

## Speaking of millions...

We raised a cool \$1 million for our Special Projects in 17 years, but plan to beat that pace with our Million Tree Campaign, aiming for a million trees in only 10 years – yep, by 2029! Partner reports: in South Sudan, Paskwale Ben plans for 10,000 trees this year, and 25,000 is the goal in the Congo; our partner Creative Solutions for the Environment in Malawi is over halfway to their 2020 goal of 20,000 trees; in Nepal, a dozen trafficking survivors from mountainous Sindupulchawk recently picked up their first batch of seedlings for planting; women of Thar Phan Gyi village in Myanmar (below, one of the microloan groups we support) recently spent the day planting hundreds of seedlings.

***On our way to a million – help us get there!***



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## As the World Turns...



“...turning the world upside down...”

Newsletter of the  
New Community Project

Ideas *that challenge us*.  
Experiences *that change us*.

A community *that gives us hope*.

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### Plan B: Yellowstone/Tetons

What to do when it became clear that COVID-19 entry restrictions would make it unfeasible to move ahead

with our Denali/Kenai Fjords and Arctic Village Learning Tours? How about a visit to Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons?! With a few weeks of advance planning, a group of 11 came together to explore these masterpieces of the National Park system. Not a bad fall-back plan, eh?

Next year offers a full range of Learning Tour opportunities (COVID-permitting), beginning with Myanmar in January, followed by East Africa in May, the Ecuadorian Amazon in June, and others through the summer, including Yellowstone/Tetons if Alaska is still limiting access. See page 3 for details.

### Rocktown Sprouts

Taking root at our Harrisonburg, VA site, Rocktown Sprouts engages school children around healthy and earth-friendly food production, from growing to eating to composting, and bike-delivers fresh produce to schools and low income families. New staffperson Kathy Yoder coordinates the effort.

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### The Match Game (but better)

Thanks to generous donors, NCP has a match for any donations up to \$10,000 to our Give a Girl a Chance fund through the end of the year!! For girls, \$18 provides a year's hygienic materials, \$40 gives a scholarship, \$65 buys a bike. For women, \$75-\$300 offers a microloan, \$120 buys a sewing machine. *Now double it!*

### Creatively confronting CV-19

NCP staff are adapting to the realities of COVID in creative, socially distant but socially meaningful ways.

Our Vermont site is distributing 45 food boxes weekly via a curbside delivery model and has worked with town leaders to expand community gardens to welcome new families.

Grants help low-income folks defray the cost of a plot, while enabling purchases for our Food Share program from struggling local organic farms. Families from area churches have filled in over the summer as garden volunteers. Winter nearing, grants and donations have provided six cords of firewood for our Woodbank.

Our Harrisonburg site is creating carbon-neutral energy by heating with Black Locust trees planted years back, while helping local Hispanic businesses reduce electric bills and carbon emissions, as they see the impacts of climate change in their home countries. Phase One of the NCP-initiated Northend Greenway is complete, with benches, stream restoration, informational kiosk, bike repair station, and trees planted. And we recently facilitated a rent-to-own housing opportunity for an African American family (see page 4).

After leading the Yellowstone/Tetons Learning Tour, director David Radcliff is Zooming all around the country for school and congregational presentations, while teaching online courses and guiding NCP's COVID response to international partners.

*In recognition of the key role NCP played, a plaque along the Greenway in Harrisonburg gives us a shout out and has a photo of Tom Benevento cutting the ribbon on opening day.*

### A Cool Million

NCP has passed a milestone, raising over \$1 million for our Special Projects since 2003! This includes

contributions to Give a Girl a Chance for girls' education and women's projects, and If a Tree Falls... for forest protection and reforestation. This is in addition to \$125,000 donated to our

fall campaigns, from *If We Build It* in 2014 (girls' school in South Sudan) to *But Not Forgotten* (following the 2016 earthquake in Nepal) to *She has a Dream* in 2019 (helping women in East Africa fulfill their dreams), or our response to the COVID pandemic.

Thanks a million to all the individuals, congregations and schools who got us to a million!

### COVID: Crisis & Response

While the pandemic has turned all of our worlds upside down, it has dealt a crushing blow to our poorer global neighbors. In response to pleas from our partners, NCP has raised over \$55,000 in the past six months for food relief (South Sudan, Congo, Rwanda, Nepal, Ecuador), teachers' salaries and mortgage payments (girls' school in South Sudan, native lodge in Ecuador), medicines, food, disinfectants and pay for grave-diggers (Diné reservation, NM), masks (NM and Congo), and emergency supplies for girls trapped at their boarding school when schools closed in South Sudan (returning home meant facing forced marriage).

Thanks to all who came to the aid of our neighbors in their hour of need.

### Fall campaign: A Place of Their Own

When planning our fall campaign, we asked our international partners what they needed most. It came down to “place”: Batwa in Rwanda need land of their own to farm; high school girls in Malawi who go to distant communities for an education need a safe place to stay; climate-induced flooding is destroying homes of single mothers and elderly widows in South Sudan; in Nepal, tunnel gardens bring income to trafficking survivors. Get your class, congregation, club, yourself involved! More on page 2.

