

## Early Harvest

*All big things grow from little things, but new little things will be destroyed by their environment unless they are cherished for reasons more like aesthetic appreciation than practical utility.*

*- Cyril Stanley Smith*

Long warm afternoons trending toward hot? *Check.*  
Pollen counts and Kleenex usage dramatically on the rise? *Check.*

Warm yellows, purples and greens pushing aside drab browns and grays? *Check.*

The signs are impossible to deny or miss – spring is born out of winter. These little things – the seemingly incidental things, the things so heavily pregnant with meaning and hope this time of year – mark spring's arrival. And as a result they become perhaps the ultimate contradiction – expected miracles. Events that we have come to recognize as annual rites of passage, yet for all their regularity, they never fail to startle us with their arrival.

In our work at WHRI – the work of the soil and the seed, the hoof and the pail, the want and the wish – we too have the good fortune to see signs of hope, signs of new birth and growth as we look over our efforts. Like the wide-ranging work of spring these signs of life and growth are not limited to pastures and gardens, but can be seen taking root all around Waco.

One such place is Doris Miller Elementary School. An elementary school might seem an unlikely place for miracles, but it must be admitted that urban

gardening by its very nature is paradoxically confounding. The urban is the realm of concrete and asphalt, metal and glass – not of fruit, branch, leaf and tilth. Yet, at Doris Miller, Will Summers, WHRI Urban Gardening Intern, and Matt Hess, WHRI Education Director, are spearheading more than one minor miracle in the works.



**The season of spring brings many new additions to the Farm**

They are championing gardens in schools while convincing kids to value the agricultural roots we all share (pun very much intended). In what they plan to be a pilot program for schools throughout the Waco Independent School District, Summers and Hess weekly walk a group of voluntary participants through basic gardening principles – everything from composting refuse to transplanting seedlings. In the process they are transforming neglected and unproductive landscapes and steering kids toward a renewed interest in the soil, their food, and how it all connects.

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# ... Early Harvest

To see the fruit that the seeds planted at Doris Miller will hopefully grow into, all you have to do is stand at the southeast corner of the campus and strain your neck to see the full-scale production garden burgeoning on the adjacent property of Carver Park Baptist Church. Fruit can be seen in the lives of the high school gardeners as well as the bountiful harvest of greens. This two year-old program encompassing almost an acre of vegetable production began as a partnership between WHRI and the Back-to-Earth-Gardening (BTEG) club (with the generous use of the church's facilities) and is now increasingly coming under the leadership and direction of its youth participants.

Central to these efforts is what we might call "compassionate, enlightened self-interest" or the idea that one way to achieve a great good is to attach to it the hope of great profit. In this case, the money earned from the sale of vegetables will be reaped by these youthful caretakers. Yet the true value of an increased awareness of local food production, methods and nutritional benefits will go far beyond the monetary and well beyond the confines of Carver Park as the youth take their experiences and knowledge with them into other communities.

One community that the fruit of our own labor regularly intersects with can be reached by a quick drive across town to visit the area food bank, Caritas of Waco. This is a journey that some lucky WHRI intern or volunteer gets to make every Wednesday morning that our garden is in production, as we tithe a share of our weekly harvest to help supplement the food staples they receive with fresh vegetable offerings. This too is a reassuring sign of hope and life as we partner with sister organizations to push back hunger.

Finally, there continue to be signs of growth and life here on our farm that have nothing to do with the abundance of our garden. No - these signs can be found on weeknights and weekends gathered in a circle to learn gardening basics, standing around decaying leaves to talk about compost, or squinting to identify cucumber beetles. These signs are the faces and voices of you - our friends, our supporters and our constituents - as you participate in the life and work of the Farm through our ongoing gardening workshops. These educational opportunities not only help to credential your green thumb but also empower you to carry the life and work of WHRI into your own lives and communities.

Yes, spring is upon us, and it brings with it the full promise of the year to come. It also foretells of the warm fruitful days ahead and the long days of labor needed to make that fruit a reality. So it is with the knowledge of those things ahead that we pause to reflect on the variety of ways in which our labor is already bearing fruit in the lives of many in the Waco area. It is through the cultivation of these many seemingly little things that we are able to accomplish the big things to which we are called to - in partnership with you.

- Jon West, 2007 WHRI alumnus

**World Hunger Relief, Inc.** is a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation registered with the State of Texas under the 501(c)(3) IRS status.

## Mission Statement

World Hunger Relief, Inc. is a Christian organization committed to the alleviation of hunger around the world.

God calls us to:

- Train** individuals in holistic ministry that equips them to work with communities in developing sustainable farming techniques
- Educate** those with an economic abundance on methods of conserving and sharing resources
- Participate** in local and international sustainable development programs

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## Staff

<b>Neil Rowe Miller</b> , Executive Director	neil@worldhungerrelief.org
<b>Matt Hess</b> , Education Director	matt@worldhungerrelief.org
<b>David Cole</b> , Farm Manager	david@worldhungerrelief.org
<b>Dale Barron</b> , Development Director	dale@worldhungerrelief.org
<b>Joanna Ivey</b> , Office Manager	joanna@worldhungerrelief.org

# African Queen

Climbing trees, raising rabbits and gardening with my dad are some of my favorite childhood memories in the African country of Niger. As a child of SIM (Serving in Mission) missionaries, my home was an oasis in the desert, a childhood paradise perched on the edge of the Sahara Desert. And yet, poverty was all around me: children with swollen bellies, a sign of malnutrition; farmer's rocky, barren fields from soil erosion; crumbling mud houses or caved in thatch roofs.

