



ECHO[®] NEWS

volume 42 | issue 4

honoring God through sustainable hunger solutions



in this issue: the ripple effect ♦ transformation takes root
a seat at the table ♦ Biblical basis: holistic witness ♦ intern spotlight: Erica Shoenberger

Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy! Psalm 126:5



David Erickson, President/CEO

Dear Friends,

Warning – it's contagious!

Hope, opportunity, provision, and joy – they pulse through the stories in this issue of *ECHO News*. While disease, dysfunction, fear, or despair are the contagions we usually hear about, it doesn't have to be this way. From the small Malian village of Sanekuy, hope spread and people flocked to an ECHO training. For Rebecca, Ron and Greg, they've caught the vision of giving-back and making a difference and are generously lending their experience and wisdom to ECHO's Board of Directors. A one-week training for 34 gardeners in a Rwandan church community demonstrated practices that could provide desperately-needed food and nutrition. The results were contagious and have spread to more than 500 families in the past year.

Hope, opportunity, and provision – often planted in contexts of suffering and sorrow – have given rise to joy ... pure and simple joy!

Joy in planting the nutritious and drought-resistant spinach bush called chaya. Joy in joining with neighbors to make a yield-boosting pile of compost. Joy in introducing school kids to worm compost. Joy in an abundance of learning, including how to put God first in everything we do.

Enjoy reading this issue of *ECHO News*. I suspect that you will "catch" some of the hope, opportunity, provision, and joy. And when you do, please join us in giving thanks to the Lord and spread it to someone else!

In Joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Erickson'.

David Erickson,
President/CEO

PS You can make a difference – help us spread the word! Will you share your issue of *ECHO News* with a friend? We are praying for more people to learn about ECHO's mission and join with us in providing life-changing hope to families worldwide!

ECHO exists to follow Jesus by reducing hunger and improving lives worldwide through partnerships that equip people with agricultural resources and skills.



Cover photo: Jacques Sedogo shared his banana production with the ECHO trainer that came to his village.

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edited by Danielle Flood

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in this issue



the ripple effect

3 a seat at the table

9 transformation takes root

11 intern spotlight

13

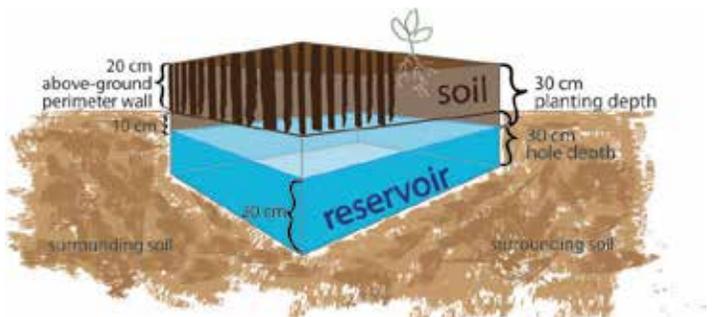
“100-fold garden” wicking bed conserves water

One innovative solution that ECHO is sharing and demonstrating is the 100-fold garden, a type of wicking bed. This is a highly efficient way of supplying water and nutrients to vegetables on raised beds. They keep the soil from drying out and supply moisture as plants need it. Other growth-promoting benefits include reduced weed growth, good air circulation for minimizing plant diseases, and access to sunlight.

Making 100-fold gardens includes an initial modest cost for materials and labor. However, once established, the beds require little effort to maintain. Gardeners

can easily determine when it is time to add water to the reservoir, and they need to water the gardens less frequently than they would with conventional beds that rely on surface irrigation.

Wicking beds are an excellent option for dry areas or dry times of the year.



The Ripple Effect

By Zach Walker

Through ECHO training efforts, the village of Sanekuy, Mali gained the knowledge to better their agriculture, their unity, and their livelihood.

As a child, Tim Albright would race his friend, Gabriel, to finish hoeing a row of millet. The 100 degree sun beat on his back as he hunched over and swung the metal tool to loosen the soil. Arms churned as each boy sought to the title of victor.

