

ECOLIFE

FALL 2012

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ECOLIFE

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You can help us in our efforts to be "green" by passing along this publication, recycling and/or opting to receive an e-newsletter version instead. Please email admin@ecolifefoundation.org to specify your preferences and how you would like to receive information from our organization in the future.

Letter from the Director

There are many reasons I love my job. Meet Russell Reed. He is 14-years-old and gregarious, as evidenced by his more than 1,200 friends on Facebook. Over the past few months, Russell gathered some friends and younger children together to put on a play. They picked *Snow White*. After practicing for several weeks, the kids, under Russell's direction, performed their play for parents and friends. They sold tickets to attend, and sold brownies and drinks during the play.



Russell Reed

The other night at dinner with Russell's parents, Russell joined us as he often does. He enjoys our stories and always has one or two of his own to contribute. On this evening he whipped out his iPhone to show us pictures of his recent adventures, including the play, and we saw that the glass on his phone was broken (I could sympathize, having once broken my own). Russell's mom has told him, "You broke it. If you want it fixed, save your money and get it fixed."

Though Russell's phone is still broken, the only checks he has ever written were to ECOLIFE. On that night, it was a donation of \$1,000 collected from the *Snow White* play.

It makes me ashamed that I fixed my iPhone.

This makes clear how a small sacrifice on our part can make a big difference. We can all give, and we hope you will.

We have worked hard to make online giving easy and fast. No gift is too small. We hope while you are on our donor page, you will consider making your gift a monthly one. Thank you!

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays and best wishes for a bright and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

William Toone
Executive Director

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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

MIKE READY

Mike Ready has been working with ECOLIFE for two-and-a-half years. He has been key in developing our aquaponics programs.

ECOLIFE: What is your background?

Mike: I'm a lifelong naturalist with a passion for all things aquatic. Professionally I have an extensive background in aquatic husbandry and the development of life-support systems and captive-breeding protocols for amphibians, a highly threatened group of animals. I'm presently an advisory associate to Tree Walkers International and Amphibian Ark, two groups working on global amphibian conservation.

I am also a professional wildlife photographer [michaelready.com], and member of the International League of Conservation Photographers.



ECOLIFE: Can you explain what you do at ECOLIFE?

Mike: I manage the ECOLIFE Aquaponics program and work to find innovative ways to apply aquaponic techniques locally and abroad to address regional environmental and cultural challenges. With the help of ECOLIFE staff and a few generous volunteers, I also maintain our aquaponics systems. We have a mid-sized outdoor demonstration system and several R & D systems inside our warehouse, all of which have been evolving as we learn more and integrate new designs and techniques. These demonstration systems also happen to grow a lot of produce, which we distribute locally. Once a month I have the pleasure of leading ECOLIFE's introductory workshops on aquaponics. I always enjoy these workshops - they bring together interesting people with diverse backgrounds in gardening, farming, aquarium-keeping, pond construction and a variety of sustainable technologies. It's a great cross-pollination of interests. I present the workshop, but I always learn something new from the participants.

ECOLIFE: What do you like most about your job?

Mike: I strongly believe in ECOLIFE's core mission of addressing the well-being of humans and cultures within the conservation landscape. It is very fulfilling to work with wonderful, like-minded people on projects that apply sustainable humanitarian solutions to ecological problems, while also applying my passion for creating living aquatic systems.

ECOLIFE: What is your motto or personal mantra?

Mike: Just be.

ECOLIFE: What are some of your favorite hobbies/pastimes?

Mike: Playing guitar, free diving, SCUBA diving, body surfing, hiking, fly fishing, and most recently, watching our son grow up.

ECOLIFE: What is your favorite song, movie, and book?

Mike: Favorite non-fiction: *The Wisdom of Insecurity* by Alan Watts; Favorite fiction: *Cannery Row* by John Steinbeck; Song: Impossible to answer – as a guitar-player, I find good music in all genres. Movie: Too many – but anything *Monty Python*.



