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Worldark

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PLUS

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Neglected tropical diseases continue to plague the bottom billion. Here's what you need to know.


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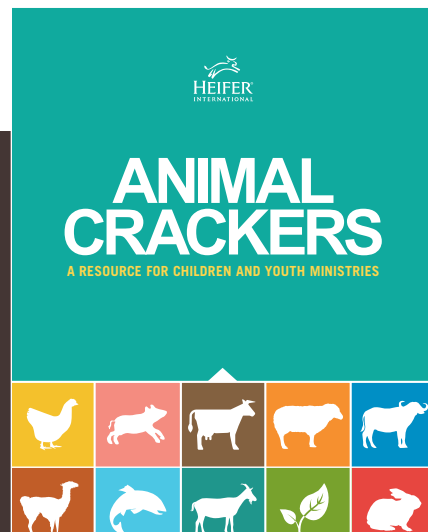
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Dear Fellow Activists,



Farmers display the different types of fodder they grow for their animals.

PHOTO BY RUSSELL POWELL

I hope your start to 2017 is shaping up to be a great one.

I am excited that we are one year closer to achieving our goal of helping 4 million families secure living incomes by 2020. The success of our work depends heavily on developing local economies that benefit, rather than exploit, small-scale farmers, as well as strengthening the communities of farmers. We do this by giving farmers the capacity and drive to start agriculture-based business activities and participate in the market economy.

It's because of the deep community development work we do that our efforts not only succeed, but last beyond the life of our projects. As you will read in this issue of *World Ark*, farmers like Edwin Paz Vasquez and Daina Cordero in Bolivia and Pedro Cconcha in Peru have internalized the components of our model so sincerely that we are confident the foundation we have laid in their communities will remain strong for generations to come.

I hope you enjoy this issue and that you will share it and our message with your family and friends.

Yours for a better world,

Pierre U. Ferrari

OUR VALUES-BASED HOLISTIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL HAS FOUR COMPONENTS



Strong community structure to pool resources; discuss, identify and prioritize needs; and plan and execute activities



Positive attitudes among community members and strong social connections



Passing on the Gift®



Conservation of resources, including the environment

A person's legs and feet are shown in mid-stride, running on a gravel path. The background is a sunset or sunrise scene with a cloudy sky and distant mountains. The overall tone is warm and inspiring.

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COVER

Lorenza Qquecho Cconcha (48) and her son Edgar Ccolque Qquecho (32) show off one of their guinea pigs in their barn in Peru's Ccorca District.
Photo by Joe Tobiason

Top photo: Luiz Burgas (left) and Mercedes Parada gather açaí berries in Bolivia.
Demand for this super-healthy fruit is rising, and Heifer is helping farmers boost profits.

12 Guinea Pigs Give a Big Boost
Loved as pets in the United States, guinea pigs have been part of Andean cuisine for thousands of years. In Peru, Heifer is ushering children away from malnutrition and poverty by helping their families raise guinea pigs.



22 The Miracle Berry of the Rainforest
The açaí berries that grow in Bolivia's Amazon are prized for their sweet flavor and purported health benefits. Farmers preserve the exotic açaí habitat and are rewarded with a sustainable source of income.



34 Kids' Solar Cook-Off
Alternative cooking options can save time, health and natural resources for families who have traditionally relied on open fires. Students from Springfield, Massachusetts, tested out some solar cookers to see how they measured up.





KUDOS

Your Holiday 2016 publication of *World Ark* was excellent. I enjoyed the milk comparison article tremendously. I was fascinated by the articles "Fried Frogs and Fiery Fruit in Vietnam" and "A Good Night's Rest in Zambia." These stories illustrate a reality vastly different from my own, and it is an excellent reminder of the day-to-day struggles of so many people that are easy to forget.

VIRGINIA SMITH
Newington, Connecticut

Thanks for the review on *The First 1,000 Days* by Roger Thurow ("The Mother of All Worries" by Brooke Edwards, *World Ark*, Holiday 2016). America has taken the lead in helping children survive and thrive. Recently, the Reach Every Mother and Child Act has been co-sponsored by 214 members of the House and 25 senators. It is aimed at ending preventable

deaths of mothers and children in our world. It may or may not pass this Congress, but is likely to come up again soon in the next Congress. Education is another important step in children thriving. The Education for All Act targets giving the 100 plus million children in our world a chance to finally go to school. Of course, all of this legislation happens faster when we use our voices to support it by calling or writing our representatives. In this way, all children will be able to survive and thrive!

WILLIE DICKERSON
Snohomish, Washington

NOT THE ROMANCE NOVEL

Minor correction for readers—I'm certain you mean *The Millionaire Next Door* by Thomas Stanley and William Danko (which I've read), not the work by Cheryl Phipps (which I am unlikely to ever read) in your list of recommended books for recent graduates. Thanks for all you do.

ELIZABETH BELLA
Anchorage, Alaska

A STICKY SITUATION

In the current issue of *World Ark*, there is an article on maple sugaring. Step number five says to boil the sap on a stovetop or outdoors over a fire. In the late 1940s, my mother and I did sugaring in Connecticut and did cook down the

maple sap in the kitchen. The net result was great syrup and maple sugar. Unfortunately, we had to repaint the kitchen after extensive cleaning of the walls and ceiling because everything got very sticky! All that boiling filled the room with evaporated maple sugar, and it coated everything. So, I caution your readers to do it outside.

MERRITT HELFFERICH
Gila, New Mexico

In our previous issue of *World Ark*, we asked readers, "Is there a country where Heifer International doesn't currently work, but should? Where, and why?" Here are some of our favorite responses.

Brazil. Specifically, the Sertão region, which is where much of the country's farms are. It's prone to famine and drought, so could be a good place for Heifer to expand to.

GLORIA GENE
O'SULLIVAN

Pine Ridge Nation in the United States. The people there have great needs, living in poverty and hunger. Heifer programs could help them raise livestock, chickens, goats, etc., help with biogas units to provide heating and especially inspire the people with hope for

an improved standard of living. It seems to me that Heifer's motto, "Working with communities to end poverty, hunger and care for the Earth," could really be put to work here.

JANESE MCALPIN
WAGONER

Q&A SPRING

This issue features Peruvian families raising guinea pigs for consumption, something that has been common in the Andes for thousands of years. If given the opportunity, would you eat a guinea pig?

We want to hear from you!

Please send your comments to worldark@list.heifer.org. Include your name, city, and a telephone number or email address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published online as well as in print. Because of the volume of mail we receive, we cannot respond to all letters.



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Since 1944, Heifer has helped 31 million families, directly and indirectly, move toward greater self-reliance through the gift of livestock and training in environmentally sound agriculture.

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Flowers are Fundamental

By Elizabeth Joseph, garden and education coordinator at Heifer Farm

It is a joy for gardeners to pore over seed catalogs, nurturing expectation for all the goodness to arrive in springtime. The pages brim with vivid and inspiring descriptions of plants, and glossy photos illustrate seemingly endless possibilities of color and shape. You can all but taste and smell the abundance to come.

There was a time when, admittedly, not every page of the seed catalog received my full attention. New to farming, I would skip over the pages of striking flowers and beneficial herbs and go straight to the vegetable section, opting for utility and function over beauty and fragrance—or so I thought. I sketched my garden maps to maximize growing space for potatoes, tomatoes, corn, beans, squash ... crops of bulk and substance.