“It was significant for me to know ... that friends that I had grown up with and their family members are ultimately being equipped,” Albright said.

missionary parents. “It was significant for me to know ... that friends that I had grown up with and their family members are ultimately being equipped,” Albright said.

More than 30 years later, a different kind of victory was achieved. But this time, it took a village.

Between 2014 and 2019, ECHO held three trainings in Sanekuy, Mali, the West African village where Albright, COO of ECHO, lived for 18 years with his

In the 1970s, those friends and family members were fed by millet, sorghum, peanuts and beans resulting from labor like Albright’s childhood race.

More than 30 fruit trees dangled mangoes, grapefruits and sugar apples behind his family home.

During Albright’s upbringing, Sanekuy relied on the season’s harvest to survive, with farmers holding the highest social rank above blacksmiths and musicians.

Each yield was governed by a season of rain that would wash over crops from late April through October at predictable intervals. Produce would be harvested from the soil as an annual gift from the showers.

Come 2014, Sanekuy still leaned on agriculture. But production had slowed. The rainy season had shortened and rain showers were intermittent and unreliable.

When it did rain, it flooded. Streams of water washed away layers of topsoil, leaving only hard dirt undesirable for farming.

The farmers knew their craft. ECHO helped them to adapt.

Two trainers based in the ECHO West Africa Impact Center in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso traveled to Sanekuy in June of 2014, equipped with farming supplies, a wealth of agricultural knowledge and the mission to provide a sustainable source of food and income to those in need.

They taught the Foundations for Farming (FFF) process to 24 farmers and leaders, including the village chief. “You want people who already had the reputation of being a good farmer and who take risks,” Albright said.

Due to unstable topsoil and intermittent rainfall, the traditional farming technique of vertical rows has failed to produce in abundance. ECHO strategies were crafted to adapt to these conditions.



Tim Albright, ECHO’s COO, and his friend Na’ua from Sanekuy, Mali



Participants wave after finishing a layer of compost during a training. The number of trainees was more than seven times that of the 2014 training. "People found out about the training and had seen the impact throughout the region," Albright said. "It was nuts. We expected to train about 50 people, but 190 showed up."

Tasks were demonstrated such as digging small holes to trap moisture during dry spells, mixing animal waste with leaves, dirt and water to make liquid manure and laying out a grid of plants using rope rulers marked with bottle caps clamped every 30 centimeters.

After three days, the ECHO team departed the village and left the people of Sanekuy to put their new knowledge to work.

Many adopted the strategy and dug holes in their fields come the next rainy season. Some rejected the new method for fear of being ridiculed for straying from tradition.

"When you introduce something that's brand new, that's different from anything you've ever done before, sometimes it's really difficult for people to fully implement," Albright said. "They had such great faith and respect for the way things have always been done."

In 2016, the ECHO West Africa team returned to Sanekuy for a follow-up assessment.

Due to unstable topsoil and intermittent rainfall, the traditional farming technique of vertical rows has failed to produce in abundance. ECHO strategies were crafted to adapt to these conditions.

A cornerstone of the ECHO process, the assessment allows for training results to be examined and applied to future research. The work of those impacted is paramount to the continuation of teaching, and the study of that work enables ECHO to spread additional knowledge.

As part of the assessment, the ECHO team met Simeon Keita, a veteran farmer and the pastor of Sanekuy who decided to employ FFF in his cotton field.

In years past, his cotton grew two to three feet tall, or to his knee. After planting seeds using ECHO's method, the stalks reached his chest.



Keita sold the cotton at a local market in exchange for cash. With the extra income, he bought a car. The royal blue paint was worn and the bumper was rusted, but it worked. He furthered his ministry with his new purchase. The four-door rumbled down dirt roads and parked in villages across the region where Keita would preach.

“When I was a kid, there were no cars,” Albright said. “Now, there are maybe four or five. And he owns one of them.”

