



echo[®] news

Hope Against Hunger | volume 45 | issue 4



in this issue: celebrating outgoing CEO David Erickson • keeping seeds and vegetables cool • impacts of Hurricane Ian in Florida



Abram Bicksler, President/CEO

***"He has told you men what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you:
Only to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God."
Micah 6:8***

Dear Friends,

As it mentions in Micah, I am humbled and honored to step into this role. My goal is to exemplify servant leadership to our staff, interns, volunteers, and our amazingly diverse network members around the world. Keeping the mission and vision in front of us, I will work to empower everyone in the organization to use their skills, talents, education, and gifts together as the Body of Christ to bring improved food security and livelihoods to the undernourished as well as healing to God's creation.

No stranger to ECHO, I have been blessed to know David and Jennifer Erickson for many years. David leaves incredibly large shoes to fill, but has also left a strong foundation that he has poured into since becoming CEO in 2015. I look forward to seeing how God continues to develop our friendship – and David and Jennifer's service to ECHO in the coming years.

In this issue of ECHO News, we celebrate David and his tenure as CEO, see snapshots of ECHO's global work, learn how simple technologies can help preserve seeds and crops, and hear from one of our interns about her experience at ECHO Asia.

At the time this issue went to press, we have just experienced Hurricane Ian. We are grateful to God for keeping us safe and protecting the campus from major damage as we continue our cleanup operation. It will be a long road ahead, but know that we are trying to get back up and running as soon as possible to deliver the services that our partners need and deserve.

Thank you for journeying with us in this work prayerfully, financially, and in your thoughts as we rebuild. You are the reason that we can **continue to reduce hunger and improve lives worldwide through partnerships that equip people with agricultural resources and skills.**

With humility, thank you!

Abram J. Bicksler, Ph.D.

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



Cover photo: Rice farmer in West Bengal India. Agriculture is the leading economic sector in West Bengal with rice being the state's principal food crop. Women grow as much as 80% of India's food. (Source: Oxfam)

ECHO News is published quarterly by ECHO, Inc.

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.

in this issue



ECHO East Africa Symposium February 21st - 23rd, 2023

Speakers are confirmed for ECHO East Africa 7th Biennial Symposium on February 21-23rd 2023 in Arusha, Tanzania.

The ECHO Symposium will provide a network and training opportunity for those involved in alleviating hunger and poverty in East Africa. Three mornings of plenary sessions featuring knowledgeable and experienced speakers will be followed by afternoon workshops and discussion groups led by regional

agricultural development workers and experts.

We are excited to share three days of practical sessions, an appropriate technology fair, and field trips. 



Register Today



Right: David is welcomed by the Mossi ceremonial King Mogho Naaba who is a leader in conservation agriculture in Burkina Faso

Below, right: David Erickson shares his passion for ECHO's mission with volunteer docents and ambassadors.

Celebrating Outgoing CEO David Erickson

By Talia McWright

ECHO's CEO David Erickson remembers his time at ECHO, sharing his experience as he prepares to move into a new phase of life, passing the mantle of ECHO leadership to Dr. Abram Bicksler. Dr. Bicksler started as ECHO's President/CEO in September.

Throughout the work week, David Erickson would pause, leave his iPhone on his desk, walk up the dark wooden spiral staircase of the Price Center and spend time alone, reflecting and recharging with God. Freeing his mind from the potential distractions of the work, Erickson opened himself to God's leading each day.

Erickson, the President/CEO of ECHO for the last seven years, retired from the role in September of 2022. He began work with the organization as a consultant, which then grew

"My time at ECHO has gained me very deep personal growth in terms of practical dependance on the Lord."

into a supportive executive role. Receiving the title of CEO was an unexpected blessing for Erickson. Now, years later, he is faced with saying goodbye.

"My time at ECHO has gained me very deep personal growth in terms of practical dependance on the Lord," Erickson said. "A greater capacity to delegate has strengthened my trust in the remarkable people at ECHO who share the vision and mission."