Now, eight seasons later, the strategy is different. While vegetable crops still claim the majority of garden space at Heifer Farm, an entire 140-foot row is devoted solely to planting flowers and herbs. We also grow flowers and herbs under



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ELIZABETH JOSEPH

vegetable canopies where they can thrive in unused space—staying low as a ground cover or vining upward on stalks and stems.

Herbs and flowers, I've come to learn, offer both beauty and utility in field and kitchen alike. In the garden, pops of color amidst a sea of green expand the color palette, while flowers' roots stimulate and feed soil microbes. Scents from leaf and blossom ward off some pests while attracting pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Herbs' scents signal culinary and medicinal significance as well. The very definition of good things coming in small packages, a tiny bit of an herb can transform a dish—elevating both the flavor and nutrition with only a pinch of this, a sprinkle of that. Small quantities in teas, tinctures, oils, salves and syrups can have healing properties for mind and body.

Herbs and flowers are perhaps best enjoyed fresh during the season, and the type of plant determines whether





you use stem, root, flower, leaf, seed or a combination thereof. Cilantro and dill are two examples that are enjoyed in both the leaf and seed stage of growing (cilantro changing names to coriander in this case).

With care, herbs can be stored and enjoyed all year long. Dry them on screens, in the oven at a low temperature, with a dehydrator, or tied together in bundles and hung in a dark, dry place. They can also be easily frozen in individual portions by blending them with oil or water and poured in ice cube trays (see accompanying recipe).

If you're planting a garden this spring, consider making space for herbs and flowers. I was late to the game, but now I can't stop singing their praises. If you already know the benefits of these plants, write to us and share your favorite herbs and flowers to grow and enjoy. Happy blooming!





Preserve Your Herbs in the Freezer

By Emily Rose, event and outreach coordinator at Heifer Farm

Give your food the fresh taste of summer any time of year by preserving fresh herbs from your garden. You'll have little cubes of flavor to pop into salad dressings, soups, sauces, quiches and more. They're easy to make. Here's how:

1. Wash herbs and remove any thick stems.
2. Pack herbs into a food processor.
3. Turn the food processor on and drizzle in a little water or olive oil*—just until the herbs make a paste.
4. Scoop the herb paste into an ice cube tray, with 2-3 tablespoons in each cube. Cover with plastic wrap and freeze.
5. After a day or so, pop the cubes out of the tray and store in plastic bags in the freezer for up to six months.

*At Heifer Farm, we process basil, dill and sage with olive oil and every other herb with water.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ELIZABETH JOSEPH

NOTES

- Herbs process down to a small amount, so it is more efficient to process a lot of the same herbs at one time rather than processing small bunches of many things.
- You will need to fully wash your food processor in between processing different herbs so the smells and tastes don't mingle.
- Freezing herbs can stain your ice cube tray, so consider devoting one to just this use.



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Homemade Ranch Dressing

Makes 1 ¼ cups

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup milk
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 large garlic clove or 2 garlic scapes, minced
- 3 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped fine
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped fine
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine the lemon juice and milk and let sit a few minutes, until the milk curdles a bit (like buttermilk).

Mix the milk mixture with the sour cream in a bowl and whisk to blend well.

Add the remaining ingredients and whisk again until well combined.

Taste to adjust seasonings.

NOTES

This dressing works great on salad. If you want it a little thinner, add a little more milk. To use it as a dip, use 1 ¼ cups sour cream to make it thicker.



NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

Disfiguring and debilitating, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) afflict the world's poorest people, demolishing sufferers' earning potential and quality of life. People with these diseases are often unable to work, and therefore remain mired in poverty.

CAUSED BY bacteria,



viruses



or parasites



FUELED BY scant health care



& inadequate sanitation



1 billion+

PEOPLE AFFECTED IN POOR NATIONS

500,000

PEOPLE KILLED PER YEAR

149 countries

IN TROPICAL & SUBTROPICAL REGIONS



6 OF THESE DISEASES — *Guinea worm, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, trachoma and soil-transmitted helminths* — can be controlled or eliminated with **interventions and medicines that already exist**.



Other interventions — mosquito and black fly control, improved sanitation and access to clean water — go a long way in **warding off other NTDs**.

SO WHY HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF THEM?

These diseases do not affect rich countries (like the United States).



As a group, neglected tropical diseases have lower mortality rates than AIDS and tuberculosis, and therefore **tend to get less press**.

MOST COMMON NTDs, SYMPTOMS AND NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS, AKA ELEPHANTIASIS

20M people in 80 countries



swelling, debilitation and disfigurement

ONCHOCERCIASIS, AKA RIVER BLINDNESS

26M people



skin rashes, itching, visual impairment and blindness

SCHISTOSOMIASIS, AKA BILHARZIA OR SNAIL FEVER

240M people



itching, bloody urine, diarrhea, anemia, fever, bladder cancer, learning disabilities and death; the deadliest neglected tropical disease

TRACHOMA

41M people



eye infection that causes blindness

SOIL-TRANSMITTED HELMINTHS (INTESTINAL WORMS)

1.2 billion people



anemia, intestinal blockage, vomiting and coughing

OTHER NTDs — Buruli ulcer, Chagas disease, dengue and chikungunya, dracunculiasis (Guinea worm), echinococcosis, helminthiasis, trematodiasis, leishmaniasis, leprosy, sleeping sickness, rabies, taeniasis/cysticercosis, yaws



The World Health Organization is taking aim at NTDs with its **roadmap to control, eliminate and eradicate them by 2020**.



Drug companies, governments and NGOs committed to **help eliminate neglected tropical diseases** when they signed on to the London Declaration in 2012.



Hunger Shouldn't

Interview by Jason Woods, *World Ark* senior editor

At the age of 13, Mindy Cohn scored her first role—Natalie Green, a part created for her on the hit TV show *The Facts of Life*, which ran for nine seasons. Since then, she has appeared in a variety of shows and films, and for the last 13 years, she has lent her voice to *Scooby Doo* sleuth Velma Dinkley. Cohn is a passionate advocate for the work of Heifer International, going so far as to compete on *Worst Cooks in America* to raise money to support Heifer's mission.

WORLD ARK: There are a lot of good causes to support. Why do you lend your star power to Heifer?

MINDY COHN: Simple. Their mission, their work and their outreach tick every box as far as what I want to give to and support: ending hunger, empowering women and their families, cultivating a better life in rural communities, and helping people to be self-sustaining while protecting and utilizing the environment. I also would be remiss if I didn't say that the biggest pull Heifer International has on my heart is that it is a person-to-person organization. Every person makes a difference, every person counts and when you can help one person, well, the legacy of the one infiltrates the whole community. Yeah, I like touching people and making a difference on the most personal level. Heifer International is an expert on all of these fronts.

If you could visit a Heifer project anywhere, where would you go?

Yes. My answer to where is yes! I hope that

brings a giggle, but I am kind of serious, too. I love to travel, and I have an intense wanderlust and an insatiable desire to know all peoples. My undergrad degree is in sociology, and people just fascinate me, so, yes. Seriously, though, Vietnam, Haiti and anywhere in Central America would be in my top five.

What is your favorite Heifer animal? Why?