In 2018, Albright returned to Sanekuy on a personal trip. He walked the dirt paths with his childhood friend, Na’ua, to observe the impacts of FFF.

Albright passed his childhood home toward fields of cotton and millet and sorghum. Na’ua led him to a farm where two fields were planted six feet apart. In one field, millet was planted using traditional farming techniques. In the other, FFF was employed.

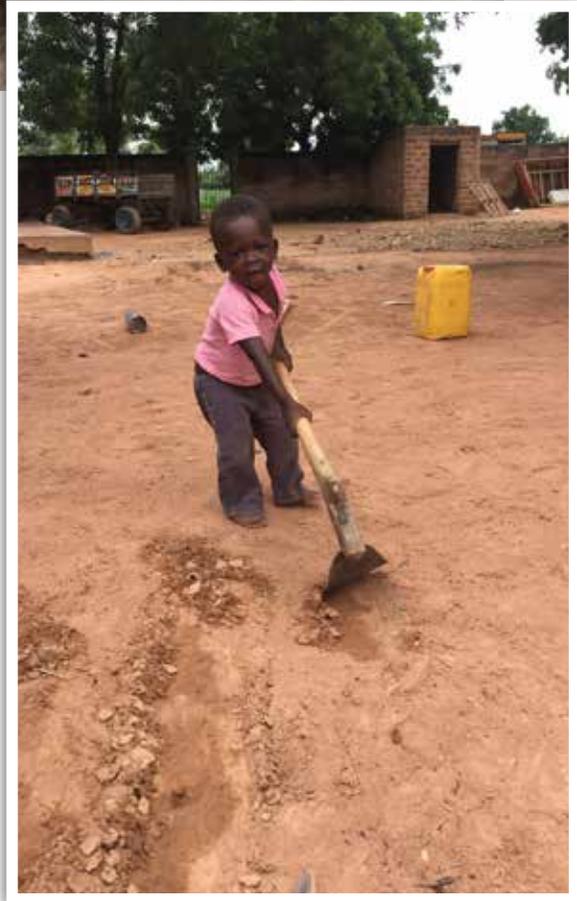
The traditional field reached Na’ua’s ankle. But when he stood amongst the FFF crop, it covered his face.

A second training was conducted in March 2019. ECHO hoped to reach a larger portion of Sanekuy as only 24 people had been trained in 2014. Between the two trainings, the ECHO West Africa team was equipped with a more detailed version of FFF and underwent two weeks of training before departing for Sanekuy.

Once they reached the village the goal was to train 50 people — 190 showed up. Most of the trainees hailed from Sanekuy. An additional bus load drove more than 65 miles from the town of Kimparana.

Both men and women attended the training, and locals were hired to cook for the extra guests, resulting in community meals of rice, beans and porridge.

“There’s ... a unification of the village,” Albright said. “And not only that, but seeing it extend to other villages. It’s this ripple effect from this one little training pebble that dropped into Sanekuy.”



A Sanekuy child scrapes the dirt with a hoe in the same manner that Albright did in his race against Gabriel. The soil in Sanekuy is sandy and vulnerable to erosion. “A lot of the rains were like flash floods,” Albright said. “The water would just take off that topsoil!”

Word of the training spread across the region. When a Sanekuy man riding his motorbike past another village saw a farmer attempting the FFF method incorrectly, he pulled over and offered a hand.

“There’s ... a unification of the village,” Albright said. “And not only that, but seeing it extend to other villages. It’s this ripple effect from this one little training pebble that dropped into Sanekuy.”

That pebble created a wave. A wave of sustainable food sources to keep bellies full, additional income to buy a car and preach the gospel, improved village healthcare, money for school fees and college tuition, and even just a couple extra cows and pigs to escape the grips of poverty.

Back in Florida, Albright received a call from Na'ua. The village chief wanted to express his thanks for ECHO's long-term training partnership.

"You will never understand how impactful this was in people's lives," were the chief's words.

