INMED Launches Aquaponics Program in Loudoun for Children and Youth in Need

STERLING, VA (September 23, 2019): INMED Partnerships for Children is pleased to announce that Loudoun County, VA, will be one of the first US locations for its international, award-winning INMED Aquaponics program. INMED has partnered with the Paxton Trust to construct an educational aquaponics system with a greenhouse and learning center on the Paxton Campus in Leesburg.

The initiative will serve children and youth in need—including those living in low-income environments, those with disabilities and conditions such as autism, and those experiencing mental health challenges—through vocational training in the burgeoning field of adaptive agriculture. INMED Aquaponics is a holistic program that involves hands-on technical training as well as business and financial planning for those interested in launching agro-enterprises. There also will be field visits for younger children to learn about ecology, nutrition, biology, agriculture and the environment.

Aquaponics is a combination of fish farming and hydroponics in a closed symbiotic system—an ancient technique used by the Aztecs. It produces crops and fish year-round at yields significantly higher than traditional farming with no chemicals or fertilizers, while dramatically conserving water, energy and land resources. Around the world, INMED has adapted aquaponics into an innovative, simplified package for individuals with disabilities and other populations vulnerable to destructive climate change events. INMED’s Education Center on the
Paxton Campus plans to collaborate with other INMED Aquaponics programs globally, especially in South Africa.

“As the mother of a child with autism, I can attest to the lack of meaningful skills development opportunities for this community,” says Jennifer Smith, INMED’s US Programs Director and founder of several programs for children with disabilities. “With INMED Aquaponics, teens on the autism spectrum, as well as other youth facing challenges, will have greater opportunities for economic independence through employment in the agriculture sector and related fields—and with training and support to launch their own businesses.”

INMED has been leveraging aquaponics to improve the lives of people with disabilities for nearly a decade, with inspiring results. In South Africa, for example, INMED Aquaponics has been integrated into several school curricula to provide alternative methods of teaching core subjects with adapted learning for students with special needs, such as attention and processing difficulty or challenges with anxiety, who don’t adapt well to a traditional classroom environment.

“Aquaponics also has improved the food security and nutrition of vulnerable children and families in under-resourced communities and has helped to develop sustainable livelihoods,” notes Dr. Linda Pfeiffer, Founder and CEO of INMED Partnerships for Children. In Latin America, the Caribbean and South Africa, INMED Aquaponics is providing food security and agro-entrepreneurship opportunities for people living in regions affected by destructive climate events.

Pfeiffer and husband Dr. Thad Jackson (an immunologist and infectious disease specialist who was a founding director of the Children’s Nutrition Research Unit in Dhaka, Bangladesh) developed INMED’s simplified version of aquaponics in the back yard of their Upperville home, raising tilapia fingerlings in their library and experimenting with rainwater capture and solar energy to conserve resources before taking it on the road to regions hard hit by climate change.

“INMED Aquaponics has been transformational for under-served populations around the world, and it will be a real game-changer for our autism and special needs community here in Loudoun,” says Smith.

About INMED Partnerships for Children

INMED Partnerships for Children is a nonprofit international humanitarian development organization that has improved the lives of millions of people in 100+ countries for more than 30 years by creating pathways for disadvantaged children and families to achieve well-being and self-reliance.

Headquartered in Sterling, Virginia, INMED has served at-risk children and low-income families in Loudoun County since 1994. INMED’s US programs are delivered via its Opportunity Community, including a Family & Youth Opportunity Center in Sterling for low-income families and INMED’s new opportunity initiative at Paxton Campus to provide agricultural-based training for low-income families and the special needs community. Learn more at https://opportunitycenter.us.
Photo captions:

INMED Aquaponics – South Africa 1 & 2: INMED has been integrating its simplified version of aquaponics into schools in South Africa for the past decade to foster skills development, food security and better nutrition, as well as climate change resilience, for disadvantaged children and those with special needs.

INMED Aquaponics – Peru 1: In Ucayali, Peru, INMED has integrated aquaponics for better nutrition, school meals, and adaptive agriculture and healthy lifestyle education for students, teachers, food preparers and parents.

INMED Aquaponics – Jamaica 1: In Jamaica, INMED provides technical and business training in aquaponics, access to financing and links to markets for youth, women and first-time entrepreneurs who want to launch sustainable agro-enterprises.