in this issue:  chaya fights drought in Zimbabwe  •  new coffee network in Asia  
mainstream moringa  •  new property, new opportunity  •  intern spotlight: Nathan Lim
“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5

Over the past few months, especially, the verse above has been my “go-to” verse. Over and over I am aware of my need for wisdom and this verse reminds me that the needed wisdom is available for the asking. And God does not begrudge my neediness or my asking. It is wonderful, comforting, and amazing!

Of course, there is no shortage of situations that could be handled better with a measure of wisdom and grace. These situations can’t be overlooked or ignored – they are important and they matter.

However, there are other situations that clearly require wisdom. Most of them seem to come in the form of opportunities. Right now, ECHO has an abundance of opportunities! It is a great problem to have…a privilege, really. And yet there are important decisions to be made. We can’t say ‘yes’ to many of these opportunities as much as we would like to do so. Some may not actually be best for the ongoing mission of ECHO and our service to development practitioners around the world. We need wisdom!

Of course, this wisdom comes in many different ways. Proverbs says that there is wisdom in many counselors, and we are blessed with wise counselors on our Board of Directors, our global staff, financial supporters, volunteers, partner organizations, and more. There is wisdom in operating within our means while lifting up a grounded vision for what is possible. There is wisdom in applied knowledge and experience. There is wisdom in prayer and Biblical principles of stewardship, transparency and accountability. There is wisdom in trusting that God is at work in the midst of our circumstances and opportunities.

There is also wisdom in staying grounded in the realities of the small scale farmers and their families – the people we aim to serve around the world.

The first story in this issue of ECHO News (beginning on page 3) is one of these “grounding” stories. It brings us face-to-face with a developing drought-fueled human disaster. It reminds us that God was at work through ECHO 20 years ago to prepare people and build resilience for a time such as this. It reveals the high cost of dysfunctional governments that seem to be uncaring or incapable of helping communities in distress. It gives prominence to an opportunity for ECHO to be more deeply engaged with Africa University in Zimbabwe. It drives home the life and death stakes that are involved in our work all around the world.

Thank you for partnering with us as we work to resource and equip people working with small-scale farmers in more than 170 countries. Thank you for praying with us – that we will know true wisdom and follow it. Thank you for thoughtfully considering and responding to opportunities to participate financially in the ongoing impact of ECHO – enabling us to benefit over 5.8 million people.

With your partnership and God’s wisdom, let’s continue reducing hunger and improving lives all around the world!

Sincerely,

David Erickson, President & CEO
in their own words...

East Africa Intern Jimson Mbwiga (below, right) shared recently about his time at ECHO:

“ECHO East Africa is an interesting place to learn and work. As an intern for the past months since I joined ECHO East Africa, I have learned a lot about crops, trees, seed saving, grafting, planting and harvesting. It’s a good place for those who are interested in agriculture and appropriate technologies.

The impact of ECHO work is encouraging and touching especially for anyone who would like to do community development work that helps in hunger and poverty reduction.”

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.
Margaret Tagwira is worried. Not worried for herself, though things are tough for her family as well, but for the dozens of extended family members whose wells are running dry and whose gardens and fields have not produced enough. For two years in a row, the rainy season in Mutare, Zimbabwe, seems to have forgotten to come, and many people are struggling.

“Drought had already begun and I had already lost the crop that my husband and myself had planted. We replanted and lost the crop again. The moisture levels of the soil were very low and the punishing heat waves which came one after another sapped all the energy that people had. It felt like the sun had moved many miles closer to earth,” reflects Margaret Tagwira.

In the Mutare region, average rainfall is 31.7 inches of rain per year, primarily falling between November and February. Record low rainfall and higher than average temperatures have withered crops and negatively impacted harvests.

A 56 percent drop in harvested maize means that 1.5 million people in the country’s rural areas are facing hunger, according to the Zimbabwe Financial Gazette. With high fuel costs and climatic shock, less land is being cultivated for crops. The World Food Programme adds: “In Zimbabwe,
where drought is the most common climatic threat to agricultural production, only 7.6 percent of farmers practice conservation agriculture.”