As a boy, Albright learned how to farm by racing his friend to the end of a millet row. But the environment changed. And new knowledge had to be spread.

Rows turned to holes. And Sanekuy claimed its victory. 🌱



Simeon Keita stands in his cotton field which he planted using FFF. Although the training focused on other crops such as sorghum and millet, Keita decided to apply it to cotton as well. "He's a risk taker," Albright said. "He doesn't mind trying something new."



A group of Sanekuy women peel and chop shallots in a village square. The people of Sanekuy also provided food during the trainings. "It's important that people contribute in some way to add value to it," Albright said. "Although knowledge is extremely valuable, there's something else when you participate, rather than just getting a handout."

what's happenin



Interns on the Florida farm harvested rice in late September. Gaining hands-on experience equips interns to serve internationally in the future.

#echofightshunger



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



Staff take a break during an intensive two-day training on implementing ECHO's new Core Training Resources. The rare opportunity to bring global staff together at ECHO Florida allowed us to invest in building our training capacity and skills. ECHO trainers work diligently to create practical learning opportunities that can be easily passed on as trainees become trainers.

Spreading Best Practices in Tanzania



Venance Mollel, ECHO East Africa Appropriate Technology trainer, shared best practices of sustainable agriculture on a popular Arusha radio station.

ing at ECHO



Wet Seed Extraction Process

Asia Seed Bank Manager Wah loves teaching and regularly demonstrates seed saving processes at conferences and workshops. This extraction process is used for seeds with a pulpy layer around them, like tomatoes. The seeds are fermented for a few days until the pulp is gone, then rinsed and dried.

Making Compost Together Brings Joy



Ladies in the village of Didyr, Burkina Faso learned how to make bio-thermal compost from locally available materials.



Nutrition Education in Schools



One of ECHO's partners focuses on nutrition education to surrounding schools in villages with high rates of malnutrition. Together, we shared about chaya, which has huge potential to increase important nutrients in their diets at a very little cost to their families. The children helped plant chaya in their school yard. Once the plants are mature, the students can take cuttings home to start their own plants for their families.

A seat at the table

Diverse backgrounds, one mission. These new board members share a passion for advancing ECHO's work globally.

By Zach Walker

Rebecca Garofano used to excitedly gather snails from rice paddies and cook them into curries. If the paddies were dry, the neighbors let her search their pond, and there were always red fig shoots to harvest if she still came up empty.

Thai food was far from her native upstate New York cuisine, but it was available. Mirroring the farmers she helped to feed, she ate what was there. Snails and all.

Chiang Mai, Thailand houses the ECHO Asia Impact Center, where Garofano was employed as the office manager from 2012 to 2016 after her internship at ECHO in Fort Myers. Today, she sits on ECHO's Board of Directors.

Working in the Impact Center, she communicated with trainers and facilitated ECHO events. But it was the people who made a true impact on her. And the food.

In February, she joined the Board of Directors. She saw the position as a chance to foster the work that changed her life.

"I really want to support the good work that is happening around the world through the network that we have connected to ECHO," Garofano said. 🌍

Some farmers in Zambia were afraid of curses. **Ron Vos** demonstrated how to farm to glorify God.

As a board member, I hope to continue telling ECHO's story," Dugger said. "I want to be a part of something that's bigger than just me."

One of ECHO's new board members, Vos has applied his agricultural prowess to small scale farmers across the globe, which drew him to ECHO. Having missed only one of ECHO's

International Agriculture Conferences in the last 20 years, Vos believed in the mission of empowering farmers with knowledge long before joining the board.

"The fact that ECHO's mission is to serve the people who are underprivileged because they are lacking in specific farming knowledge is extremely important," Vos said.

In Zambia, a tradition that valued superstition, farmers believed there was little reason to care for their crops due to their neighbor's ability to lay a curse upon their land.

