Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that we are here for the sake of each other, above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. — Albert Einstein
Monsanto Fund has been in existence since the mid 1960's, providing charitable grants in communities where our people live and work. That mission has extended the reach of our giving all around the globe, always with the hope that we are doing good, transforming lives, leaving footprints. And it’s not just about what is given away that matters. How it is given is far more important.

We listen for understanding, to the opinions of our collaborators and respect their physical, social, spiritual and cultural circumstances. We are committed to demonstrating clarity, equality and integrity in all of our processes. If this works, it enables partnerships of creativity and hope, energizing the best in each of us.

In the following pages you will see what has evolved from some of those partnerships.

We are humbled by and appreciative of this responsibility.
INMED, a nonprofit development organization dedicated to improving health and quality of life worldwide, teamed up with Monsanto Brazil and Monsanto Fund in early 2000 to implement Healthy Children, Healthy Futures. Now entering its third year, the partnership has the potential to boost health, hygiene and sanitation for 25,000 children in seven Monsanto facility areas in Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais, Goias and Bahia states.

"Monsanto Fund has been a real partner for INMED, visiting the sites, making a great effort to understand the different realities and looking for ways to improve them," says INMED Brazil Director and INMED Vice President Joyce Capelli.

Healthy Children, Healthy Futures is customized for each community. But it's based on INMED's intervention strategy called Children as Agents of Change, which focuses on children's real abilities to motivate others and make positive changes happen among their peers, families and communities.

The strategy starts with treatment for intestinal parasites, other preventable diseases and nutritional deficiencies. "Many activities happen before and culminate with treatment day," Capelli says. "So, it is in fact a celebration of all our efforts and also a beginning of the next step: prevention not to get reinfested."

The biannual deworming sessions are followed up with education. The children learn the importance of washing their hands, as well as fruits and vegetables, while drawing posters, planting gardens, playing games and singing songs.

Armed with knowledge, the children put their lessons into action, in their neighborhoods and beyond. In Santa Helena, for example, students from an agricultural school passed out vegetables from their garden along with a pamphlet they wrote about good nutrition — including recipes. And on the town's birthday, the parade featured a float with the theme, "How to prevent parasites."

Synergy is a good word to describe the process, Capelli explains. "It's very important that everyone involved interact and integrate to make Healthy Children, Healthy Futures work," she says. "That includes local government, other nonprofit organizations, school staff, parents, community members and the children."

The results can last a long time, as the children grow up, raise their own children and enjoy vital, significant lives.

Synergy One day in Goiatuba in Goias State, Brazil, dozens of students roamed their neighborhood with a single-minded purpose: to pick up the garbage lying in the streets. They tossed it all into a big pile to make the point that trash should be collected three times a week, not once. After all, they knew the dangers of poor sanitation and careless hygiene. They learned all about it in school as part of INMED'S Healthy Children, Healthy Futures program supported by a Monsanto Fund grant.
“Trust is intertwined with the process of community organization. When they perceive that we do not aim for any political or financial gains, they can rely on our role as catalysts of community strengths. To achieve all of this, communication, ethics and professional excellence are fundamental.” — Joyce Capelli, Vice President and Brazil Director, INMED
Connections

Imagine six big balls on a bare stage. Five actors appear. They press the balls together, tilt the column straight up and plunk a bucket on the top — it’s a dancing ball-man, “the damndest display of applied physics,” says Carol North, Metro Theater Company artistic director, “yet it’s quite magical, too.”

The dance of the ball-man is one of many magical moments in “More Stuff,” an original theater piece commissioned by Metro Theater Company and performed in or near U.S. Midwestern Monsanto seed production and research sites with the support of a Monsanto Fund grant. In a series of residencies, the company presented the show to hundreds of young people and their families in Illiopolis, Mason City and Stanington, Illinois; Matthews, Sikeston and New Madrid, Missouri; and Constantine, Michigan — rural locations that professional theater troupes rarely, if ever, stop in.

Over the years, Monsanto Fund has supported many projects in partnership with the St. Louis-based Metro Theater Company. Two years ago, the Fund staff asked the company if it could bring original, live theater straight to Monsanto seed-site audiences.

“We said, of course! After all, we’ve been a local and national touring theater for three decades,” North says.

Planning and producing the seed-site residencies are examples of pure collaboration between the Fund staff, Monsanto seed-site management and community representatives.

The results are three-to-five day residencies in each town that include, besides the show itself (typically staged in a school), teacher and classroom workshops, hands-on family programs and all types of theatrical and educational experiences created just for that time and place.