I'm partial to goats based on my affiliation with the Beekman 1802 farm in upstate New York. But, like people, I haven't met a Heifer animal I didn't like. Insofar as their value to the Heifer family recipients, too, I think each serves a wonderful purpose.

What do you think people who aren't very familiar with Heifer's work should know?

This is a biggie for me. I think due to the success of giving an animal for the holidays, Heifer is often seen as just that. While it deserves the success and publicity it gets, Heifer is SO MUCH MORE than gifting a gaggle or cow.



Be a Fact of Life

You recently competed on *Worst Cooks in America* to raise money for Heifer. What was that experience like?

Hopefully without offending anyone suffering from PTSD ... I kind of had PTSD. No joke. I will say this ... I earned every dollar that I won!

In your long and successful career, you have starred in TV shows, stage productions, independent films and as a voice actor. Is there anything you haven't done that you would really like to do?

My motto in my career and life is "the best is yet to come," so once again I say YES to whatever is next and look forward to it.

I also would love to elevate myself and others who want to be ambassadors for Heifer to bring us to the level of the UN's [Goodwill Ambassadors program]. Just to be able to be known and have prestige on that level is one of my personal missions.

Thanks so much for the privilege of being in a magazine I dearly covet and read cover to cover. ■



Actress Mindy Cohn

PHOTO PROVIDED BY MINDY COHN





The road from Cuzco to Ccorca.

Tiny Guinea Pigs GIVE A BIG BOOST

By **Jason Woods**, *World Ark* senior editor

Photos by **Joe Tobiason**

CCORCA, PERU—In the shadow of one of Peru's most popular tourist sites sits the district of Ccorca, which used to be one of the country's poorest areas. Ccorca is only 14 miles from the ancient stonework and bustling city squares of Cuzco, the former Incan capital. But steep, winding Andean roads mean the journey from one to the other will take at least an hour by car.

The contrast between the two places is stark. Until recently, half of Ccorca didn't have electricity, and 84 percent of the population had no access to running water or sewage facilities. Peru is where potatoes originate, and with Ccorca's rocky

mountain soil, that's predominately what locals grew, ate and sold. With not much else to complement diets or incomes, malnutrition and poverty were common.

But Mayor David Quispe Orozco, who was born and raised in Ccorca, saw potential. "We're not a poor territory," he said. "What was happening was we were a district without opportunities."

Quispe believes it's the local government's obligation to provide those opportunities. So, after witnessing the success of a Heifer Peru sheep project in another part of the country, he made some phone calls to Heifer's Cuzco office.

Guinea pigs are a traditional food source for Andean peoples.



In 2013, Heifer Peru started working in Ccorca to help families raise and sell guinea pigs. The animals, which are indigenous to the Andes, have been a food staple in the region for thousands of years, and are an important part of local culture. In addition to providing guinea pigs, the project helps connect farmers to Cuzco's thriving tourism industry, where hotels and restaurants pay a higher price per animal.

Heifer Peru is also working with the community to make significant home improvements, which include solar water heaters, ecological

refrigerators and improved stoves.

After a few years of the project, Ccorca is already seeing big changes. Since 2013, incidences of anemia in children here have gone down, from 85 percent to 25 percent. Child malnutrition has also seen a dramatic decrease, from 76 percent to 36 percent.

The entire demeanor of Ccorca has changed, according to project participant Pedro Cconcha. "Before, we would think of ourselves, nothing else," he said. "Now we work in a united way. One day for me, the other day for him, no?" ■



2



3



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4

1. Cipriana Amache adds straw to her guinea pig pens. Each project participant starts with 10 guinea pigs, eight females and two males. After three years, Amache has 150 guinea pigs.

2. Members of Ccorca's Casacunca community give guinea pigs to other families during a special ceremony. Sixty families received 10 guinea pigs each, along with feeders and materials for pen construction.

3. A woman with her baby tucked into a *manta* walks to the Casacunca ceremony.

4. Looking toward Cuzco from the District of Ccorca.

5. As a part of the gifting ceremony celebration, Casacunca community members use a *huatia*, an oven made of earth and rocks. Here, a woman is pushing hot rocks on top of potatoes to cook them. The tradition dates back to at least the Inca Empire.



6



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8



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6. Lorenza Qquecho Cconcha grinds local herbs into a paste to flavor the guinea pig meat.
7. Qquecho shows off the roasted guinea pig that was cooked in her improved stove. The improved stove conserves energy and funnels lung-damaging smoke out of the kitchen.

8. Guinea pigs huddle in their pens, which were built with the help of Heifer Peru.
9. Vegetables and cheese sit in the ecological refrigerator in the kitchen of Pedro Cconcha and Cipriana Amache. The refrigerator uses cold water to keep the whole cabinet cool.



10



11



12

10. A mural on the outside of the Cconcha-Amache home outlines the family's plan to fix up their home. Improvements to date include the addition of a kitchen with improved stove, a bathroom, a dining room, separate bedrooms, a barn for the guinea pigs, a garden and an irrigation system.

11. A project participant in Casacunca holds one of her new guinea pigs.

12. Pedro Cconcha and Cipriana Amache smile outside their home in Huayllay. Like all of the project participants in Ccorca, they decorated the outside of their home with paintings.



As part of the Ccorca project, Heifer Peru is assisting 600 families with guinea pigs, materials for improved homes and training. That's only a fraction of the work that has been done since Heifer International began operating in the country in 1984.

Since 2000, Heifer Peru has donated 23,000 guinea pigs to 2,300 families and helped 75,005 families total, through gifts of animals, seeds and agricultural supplies.





15



17



16

13. Hilda Huillcas Huanao gathers straw for her guinea pigs.
14. Edgar Ccolque Qquecho and his mother, Lorenza Qquecho Cconcha, grow alfalfa for their guinea pigs near their home.
15. The city of Cuzco is a prime market for guinea pigs.
16. This sign advertises a *cuyeria* serving guinea pig dishes.
17. Many Cuzco restaurants cater to tourists' curiosity about eating guinea pigs.

Reporter's Notebook

It's unclear where the name guinea pig comes from, since the animals are rodents, not pigs, and they don't come from Guinea.



In Spanish, the word for guinea pig is *cuy* (coo-ee). The word is borrowed from the Quechua language, and mimics the sound the animal makes.



Plenty of other languages also show some confusion about the animal's origin and classification. In Germany, for example, guinea pigs are *meerschweinchen*, or "little sea pigs."



If you've never tried it, you're probably wondering what guinea pig tastes like. The answer: kind of like rabbit.



Guinea pigs were domesticated by the indigenous peoples of the Andes somewhere between 5000 and 3000 B.C.



The cultural importance of guinea pigs didn't diminish during conversion to Catholicism. Evidence of this can be seen in Cuzco's Cathedral Basilica, where a painting of the Last Supper shows Jesus and the disciples dining on *cuy*.

In the 1500s, Spanish traders brought guinea pigs to Europe from the Americas, and guinea pigs quickly became popular pets among the aristocracy.

In addition to being high in protein and low in cholesterol, the meat of the guinea pig contains an enzyme, L-asparaginase, which is purported to slow the spread of cancer.



In Ccorca, people play music on the radio to soothe their guinea pig herd and drown out noise from outside. When I asked Edgar Ccolque Quispe what kind of music his guinea pigs prefer, he said they like "a little bit of everything."