### Backyard Fence—conversations about the new community

*"Hello, hello!" Lisa called out in greeting, arms raised high in the air and the edges of a big smile behind her mask. Lisa has struggled for many years to secure safe housing and a place to call home for her and her son. Now, through Lisa's efforts and the generous support of folks in the NCP network, they are renting to own a home Harrisonburg, VA. Here's her interview with NCP's Tom Benevento.*

**Tom:** What was your previous

**Lisa:** I was at the bottom of the ladder

We were in places where I did not feel amazing to be in a place where someone you, or even shoot you. I bumped into

**Tom:** What were the challenges of

**Lisa:** It was years of constant overpriced fees and they made it scary when you hoped for better, but unfortunately the

**Tom:** What does it mean for you now to

**Lisa:** Oh my goodness, it feels like I am coming together. Don't get me wrong, it is still scary, but I want that feeling now because it means growth. I can't believe it. I never imagined I could be in this position to be here, that a circle in my life is almost complete. I am super excited to say this is my property and it is something I can leave for my son. I have no fortunes saved, so this can be a start to enable my son's future, to have a fair chance. And someday I want to do the same for someone else, to make this happen for someone else. I believe in possibilities.



**New Community Project Advisory Board: Robbie Miller (chair), Jerry O'Donnell (v-chair), Steve Brady, Alex Murphy, Greg Davidson Laszakovits, Kim McDowell, Linetta Ballew, Hope Steele, Timothy McElwee, Taona Makunje**  
**Newsletter printed on 100% post-consumer content, saving 1.5 trees & 35,000 gallons of water with this print run of 6750 pieces**



## Fall Campaign: A Place of Their Own

*Pick a cause and pitch in!*

### Land is life

The Batwa (pygmy) in western Rwanda struggle with marginalization, and were driven from their forest homes to urban settlements. They survive by day labor and trading with nearby Congo (mostly carried out by women), both curtailed by CV-19. They don't have land to grow food to eat or sell; with no food for lunch, often children come home at noon and go out begging.

Goal: 3 hectares (7.5 acres), owned cooperatively by 30 women    Cost: \$8000   *\$1 buys a square yard of land*

### Home away from home



Rural communities in Malawi where NCP is involved do not have high schools, so girls have to travel long distances to attend. Our A Girl and a Bike program helps get them to the nearest one 7 miles away, but other schools are much further. These are boarding schools, but the girls can't afford to stay there, so they rent a room – often small, squalid, and not always a safe place to be.

Goal: a hostel with detached toilet for 10 girls, on or near school grounds    Cost: \$5000 / \$2000 (toilet)

### Putting women in their place

Many women in South Sudan are illiterate, and face cultural biases and sexual violence, which has increased during the COVID pandemic. This project will help women take their rightful place in peace building, the development process, and combating gender violence.

Goal: train 500 women    Cost: \$3500

### Topped tukuls

This project in South Sudan is to assist elderly widows and young single mothers who have lost their homes to flooding, as more severe rainy seasons are destroying homes. The need is for tukuls, the traditional circular daub and wattle South Sudanese house.

Goal: tukuls for 50 women    Cost: \$200 each

### Helping survivors survive

Making a fresh start as a formerly trafficked woman in Nepal is tough enough in normal times, and now add in a pandemic. Our partner Shakti Samuha wants to help women in the Sindupalchowk district - who are illiterate, but know how to work the land - learn tunnel gardening to extend the growing season for popular (and marketable) vegetables such as onions, tomatoes and chilies.

Goal: train and equip 12 women    Cost: \$4904



## Earth in the Balance

*Caring for the planet—as if it's the only one we have*

### Going, going...

Population sizes of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians have declined an average of 68% in the past 50 years, according to World Wildlife Fund's recently released Living Planet Report. Latin America and the Caribbean have fared worst, with an average decline of 94%. Global freshwater species have also been seriously impacted, declining 84% on average.

The culprits over these decades have been the explosive growth of human consumption, population, global trade, and urbanization. The main direct driver for loss of biodiversity is land-use change, particularly the conversion of virgin habitats like forests, grass-lands, and mangroves, for agriculture – and especially beef and palm oil production. Climate change will become an even bigger factor in the decades ahead.

So our work is clear:

- Food production and consumption: avoid palm oil; reduce consumption of non-local meat; garden
- Aggressively address climate change: personally (reduce car travel, meat consumption and energy use) and politically (call for a carbon tax nationally and greenhouse gas emission goals in your community)
- Conserve natural areas: get to know a local stream; reduce lawn size; support NCP's Million Tree Campaign, preserving rainforest in the Ecuadorian Amazon (we will see palm oil plantations on our June Learning Tour)

• Change the system: “It is easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit.” - Pope Francis

### Palm oil: not just about orangutans anymore

Malaysia and Indonesia account for 85 percent of the \$68 billion global palm oil industry. One of the results of the boom is a massive loss of tropical forests and their creatures, including endangered orangutans.

