

ECHO

From page 1

53,000 hours to ECHO in 2007 — keep the programs in operation. Individual donations made up 63 percent of ECHO's more than \$5.5 million in assets, including cash and equipment, last year. If you donate \$1 to ECHO, 81 cents goes into the farming program itself, while 7 cents returns to fundraising efforts and 12 goes to manage the operation.

There is also a group of interns, often seen perusing the gardens, maybe taste testing a mango or winged bean. They are college graduates who train for one year at the farm, before being dispatched to locations worldwide, where they serve that community.

Ultimately, ECHO's staff members, volunteers and contributors have a huge goal: to end world hunger. Unfortunately, satisfying that need is more complicated than simply giving hungry people food, Doerr said, or even innovative ways to grow it.

"If world hunger were just caused by lack of food, it could easily be solved," he said. "If it were just a matter of technology, no problem. But often the problem is more human than technical. It's often a matter of culture, of 'We don't do things this way.'"

Some cultures, he said, shun certain plants because they imply low social standing. Others have long traditions in farming which, like a favorite but flawed family recipe, make farmers reluctant to change. Political red tape afflicts some; for example, officials in some countries support companies that manufacture chemical fertilizers even if their farmers can't afford them. And because of factors like global warming and changing weather patterns, "the rules that apply to previous generations no longer apply," Doerr said; third world farmers have to be willing to look for fresh options.

But there is scant room for error in places where people are already starving, he said. If a crop goes bad, people die. That's why Doerr encourages these farmers to put aside a portion of their land as an Agricultural Recourse Center, to test seeds and growing methods. In places where the same methods have been used for hundreds of years, Doerr's suggestions are often met with polite skepticism and sometimes laughter.

In Cambodia, for example, Doerr introduced a new method of growing rice, which he said uses less water and less seed, but produces more rice. Most of the farmer's in that area balked at the plan when he first presented it. But one man, named Farmer Darah, discovered that he could use only 10 percent of the seed and grow 25 percent more rice. Now all the farmers in that area use the method, a change that hadn't been seen there for centuries, Doerr



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO EVAN WILLIAMS
Mark Maerten pulls some weeds out of a bed of soda cans where a sweet variety of habanero peppers grow.



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO EVAN WILLIAMS

ECHO

said, and maybe a change that will last for centuries to come.

All of ECHO's innovations, from soda cans to the rice to the Nubian goats, are ideas culled from every populated continent, making ECHO a vast repository of agricultural information.

"These ideas come from all over the world," Doerr said. "If we find an idea in Southeast Asia that works in Central America, we want to use that...I've lived on the other side of the pond long enough to know what we do really helps third world countries."

Just a few examples of the places ECHO appeared last year: in the Ukraine, helping an orphanage to create an organic garden; in Mozambique, where information on rooftop gardening was shipped; in Cameroon, a new crop of pigeon pea and disease resistant papaya was introduced to the Mbengwi Area Food Crop Cooperative; in Madagascar, a teacher there who is implementing a poverty relief program at a local college, was provided with educational material on a highly nutritious tropical mushroom.

For curious members of the public, ECHO invites you to take their tour, and explore how these gardens "echo" a world where technological innovation sometimes means a new type of bean or way to fertilize a seed, instead of a cell phone or laptop.

"People love coming here," Director of Communications Mark Maerten said. "People say, 'you've taught us to use things we've spent our entire lives ignoring.'" ■

When you need Wealth Management with Personal Guidance.

CALL **Jennifer L. Myers**
MBA, Financial Advisor

Coastal Wealth Management Group
AN OFFICE OF METLIFE
(239) 896-1110

Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., New York, NY 10166. Securities products offered by MetLife affiliated broker/dealers including Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (member NASD) or MetLife Securities, Inc. (member NASD). 2007 Investment advisory services offered by MetLife Securities, Inc., a registered investment advisor. (03/07/06)exp/08/07/07

If you go

>>What: Tour of ECHO's "Global Village."
>>Where: ECHO is located one mile east of I-75. Take exit 143 to Bayshore Road. Turn left onto Durrance Road. The Visitors Center is on the left.
>>When: Jan. 1 through Mar. 31, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. only on Saturday. April 1 through Dec. 31, 10 a.m. only Tuesday, Friday and Saturday
>>Cost: Adults, \$8; Children, \$5
>>Info: For more information call 239-543-3246 or visit www.echonet.org

Executive Office Suites For Lease

Beacon Executive Office Suites are an excellent option for smaller companies or businesses.

- Front Receptionist w/ Answering Service
- Large Community Room
 - Conference Room
- High Speed Internet Access
- Office Satellite TV Available
 - Private Restrooms
 - Kitchen Facilities
- Covered Parking Available
- Full Service Hair & Nail Salon
 - Food Court Breakfast & Lunch Service
- Health & Fitness Facility Included
 - Virtual Offices

Lease Rates from \$300 Per Month

Private Offices with Utilities

BEACON EXECUTIVE SUITES

239.425.2600 • www.BeaconExecutiveSuites.com
8359 Beacon Blvd. • Fort Myers

BANKING LAW • COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION LAW
EMINENT DOMAIN (CONDEMNATION) • REAL ESTATE LAW
REAL ESTATE LITIGATION • TRANSACTIONAL REAL ESTATE

Henderson Franklin 1924 Henderson Franklin 2007

Our dedication to our clients and community is timeless.

Henderson Franklin is one of the oldest and largest law firms between Tampa and Miami. We are proud of the role we have played in the growth and development of Fort Myers and southwest Florida.

Our dedication to our clients continues today in matters of estate planning, real estate, commercial litigation, business and tax issues, land use, family law, and much more.

www.henlaw.com Henderson | Franklin
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Professionals committed to serving our clients and communities.

239.344.1100 Fort Myers • Bonita Springs • Sanibel

© 2007 Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A.