Vos arrived armed with years of experience as a professor of agriculture and environmental studies at Dordt University in Iowa and Northrise University in



"I was so blessed and so fortunate to be able to work along such amazing colleagues," Garofano said of her time working at the ECHO Asia Impact Center following her internship.

Zambia as well as a Christian perspective. He taught the farmers the strategy of Farming God's Way.

Years later, he returned to find a surplus of air yams growing in the village. He had spotted the crop during his earlier visit and identified it using ECHO's online database. The yams were sold by the farmers, resulting in profit used to better their livelihood.

"God is stronger than any other power," Vos said. "That's how I approach agriculture." 🌍



Ron Vos bites into a cob of boiled maize at an orphanage in Uganda. He has served in many countries across the globe including Russia, Hungary, and Ukraine. "I can serve the board best through my on-the-ground international experience," Vos said.

Greg Dugger had never seen poverty like this.

Ten years old and on a mission trip to Haiti, he peered into hospital rooms and caught glimpses of children with outstretched bellies and patients suffering from leprosy and tuberculosis and malaria. To help, he built a school with other students and chaperones.

His father returned home and launched ECHO.

Dugger also recently joined ECHO's Board of Directors. The son of Dick Dugger, ECHO's founder, he grew up watching his dad move from concept to implementation in the process of growing a faith-based organization to help the world feed themselves. Now, he hopes to do his part.

"God invests in you," Dugger said. "You need to invest back."

During the mission trip, Dick Dugger met a young woman living in a wooden crate with her baby. He had been driving with his Haitian friend, Pastor Napo, when they spotted her beside the road. Inside the crate sat a blanket and a bucket of water, her only possessions.

The men offered powdered milk and bread. As she disappeared in the rearview mirror, she remained in Dugger's mind.

Back in the United States, Greg Dugger listened to his dad talk about the woman and the hunger and the need in Haiti. There had to be a way to help beyond an annual mission trip.

"That experience was so deep for dad," Dugger said. "He wanted to start something."

Now, after 35 years in the mortgage business, Dugger is ready to return to the ministry that his dad grew. And he wants to grow it even more.



Greg Dugger

As part of the Board of Directors, he has the opportunity to further the mission that his father initiated. To ensure that people like the young woman in Haiti have full minds and full bellies.

"As a board member, I hope to continue telling ECHO's story," Dugger said. "I want to be a part of something that's bigger than just me." 🌍

Transformation Takes Root



Last year, ECHO held a one-week training for 34 church leaders and farmers in the Kibuno village of Rwanda. A generous donor provided funding for a participant to conduct follow-ups and help spread the training impact.

One year later, eight churches had each trained 60 more people.

Every trainee planted at least one key hole garden. Collectively, 670 key hole gardens have been established.

That means hundreds of families are now growing enough food for themselves.

The churches are growing and flourishing, too. A lead pastor reported that giving has increased as people have extra produce to share with the church or sell to generate money for a tithe.

Over the next year the churches are taking the trainings on their own to five public schools where more than 5,000 students will learn agricultural skills.

ECHO's equipping work is intentionally designed to be "sticky" — easy to remember and easy to pass on — because true, transformative change takes root within a community when the trainees become the trainers. 🌱

***"One year later,
eight churches
had each trained
60 more people...
Collectively, 670
key hole gardens
have been
established."***



The Biblical Basis for ECHO and Agricultural Missions

by Bruce Wilson

We continue our series exploring Biblical themes that provide the foundation of ECHO and agricultural missions. This issue examines the sixth theme, The Holistic Witness.

Holistic Witness means that the verbal proclamation of the gospel and the physical demonstration of the gospel go hand in hand. We speak it and we live it, relying on the Holy Spirit to transform people's lives.

At the end of Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul describes this interplay of word, deed, and Spirit. Paul describes how Christ worked through him,

"bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them. They were convinced by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God's Spirit. In this way I have fully presented the Good News of Christ..." (Romans 15:18,19)

Peter also describes this full presentation of the Gospel that combines word and deed in 1 Peter 3:

"Have no fear...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:8-17).