Students at The Grauer School

Program Spotlight

Presenting ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™

By Maren Peterson and Mike Ready

Aquaponics is the science of raising vegetables and fish in a closed re-circulating system - essentially the marriage of fish farming and hydroponics. This unification of systems results in significant increases in efficiency and production, as well as the conservation of land and water resources. Although simple forms of aquaponics were carried out thousands of years ago in Mayan fishponds and the rice paddies of China, the private and commercial application of modern aquaponics is just now entering the mainstream. It is a biologically efficient and fully organic system capable of producing 70 pounds of greens for every one pound of fish. Most importantly, it grows these vegetables using only ten percent of the land and water required for traditional agriculture.

ECOLIFE has been implementing aquaponics programs in San Diego for more than three years. Our effort to spread the word about aquaponics has been well received by the community, and our monthly workshops have consistently sold out. With the growth of our aquaponics program, it has become clear that we need to bring this remarkable system into California classrooms and offer unique learning and even career opportunities to some of the most under-served families in our state.

Enter the ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit. This innovative desktop system turns a standard fish aquarium into a productive garden. Sized for a standard 20-gallon aquarium and suitable for smaller tropical aquarium fish and goldfish (as opposed to food fish like tilapia), the ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit engages families and students in a fun, creative, and productive form of sustainable agriculture.

Each desktop unit includes an aquarium, lights, pump, filter, the aquaponics tray, pots and grow media. Schools only need to supply the water and fish (guppies work well). Teacher training will be provided by ECOLIFE.

In schools, our desktop systems will provide students with project-based-learning to understand life-cycles that impact all life, and to learn critical science topics. The ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit may be used to demonstrate concepts such as the nitrogen cycle, the role of bacteria in ecology, the function of water in ecology, living systems, plant and animal life cycles, hydrodynamics, and the science of food production. All of these principles can be demonstrated as students care for the fish and plants, germinate seeds, harvest vegetables, and monitor water quality.





This hands-on interaction increases interest in topics that are visible and applicable to students' everyday lives - climate change, water issues, agriculture, increases in food prices, natural resource based economy, green energy and sustainable gardening.

The ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit is the only commercially available retrofit aquaponics system and teaching curriculum package on the market. This is the only single system available for teaching life sciences with all of these qualities. ECOLIFE is first targeting the Southern California counties with a strong agricultural presence. Los Angeles, San Diego, Imperial, Orange and Riverside Counties were specifically selected for the first 100 classroom ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kits. Each of these counties is a reasonable commute from our office and will provide us with the opportunity to be intimately involved in the initial launch.



Janai Bashore and Rex Ready investigate the fast-growing greens.

Early feedback from our pilot schools is validating our vision for this project. Nick Scacco, environmental science instructor at The Grauer School in Encinitas, CA, has this to say about the ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit:

"The system has definitely piqued my students' curiosity. Every student who passes through the classroom asks what the system is and how it works. It has become more of a focal point than a fish tank or another animal in the room."

In middle school, it will give students a sense of responsibility to care for the fish and to sprout the plants. It will also help to illustrate the principles of ecology. It will show how organisms are connected, the effect of abiotic/biotic factors, and a visual representation of nutrient cycling.

In high school biology, it will give students a working model of the nitrogen cycle. It will allow us to do controlled experiments and problem-based learning activities on ecosystems. Students will be able to test the pH, oxygen, and nitrogen levels in the water. In environmental science, students will be able to see closed loop design that mimics a natural system. They can weigh the economic costs and benefits of the system and how they would apply it to developing nations' decision-making."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our 2013 program goal is to place 1,000 units in classrooms. With your support, we can meet or beat that goal. Go to www.ecolifeconservation.org/donate to sponsor an ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit.

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Wow! What a Gal a!

More than 170 guests arrived in Roaring 20s-style, for ECOLIFE's 9th Annual Gala, *Razzmatazz Speakeasy*, aboard the luxury yacht, California Spirit. Champagne flowed and so did the support for ECOLIFE's programs. Ruby Blue played songs of the era and kept guests moving on the dance floor. Galavanting about the decks of the yacht, revelers enjoyed drinks, hors d' oeuvres, a gourmet dinner, and silent and live auctions, amid a jovial party atmosphere.