**Africa University**

Fanuel and Margaret Tagwira are two of the small percentage of farmers practicing conservation agriculture in Zimbabwe, but they are passionate about seeing that number grow among their country’s rural farmers. Fanuel and Margaret live a few miles from Africa University, and in their yard they have experimental gardens that anyone who has been to the Global Farm would recognize as “inspired by ECHO.”

The Tagwiras are also on staff at the United Methodist-related university. Fanuel is the Emeritus Vice Chancellor and a Professor of Soil Sciences. Margaret began working with the University as a laboratory technician in 1992 and is now a staff lecturer on subsistence nutrition who also teaches about raising mushrooms for food and profit.

**The ECHO Connection**

Margaret was introduced to ECHO through Co-Founder Dick Dugger in the early nineties. In 2005, Margaret visited ECHO’s Florida campus (then the only campus) and went home inspired and not the least bit empty-handed. She went home with chaya cuttings, Moringa seeds, and a passion for amaranth grain and its potential for the people of Zimbabwe.

In 2009, ECHO’s then Executive Director Dr. Martin Price was invited to Africa University to consult with the staff on the feasibility of creating a Small Farm Resource Development Center. This deepened the relationship between the Tagwiras and ECHO.

Though Margaret’s work was in the lab, her passion was seeing her research help her fellow Africans. “Research in a university is of no use unless it is going to benefit the people who need it most,” she said.

Her desire to reach out continues today. In lieu of a welfare or social security program, many cultures rely on family ties to weather the challenges of life. Margaret has a strong network of family members that rely on each other, especially this year.

“Research in a university is of no use unless it is going to benefit the people who need it most,” says Margaret Tagwira, Professor and ECHO champion in Zimbabwe.

“Rainfall in Mutare, Zimbabwe has been drastically lower than average for two years. Corn plants, such as this plant documented by Margaret Tagwira, are not resilient enough to survive the drought.”

Development Center. This deepened the relationship between the Tagwiras and ECHO.

“The moment I realized the danger that people were in as a result of this year’s drought, I started sending Chaya cuttings to family members every time I had an
opportunity to meet with them. I take dried Moringa leaves whenever I visit and I take with me ingredients to prepare meals using the dried leaves. This very night in my home, I have two ladies who travelled over 100 miles to get Chaya planting materials. We have prepared their cuttings and they leave first thing in the morning.' Margaret shared in an email.

**ECHO Seeds Spread**

Margaret started her first Moringa plot with seeds and information from ECHO, and many organizations, in particular non-governmental organizations like Environment Africa got seeds from the trees she grew. She distributed seeds to students, community members and anybody who cared to pass by her office and ask for seeds. Many students sent seeds back to their families during their years at the University.

We may never be able to measure all of the ways the ongoing work of the Tagwiras, Africa University, and ECHO’s resources have impacted rural farmers. But it is clear that through Margaret and Fanuel, and their selfless work, families in Zimbabwe are reducing the impact of failed harvests, and lives are being saved.
Have you shopped at your local health food store recently and seen little packets of dried Moringa available for sale? Or noticed the supplements, energy bars or teas extolling Moringa's health benefits? Or seen it mentioned in research as one of the newest superfoods on American shelves? Moringa has even been called "the new kale" in efforts to promote its health properties.

But if you know ECHO, then you already know Moringa oleifera, otherwise known as the Miracle Tree or, simply, Moringa. It's "old news" at ECHO, but good news for its sustainability and potential in increasing the well-being of the poor around the world. For Americans, Moringa may simply join other forgotten foods as an addition to their diet—somewhat like the emergence of superfoods like chia, quinoa, or kale. For much of the developing world, Moringa offers so many more benefits:

- It grows fast, requires little water, is disease and insect resistant, and lives a long time. Resilience in marginal growing conditions makes it especially useful for small-scale farmers and global households.
- Every part of the tree (or shrub if kept trimmed) is useful, much of it for food, medicines, or to purify water.
- Leaves and seed pods are supercharged sources of vitamin C, iron, potassium, vitamin A, and calcium.\(^1\)
- Seeds consist of 42% oil, which can be used for cooking, as biofuels for machinery lubricants, fertilizer, antibacterial ointments, and skin conditioners.
- Seeds can be used to purify water by settling out particles and killing 90% of bacteria.
- Roots taste like horseradish when ground.
- Flowers, young pods, and small seeds can be eaten or made into teas.
- Wood makes paper pulp, and its bark has fibers to make ropes. Sap from its bark is used in medicines.
- It makes excellent animal forage and green manure.