In his work, Erickson has supported the development of ECHO's impact centers in

Asia, East and West Africa, along with all aspects of the organization that enhance training and outreach. A large portion of his efforts consisted of managing partnership opportunities with other national and global organizations. He embodies the meaning of personability in his relationships with supporters and partners, often making in-person visits. Valuing ECHO interns, he encouraged the reorganization of the internship program that would multiply their spiritual and practical growth. Through his leadership, ECHO increased the number of direct trainees globally to more than 6,500 per year. Seed banks in Thailand, Tanzania, and Florida are stronger, more relevant, and able to share seeds across the globe. Hundreds of agricultural resources were published including Asian language books, the first e-book, and more than 1,000 training videos. ECHOcommunity has grown to offer valuable tools such as the Green Manure Cover Crop online selector tool and the ECHOcommunity mobile app. Under his leadership, ECHO weathered Hurricane Irma and the Coronavirus pandemic. Pivoting within COVID policies, ECHO hosted multiple virtual training events, continuing to meet resourcing needs around the globe. Invariably reflecting recognition to God, Erickson honors his work as the work of the Lord.

"God with a team could do everything I couldn't," Erickson said. "All of that together could bring



us to something much closer than what I had envisioned and bless and benefit a whole lot more people."

Building upon the foundation of ECHO, Erickson has sought to acknowledge the responsibilities of his role. Taking on the duties of a faithful steward, he has leaned on God in investing in the lives of others. Purposeful in his work, He was always seeking the potential for more ways to amplify increased food security and quality of life opportunities globally. Erickson recognized the privilege of his position, and was empowered by the collective effort of the ECHO team.



"Meeting the missional goals of ECHO equates to profound and life-changing development in the lives of men and women around the world and means opportunity for their children," Erickson said. "I am so thrilled about that."

Erickson credits much of ECHO's success to the global community of staff and volunteer members whose work advances ECHO's mission. An introspective introvert at heart, Erickson's deep appreciation for connection ensures he acknowledges the values and attributes of others. His humility and authentic, attentive spirit have positively impacted members of the ECHO community and beyond.

"There are so many extraordinary gifts that our staff have and it's clear to me that the mission of ECHO requires all of them," Erickson said. "They often inspire and remind me that we all need to be part of a community. The

people on ECHO staff around the world care for, encourage, and support each other in remarkable ways."

Erickson's presence in his role will be greatly missed by the ECHO community. Colleagues that work closely beside him, shared some of the significance his character has had in their work environment.

"David is precious," Executive Assistant, Kristen Musko said. "I've never worked for anyone quite like him before. His love for the Lord and others shines through in every aspect of his life. It's not often that you meet someone so gifted, yet so very humble and kind. I believe this is because he knows the gift-giver and seeks to give Him all the glory. He fosters every relationship with an overarching element of pastoral care. He and Jenny will be deeply missed."

"David is one of those significant people that





my life has intersected with," ECHO COO, Tim Albright said. "If nothing else I can take blessing in the deep richness of that. He has brought a unique perspective, experience and many talents that make him highly qualified for the work he's done. His unbelievable giftedness will be deeply missed, not only by me, but by ECHO as a whole."

For Erickson, the future is in God's hands, and he is hopeful about what's to come.

"ECHO was a manifestation of God's goodness and grace and an affirmation that he has a bigger purpose for us," Erickson said. "God is the ultimate good steward and he has plans and purposes for the future of ECHO."

As ECHO welcomes incoming CEO, Dr. Abram Bicksler, Erickson will work closely by his side for the next few months. Spending this time to walk with Bicksler, Erickson is delighted to give insight and advice as he passes along the role.

"My advice to Abram is to bathe everything in prayer and recognize that ECHO is first and foremost God's work," Erickson said. "Trusting that truth is profoundly freeing. I would pray for humility and gratitude to recognize the privilege he's been given."

Erickson's leadership will be missed by many at ECHO. The effects of his work continuously reverberate and create lasting impacts globally. ECHO celebrates the 12 years of service he selflessly gave to the community, wishing him and Jennifer blessing and comfort in their future. As ECHO launches this new chapter, we hold close the wonderful influence of Erickson in the continuation of fulfilling our mission. Thank you David, for all of your profound contributions, and for modeling the love of Christ in your humble leadership here at ECHO.

