school is open mainly for the Burmese Rohyngya refugees who are a large migrant population in Penang. Most of the plants at the refugee school are growing well and the students are assigned roles to care for the plants, which has been a positive opportunity for them. However, due to the issues surrounding the refugee situations, all the plants have to grow behind locked doors; there is a possibility that if plants are grown outside, they would be stolen. Being permanently indoors has caused some of the plants to die, but moringa, basil, and spinach are still growing well. Apart from the hydroponics kit, they also have shared knowledge they have gained about sustainable gardening from their hands-on exploration with Lisa’s guidance.

Currently, Lisa is working on sharing the hydroponics system with the refugee school soon. The school’s science teacher is also working on putting the aquaponics system into the curriculum in order to use it as an extension of a new seed-saving experiment. They have been in contact with ECHO Asia for advice on a good testing season for seeds and good seed varieties to use for experiments.
Did you know that ECHO has helped forests grow in the Sahel? Not by planting trees, but by planting ideas.

Since its beginning, ECHO has been a uniquely positioned organization. While so many others are manning projects in various countries, ECHO maintains the position of an assistance organization to each one of them. It may seem counter-intuitive at times, but this strategy of being the resource organization has given ECHO a far greater impact than if were “on the front lines” ourselves.

ECHO works to equip partner organizations like Beersheba in Mbour, Senegal, to inspire, resource and facilitate the work that they do. Beersheba is drastically changing the Senegalese landscape, as you can see in the photo below. Having allowed their land to regrow and heal, they now work with local farmers exploring ways to farm within the restored landscape while maintaining a functioning ecosystem. Look at the difference inside of the fenceline!

Beersheba's mission is to serve the Senegalese church by training young farmers both spiritually and agriculturally, and they are seeing fruit. When interns leave, they return to their villages “as witnesses, both agriculturally and spiritually, in their own communities.”

ECHO has had a long-term relationship with Beersheba, providing training, staff, ideas, seeds, cuttings, and knowledge whenever possible. Most recently, ECHO staff members had the unique opportunity to pack a trunk of much-needed plants in Florida and deliver them to the Beersheba farm just two days later. These plants will greatly diversify and strengthen Beersheba’s agricultural program.

While ECHO's training focus includes techniques that can be used around the world, Beersheba focuses specifically on what will work best in their soils, their environment, and their social system in Western Senegal. In turn, what they learn gets spread back through the ECHO network to others with similar work conditions.

Beersheba trainees are spreading healthy agricultural practices throughout West Africa, more efficiently than ECHO or Beersheba could do alone. This partnership is a great example of how ECHO's resources are spread, affecting individuals, families, and entire communities.
My name is Patrick Trail, I am currently serving in the Tropical Monsoon demonstration area of ECHO’s Global Farm. I am originally from Louisiana, but grew up on the tiny island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. My family also spent time in Rwanda and Botswana where they served in ministry. I went to Virginia Tech for university and then stayed on to complete a masters degree in Crop & Soil Environmental Sciences. I had the opportunity to do my research in Senegal, where I studied different millet-legume cropping practices.

I am about 9 months into my time here at ECHO and am loving every minute of it! I have had a unique intern experience as we have been completely revamping the Monsoon demonstration area over the past several months. In addition to learning about and working with all of the unique crops we grow here, I have spent considerable time setting up irrigation systems and moving soil to facilitate water management. I have had a hand in many aspects of setting up the infrastructure it takes to do agriculture well. More than anything though, I am so grateful to be surrounded by and learn from staff members that have years of experience on the field working with disadvantaged farmers.

I love that ECHO works to bring together agricultural practices from all over the world, and I get excited when we work to test and verify those practices for new regions. I hope to end up in similar work overseas, where I can help to take on some of the risks of new methods for farmers that may not have the luxury of trying something new or something different. Most importantly, I hope to point people to the Creator as we work together in the world He has created. 🌿
Gifts Anyone Can Make

Every day, generous givers like yourself support the ministry of ECHO with their time, money and talents. We are so thankful for you!

Through Planned Giving, donors can enjoy specific tax advantages, often allowing them to make larger gifts than they may have thought possible. Planned gifts to ECHO provide long-term financial stability to our mission, creating a wonderful legacy, improving their lives for generations to come.

The Promise of Your Planned Gifts

Planned gifts demonstrate your intent to provide for the future of ECHO while meeting your current needs. We are available to discuss your personal financial situation in confidence, answer questions you or your financial advisors may have, provide more in-depth information about the organization, and offer other related assistance. Through ECHO's partnership with the National Christian Foundation, you can benefit from diverse giving resources as we better serve your needs.

The Legacy Society

The purpose of the Legacy Society is to honor the gifts and legacies of our family and friends with appropriate displays of gratitude and stewardship for their charitable plans that provide for ECHO’s mission.

Your charitable planning may have already qualified you to be a member. We would be grateful to hear from you, or work collaboratively, and in confidence with you and your advisors toward making such a gift possible.

Contact Us

For more information about tax-advantaged and planned giving, please contact Ali Diaz, Donor Services Manager 239.567.3309 or adiaz@echonet.org.

The pummelo is the largest citrus in the world as its botanical name implies, Citrus Grandis. It is most commonly cultivated in Malaysia and the Indo China region, thriving mainly in the tropical lowlands but will produce in sub-tropical areas. The pummelo in ground at ECHO produces several times a year.

The pummelo is a distant relative of the grapefruit that we are so used to, but differs in several ways. The actual size of the pummelo is a little bigger than a good-sized grapefruit, but sources state that some varieties become basketball sized. Characteristic of the pummelo is its thick rind that measures to about an inch to an inch and a half, but once peeled there is a fruit that resembles a good sized grapefruit. Depending on the variety the flesh can be juicy to dry, acid to sweet, and seeded to seedless. One thing that the pummelo lacks is the bitterness that is inherent to grapefruits.

As a landscaping tree, it is a bushy spreading evergreen that can grow to fifteen feet. It is quite similar to the grapefruit tree with shiny dark green leaves but bears a larger leaf and fruit.

You may have a hard time finding a pummelo in your local grocery store since it is a rare fruit. But you may want to try your luck at an oriental market or store. If not available there, you can visit ECHO when our pummelo tree is in season (February to March) to get a taste. You may even want to try to plant one in your own yard.

Give a gift that will last a lifetime!

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in their own words...

“We are proud to announce ECHO has earned our fifth consecutive 4-star rating. Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organization adheres to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way. Only 6% of the charities we rate have received at least 5 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that ECHO outperforms most other charities in America. This “exceptional” designation from Charity Navigator differentiates ECHO from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.”

—Michael Thatcher, President and CEO, Charity Navigator, www.charitynavigator.org