
ECHO's INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:

Training Agricultural Development Workers for International Service

North Fort Myers, Florida

THE OPPORTUNITY

ECHO's internship program provides an opportunity for personal and professional development for individuals wanting to be equipped to live out their faith commitments through a career in international agriculture development. The Internship Program is designed to serve both as an important element of ECHO's training and demonstration program and as a hands-on training program in tropical agriculture or appropriate technologies for those interested in working in developing countries. Interns learn at our facility in southwest Florida for 14 months and then have the opportunity to participate in a 6-month field experience at one of ECHO's Regional Impact Centers. Currently, ECHO offers eight internship positions each year with 2 interns arriving each quarter: seven agriculture internship positions and one appropriate technology internship position.

The knowledge and experience gained as an ECHO intern is comparable to a year of graduate school. The Internship Program provides an intense learning experience through active work involvement where most learning occurs through hands-on activities. With on-going training, oversight, and support, Interns are responsible for specific Global Village demonstrations and quickly develop basic skills in various areas such as basic horticulture, small-scale farming techniques, community development, animal husbandry, agroforestry, appropriate technologies, public speaking, and managing volunteers. Interns also benefit from regular seminars, trainings, and field trips designed to enhance these skills. During the 14 months at ECHO, Interns are provided with housing, utilities, health insurance, and a monthly stipend (arrangements for the field experience portion are made separately).

THE RESPONSIBILITIES

With one of the largest collections of tropical food plants, ECHO has a Global Farm filled with plants and techniques that are important to small-scale farmers and gardeners in developing countries. ECHO's Global Farm is divided into 8 demonstration areas: monsoon, rainforest, semi-arid, lowlands, highlands, urban, community/school gardens, and appropriate technologies. The Global Farm serves as hands-on work experience for interns, a demonstration farm for visitors, a living classroom for students, an educational tool for public tours, and a production farm for our network.

Global Farm: ECHO interns are involved with aspects of the daily operation and maintenance of the Global Farm, seed bank, and propagation area. Major activities for interns include propagating plants and trees, caring for animals, and maintaining various demonstrations. Interns also assist with ECHO events such as our annual Conference and Global Food & Farm Festival and help respond to requests from ECHO's network, fill seed orders, learn to manage volunteers, and periodically lead educational tours for guests. ECHO offices are closed on Sundays but since ECHO is a fully functioning "working farm", Interns may have duties (for e.g., feeding animals, watering plants, etc.) for which they are responsible every day, including weekends and holidays. This is a "real world" reality of agriculture and agricultural development practices and the ECHO Internship reflects this full-time commitment.

Each intern is assigned the responsibility for one of the demonstration areas on the farm. Each of these areas highlight techniques and plants or technologies which can be useful under challenging conditions. Interns work together with staff to plan what will be demonstrated in each of these areas. Once the plan is determined, the interns are responsible to establish and maintain these areas with the guidance and support of an experienced staff member/trainer.

Each intern is also trained and given hands-on engagement with ECHO's seed bank or propagation nursery. All interns are also rotated through the appropriate technologies practice areas for general exposure and training. Seed bank interns are involved in the operation of ECHO's seed bank, which supplies trial packets of hard-to-find seeds to our network of Peace Corps Volunteers, missionaries, and many other types of international development workers. Propagation interns work with the propagation and maintenance of tropical and subtropical plants for ECHO's Tropical Fruit Nursery and for farm use. [All agriculture interns have a rotation in the Retail Nursery and gain experience with tropical fruits, small business skills, and dealing with the public.] Appropriate Technology interns serve in the AT department which provides information, trainings, and demonstrations on over 100 technologies that are appropriate to developing countries. The Appropriate Technology intern will also be assigned to either the seed bank or propagation during their internship.

Seed Bank: The purpose of the seed bank is to provide a wide array of development workers, missionaries, and other practitioners with trial quantities of tropical or sub-tropical seeds at no charge. In general, seeds maintained in the seed bank are either from plants adapted to difficult growing conditions, are from plants appropriate to small-scale farming, or are ones that are difficult to locate elsewhere. Seed requests are a major resourcing aspect of ECHO's international work. All Interns participate in this activity by producing many of the seeds and recording data on plant performance. The seed bank team is responsible for keeping the seed bank stocked and organized. Activities include recording new accessions, growing and harvesting seed, cleaning and treating seed, checking viability, coordinating with interns and suppliers to replenish stocks, packaging seed, and filling seed requests. Seed bank activities are high in organization and details. People who are interested in botany and taxonomy find working with 300+ species of useful plants stimulating. The seed bank provides an excellent opportunity for developing seed-related skills (growing, harvesting, selecting, cleaning, storing), organizational skills (recording accession information, database management, inventory), and management skills (quality control, managing volunteers, seed stocks). Seed bank interns will have the opportunity to experience in-depth learning in harvesting, processing, and seed storage.

Propagation: The propagation team has responsibilities to propagate and grow approximately 300 varieties of tropical and subtropical fruits as well as herbs and bamboo that we use on the farm and sell in our Retail Nursery. Propagation interns gain valuable, hands-on experience with these plants. Propagation provides interns an opportunity to develop plant propagation skills (grafting, air layering, cuttings, seeds, and tubers), and knowledge of plant growing conditions (potting mixes, fertilizers, light requirements, pest control). Propagation interns will also have the opportunity to gain in-depth experience with tropical and sub-tropical fruits.