For example, in one seed-site town, Metro Theater Company presented a workshop for 60 parents and small children. Elsewhere, a high school principal asked the group to host brown-bag lunches to discuss career options in theater.

In another location, the high school drama teacher asked the company to include a special group of dedicated drama students in a variety of activities.

“So the two days we were there, we wove into our schedule a continuous relationship with them,” North says. “The kids helped us load in, watched us warm up, accompanied the actors to classrooms to observe workshops, and we presented a special one just for them.”

In certain communities, Metro Theater’s production is the first live performance some children have ever seen.

“What a rare and wondrous event!” North says. “But the other side of the experience is to turn the equation around, to demystify what was magical and put it in students’ hands, so they can know theater isn’t mysterious, but structured and disciplined creative work they can do themselves.”

It’s all about connections, between students and their dreams, actors and audiences, Monsanto Fund and Monsanto’s seed-site communities.

“The residencies are not just about doing a show but making connections with people on their turf, in their town,” North says. “And that’s precisely why Monsanto Fund values this project, as a way to connect with their communities, to offer something that can enrich everyone’s life and can last long after we’ve packed up the props and gone home.”
“The residencies are not just about doing a show but making connections with people on their turf, in their town, to offer something that can enrich everyone’s life and can last long after we’ve packed up the props and gone home.” — Carol North, Artistic Director, Metro Theater Company
Where can the farmer find extra money? Certainly the local bank would not consider him a good risk, since he doesn’t earn an income that allows him to systematically repay a loan. Perhaps he could borrow from family members — if they’re not in the same desperate situation. Loan sharks are always glad to help and to charge inflated rates. Input suppliers may insist on a loan, for a while. So the small farmer has nowhere to turn. But that was before the Fundación Mexicana para el Desarrollo Rural, A.C. (FMDR) began its micro-credit program for smallholders.

Since 1964, FMDR has helped low-income rural Mexican families improve their lives by providing means to increase agricultural productivity and thereby income. The concept is to support the farm family unit in an integrated way that stimulates, motivates and generates income-producing activities that may or may not involve farming, in order to encourage diversification and mitigate risk. To accomplish this, FMDR helps create “farm enterprises,” or small, family-based businesses, which frequently are launched by micro-credit loans.

A Monsanto Fund grant supports FMDR’s micro-credit program, which is many farm families’ only financial alternative. The basis of the program are solidarity groups of 25-30 people, who establish and oversee a small savings fund, and add to it over time. According to the solidarity group model, every member is mutually responsible for the loan. People know and trust one another, and that keeps risk low.

Typically, individuals borrow $80 to $650 at five percent monthly interest. The loans are collateral-free and can be used for any purpose, but must be repaid every week over 16-49 weeks. If one borrower defaults, the entire group loses its borrowing privileges until the debt is paid.

To date, FMDR has helped establish more than 90 solidarity groups with more than 3,000 members. The vast majority are women, who gain empowerment and financial independence through the program.

“Every rural family in Mexico lives in a small village where a lot of products and services are needed,” says Alfredo Espinosa Jimenez, FMDR’s director general. “Micro-credit recipients have used the borrowed funds to start small businesses that provide these products and services to their neighbors, and eventually, to a larger market, in amazingly creative ways.”

Operating from patios, windows, carts, stands or stalls, these entrepreneurs sell pottery, chili peppers, poultry, t-shirts, cotton or shoes. Others offer crafts, coffee, goats, corn, wheat, beans or milk. Some sell Avon perfumes and Fuller brushes. Several grow an insect that produces a desirable, rich red pigment, and some grow the cactus that the insects like to eat.

Beyond the loan, FMDR helps assure the business is capacity-building and sustainable, so the loan can be repaid. To that end, FMDR has integrated the farm enterprises into cooperatives for value-added processes, more cost-effective purchasing and product sales. It also offers classes in technology, marketing and money management.

The micro-credit program benefits are twofold, Espinosa says. Since the majority of those who establish a small business are farmer’s wives, the resulting income has a tremendous impact on their families’ well-being. Furthermore, he adds, “it increases the well-being of the community, because these families can now purchase what they need and want at affordable prices and in convenient locations.”

“So there is, in fact, abundance,” Espinosa says.
“I am absolutely certain that the micro-credit program has a very large and positive impact on farm families, both the borrowers and their consumers, and both in their income and in their quality of life.”