But there is another species endangered by palm oil: humans. A recent investigation by the Associated Press found plantations that meet guidelines for “sustainable production” where immigrant workers are

cheated, threatened, held against their will or forced to work off insurmountable debts (if they manage to escape to the jungle to hide, they face roaming tigers), land is taken from indigenous people, and slash-and-burn forest destruction is routine. The palm oil they help produce ends up in the supply chains of the makers of Oreos, Lysol and Hershey's chocolate. The reporters told NCP that U.S. Customs will now start seizing shipments from at least one large importer. NCP friend Olivia Chaffin from Jonesborough, TN has already been on this, calling out the Girl Scouts over “sustainable” palm oil in their cookies. Go girl!

## Truth...or Dare!

What we don't know *can* hurt us – especially in the long run. NCP doesn't shy away from facing the truth about our world, challenging all of us to dare to act for something better. Thus, this Truth...or Dare! segment topic: Forced & child laborers making our stuff

Caution: children (and slaves) at work

Globally, 25 million people are involved in forced labor, and there are 152 million child workers (these numbers are increasing, as COVID pushes more people into poverty). The hotspots for these abuses are sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and Southeast Asia, along with Latin America. While many of these workers produce domestic goods, an estimated \$144 billion worth of US imports are at risk of having child or forced laborers involved somewhere in the production chain.

Of these areas of US exposure, over 60 percent are related to electronics, around 30 percent to clothing, and the remainder to fish, rice, sugar and cocoa. (Note from previous page that palm oil needs to be added to the list.)



*(Child laborer making sari shawl in Nepal)*

### Why tolerated?

The reasons that these practices continue are several. Global supply chains can obscure who made what for whom. In addition, Poor World governments lack incentive or means to police these activities. Trade agreements made between nations protect profits, products and patents, but rarely people or planet. Finally, there are the consumers and shareholders in the Rich World, some of whom have investments in offending companies, while others enjoy the tainted product; both may prefer to “see no evil”.

What's to be done: micro to macro actions

- Keep children in school as antidote to child labor
- Economic empowerment of the poor to reduce vulnerability to forced labor
- Educate ourselves about and boycott consumer products that violate human rights; inform the company
- Call on the government to forbid import of products using forced/child labor



*(Women benefiting from NCP microloans in the delta of Myanmar told our Learning Tour group, “Our daughters no longer have to migrate to the cities! With our income, we can keep them in school!”)*

*Sources: Walk Free, ILO, Respect International*

## Experiential Learning

*Go. Meet. Learn. Grow. Be renewed. Change – yourself and your world.*

### 2021 Learning Tours

*All COVID-permitting; current info on website*

Myanmar (January 7-17) Visit NCP-supported micro-loan projects in the Southwest Delta, traveling by boat and over-nighting in communities. Then trek into the the Paloung hilltribe and see reforestation efforts, girls getting NCP scholarships and new women's projects.

East Africa (May 8-18) Experience the life and culture, the determination and struggles of the people of South Sudan and Rwanda. Visit schools, women's projects, a refugee camp, reforestation projects, and a National Park. Safe and comfortable accommodations.

Ecuadorian Amazon: Deep Jungle (June 1-7) Travel

deep in the rainforest to meet renowned shamans and all manner of amazing plant and animal life, while visiting rainforest preservation projects supported by NCP. Accommodations in a native-owned lodge.

Shenandoah National Park (for youth) (June 10-14)

After orientation at our Sustainable Living Center, hike and camp on the Appalachian Trail; learn about environmental issues while experiencing wilderness.

Lybrook, NM (June 21-27) Work alongside Diné

(Navajo) elders and youth on community projects; talk with and learn from local artisans. Explore the history, culture and current challenges facing the Diné; visit nearby Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

Denali/Kenai Fjords National Parks, Alaska (July 29-

August 7) Camp and hike in the Denali National Park, see bears, moose, caribou, a sled-dog demonstration – and hopefully 20,000-foot Denali. A sea cruise in Kenai Fjords NP offers whales, puffins and a glacier.

Arctic Village, AK (August 8-15) Visit this north-of-

the-Arctic Circle community – Gwich'in by birth, caribou by culture, and defenders of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Hike and camp in sight of the Brooks Range; native foods and campfire stories. OR

Yellowstone/Tetons (July 27-August 4) If CV-19

restrictions prevent a visit to Alaska, this is our not-too-shabby Plan B. Camping and hiking among towering mountains and waterfalls, thermal springs, wildflowers; see bison, bears, elk, pika and moose.

Looking ahead:

Nepal (January 9-22, 2022) Experience this beautiful but impoverished Himalayan country, hosted by Shakti Samuha, an anti-trafficking group supported by NCP. Experience teeming Kathmandu and rustic rural areas. Visit shelters for returnees from the sex trade; explore Chitwan National Park (tigers, elephants, rhinos!).