Around Cuzco, the highest demand for *cuy* coincides with the Corpus Christi celebration in June. *Chiriuchu*, the traditional dish of the event, is abundant during this time and combines elements from all parts of the country—roasted guinea pig, chicken, fish, beef sausage, cheese, toasted corn kernels and peppers.







The **Miracle** **Berry** of the **Rainforest**

By **MOLLY FINCHER**
World Ark writer

Photos by **PHILLIP DAVIS**

While the demands of agriculture sometimes clash with natural ecosystems, the prized açaí berry makes it possible for farmers in the Bolivian Amazon to strike a symbiotic balance with the rainforest.

THE RED ROAD TO PRIMERO DE MAYO, a village hidden in the middle of the Bolivian rainforest, winds through a vista once dominated by forest but now reduced to empty fields. Cattle graze under the few remaining trees stubbornly holding their ground. The jungle's raw edge lines the horizon. Moving nearer to the village, the forest creeps closer and closer to the road until it looms overhead on either side. The last house at the end of one of Primero de Mayo's few dusty streets stands right against the tangled wall of the forest.

Berry pickers' hands are stained purple during harvest season.



The tension between industry and environment plays out on the deforested land lining the road to Primero de Mayo.



This is the home of Edwin Paz Vasquez and Daina Cordero. A long table sits out front, at the ready for the many community meetings held there. Paz is one of the leaders of an association of farmers in Primero de Mayo. Member farmers hope to invigorate the community's economy while also nurturing the surrounding rainforest. Making money and protecting the environment at the same time may sound like an unlikely combination, but the farmers here have a secret ingredient growing wild in the jungle: açai.

Paz and fellow açai harvesters are learning how to harvest the fruit and process it into pulp, a sought-after product that commands good prices. With help from Heifer

International, the farmers' association is building a sustainable harvesting and processing operation that keeps profits in their own pockets.

THE HUNT

Gathering the deep purple, almost black fruit is not for the faint of heart. Every year from April to July, açai seekers grab their burlap sacks, harnesses and a handful of coca leaves in the morning and ride their motorcycles into the jungle in search of this elusive rainforest fruit. They go in pairs, leaving Primero de Mayo behind and heading down a long stretch of unmarked dirt road, the jungle rising high on either side. After a while, they stop their motorcycles in a spot on the side of the road that



Luiz Burgas, 30, and Mercedes Parada, 29, drive into the rainforest to hunt for açai.



Edwin Paz Vaquez, 34, holds a meeting with Heifer staff at his home.



Primer de Mayo is a remote village hidden in the middle of the rainforest.

Gathering the deep purple, almost black fruit is not for the faint of heart.

appears to be like any other. But then they disappear into the seemingly impenetrable wall of plant life; there is a small opening in the wall, and a footpath leads into the forest.

Ducking into the cave-like opening is a sudden and jarring transition between the bright, hot sunlight of the outside world and the dark quiet of the deep woods. The footpath disappears immediately under the leaves carpeting the forest floor, and the flora is so thick that the bright portal to the outside world disappears only a few steps in. All that's left is a close, disorienting tangle

of plant life that looks, to an outsider, very much the same in every direction.

Experience allows the berry hunters to navigate the forest easily, and they plunge into the trees with confidence. Açai hides in the canopy, so that seekers must identify the tree by its characteristic root pattern rather than looking for the fruit itself in the tree. Once an açai tree is identified, closer inspection of the roots may reveal ripe fruit that has fallen from above. Ripe açai is richly pigmented and about the size (and hardness) of a marble. To make sure it's ripe, one can briskly knock a berry against his or her thumbnail; if the fruit leaves a purple stain, it's time to scale the tall, branchless trunk to get at the treasure in the canopy: long, full bunches



WHAT IS AÇAÍ?

The deep purple, edible berry of a Central and South American palm tree, *Euterpe oleracea*.

How do you say it?

Pronounce it like this: "ah-sigh-ee"

Sounds vaguely familiar.

Where else have I heard of it?

While açai has long been a staple in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America, the fruit was only recently popularized in the United States. Touted by some as a "superfood," you may have had it in your specialty smoothie or nutritional supplement. For a more authentic taste, you might find a Brazilian restaurant that serves an açai bowl: açai berry puree topped with granola and other fruit.

What does this have to do with Heifer? I thought this charity was all about cows and goats?

As much as we love cows, ultimately we're all about whatever will be most helpful to the farmers we work with. The same methods won't work for everyone, and we strive to help farmers make a good living through whichever means are culturally relevant and good for the local environment.

SEE HOW AÇAÍ IS HARVESTED AND PROCESSED AT

WWW.HEIFER.ORG/MIRACLEBERRY



Luiz Burgas follows fellow açai hunters into the forest.



Açai trees are slender palms that can grow more than 25 meters (that's 82 feet) tall.



Ripe açai berries leave a purple streak when scraped against a fingernail.



Luiz Burgas slides down an açai tree, using the stalk to guard his hands.

***"It's risky; you're risking your life going up so high. Sometimes there's wind, and the wind sways the tree and that's when you feel some fear."*—LUIZ BURGAS**

of palm fronds bursting with açai berries. Once açai harvesters make it up the tree and cut off the frond, they use the stem to protect their hands as they slide swiftly down the trunk. The pair of harvesters work together to remove the berries from the palm fronds and pack them up in a sack, and then it's off to find the next tree.

"It's scary," admits Luiz Burgas with a sheepish grin. Burgas and his wife, Mercedes Parada, have been harvesting açai for about five years.

"When you go in, you remember God, and you know he's the one who takes care of all of us. But always you go up with a little bit of fear. It's risky; you're risking your life going up so high. Sometimes there's wind, and the wind sways the tree and that's when you feel some fear."

For Parada, the family's bubbly commander-in-chief, seizing the opportunity that açai presents was second nature. That's just how she lives. "There isn't any

work that I shy away from. For me, it's just normal. Whether it's men's work or women's work, it's all just normal to me," she said.

She cheerfully went on to detail everything she and Burgas do to piece together a year-round living in Primero de Mayo for themselves and their four children. Regular work is rare in the area. Before açai season, they harvest Brazil nuts from January until April. Parada runs a small store, and Burgas sometimes clears land



Luiz Burgas (left) and Mercedes Parada (right) display their harvest from one açaí tree. When the fruit is in season, they typically harvest three or four days a week.

for other farmers. Parada is always on the lookout for more work. "They call me to wash clothes, or they call me to go clean a house or to go out to the field to the farm plot," she said. Her apparently indefatigable high spirits are both infectious and somewhat incongruous with what is clearly a hard life, and a harder past. She credits her work ethic to a childhood in which she was obligated by her stepmother to work preparing and selling bread every moment she wasn't in school—at times her day began at 4 a.m. and ended at 1 or 2 the next morning. Even though that environment drove her to leave home at the age of 14, her perspective, looking back, is surprisingly even-handed. "I also appreciate my stepmother, who was so harsh," she said, "but thanks to her I learned to work."



Luiz Burgas (left) and Mercedes Parada (right) roll the fronds to remove the fruit.



Mercedes Parada (left), Benito Bargas (middle) and Luiz Bargas (right) head home with the day's harvest.