The Apostle Paul instructs Titus to "teach the truth" and do "good works of every kind". (Titus 2:7,8). That's holistic witness. We humbly and respectfully speak the truth and do good works of every kind. Witness through word and deed isn't sequential, it's concurrent.

- We don't do good deeds first and hope for an opportunity to explain our motivation later.
- We don't give someone a gospel presentation first and then try to do good deeds to back it up.
- **Instead, we are open about our faith and doing good at the same time.**

"Holistic Witness means that the verbal proclamation of the gospel and the physical demonstration of the gospel go hand in hand."

A friend may only be able to handle small doses of verbal witness at a time. They need to hear the truth little by little. We can't dump a whole pitcher of water into a cup that is too small to hold it. That creates a mess.

We also can't be afraid to reveal our identity as followers of Christ. Word and deed, hand in hand, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

At ECHO we do good work. We meet the urgent needs of the poor. And we talk about Jesus, unapologetically pointing people to Christ their Creator. Word. Deed. Spirit. At the same time. That's holistic witness according to scripture. 🌍



Intern Spotlight

Erica Shoenberger

Hello! My name is Erica Shoenberger, and I grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Currently the Community Garden Intern, I graduated from Eastern University, near Philadelphia, with a B.S. in Biology in December 2016. The next year, I served with AmeriCorps leading hands-on garden and environmental education classes with elementary school kids. Then I managed to make my way to ECHO!

I am so thankful for my time at ECHO. I love living on the farm; I often see snakes and frogs (which I love), have learned to cook with nutritious perennial vegetables, discovered food preservation techniques, and have been able to live and work with so many people who care deeply about people and the earth. A friend of mine that came to visit me on the farm said "It's like you live in Narnia!" She is right. I am always thankful to live in such a lovely place. I have spent this year caring for the Community Garden area and supporting community gardens in Southwest Florida. I even got to lead a few classes with kids and adults about worms and worm composting. I have been surprised to learn how many folks have started community and school gardens! It seems that people are

starting to rediscover where their food comes from. It is exciting and empowering to be able to supplement one's diet with home-grown or school-grown food; it is beautiful to see teachers and community members put in so much time and energy to assure that their students and families enjoy fresh food.

Living at ECHO has been such a sweet time. I have learned so much information, cultivated practices, and connected to resources involving sustainable agriculture. My time at ECHO introduced me to the field of Agricultural Ecology, and now I am in the process of applying for graduate school in Agricultural Ecology! I learned a lot about social justice and food access in the US when I served with AmeriCorps. Then I came to ECHO and learned about global food access and sustainable agriculture farming practices. Now I get to meld those experiences together as I pursue my graduate degree in Agricultural Ecology. In the future, I hope to work in academia and serve small-scale farmers to help improve knowledge of and access to sustainable agriculture practices and resources. 🌱



engaging student learners



Erica Shoenberger



hands-on with worms



Recipe: Apple Butter

Apple season is here!

- 6 cups apples, peeled, cored, and quartered (1500 ml)
- 2/3 cup light brown sugar (150 ml)
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar (120 ml)
- 2 tsp cinnamon (10 ml)
- 1 tsp ground cloves (5 ml)
- 1 tbs lemon juice (15 ml)
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar (60 ml)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract (optional)

Add all ingredients to a large pot, the more surface area, the better. Heat over medium heat until apples are soft, about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Use an immersion blender, food processor, or traditional blender to puree your mixture. Then, transfer everything back to your large pot. Add vanilla if desired.

Cook over low heat, for one hour or as long as desired, stirring occasionally. Your mixture should be thicker, shiny, and creamy.

If canning: Pour the apple butter into hot, sterilized jars and seal. I use a hot water bath for 10 minutes to ensure a good seal.

Slow cooker option:

Fill 6 quart or larger slow cooker with all ingredients and stir well. Cover and cook on low for 7-8 hours (overnight works well for this). Puree.

