



Monday, June 1, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mr. Pierre Mainguy, President

Email: p.mainguy@communityfirst-global.org

Phone: Mr. David Mans, Board Chair (626) 201-2228

“Community First Brings Aquaponics Demonstrations to the Huntington” An innovative agricultural technique that empowers entire communities in developing nations

Over the past ten years, the Pasadena-based international nonprofit Community First has been hard at work bringing social innovation to the forgotten rural communities of Cambodia. In that time, in great part thanks to the support of *Rotary International*, Community First has been able to provide clean drinking water to over 10,000 people as well as renewable energy and new farming techniques to the villages around Angkor Wat in Northern Cambodia.

In this part of the world where 40% of children are stunted because of malnutrition (UNICEF), Community First recognized subsistence farmers could not grow the food they needed and introduced them to aquaponics. It allows them to raise fish and grow vegetables in a closed ecosystem located on the farm. Such a system ensures a balanced, protein-rich diet even during the dry season.

This has helped families to better provide for themselves and had a dramatic impact on single mother families. Thanks to Community First's ongoing training in the villages, families are able to farm high value-added crops for themselves, but also for sale. Every year, over a million tourists, visit the Angkor Wat temples, but few eat locally farmed produce as most hotels and restaurant rely on food imports. Local aquaponics farming offers an opportunity to re-establish local produce supply.

The combined impact of aquaponics on health and nutrition and the economic opportunity it offers has generated great interest in the world of international development. As a result, *Rotary International's District 5300* Governor selected this project as their international initiative of choice for the year. As part of this partnership, individual clubs in the greater Pasadena, High Desert and Las Vegas areas plan to partner in bringing aquaponics where it is most needed, starting July 1, 2019.

Rotarians will be volunteering their time to travel and provide financial support for the cover the material and training necessary for families to start their aquaponic businesses. In addition, Community First and Rotary will

be bringing aquaponics to the local youth and the community at large here in Southern California in order to spread awareness and the opportunity to touch the lives of others around the world.

The Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, CA has offered space in its experimental and permaculture site known as “The Ranch Garden” for Community First to house an aquaponics unit so that visitors can learn about this innovative agricultural method. Members of the Community First team will be joining the weekly open houses in the Ranch Garden, held every Saturday from 10 AM to 1 PM on the grounds of the Huntington.

Community First Initiatives, Inc. (Community First) is a US non-profit and non-stock company registered with the IRS as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charity. Its mission is to connect people to create socially innovative solutions to the global problems of poverty in a sustainable and impact-driven way. Community First is headquartered in Pasadena, CA in the United States and in Siem Reap Province in Cambodia where it operates as an International Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) registered with the Cambodian Royal Government.

Attachments: ten file photos of the aquaponic program in Cambodia and the open house at the Ranch.