BETTER BUSINESS

Before the Heifer project, Bargas and Parada made money from açaí by selling the fresh fruit to a trader from Brazil for about 25 bolivianos, or \$3.61, per can. The trader would then load up all of the açaí from the area and truck it to Brazil, where she sold it for a profit.

Last year, Edwin Paz Vasquez invited them into the Heifer Bolivia-initiated association of açaí farmers, which collectively owns the newly formed açaí processing company, Pulpas Abuná: Frutas de la Amazonia. Together, the members of the association pool their resources in order to cut out the middle man and keep the açaí profits in the community.

It works like this: the company buys fresh açaí from its members and then processes and packages the açaí into açaí pulp, which they can then sell at a higher price than the fresh fruit. Members of the association make 20 percent more selling açaí to the company than they would selling to traders, and they also share the profits the company makes from selling the processed açaí pulp.

Since 1957, Heifer Bolivia has worked in communities ranging from the Andean highlands to the Amazonian lowlands, helping thousands kick-start their farming businesses through training, equipment, livestock and diversified crops such as açaí, chocolate and coffee. In Primero de Mayo,

the processing plant has been running for more than two years, and members of the association are poised to expand the business after the project concludes. Next steps include acquiring more cold storage so they can ramp up production and completing the process of getting their food safety registration. According to Orlando Malgarajo, an independent consultant Heifer hired to evaluate the effectiveness of the project, "They are on the path for good growth."

The extra income came in the nick of time for Parada's family. More than anything, she wants her daughters to have the best education possible. Now that the oldest is in secondary school, fees are higher



Luiz Burgas (front) drops off the day's açai harvest with Edwin Paz (far right) at the processing plant.



Brazil nuts also grow wild in this region of the Amazon.



Since the pulping plant does not yet have the capacity to process all of the harvested açai, association members sell the extra to traders.



Mercedes Parada prepares *payuje*, a dish made from açai and plantains.



Ingrid Yulet Burgas Parada, 15, is Luiz Burgas and Mercedes Parada's oldest.



Burgas and Parada's daughters, Yanira Patricia (left), 5, and Pamela Rocio (right), 3, enjoy cups of *payuje* with their cousin Sergio Burgas Guarena, 6.

"You need to give your hands for work or for service in order to get something back."

—MERCEDES PARADA

and Parada and Burgas are using the money from their açai enterprises to pay for their children's studies.

The eldest children know how to harvest açai and Brazil nuts, and sometimes they go with Burgas on these missions. But ultimately, Parada envisions a different life for her children. She encourages her daughters first and foremost to focus on their studies, and she hopes to teach them by example the importance of hard work. "You know that nobody's going to give you anything," she said. "You need to give your hands for work or for service in order to get something back."

NURTURING OPPORTUNITIES

The açai harvesters of Primero de Mayo no longer sell raw fruit. Instead, they process the açai to significantly boost profits. The bright white processing plant with its purple and orange accents stands out against the rusty color palette of Primero de Mayo's dirt road and tin roofs. Heifer International helped the association renovate the old building and equip it with the machinery needed to smash açai fruits into marketable, juicy pulp. The Friends of Nature Foundation, a local organization dedicated to protecting Bolivian biodiversity, is also a partner in the project.



Heifer Bolivia helped renovate the açai pulping plant and provided the pulping equipment inside.

"The biggest change I've seen with the project is this *idea*, this knowledge of the people here, that they do have the capacity to have a business and for it to be successful, and we don't have to be, as people say, poor farmers." —EDWIN PAZ VASQUEZ



Edwin Paz (back left) poses with the açai pulping plant operators after processing a fresh batch.

Edwin Paz Vasquez manages the operation of the plant, checks the quality of the final product and handles the accounting. These are all new skills for Paz, which he learned by going to training set up by Heifer and the Friends of Nature Foundation. "I like what I do, and it's also something I'm learning for my life. I didn't go to the university, but I'm having the opportunity to learn the accounting—and I like it! And I'm finding that it's not anything so difficult," he said.

Paz is enthusiastic not just about the benefits the association and company generate for members, but for the community as a whole. The plant created jobs, and most of the operators are women. His eldest daughter, Danitza Cordero, has a job at the plant and has noticed a change in the women with whom she works. "They speak, and they make decisions based on what they think, they don't just sit back," Cordero said. "It's different. Before, it was whatever the men thought, and that was how

they made decisions. There was no interest in what the women thought.”

And it’s not just the women who are thinking bigger, Paz said. “The biggest change I’ve seen with the project is this *idea*, this knowledge of the people here, that they do have the capacity to have a business and for it to be successful, and we don’t have to be, as people say, poor farmers.”

A PERFECT SETTING

Neither Paz nor his wife grew up in Primero de Mayo. Their marriage came after a week-long whirlwind romance that ended with Paz adopting Cordero’s three children as his own. “Our relationship was a bit crazy,” Paz said, laughing. “We

got married so fast, it was love at first sight for me. When I asked her to marry me, she didn’t even believe it, and she wasn’t so sure about getting married ... and I got down on one knee and *begged* her, ‘Marry me!’ And she did.”

Life calmed when the family came to live in Primero de Mayo. According to Cordero, “We came on an adventure.” They traveled to the village to visit some of Cordero’s family, but Paz liked living in the rainforest so much that they ended up staying. “I like the environment, I like the freedom,” Paz said, comparing the remote village to life in cities. Living so close to the forest, he enjoys “the calm, the freshness.

The air you breathe is softer.”

Conserving the rainforest is fundamental to his vision for their community. “I wouldn’t ever want someone to take in machinery and knock it down. And I wouldn’t ever want them to mechanize things in the forest because I think it is richer, it is more profitable, there is more wealth and there is more beauty as it is,” he said.

“When we conserve the forest,” he continued, “we’re preserving the lungs of the world. That’s what gives us oxygen, and it gives us food ... that’s what allows us to breathe and have more tranquility and better air. And that’s what the pulping plant does. It preserves this wealth.” ■



Edwin Paz Vasquez (back) and his wife, Daina Cordero (second row, far left) pose with their children (second row, left to right) Luz Milka Paz Cordero, 11; Danitza Jackeline Saenz Cordero, 18; Dario Saenz Cordero, 15; Jose Manuel Paz Cordero, 13; and Ruth Daniela Paz Cordero (front), 6.

HOW IT'S MADE

Though gathering açai is a daring enterprise in and of itself, getting one's hands on the fruit is only half the battle. No one is tempted to snack on a few freshly picked açai berries while on the hunt, because they are hard as rocks straight off the tree. To get to the good stuff, the fruit has to be washed, sanitized, cooked, spun, sieved and otherwise beaten to a literal pulp. Here's how they do it:

1 PICK IT

Operators combine the day's açai haul and cull any unripe berries by hand.



2 WASH IT

Next the fruit is disinfected in a giant water bath. Extraneous twigs and dirt will rise to the top and get scraped away.



3 COOK IT

After a rinse, the fruit soaks in hot water until the berries are softer and the skin comes off easily.



4 SPIN IT

The açai berries go for a spin in the pulping machines, which keep the tasty fruit pulp and spit the hard seeds out.



5 SIEVE IT

Next the pulp goes through a sieve to make sure the final product has a nice and smooth texture.



6 SEAL IT

The dark, glossy açai pulp is carefully measured out, sealed and stored in refrigerators.