To thicken, add apple butter back to slow cooker and cook on low, uncovered, until apple butter thickens to your liking. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Enjoy! 🍏

Meaningful and Lasting Gifts

Stores are already decking the halls, leaving many of us lamenting how this retail-rush brings Christmas way too early and distorts its true meaning. This year I want something different for my family.

Maybe it's the collection of cast-away toys and gadgets that have piled up in the closets I've been cleaning out. Perhaps it's the familiar feeling of being left too exhausted and stressed from the frenzy of holiday shopping to enjoy one of the rare times of year when all of our college-aged sons are under one roof.

For Christmas this year, I'm asking my family to join me in giving meaningful gifts that will truly last a lifetime. I think they'll appreciate the simplicity and ease of finding something I'll cherish. And, let's be honest. How many more candles or coffee mugs do I really need?

A \$100 "Gift of Keyhole Gardens" can train a family in techniques that will help them be more productive through their agriculture for years to come! A \$25 "Gift of Seeds" provides seeds to a family who desperately wants to improve the nutrition of their home garden.



Or, maybe your family wants to underwrite the cost of a village training, like the ones shared about in Sanekyu or Rwanda in this issue of *ECHO News*.

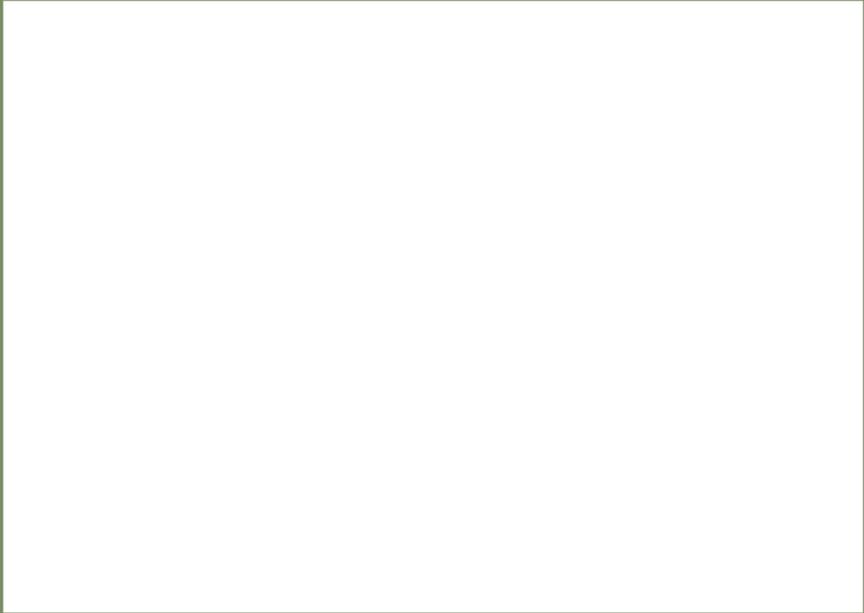
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in their own words...

Though she had never studied agriculture before coming to ECHO, Noreen, a young Tanzanian who recently finished secondary school, was excited to share a list of what she learned during her six-month internship at the ECHO East Africa Impact Center:

- I learned how to graft mango and avocado trees.
- I got the chance to attend a biogas training about how biogas works, how to feed it properly, and also how to manage your own biogas business.
- I learned about different kinds of gardening, like key hole gardens and sack gardens. I also learned how to construct them.
- I learned how to grow mushrooms while attending a training. One day it is my hope to own a mushroom business.
- I learned about green manure cover crops and how each fixes nitrogen to the soil. I never knew that there were crops that could help the soil by fixing nitrogen.

Noreen also shared: "I learned how to put God first in everything that we do. In our work and in all things, God should be first. There are few organizations that have morning prayer like we do at ECHO. I now know that when God gives me the chance to open my own company, I will put him first before everything."



Noreen Salim, a six-month intern at ECHO East Africa, helps with a planting project

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