SHI Celebrates 15 Years

Dear Editor:

Sustainable Harvest International (SHI) had the privilege of celebrating its 15th anniversary on Aug. 19 with Tom Rolfes and other citizens who help make SHI's work possible. More than 280 valued friends and supporters turned out at College of the Atlantic to mark this important milestone and prepare SHI for its future efforts to reverse the tropical deforestation crisis in Central America.

Florence Reed founded SHI in 1997 after serving as a Peace Corps volunteer, when she witnessed the devastation that slash-and-burn farming techniques inflict on families, communities and the planet. Dedicated to helping rural Central American communities implement sustainable land-use practices, SHI has converted 14,000 acres of degraded land to sustainable farms and has planted 3.1 million trees. At the same time, SHI has helped 1,500 families become self-sufficient stewards of the environment and trainers of more than 10,000 other families across Honduras, Panama, Belize and Nicaragua. Reed's years of dedication to sustainable agriculture initiatives in Central America recently earned her the 2012 Sargent Shriver Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Service from the National Peace Corps Association.

SHI appreciates the acknowledgment Mr. Rolfes gave to Ms. Reed's work in his letter to the editor. While he does not share Bill McKibben's perspectives on the specifics of climate change, people like Mr. Rolfes have further strengthened Ms. Reed's view that the health of our tropical forests is vital to the health of the planet. SHI appreciates his interest in the effort to end slash-and-burn farming practices while empowering Central Americans to create their own sustainable farms and viable economies. These local efforts have a global reach that benefits all of us on this planet in myriad ways.

The collective spirit and concern exhibited during SHI's 15th anniversary celebration points to a common desire to improve the health of the planet — tree by tree, farm by farm, country by country. SHI extends heartfelt thanks to Mr. Rolfes and all who attended the celebration, making the night special, memorable and successful. The standing-room-only attendance affirmed the importance of protecting the earth and energized SHI's pursuit of its mission: providing farming families in Central America with the training and tools to preserve our planet's tropical forests while overcoming poverty.

Renee Johnson
Acting Executive Director
Sustainable Harvest International

Letters to the Editor

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