Appropriate Technology: The AT program serves various sectors of ECHO's network: community development workers, interns, visiting missionaries, students, classes, and the public. The AT program has established AT demonstrations and is involved with networking, training and maintaining a collection of AT resources, documentation, and information. AT interns assist with each of these activities and they are responsible for the AT demonstrations, which involves maintaining existing demonstrations, constructing new demonstrations, acquiring AT equipment, and assuring that demonstrations are relevant to the needs of ECHO's network. AT interns gain experience with many simple technologies including ideas for water purification, water pumping, post-harvest food

processing, efficient cook stoves, and alternative energies. The AT interns also serve the ECHO network by giving tours, providing trainings, and responding to requests for technical information.

THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

Following the Internship Training program, Interns may apply to participate in a 6-month field experience. This component provides interns the opportunity to live and work in an actual field setting with one of ECHO's Regional Impact Centers.

Our vision for the field experience is that, by living and working in a field setting, interns will develop an increased awareness of the holistic needs of people living in developing contexts. As this happens, more people will be equipped and motivated to work on behalf of those battling hunger and resource constraints that limit development opportunities. At each field site, interns can expect a good orientation upon arrival, direction and encouragement as they work, and a feeling of accomplishment at the end of their stay. Interns will learn various skills depending on the project focus: agriculture experimentation; the role of adaptive research in dealing with the issue of hunger; variety trials; seed multiplication; community trainings; plant propagation techniques; project management; etc. Just as important as the impact on the community is the opportunity to interact with the local people, study the language and culture, and fine-tune a personal philosophy of missions and development through interaction with communities, other practitioners and development workers.

Most field experience positions require interns to cover some of the expenses. Interns work with the Regional Impact Centers to develop a budget, ideas for support raising, and logistics on how to properly receive and account for support funding.

THE CAMPUS

ECHO is located in southwest Florida in North Ft. Myers. The ECHO Global Farm is located within ECHO's 56-acre Florida campus. The development of this campus began with a 5-acre plot of land purchased in the early 1980s. Over the subsequent 35 years, additional surrounding land was acquired. Additional structures were also developed: a new office building and visitor reception center was completed in October 1998; in March 1999 a new office building for the technical staff and library was completed; in June 2002 the initial construction of the Global Farm with new demonstration areas was completed; and, a new Farm Center Building with office space, a wood-working shop, welding station, storage space was completed in March 2003. ECHO's seed bank was completed in the summer of 2002 with office space, a seed cleaning room and a connected climate-controlled seed storage area made from a refrigerated shipping container. In June 2008 ECHO added an Appropriate Technologies Center with an office, work space, and covered area for demonstrations. In January 2016, a whole new Appropriate Technologies training and demonstration center was dedicated and opened. In April 2016, a substantial remodeling of the ECHO-Florida seed bank was completed, additional Global Farm modifications were completed, expanded research plots were developed, and the remaining unowned piece of the contiguous ECHO-Florida Campus was acquired.

In addition to the interns, ECHO has 39 full-time staff, 17 part-time staff, and hundreds of volunteers (current employees can be viewed on the "Staff" page of our website).

THE REQUIREMENTS and APPLICATION

Minimum requirements for ECHO Intern applicants:

- Undergraduate degree or equivalent work experience
- Fluency in English (oral and written)
- U.S. Citizen or hold U.S. work permit
- Valid passport
- Desire to live-out a professed belief in Jesus by serving all persons in developing countries

- Ability to engage in moderate physical activity

We do not require applicants to have a degree in agriculture or the natural sciences nor to have previous farming or gardening experience, although both are helpful for agriculture interns. Most interns come to ECHO right after getting their bachelor's degree. Others have come with a variety of other qualifying experiences, including graduate study and work experience overseas and in the U.S. The purpose of the internship program is to prepare professing believers in Jesus to serve as effective agricultural and/or technology development workers so we look for candidates who are most likely to pursue this type of career.

ECHO selects 8 interns each year with interns arriving each quarter (January, April, July, October; starting date is the first Monday of the month). To apply, complete the online Internship Application Form and submit your resume/CV and college transcripts online at <http://echonet.org/echo-internship/>. Married couples should choose who will be the applicant and submit one application.

For January or April internships: Applications are accepted from June 1 - July 31. These applications are processed in August and reference forms are sent for those who pass the first cut; phone interviews are conducted in September for those who pass the second cut; the selection process will be completed in October and the remaining candidates will be notified of their final status.

For July or October internships: Applications are accepted from December 1 - January 31. These applications are processed in February and reference forms are sent for applicants who pass the first cut; phone interviews are conducted in March for those who pass the second cut; the selection process will be completed in April and the remaining candidates will be notified of their final status.

Internship positions are limited so there is competition for each position. If you are not selected and wish to re-apply you must submit a current application each time.

If you have any questions, please contact the Intern Manager: 239-543-3246 or echo@echonet.org

If you would like more information about ECHO visit our website: www.echonet.org