Above: David Erickson was able to celebrate the generous donation of land for the ECHO Asia Small Farm Resource Center with the team in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

what's happening



East Africa Interns Ferdinand, Susan, and Magreth produce and test a natural insecticide by combining kei apple fruit, neem leaf oil and liquid soap.

#echofightshunger



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



Along the Thailand-Myanmar border, an ECHO Asia training team shared a Backyard Gardening Workshop for students at a secondary school.

Abundant Harvests



During follow-up visits to villages in Burkina Faso, one of our training teams was shown a farmer's cowpea harvest. Trained by ECHO to grow cowpea amidst the annual crop, this farmer now has two food sources!

g at ECHO



Biosand Water Filters

An ECHO Asia training team traveled to the Thai-Myanmar border to host another workshop on Low-Cost Biosand Water Filtration Systems. These communities are making affordable water filtration systems using rock, gravel, sand, and activated charcoal that we learned from others and are sharing!

Chaya to Share



At a clinic training, Anna Sirikwa gives out chaya cuttings to caregivers to grow and multiply at their homes.



Tropical Agriculture Development



It was an honor in September to resume the in-person week-long Tropical Agriculture Development Course at ECHO Florida. 18 trainees from around the globe spent 6 days in on-farm learning sessions.

Keeping Seeds and Vegetables Cool

By Talia McWright

Including appropriate technologies at ECHO enhances the impact of our educational ministry. CoolBot, a device that can turn any air conditioned space into a walk in cooler, is a method of refrigeration on the list of sustainable resources and appropriate technologies implemented in ECHO's global work. CoolBot works by connecting to an AC unit and directing the unit to continue running without freezing over, dropping the temperature into the 30s. Small enough to fit in the palm of a hand, the affordable device is a possible solution for benefitting farmers globally. To function optimally, CoolBot must be installed in a well insulated room; this includes all walls, ceilings, floors, and doors. Fairly easy to install and run, CoolBot's website walks users through the step-by-step installation process. The innovative device is used at ECHO Florida as a demonstration of appropriate technology (AT)

and at ECHO Asia Seed Bank as a practical solution to their cooling needs.

ECHO discovered CoolBot in 2010 through the USAID Horticulture Innovation Lab, as the team researched options to protect their seeds against issues caused by warm weather and humidity. Implementing the device in seed storage spaces can help preserve seeds by providing a cool and dehumidified environment. This is put into practice at the ECHO Asia

"Farmers can pick produce like mangoes when they're mature but unripe and store them using CoolBot," Cotarelo said.

"The produce can then be transported to customers as it begins to ripen, which leads to less food waste."

Seed Bank where they are using a combination of vacuum sealing and a CoolBot chilled environment to protect their stock. Caring for the life of seeds is extremely vital, as seeds are directly tied to ECHO's mission of supporting global farmers. Because seeds create life, their viability must be protected to positively impact the lives of those supported by ECHO.



Seed bank manager, Holly Sobetski, uses CoolBot technology in the demonstration area of the seed bank as an example of appropriate technology. By insulating a shipping container, Sobetski uses the device to combat Florida's tropical heat and demonstrate a real-world application for the device. The demonstration seed bank is used throughout the year for trainings, and as an overflow chiller for research projects.

Left: Holly Sobetski teaches seed saving in the ECHO Florida Seed Bank.

"CoolBot is a useful technology for people who have access to electricity and want to cool produce or create a community seed bank," Sobetski said. "It can be a good solution for farmers who want to prolong the life of their seeds in storage."

Alternatives often used by those without access to a cooling system or electricity are storing seeds in airtight environments, away from direct sunlight. These methods aid in fighting humidity, but do not offer the compound benefit of controlled vacuum sealing and cool temperatures as CoolBot technology. CoolBot has been an asset to ECHO regional centers, along with many farmers and seed bank communities.