So while researchers continue to find new uses for Moringa, and marketers continue to extol its benefits, ECHO remains focused on its decades-old commitment to promoting Moringa as a tree with life-saving properties for people who are hungry.

ECHO’s little packages of Moringa seeds have been known to produce hundreds of thousands of seeds for distribution. Stories from ECHO partners continue to tell of its life-saving properties and ability to build good health by strengthening immune systems. Whole villages have credited Moringa leaves and tea with saving lives and increasing health.

We knew it all along: Moringa is, indeed, a superfood—a gift from God to the world! 

\(^1\)Jed Fahey, a nutritional biochemist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has been studying Moringa for 20 years. He believes that Moringa, like other cruciferous vegetables, provides chemoprotection and can help guard against cellular damage that contributes to cancer and other chronic diseases.
what’s happenin

Dr. Jane Goodall and 50 students visited ECHO East Africa Impact Center to learn about agriculture for small-scale farmers.

#echofightshunger

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

Farmer-to-Farmer in Burkina Faso

122 training participants in Burkina Faso are praising the qualities of ECHO-led farmer-to-farmer trainings held in their community.
Across West Africa, hands-on farmer-to-farmer trainings have proven to be effective. Groups are usually limited to about 30 farmers, but due to enthusiasm, recent trainings have included more than 50 participants.

These events cover a wide range of agricultural practices, underutilized crops, and appropriate technologies such as Foundations for Farming (FFF), family gardens, Moringa, biogas, and small-scale livestock.

Biochar for clean water!

ECHO Asia staff, and partner organization Pun Pun, traveled to Mae Ai to host a biochar water filter training and installation at two churches. With the biochar water filters, more than 500 children and adults in these villages will be able to access clean and safe drinking water.

Sack Garden Demonstration

Seed Storage in Asia

The ECHO Asia Seed Bank staff have been busy building a new Seed Bunker (right) and an Earthen Jar (left) Seed Storage Space, options for seed storage that are both appropriate and affordable for communities in this region. We will start recording data in these two new locations soon to share information with our network.
At ECHO, we take education seriously, but we also know that learning can be extremely fun!

Our annual Global Food & Farm Festival was no exception. Families participated in educational activities. Gardeners learned how to manage Florida’s unique growing challenges. People who enjoy cooking attended cooking shows with samples available for tasting. Those concerned about world hunger saw demonstrations of how ECHO is testing sustainable solutions. Nature lovers enjoyed touring the lush, serene 55-acre farm filled with mature plantings, experimental gardens and small farm animals.

Educational workshops covered topics such as Propagating Fruit Trees, Earthworms and Vermiculture, Landscaping with Edible Plants, Fertilizer Basics, Permaculture in the Suburbs, Multi-purpose Ground Covers for Tough Places in the Landscape, Perennials and other Vegetables for Summer Gardening in Southwest Florida, and In-Garden Composting with Worm Towers. Special tours featured ECHO’s bamboo and fruit tree collections.

For junior nature enthusiasts and dreamers alike, we featured an interactive Imagination Playground that housed all of the essential materials for building and creating. With cardboard boxes, milk jugs and coffee cans to inspire creativity, rocket ships and trains seemed to be the most popular creations. When finished, the young travelers could venture with their families to the Petting Parlor to interact with the goats. While walking, guests enjoyed seeing some of our special Festival attendees: pigs, bunnies, and wandering ducks.