7 EAT IT

Now it's ready to taste! Açai pulp is usually made into juice that tastes a bit like blueberries, a bit like grapes and a bit like something else entirely—something earthy and unique to açai. Once in pulp form, the possibilities for açai are as wide as any other fruit. Some people get creative and make açai treats like wine or cake!



KIDS' SOLAR



Kaydee-Ann Henderson demonstrates the GoSun Sport solar cooker as Jadalyn Santana-Santiago looks on.

COOK-OFF



COOKING METHODS IN UNDEVELOPED PARTS OF THE WORLD ARE LIMITED, BUT SUSTAINABLE OPTIONS EXIST. STUDENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS TESTED OUT SOLAR TECHNOLOGY AND FOUND THAT THEIR COOKIES AND CARROTS WEREN'T HALF BAD.

Story and photos by Erik Hoffner,
World Ark contributor

"I like that we use the sun to do it," said a 5th grader of preparing food with a solar cooker, "and that you don't need fuel." He and his classmates from Mary M. Walsh Elementary School in Springfield, Massachusetts, were spending a week learning about agriculture at Red Gate Farm in Buckland, an educational farm about an hour north and west of their city by big yellow bus, and some of them took part in a solar cook-off one sunny afternoon.

The idea was to compare three kinds of solar cookers, I told them, to decide which ones we like the best. And also, I said, the rule was that we'd have to eat what we made.

That brought cheers from the kids sitting on a nearby array of picnic tables. This excitement was quickly tempered by my insistence that we learn a little before cooking anything, like the fact that the sun beams more energy onto the Earth every hour than humanity uses in a whole year, and that these solar cookers arranged on the grass were designed for people who don't have modern stoves and ovens like we did at home, but who rather have to cook over smoky fires that make moms and kids sick (I spared them the statistic that 4.3 million people die every year from smoke-related illnesses, mostly women and children).



Kaydee-Ann Henderson and Adriel Morales test the Solavore box-style solar cooker.



The Solsource dish-style solar cooker was the consensus favorite among adults.

I spared them the statistic that 4.3 million people die every year from smoke-related illnesses, mostly women and children.



The GoSun Sport solar cooker made a delicious carrot dish.

How would your family make dinner if you didn't have electricity, or gas, I asked them. With solar energy, I explained, you could do it for free, without cutting down a tree and without the choking smoke.

Still, they needed some proof, so we elected a couple of kids to help load raw ingredients into the three cookers, a SolSource dish-style cooker, which concentrates the sun's rays at the bottom of a pot to boil water or heat a frying pan; a Solavore box-style cooker, which captures sun and traps heat inside a dark interior to bake food, like a closed car on a sunny day; and a GoSun Sport, which reflects light onto a tube surrounded by a vacuum, the same way solar hot water systems

operate on the roof of homes. Inside that tube, I explained, a long thin tray can bake or roast anything you want, including cake, which prompted some excited looks.

Today, though, the GoSun was loaded with chopped root vegetables from the farm. The kids brightened up when the Solavore box cooker was loaded with raw cookie dough, and again when we filled a pot on the SolSource with water, sugar and a whole lot of berries grown at Red Gate Farm. When boiled, strained and mixed with seltzer and ice cubes, these ingredients would create a yummy fresh soda to wash down the cookies and carrots.

While we waited for the sun to

make our midafternoon treats, we talked about the moms and their kids (mostly girls) who, in many places in the world, start every day by walking many miles to cut firewood before cooking breakfast. And how this can be even more dangerous than the resulting smoky cook fires, because sometimes there are hungry animals prowling out there, or irritated elephants. Or even people who might rob them. "Do you think you'd be ready to learn at school after doing so much work before breakfast?" I asked.

Checking on the progress of our meal, it seemed it would take a little while longer, so I asked them if they thought their families would use a solar cooker like this, if the fuel were



free? The result was a couple maybes, one yes and one declarative no from a student who explained, "Because we like to do things fast." His classmate chimed in that if it's taking a long time to cook, that would be fine with her, because then she could do other things at the same time. Which, I pointed out, was something lots of people do in countries where pre-packaged foods and microwaves aren't readily available.

Suddenly everything was done, and the kids and their adult helpers pulled the cookies, veggies and juice from their respective stoves. A spirited snacking ensued, and even the roasted roots all disappeared behind wide smiles.

So what was everyone's favorite solar cooker, I wanted to know?

By far the kids liked the Solavore box cooker, and not just because it was responsible for the baking of cookies. Rather, they liked it most because it was easy to see the food cooking. The adults all liked the SolSource for its flexibility, since it accommodates large pots of water to boil grains or pasta or veggies, and also can heat a frying pan. That left the GoSun without fans, but I pointed out that it made such a delicious dish of carrots that they were all gone.

So in the end, all the cookers came out winners, and so did the beautiful blue sky, which on that afternoon was just a bit less smoky. ■



Writer and photographer Erik Hoffner is an environmental journalist based in Massachusetts.

Heifer Cooks Up Sustainable Solutions

By **AUSTIN BAILEY**, *World Ark* managing editor

The deforestation and air pollution that come with cooking over open flames are just part of the problem. Millions of women and girls in developing nations spend hours a day foraging for wood, leaving them with little time for school, work and other pursuits. And smoke inhalation that comes along with open-flame cooking has devastating effects on health, contributing to millions of deaths each year.

Heifer International aims to preserve the health of people and the planet by promoting more sustainable cooking methods in our projects around the globe. We work with project participants to help them choose cooking options that are culturally and environmentally appropriate.

In Malawi, that means Heifer is supporting women's groups to make and sell highly efficient, portable ovens that use less than half the fuel of the traditional open fires. These improved

stoves also emit less smoke, and because they are enclosed, they are less likely to cause burns. Project participants in Malawi are also adopting heat-retention cookers that require only a short amount of time over a heat source. Heifer also embraces solar energy and uses solar panels in some projects.

In other countries where Heifer works, we help project participants turn waste into fuel with biogas digesters. The digesters turn organic waste into rich fertilizer and combustible methane gas used for cooking and lighting. Children can study past sunset thanks to the light in their homes that they wouldn't otherwise have, and time once spent hunting for cooking fuel can go to other things. Trees that might have been chopped for cooking fuel are preserved. This method of cooking has health benefits as well, since it significantly cuts indoor air pollution and the associated health risks. ■



In the El Mezcalito village of Honduras, Bernardina Vasquez Calix works in her kitchen.



Jane Mwenechanya and other women in her Malawi village use fireless rice cookers that capture and retain heat, drastically reducing the need for fuel.



The inner workings of a biogas system in Cambodia.



Sharon Nkhoma of Malawi makes extra money building and selling efficient portable clay stoves.



Gladys Chari cooks on her fuel-efficient stove at home in Mandemwa village, Zimbabwe. The improved stove requires less wood than traditional ones.



Workers use clay bricks to piece together biogas digesters in Uganda.



Donata Musanabera lights a gas burner powered by biogas produced from cow manure in Rwanda.



Zhao Juxiang of China uses biogas to cook.



Sovann Kong Kea prepares a modest meal on her biogas stove in Svay Thom, Cambodia.



No Place

Reviewed by Jason Woods, *World Ark* senior editor

Each of the world's 21 million refugees has a harrowing story to tell, and those stories usually go unheard. *City of Thorns* speaks up to remind us about the humanity and potential trapped hopelessly in limbo.