A bidding war on Cherrie LaPorte's fabulous glass mosaic surfboard ended with ECOLIFE President, Steve Shultz, winning the bid and then gifting the art to Trustee Ricardo Cervantes, whose logo and namesake for his L.A. bakeries [La Monarca] is the monarch butterfly. How much more exciting could it get?!!

A huge thank you to Doug and Libby Scott for their underwriting of the yacht and dinner. With their help and sponsorships from the Stephen and Catherine Shultz Family, Carl and Linda Shay (Badger Controls), Liz and Mark Brolaski (MO BIO), Eleanor Musick (Procopio) and Gad and Suzan Shaanan, the event netted \$75,000+ for ECOLIFE programs in Uganda and the U.S.

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Philanthropy

MONTHLY DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Eddie and Lori Forstein

Eddie and Lori are longtime monthly donors to ECOLIFE. They have an exciting life of travel, dining and fun. Lori is a marathon runner - she has run two New York Marathons and trained to run the 2012 NY Marathon, which was cancelled due to Sandy. Eddie is an oenophile with a real passion for wine and food. They live in Princeton, New Jersey with two rescue cats, Seba (whisper) and Naya (to give) - an unintentional reflection of their giving - quietly and generously.

Generosity outside of organized philanthropy is a big part of their life. They feel that they have been fortunate and find genuine pleasure in sharing their love for life with friends and family.

There are a number of philanthropic loves in their life and ECOLIFE has become an important part of that. When asked why they support ECOLIFE, they explained, "ECOLIFE empowers people to become better able to feed their communities and families while being kinder to our planet and all creatures which inhabit it. We have been fortunate enough to visit some parts of the world where ECOLIFE's programs operate and have seen first hand the beautiful landscapes, people and wildlife that benefit from them. Thank you for the wonderful work that you do."



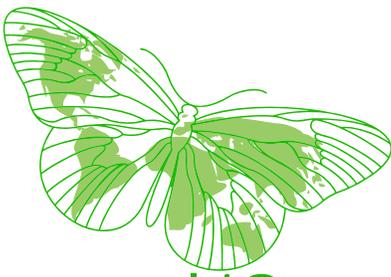
FOUNDATION SUPPORT LIATIS

The LIATIS Foundation was established in 1994 by Nita Borick to support the various organizations focused on promoting education, improving health and human services, and advancing the arts and humanities. Nita, along with her

children Linda, Steven, Robert and her granddaughter Lauren are all directors of the Foundation. They are committed to helping the children of the world, their health and well-being. Through the years, Nita taught her family the importance of compassion and the key principal of "LOVE IS ALL THERE IS." This wise adage is also the basis for the name of the Foundation - LIATIS.



This year, LIATIS is proud to support ECOLIFE's work of bringing healthy food to kids through the ECO-Cycle Aquaponics™ kit and our collaborators with schools and human service groups.



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growing our programs

ECOLIFE is proud to count Daniel Kikemu of Nairobi, Kenya, as one of our own. Daniel organizes all of ECOLIFE's Kenyan safaris through his own company, DK Grand Safaris. He has a great team of dedicated employees and allows us to present Kenya's people and wildlife in a way in which that country can take pride. In addition to all of this, Daniel is now fully engaged in assisting ECOLIFE with our East African programs.

To prepare him for the new adventure, Daniel traveled to San Diego where he had the opportunity to participate in our annual gala and go through a rigorous stove training program.

Daniel Kikemu and the rest of our local team spent several days building model Patsari stoves - the same stove we use in Mexico. Though Daniel was trained to build a Patsari stove, with his assistance, the stoves we build in Kenya and Uganda are likely to look very different.

Where we work in Mexico, wood is the primary fuel. Most of East Africa depends on charcoal, so this alone will change the dynamics of the stove. Also, their diets and cooking utensils are different.

What is learned through the construction of a Patsari stove is that we have three goals to be met – increased fuel efficiency, protection from burns, and the venting of smoke. With those basic components in place, we are ready to watch our traditional Patsari stove begin its East African evolution. Thanks, Daniel!