If you weren’t one of over 2,800 guests that attended this year, we invite you to visit next year’s event on March 25th, 2017. Spend a fun day on the farm while also being part of the movement to care for creation, our fellow man and the environment around us while reducing hunger and improving lives.
Angela (Nelson) Burleigh ’01 lives in Orlando with husband Brian, an elementary school teacher. In 2015, she graduated from Reformed Theological Seminary with a MA in Counseling and is now working as a counselor in Orlando. If you know any missionaries or development workers who could benefit from Skype counseling, check out her bio at TheRestInitiative.com

Jason and Jenna Weigner ’08 welcomed their third son, baby boy Ezer Cruz, just after returning to Bolivia in late 2015. They are helping to start a Discipleship Center for indigenous, rural people groups. The center will also focus on developing life skills such as sustainable agriculture. Jason will be helping set up the training farm and is already starting trees to go in the ground. Jenna is putting her recently attained Masters in Midwifery to use serving pregnant mothers.

Jonathan Ribich ’13 is working with a Native American food sovereignty program, Bad River Food Sovereignty, in northern Wisconsin. The program is located on the Bad River Reservation and is run by the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa. He is the fundraising and resource development coordinator, a one-year-position through Americorps VISTA.

Tim Wills ’08 is currently working at Universal Orlando Resort as a horticulturalist. See his work on these topiaries in Seuss Landing.

Intern alumni/ae, please let us know what you’ve been up to, and we’ll print the news! Send submissions to dflood@echonet.org.
From a nominal five acres of rented land in 1981, the ECHO Florida campus has grown steadily to meet the needs of this expanding international organization. Through the years, neighboring plots of land have come available as homeowners sell their property. And each time God has graciously provided – through many of you – the financial resources to seize these opportunities to grow ECHO’s space.

For the last 10 years, the ECHO campus has had a “keyhole” shape, as one parcel of land remained privately owned between the ECHO Global Farm and visitor housing. In many different ways, this “gap” was a challenge to the full, effective, and efficient utilization of parts of our campus. This parcel, highlighted in red below, is the “gap” property that recently came available for purchase. Through negotiations and prayer, ECHO and the property owners agreed upon a substantially reduced and reasonable purchase price.

As word of this opportunity was circulated, a groundswell built. In just a few short weeks, 22 generous individuals and families contributed the funds needed to buy the property outright, pay the closing costs, and finance the site work needed to integrate the space into the rest of the ECHO campus. Once again God graciously provided – through many of you – and we were able to close on the property on April 1st!

We are so grateful for this opportunity, and the support that enabled us to seize it. This new potential grazing and growing space will enhance the training and equipping that we do at ECHO Florida for years to come. 🌿
Developing the skill of cupping coffee in order to evaluate its quality and unique characteristics is essential in helping ECHO network members succeed in endeavors to empower smallholder farmers. The end goal is to equip these farmers with the knowledge needed for high-value specialty coffee production.

The first ECHO Asia coffee cupping was organized on March 10, 2016, at the Torch Coffee Lab in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Zachary Price, ECHO Asia Technical Advisor and Q-grader (certified coffee cupper), led the activity and also shared knowledge about the SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America) cupping protocols, coffee processing, and tasting.

The purpose of this event was to host local ECHO network members, nonprofits, and business owners who work with smallholder coffee farmers—in order to share knowledge and skills needed in evaluating coffee. Each participant was asked to bring 100 grams of light roasted coffee beans for the cupping in order to analyze the quality of the beans and to discuss the attributes of each coffee.

“It was my very first experience in joining a coffee cupping workshop. I found it very useful for a beginner like me because what I learned helped me to test and taste coffee better. I can also start doing my own cupping with more confidence. It would be great if there were other workshops on how to evaluate coffee. I definitely will join them in order to expand my knowledge in this area” said Sawang Thongdi, community activist and owner of Nomad Coffee.

ECHO Asia is working to support and strengthen the capacity of our network members in Asia where high value niche crops, such as coffee, have become of economic importance. When ECHO network members understand how to produce and evaluate quality coffee, it will enable them to speak up for fair treatment of smallholder farmers within the coffee industry, and guide these farmers to a more sustainable path. ECHO Asia Technical Advisor Zach Price works with NGOs and coffee business owners who assist smallholder farmers to provide both knowledge and skills that they can, in turn, share with the farmers. Future trainings centered on topics such as best agricultural practices for coffee production, coffee processing methods, and coffee evaluation are all a part of ECHO Asia’s plans to better equip our network.