Kenya's third-largest city isn't technically a city at all. It's a refugee camp that for two decades has been filling up with families fleeing Somalia's civil war. The Kenyan government established Dadaab in 1992, with the aim of temporarily housing 90,000 Somali refugees. Violence, drought, famine and flooding in Somalia and other nearby countries swelled the camp over time. Now its population is about a half a million, comparable to that of New Orleans or the state of Wyoming.

Author Ben Rawlence first visited Dadaab as a researcher for Human Rights Watch. A year later, he began what would become a series of visits to the camp to record the experiences of the residents. The result is *City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp*, a combination of the author's firsthand descriptions and reconstructions of the accounts Rawlence recorded in interviews with camp residents.

City of Thorns isn't an easy book to read. The title references the thorn tree fences that surround and intersect the red sand of the camp and doubles as a metaphor for the myriad difficulties of the place. In the book, Rawlence describes a camp that has solidified and become permanent, but a city where overcrowding, disease and crime are commonplace. The

United Nations Refugee Agency, which manages Dadaab, struggles to provide enough food and water. Health services are overtaxed. Residents are forbidden from working in Kenya, so they make money by selling their rations and finding a niche in the informal market.

Most of Dadaab's residents live in a constant state of suspension. The Kenyan government does not want to assimilate refugees into the country and has long wanted to close the camp. In 2013, as an initial move toward camp closure, the governments of Kenya and Somalia signed an agreement with the UN Refugee Agency to repatriate Somali refugees. The problem is that it's still not safe to return to Somalia, where al-Shabaab, a terrorist group aligned with al-Qaeda, controls much of the country. About three-fourths of Dadaab residents don't want to return to Somalia. And many refugees were actually born in the camp and have never known another home. But the Kenyan government still plans to close Dadaab by mid-2017.

Resettlement to countries like the United States, Norway or the United Kingdom is the dream in Dadaab, but it's not usually a realistic goal. There are few slots available for resettlement, and shockingly, not that many refugees in Dadaab are eligible. According to Rawlence, "The proper criteria for resettlement



to Go

abroad for protection purposes under UN rules are a specific threat to life, not a generalized fear of war." So only people who are specifically targeted by violence are likely to be selected.

Even then, the process often takes years. Monday and Muna are a married couple featured in *City of Thorns*, and both were targeted by extremists in Dadaab. They were selected for resettlement in Australia, and they went through all of the necessary interviews, paperwork and medical examinations. But their case stalled for 17 months due to a bureaucratic error. "The Australians had forgotten about the case: there had been a change of government, a rotation of personnel, they were full of apologies. For want of an email, Muna and Monday's life had slipped through the cracks."

Throughout the book, Rawlence leans into the hopelessness of the lives in Dadaab: "To live in this city of thorns is to be trapped mentally, as well as physically, your thoughts constantly flickering between impossible dreams and a nightmarish reality."

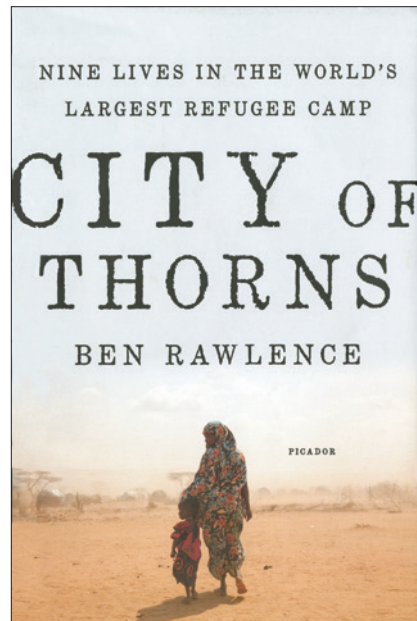
With no other options, some refugees make the extremely dangerous decision to sneak out of Dadaab and try to survive until they make it to

Europe or elsewhere. Others just wait in limbo.

Fish was 8 years old when he and his mother fled to Dadaab. Now in his early 30s, he sometimes lives in the city of thorns and other times escapes to find opportunities as an undocumented worker in Nairobi. Eventually, Fish becomes one of the first employees of an NGO trying to facilitate resettlements in partnership with the Kenyan government. But his hope is fragile: "No resettlement, no integration in Kenya, no life in the camp, no nothing ... it's disturbing, you know. If UNYPAD (United Youth for Peace and Development) fails, I think the earth doesn't want to hold us anymore."

By the end of *City of Thorns*, the fates of most of the characters are no

more clear than in the beginning of the story. But the book gives readers a personal context for the next time they hear about a refugee crisis or border issues in the news. Rawlence writes, "At a time when there are more refugees than ever, the rich world has turned its back on them. Our myths and religions are steeped in the lore of exile and yet we fail to treat the living examples of that condition as fully human. Instead, those fleeing the twenty-first century's wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere are seen as a potential fifth column, a threat." ■



City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp
By Ben Rawlence, Hardcover, \$26;
402 pages



READ TO FEED

Students at St. Aloysius School in New Canaan, Connecticut, first signed on to read books for Heifer International in 2000. Student Sophia Lasky is happily carrying the torch as she takes part in her third year of Read to Feed. Last year she raised the most money of any reader in the entire school!

What did you like most about Read to Feed?
I like helping poor, less fortunate people and learning about the countries they come from.

What have you learned about Heifer International?
I learned that providing animals and necessary supplies for children and their families is important because it teaches sustainability. It teaches them how to rely on themselves. It's like the proverb about teaching a person to fish instead of just giving him a fish to eat. That way he or she can always eat!

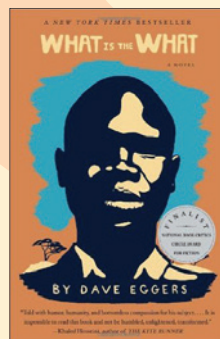
How does it feel to know that you helped change the world?
It feels so amazing, and I'm proud to be able to help. I am very grateful to my grandparents and my family for helping me raise so much for such a great cause!

SOPHIA LASKY
7th grade
St. Aloysius School
New Canaan, Connecticut

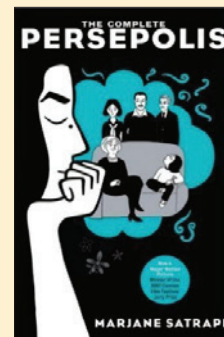
LEARN MORE AT READTOFEED.ORG

THREE FAVORITES ON: REFUGEES AROUND THE WORLD

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#ReadtoFeed



Grandmother Grooms Hollywood Barbers to Give Back

By Liz Ellis, *World Ark* contributor



PHOTO BY LARELLA ALLEN

The Svelte Men barbers show their support at Heifer's 2014 Beyond Hunger event.

What does the plight of farmers in the developing world have to do with a high-end men's barbershop in Hollywood? Generally, not much. But worlds collide in the Svelte Men Barbershops in Los Angeles, thanks to a certain Grandma Jean.

The seeds of Svelte Men's mission to improve people's quality

of life worldwide, in addition to improving men's quality of coiffure, began nearly 15 years ago as co-owners Dan Broadley and Timmy Yanchun were growing up in the suburbs of Boston. When he was young, Broadley's grandmother Jean donated animals from the Heifer catalog in his name every year for the holidays. "As I grew older," writes Broadley on the

company's website, "the donations quickly became my favorite gifts to receive during the holiday season."