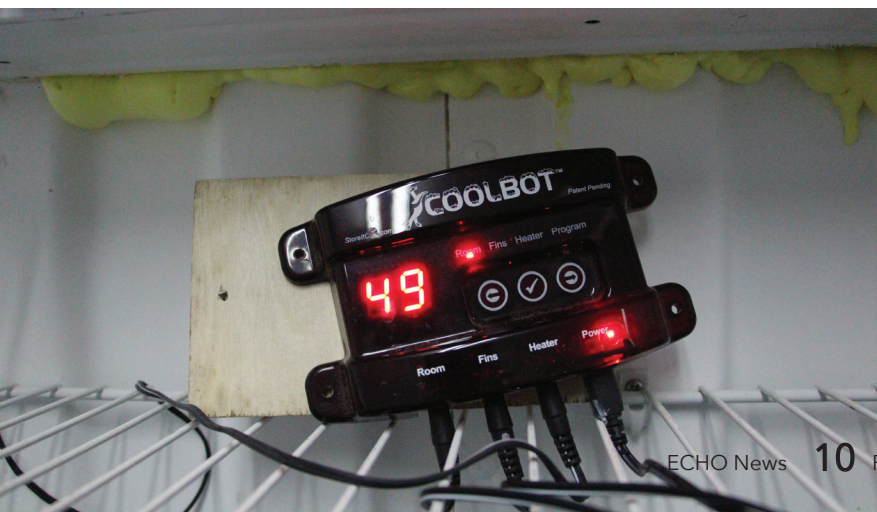
"I think CoolBot is brilliant and has been useful to ECHO," Sobetski said. "It's unique how with just an insulated room and an air conditioner, CoolBot can create a refrigerator."

Farm Manager, Andy Cotarelo, uses CoolBot to store produce. Installing CoolBot in a mobile trailer, Cotarelo keeps fruits and vegetables inside the movable refrigerator year-round. Utilizing CoolBot in a mobile space allows for a smooth process of transporting products. ECHO can use the trailer when ripening produce and donating to organizations like Cultivate Abundance, a local feeding program for farm workers in Immokalee. Global farmers can benefit from creating similar mobile refrigeration systems with CoolBot, as the vehicle allows for increased opportunities in bringing products to market and preventing loss.

CoolBot's economical product adds value to the methods of farming and gardening at ECHO and creates a refrigeration solution that is efficient and effective. Providing global farmers with more resources and opportunities to improve their livelihoods and business, resources like these are an asset for ECHO's global work. Using devices like CoolBot, ECHO is spreading the mission of Christ through helping families and communities help themselves. 🌍



Above: Seeds are stored at low temperature and low humidity, conditions most effective at lengthening the lifespan of seeds. Below: The coolbot interface, while small, can make a great impact in the longevity of ripe produce and the value of crops when farmers take them to the market.



In Their Own Words: ECHO Asia Intern

You may know quite a bit about the ECHO Internship program in Florida, but our Impact Centers are often bustling with interns as well. It is an honor to host and train young people who are passionate about serving those around them in their churches, their universities, and their communities.

My name is Mackenzie Gray from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. I am a fourth-year university student studying International Development and was blessed to complete a 3-month extended international internship with ECHO Asia. Initially, I was supposed to come to Thailand 2 years ago, but like everyone else, my plans quickly changed once COVID-19 hit. Although I had to wait a few years, I finally made it to Southeast Asia, and I was able to complete my internship abroad!

"ECHO Asia affirmed my passion for community development."

As I prepared for this time, I questioned what I could bring to ECHO without having a strong background in agriculture. Nonetheless, upon arriving at the farm, my worries cleared almost instantly. The research on the farm spans from bio-sand water filtration systems to alternative animal feeds to using biochar as a fuel for engines. I learned that ECHO is all about networking and

extension. ECHO is a "trainer of trainers," allowing development work to occur more productively. I've recognized that people from a background like myself can participate by creating training seminars, writing articles for journals, and connecting to partners, new and old. Every month the latest goals, concepts, and training activities are brought to the staff, who are eager to learn. Honestly, I have never seen so many people work so hard to maintain such a large project. I am in awe of the work done every day.