After receiving positive feedback from this first cupping, we are planning to organize more events that will also incorporate other topics for both the coffee beginner and professional. One participant stated that the cupping event did not last long enough – by offering expanded events in the future we can provide more training opportunities! 📌
My name is Nathan Lim, and I work in the Semi-Arid area of the Global Farm. I am originally from Maryland and attended to the University of Maryland where I studied agriculture economics. I was exposed to the production of food in college and have seen so many phases of life tied to growing food.

The past couple of months have gone so fast for me. One big thing that I am constantly reminded of is that ultimately no matter how much knowledge and understanding we have, ultimately our trust should be in our Father who is in charge of it all.

I came to ECHO to learn how to farm in the tropics. I worked on farms and learned about agriculture in college, so I thought I knew what I was doing. Then I went to the Philippines, where I was given a job managing a farm. I realized how different it was and that more training was needed in small scale tropical farming. This fueled my interest in ECHO’s internship program.

I appreciate ECHO choosing me to be a part of the intern program. The staff, interns, and volunteers have made a great impact on me through the conversations I have had with them and just seeing the way they work. Community living and working with the former ECHO Farm Manager, Danny Blank, at a farmer’s market have been two defining experiences for me. Living in community has its joys and challenges and seeing how to serve your family in Christ has shown me how much I still need to grow. Every day I know I can always come home to a good laugh because life on a farm is never boring. Working with Danny Blank at a farmer’s market on Saturdays has been such an eye opener. While there is much help and resources for farmers to grow food. It is not as easy to then find a market and sell what you have at a price that fairly represents what it take to grow it. With this new knowledge I hope to pursue the food distribution side after my time at ECHO and serve in southeast Asia.
Charitable Gifts Corner

“What can I realistically do now?”

It’s natural to wonder this when juggling expenses and taking care of family members, while also desiring to make a lasting, legacy impact. If providing sustainable hunger solutions with ECHO is something you want to be part of for decades to come, Beneficiary Designations are one way to do that, while receiving your accounts’ benefits and distributions during your lifetime.

As individuals plan for their loved ones and their favorite charitable organizations, Beneficiary Designations of assets – including bank & brokerage accounts, life insurance plans, 401(k)s, IRAs, and Donor Advised Funds – can direct all or portions of remainders to named recipients. Multiple beneficiaries are allowed, as are Contingency Beneficiaries should your primary beneficiary not survive you.

These gifts can be easily set up for free by asking for a beneficiary form from plan administrators, HR representatives, or financial institutions. They do not require an estate planning service nor executor. Designations can be reviewed or adjusted at any time for any reason should circumstances change.

Benefits

Beneficiary Designations can be used in place of, or in conjunction with, a Will. Beneficiary Designations supersede designations named in a Will, should a donor have both. Designations named to a 501(c)3 organization like ECHO would be tax free, whereas portions to heirs other than spouses would be taxed.

For information on your Beneficiary Designations, contact your asset administrators. To learn more about Planned Gifts to ECHO, contact us at 239.567.3309 or visit http://echonet.org/gift-options

Even with our world’s fluctuating conditions, ECHO will continue its mission established in 1981 to, through the gathering and dissemination of research and best practices, equip people with agricultural resources to reduce hunger and improve the lives of the poor.
The gift of a sheep!

At a training in Burkina Faso in March, one of the participants was particularly touched by the humility of the ECHO staff and their teaching style that allowed even people who did not attend school to understand and to put into practice what they had learned. He concluded by saying “people of the city have no consideration for us when they come to the village, but as for you ECHO, you have been different, you are so humble and so good with us.”

Another one was really pleased and appreciated the tools and the methods used by ECHO. He said: “everything you teach is based on tools available to us”.

At the end of the training, the village chose to give a sheep as a gift to ECHO to recognize their hard work. They were then asked to deliver this gift to the head of ECHO and thank him. We pass along the gift and thanks to you!

Thank you for equipping farmers in Burkina Faso through ECHO!

P.S. ECHO staff members confessed to the villagers that they were not very sure that this sheep could reach the ECHO Director in Florida and that his travel might be limited to Ouagadougou.