At the same time, Yanchun began his career by giving affordable haircuts to his brothers and cousins. "It blossomed into my first barbershop at 18," he said. The young man went on to develop a devoted clientele on the West Coast where he opened his first shop at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. From there Broadley and Yanchun, along with Yanchun's brother Nicky, officially launched the Svelte Men brand.

"We always had that entrepreneurial spirit," Broadley said. "I was working as an accountant, and my grandmother passed. Because of the money she left us, we were able to get off the ground, and so we vowed to show respect and not forget that down the road."

In addition to volunteering at Heifer events in their area, the barbers support Heifer by donating a portion of their profits and by spreading the word among their customers. Broadley notes that, "It seemed like that was the best way to honor what she left us."

While more and more businesses are incorporating social causes into



their model to chase the fairly new ideal of the triple bottom line (i.e. people, planet, profit), Heifer's folksy appeal isn't necessarily an intuitive match with the sleek, über masculine style of Svelte Men. Broadley and Yanchun admit that Heifer wasn't an obvious go-to topic for barbershop chair-talk at first. "Guys in our demographic really don't know how or why these things are happening, and that's a lot of our motivation in our job, to inform them on how to help," Yanchun said. "In our opinion, [Heifer is] really the best cause to give your time and money to. We're obsessed with this work, and we don't think that it's too far-fetched to have other guys our age do the same once they understand it. That's our job."

So how do they relate their passion for Grandma Jean's favorite charity to their customers? "One thing that stuck out to me very early on working with Heifer was the 'teach a man to fish' idea ... that really resonates with guys ... when you apply it to a charitable situation, they definitely get it," Yanchun said. The Svelte Men shops are decorated with images of Heifer project participants that Broadley says, "tell the story and invoke questions from our customers."

But that's not all. Broadley and Yanchun are planning to take it to the next level by tapping into another emerging trend in the business world: the desire among consumers for products that are both high-quality and ethically sourced.

Broadley and Yanchun recently had the opportunity to see Heifer's work in Guatemala firsthand and felt a kinship with Heifer project participants as fellow entrepreneurs. Broadley shares that, "There is a huge entrepreneurial spirit within



Timmy Yanchun (left) and Dan Broadley visit a Heifer project in Guatemala.

Heifer once things get rolling ... One of the things that we thought was really cool was how Heifer projects progress." They witnessed the work Heifer does to connect small-scale farmers to markets so that they can make a good living from their hard work. After they returned home, Broadley and Yanchun decided to apply their talents to the needs they saw in Guatemala by making plans to begin selling products including honey, coffee and cardamom produced in Guatemala to American consumers. They hope this will help the farmers there reap the most revenue possible.

Meeting a woman named Ms. Dolores Tux Xol from Caquihá 1 Village, in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala, made a particularly deep impression on the two men. "It was definitely life-changing and made me rethink a lot of things in my personal life and about the world as a whole. I was deeply moved by her words and her overall situation. I



A young Dan Broadley with the inspirational Grandma Jean.

will be connected to Dolores through that memory forever, and I am truly indebted to her for humbling me," Yanchun recalled. "It really motivated us and trickled into our business life. It's got us thinking a lot about Guatemala as a whole."

What might Grandma Jean think of all this? Of the men's ongoing work and commitment to Heifer, Broadley says, "She'd be thrilled ... she was always super giving. They never had a whole lot, but they always worked to help others less fortunate." ■



Leading with Faith and Flexibility

By Austin Bailey, *World Ark* managing editor

For Esther Cohen, years of working in New York's off-Broadway theaters honed the improvisation skills she uses today to figure out how to ease suffering around the world. Now the chief operating officer of Episcopal Relief & Development and a member of the Heifer International Board of Directors, Cohen says her unlikely career path actually makes a lot of sense.

"One of the skill sets I developed in theater was the ability to do what you have to do with what you have, and to be flexible," she said. "Those skills turned out to translate well."

Heifer's Board comprises 19 members, including Cohen and two other covenant agency directors who represent faith-based groups.

Serving on Heifer's board is comfortable for Cohen, she said, because much of the work Heifer does mirrors her day job at Episcopal Relief & Development. Her expertise is helpful to other Board members who aren't as familiar with the day-to-day operations of nonprofits.

"I think it helps when there's somebody in the group who can say, 'Oh, this sounds so familiar. This is what's going on in the rest of the NGO [non-governmental organization] community.'"

One fundamental difference between her work



Heifer Board member Esther Cohen snuggles a baby goat at Heifer International headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas.

with Episcopal Relief & Development and her work at Heifer is the role faith plays in both organizations. Heifer was founded on Christian beliefs but is not a faith-based organization. Both approaches have their benefits, Cohen said.

Episcopal Relief & Development works mostly in areas with a strong Episcopal or Anglican presence, which makes it easy to build a feeling of connection between donors and recipients. "It's more than just that they are in need, it's that this is a community filled with our brothers and sisters." The challenge is combatting the perception that faith-based organizations work solely with people with similar religious beliefs. "The fact is that we're working on

the ground much the same way Heifer is working on the ground," Cohen said.

The spirit of giving and kindness imbues Heifer's work, the same as it does in faith-based organizations, so the differences are not as great as they may seem, Cohen said.

"I don't think that one is better than the other. I do think that much of the way Heifer works today, although done in a secular environment, is informed by its past," she said. ■



The Legend of the Man-Tiger

As told by residents of Primero de Mayo, Bolivia
Illustration by Boya Sun

Life in the rainforest is colored with glimmers of danger and flashes of magic. While visiting an açai project in Bolivia, writer Molly Fincher captured this story of a mystical creature with a taste for meat. While it is called a tiger in this story, the beast to which our storytellers refer is known in the United States as a jaguar.



We don't know that much of what's in the forest, but our ancestors say there's a small species of plant that people rub on their bodies, like a ritual, and then they do three somersaults backward. At the third one, when they land, they land as a tiger. And they say that the head of the person becomes the back part of the body of the tiger.

The man who became a man-tiger, every night he would go out and hunt, and every day he would have meat to eat. He always had meat. But then, he started to steal meat from the people in the village. He would take their pigs. And nobody could kill him because, since he was a man-tiger, he had the intelligence of a person. So he knew when people were waiting for him, and he knew where to hide. And the people in the community were afraid.

Finally one person said, "I'm going to catch him," and began to lay in wait for him one day after the next after the next. And that man was able to shoot him, but he shot him in the head, and the tiger took off.

But who was the man-tiger? The person who shot it had a guess, so he sneaked into a man's house, and he saw that the man had a rifle bullet in his backside. And then he knew the man was a man-tiger, and he came back with all the people in the town, and they said, "If you don't leave, we're going to burn you." And then the man-tiger had to leave that home and go to live somewhere else. And until today, there is still this species of men who turn into tigers. ■



PHOTO BY JASON WOODS

"I met some of [Heifer's] early founders on a plane trip. I wanted to support it because it was a great idea."

Ed Asner

At the 2016 Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, actor and activist Ed Asner was awarded the Heifer International Spa City Spirit Award for his tireless involvement in a wide variety of social issues. Asner, who is a longtime Heifer supporter, accepted the award after a screening of "My Friend Ed," a documentary showcasing the activist side of his life.

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