Over the summer, I completed various tasks with nearly the entire farm staff. Though I may not have known much about agriculture before, I've gained a holistic understanding of its intricacies. Working in the greenhouse and various plots taught me a great deal about farming practices and on-farm feeds. Working in the seed bank educated me about ECHO's seed storage strategies, as I conducted germination tests and identified seeds for packaging. Working in the office and communicating with national and international partners empowered me to write an impact story about clean water accessibility in rural Thailand and Myanmar. I have witnessed biochar burnings, participated in a rice training, built a loft space, and engaged in a pest management seminar. As ECHO is a place of connection, I also had the opportunity to complete a 'mini work study' with one of ECHO's partners in northern Thailand. I cannot believe how much I have learned in such a short period.



My summer was unlike any before. ECHO Asia affirmed my passion for community development. I am eager to take everything I have learned and apply it to my final year of schooling. I tried my best to be a sponge for practical and cultural knowledge and to remember the emotions and feelings that surged through this opportunity. ECHO Asia provided many opportunities for me to learn, question, and grow as a development worker, student, and Christian. I am forever grateful to the kind-hearted staff who showed me patience and guidance throughout my journey.

I am confident this experience will alter the way I lead my life moving forward and the decisions I make from here. Development work is not simply hopping on a plane to 'do good.' It's uprooting your worldview and growing to understand someone else's. I have learned not to take anything for granted and will remain forever thankful for my summer at ECHO Asia. 🌱

Opposite: Mackenzie Gray served at ECHO Asia helping with various farm tasks such as feeding the cattle, harvesting crops, and working in the ECHO Asia Seed Bank.

Above: Mackenzie and Chrissy bond while harvesting wild mangosteen. Chrissy is serving for six months at ECHO Asia after her internship in Florida. **Right:** Mackenzie learned how to make pig feed with the ECHO Asia staff.



Hurricane Ian

Grateful and Humbled... Still a long road ahead



Thank you for your continued prayers and support for ECHO and its Florida staff. We continue to thank God for keeping us safe as we continue the cleanup operation. Many of you have reached out to let us know that you are praying for and thinking about the team, which makes us so incredibly grateful.

We continue to remember and ask you to pray for and help those who suffered much more than ECHO – those who were affected by Ian's broad path of devastation. We are also reminded of the poor and vulnerable around the world for whom hurricanes, drought, famine and floods are increasingly common and severe.

"We are trying to get back up and running as soon as possible to deliver the services that our partners need and deserve!"

We will continue the cleanup work as we are in a race against time to get the farm in shape for our ECHO International Conference in November. We are trying to get back up and running as soon as possible to deliver the services that our partners need and deserve.

We press on in hope and confidence that we will get through this together and continue the global work of ECHO to empower the undernourished with sustainable hunger solutions. 🌱



Growing
hope
from the
ground
up

To give a financial gift to help ECHO
recover from Hurricane Ian visit:

echonet.org/impact



17391 Durrance Road
North Fort Myers, FL 33917
239-543-3246 | www.echonet.org



Ministry Among Marginalized People

July through September is when farmers are busy in their fields as rainfall has started well throughout the West African region. There were floods in some countries such as in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina and Mali. We then had pockets of drought in certain parts of the region. But in general, the rainy season looked pretty good.

Three Job Booster trainings were hosted this summer in Burkina Faso, equipping 150 people under the age of 35. Trainees selected for these trainings focused on vulnerable populations, internally displaced people, and those with disabilities.

Ultimately, the objective of this training is to enable these young people to improve their living conditions through a gainful activity.

Overheard at the seminar... "It is important for me to put into practice the techniques learned

because I know that it is the only solution for us to avoid starvation in our family. As you know, we have poor soils and we have no money to buy chemical fertilizer. So I can say that the training received is a godsend for us. I am confident that we will be able to eat our fill now, without spending money, thanks to these new techniques," shared Sandrine of Burkina Faso. 🌍