— Alfredo Espinosa Jimenez, Director General, FMDR
That astonishing experience happened (thanks to a talented actor) for hundreds of visitors to the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, as part of the traveling exhibition, Lure of the West: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum. A grant from Monsanto Fund through its Soda Springs plant in southeast Idaho helped the museum stage the two-month show last summer.

Besides presenting opportunities to view rare artwork, Lure of the West and similar exhibitions, plus the museum’s permanent collection, present other equally important opportunities: to teach children about their environment. In fact, science education on behalf of the environment is the Soda Springs plant’s philanthropic theme.

The artwork inside the building offers one way to study the environment. The National Museum of Wildlife Art building itself offers another; it’s an architectural wonder built into a mountainside, overlooking a far-reaching panorama and the National Elk Refuge. “I know of no other museum where the architecture, the art, and the setting are all seamlessly connected,” says museum Director Francine Carraro. “They all come together to promote environmental education in ways that simply are not available anywhere else.”

Catlin’s portraits were the centerpiece of Lure of the West, which featured paintings and sculpture from the 1820s to the 1940s. The works — from famous blockbusters to small but equally breathtaking pieces — depicted wildlife, changing seasons, landscapes, lakes, and rivers, thereby providing an excellent springboard for studying the dramatic and dynamic environment of the West.

Pieces from the permanent collection also serve the purpose. For example, a show called “Animals in Winter” vividly illustrates how animals adapt and survive in the severe, mountainous terrain — the real environment just beyond the walls.

“The animals are seen through the artist’s eyes, but that provides enough information for children to look outside at the elk in the preserve and see them lying down to preserve body heat, just like in the painting,” Carraro says. “They can observe real-world events like survival and animal physiology, then view how artists portray them.”

The museum offers a number of environmental classes that start with art. Young children learn about animal environments as they follow a trail of tracks. Older pupils study changing weather patterns through examples in paintings. Others study habitats and landforms through the magnificent work of Western painter Carl Rungius.

For the children of Monsanto’s 600 Soda Springs employees, however, Lure of the West and other exhibits at the National Museum of Wildlife Art have been especially meaningful. In particular, fourth-graders, required to study Idaho history, could put real faces to the names of the Native American leaders they studied in class, thanks to Catlin’s portraits. They could visualize the links between Native Americans, bison and the land, relationships that lasted thousands of years. Sixth-graders, as part of Idaho’s science curriculum, observed through artwork the role of wildlife in ecosystems and the harsh realities of the food chain.

The bottom line is, looking at it or learning from it, art is not a passive activity. “Rather, art involves becoming actively engaged and making connections. It all relates to the fact that as a museum, we enrich lives. And that’s an important business.”

Enrichment: Suppose you’re in an art museum admiring George Catlin’s remarkable Native American portraits, when suddenly the artist himself enters the gallery. The buckskin-suited Catlin, surprised to see his works again after nearly 150 years, dramatically recollects the personal encounters that led to the portraits. And as he recalls his life among the native people and the history of the early West, you start to see the paintings, the people in them and the entire world around you in a whole new way.
“We’re committed to using art to examine larger subjects like the environment, man’s relationship to nature and animals, animal behavior and animals in the region.” — Francine Carraro, Director, The National Museum of Wildlife Art.
Beyond Housing
Community Building in Castle Point

It’s something that tells a community, “You have value. You get to have the good stuff, too,” says Chris Krehmeyer, executive director of Beyond Housing.

Helping the 5,000 residents of the Castle Point neighborhood get a new playground and other “good stuff” has been the goal of Beyond Housing since 1996. That’s when Monsanto Fund presented the agency with an intriguing challenge to expand its 16-year track record of providing safe, affordable homes and vital social services to one family at a time, and apply it to an entire community.

“We saw the negative shifts happening in Castle Point,” Krehmeyer says. But, they also saw people still trying to take care of their homes and make the community better.

“So we said, yes, there are some issues here, but it’s not so far gone that we can’t help,” Krehmeyer says. Thus began Beyond Housing’s journey into community building, which recognizes the impact of the surrounding environment on the hopes and abilities of families to turn their lives around.

The agency launched a three-part program for Castle Point. Part one involves improving the housing stock — tearing down vacant houses, building new homes and rehabbing existing ones to create new home ownership opportunities.

Part two is providing social services to the community, from within the community — specifically, from the Castle Point Family Support Center, formerly a vacant house Beyond Housing rehabbed and leases from the local county government for one dollar a year. Residents benefit from traditional case management, mortgage and food assistance, GED and computer classes, summer camp and much more.