The nameless people from my childhood had real physical and spiritual needs. In these memories; the tastes, sights and sounds of my childhood, my life has been dramatically shaped. I see more to life than the here and now, than shopping malls, new clothes, and the latest technologies.

At Indiana's Bethel College, I studied environmental biology and loved every minute of that experience. More than anything, my fascination for biology was unlocked and I began to intently explore our role as caretakers for God's Creation. And what a Creator he is! I was continuously amazed by the intricacies of life down to the microscopic creatures living in our soil and how everything fits and works together. Yet, how does my faith and relationship with others fit in with biology and my study of the environment?

Agriculture has always been on my mind - throughout my college career, while teaching outdoor science in California at a Christian camp, during my short-term assignment in Niger with an SIM development project, and even while working in a retail nursery in Colorado. Agriculture has combined my desire to help those in need with my love for exploring creation and working with my hands. This is where the Farm comes in - I met

the WHRI staff and interns at an agricultural missions conference in Florida and knew that it was my next home.

My tenure here at World Hunger Relief has already passed the half-way mark. Working with the livestock was not my first choice, as plants are my first love - and yet I believe God knew it was the position for me. I have grown to love the goats (anyone here can testify to that) and working with all the

animals. Most of my time is spent in managing the goats in particular along with the dairy. It has been an incredible learning experience for me from hoof trimming, disbudding, and parasite management to fence moving for our rotational grazing system, planting pasture, bookkeeping, performing minor surgical tasks, and researching various livestock issues.



**Jocelyne Philpott shepherding her flock**

I get to participate in other farm operations relating more to gardening and education. When I think about the two places I grew up calling home - the lush tropical setting of the Nigerian plateau compared to the rocky desert landscape in central and eastern Niger - I see similar needs: hungry and impoverished people. Even in the midst of food and wealth there are those who are starving and in need, a testimony of how we can find poverty in even the most unsuspecting places.

God is using my experience here on the farm to prepare me for the future, to equip me to be a useful tool to help others ... and I love it. Stop by the farm sometime for a visit. Maybe you will fall in love too!

*Jocelyne*

# WHRI Alumni & Intern Updates

## ◆ Lena Yual

After a visit home to Papua New Guinea, Lena has been working for the past two months with a Mennonite Central Committee project in Bangladesh. She writes that "Bangladesh is so hard ... when you're trying it with your own strength, but as I have mentioned, God has taken me through. All in all, I am so grateful that God brought me here and I am looking forward. My request to you is that you please pray for God's direction for these days."

## ◆ Chip Kingery

WHRI 1980s alumnus now working for Joni & Friends, Chip writes: "I must admit that whenever I travel and see such opportunities for agricultural missions as I (recently) did in China, I think about our dear friend Carl Ryther. WOW! It was a privilege to serve alongside him - he taught me so much. I'm sure that WHRI continues to be a blessing as an extension of his vision and passion."

## ◆ Merideth Mayrand

Settling in to her assignment in Mexico with Mennonite Central Committee, Merideth writes: "People here are very friendly, and almost every day I have been blessed by generous hospitality in the form of warm greetings in passing, conversations, tortillas, refrescos or invitations to share in various special events. There are always lots of birthday parties, weddings, dances, and other neighborhood celebrations happening. I am still having a hard time figuring out the "time" thing here. I'm never sure if I should show up 30 minutes late or 3 hours late. Holy Week here was a huge event, complete with daily processions, a huge market, carnival rides, and about 1,000 out of town visitors for the week. It was wonderful to be a part of that celebration! As we continue with our work, I would appreciate your prayers for the success of the women's gardens, that the people in these communities would be willing to work together on the building of dry latrines and cisterns, and that the love of God would be shared through our interactions and work. On a more personal note, I would so appreciate your prayers for strength and courage in some personal struggles that I have been facing, for continued language learning, and for opportunities to develop close friendships here. I pray that as we enter Spring, you would be blessed by God's beauty, and that this month of April would be filled with joy and peace for each of you."

## ◆ Ruth Mick

A former Live-In-Volunteer, Ruth writes: "I wanted to let you know some exciting news! I was accepted for the Fulbright Scholarship that I applied for (last year). I am thrilled and excited to be going to Zambia in 2009. Ruth will be collaborating with a former colleague of Neil Rowe Miller, WHRI's Executive Director."

## ◆ Ted & Darlene Eash

Volunteers with the Mennonite SOOP (Service Opportunities for Older People) program, Ted and Darlene recently spent two months helping with construction projects on the Farm. They wrote back with these thoughts: "This experience narrowed the gap between 70 year-olds and 20 year-olds, helping us gain a new understanding, hope and growing respect in the vision, energy and confidence that my grandchildren's generation can address the current needs of our world ... We came away with a new appreciation for young people preparing for life in Third World countries."

World Hunger Relief, Inc.  
P.O. Box 639  
Elm Mott, TX 76640-0639

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