Perhaps part three is the most significant in regard to the future. It involves working with the officers of the Castle Point Community Association daily and daily, helping them make the transition from a group of volunteers to effective leaders. That means gaining tax-exempt status, accessing federal funds, reviewing best practices from other communities, generating revenue. In the not-too-distant future, Castle Point residents will have helped to mold a solid community-based management structure and will have mastered the tools to ensure its future.

In the meantime, community building in Castle Point is working. In the past three years, housing prices have risen 31 percent. Crime is down 11 percent. And test scores in schools are starting to snap up.

“Maybe more important than any statistic is folks are starting to tell us, ‘It feels better,’” Krehmeyer says. “It seems things are improving. I see changes.”

Some of those changes are taking place within Beyond Housing itself. The agency will continue providing housing and services to families, one home at a time, but, Krehmeyer says, “We know quite frankly community building has changed our organization. It has transformed us.”

Transformation

On a rainy day on a muddy lot in north St. Louis County, Missouri, USA, an amazing transformation occurred. Where a dilapidated, outdated jungle gym once stood, there arose a bright and brand-new configuration of spirals and slides, ladders and loops, bars, bounce buttons and more — designed by kids, for kids, and built in one day, despite the rain, by people who care.
“The Monsanto Fund board saw a void in the region because no one was tackling the issue of neighborhoods,” says Chris Krehmeyer, Executive Director, Beyond Housing. “They challenged us to consider a venture they felt we could be successful in. We knew we had to try.”
The hunters were students from the borough of Waltham Forest, an urban area in northeast London. The freshwater pond is part of the Suntrap Field Study Centre where, since 1967, primary and junior-level students have come to “dip” for animals and observe their habitat, and participate in other hands-on environmental studies.

The centre is located in Epping Forest, an area of ancient woods and natural beauty just 30 minutes from the farthest school in the district. Last year, nearly 2,800 young dipper took a break from their classroom and took part in freshwater studies at Suntrap. Among these young environmentalists were many children from Pakistan, Afro-Caribbean nations and other ethnic minorities whose families have relocated in the area. 

Recently, dipping has sometimes been disappointing. Suntrap’s small ponds were hard to reach, and could barely accommodate an entire class of students. Some of the younger pupils had trouble transporting their catches to the main classroom area, located quite a distance from the ponds. In addition, an old camping shelter used as a classroom and a kitchen had become outdated and unsafe.

A Monsanto Fund grant is changing all that. It’s being used to provide a large freshwater pond habitat and camp base classroom for the growing numbers of students who come to Suntrap to learn and camp.

The first phase of the project was completed late last summer, as a 30-meter-by-20-meter pond was dug. With a pond this size, all the children in a class can surround it and dip together, so they can spend more time dipping instead of waiting for their turn. Group management is easier, too. A level, hard-surface sidewalk around the big new pond allows year-round use and also allows disabled students to dip, too.

“The pond is and will increasingly become, as nature takes its course, a highly attractive new environment which will substantially increase the ecological diversity of the site,” says Ray Murdoch, head of service at Suntrap.

Beyond the pond, Monsanto Fund’s grant will provide a new camping site and a safe, weatherproof, environmentally sensitive classroom base where students can socialize, dine and study, though most of the time, studying seems more like fun.

By becoming more aware of the interdependence of living organisms in and around the ponds and woods at Suntrap, students who visit the field study centre are more likely to develop moral and social responsibilities toward the environment. The result is a lifelong recognition of the need for conservation and sustainable management of the environment.

In fact, that’s already happening. Not long after the pond was dug, children from an inner-city school, along with several area conservation groups, planted more than 200 trees and shrubs around the pond site.

As the children grow, so will the trees, an ever-present link between them and the natural world they inhabit.
“The project will have an enormous effect in potentially raising the achievement of the young people in the area.”

— Ray Murdoch, Head of Services, Suntrap
From the CEO

I am very pleased to be able to share some of the work of the Monsanto Fund with you through this report. Obviously there is a limit to what paper and ink can really illustrate. It’s hard to show the nature of the relationships that are created, the small, but significant, steps taken by children and adults alike toward a better life.

Each of the projects that we support are based on written guidelines and processes that are shared and worked through in partnership between the not-for-profit organizations and our staff. What matters most to us is how those partnerships are valued. We hope that they are seen as meaningful relationships of enduring understanding that extend far beyond the life of the grant.

It is our pleasure to be able to share this report with you.

— Hendrik Verfaillie, CEO, Monsanto Company