

2016 Annual Report



applesseed



IMPROVING WHAT CHILDREN EAT

Millions of children worldwide are unable to realize their potential because they lack the nutritional fuel necessary to power their bodies and minds.

Fortunately, there are thousands of inspiring organizations rooted in developing communities, committed to providing better nutrition. The science is known, teams are on the ground, the passion is there, and yet—changing eating habits is hard.

That is where Appleseed comes in.

We are a marketing agency for the developing world.

We make it possible for NGO's to "sell" their ideas and solutions to the communities they serve.

By effectively arming communities with the tools to tackle chronic malnutrition, we can unleash the full potential of children.



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THROUGH MAIZE:**

Reducing Childhood Stunting with
Biofortified Corn for Farmers

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FORGOTTEN:**

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**At Appleseed,
we believe that
NGOs need to
better market
their solutions in
order to create
lasting impact in
the places that
need it most.**

In 2016, we set out to conduct pro-bono marketing projects for development organizations around the world. We wanted to prove that our approach could be an effective way to create immediate impact and change children's lives for good.



In January 2016, the Appleaseed team arrived in Guatemala eager to meet our newest partner, Semilla Nueva. We had already proven that social marketing could change behavior to improve what children eat back home in the U.S. This was our first opportunity to apply our model in the developing world.

GUATEMALA

THE NUTRITION CHALLENGE:

Corn tortillas, eaten three times a day, are the dietary staple in Guatemala. Unfortunately, corn lacks quality protein and zinc. The lack of these essential nutrients results in stunting—an irreversible condition in which children’s bodies and brains are unable to fully develop, leading to lifetime deficits. **In Guatemala, childhood stunting rates are the 4th highest in the world.**

THE PARTNER & THEIR SOLUTION:

Semilla Nueva seeks to turn risk-averse farmers toward planting a new type of corn seed that has been biofortified to contain 90% of the protein quality of milk and 50% more zinc. This one change provides farming families, which have an average 5 children, with a full year of essential nutrients—enough to **increase child growth by 12%, allowing many children to avoid stunting.**

WHAT WE DID: Our team created a new marketing strategy that ignored nutrition and focused on what farmers valued: family, strength, and great tasting tortillas. We then rebranded the seed “FORTALEZA” (“fortitude” in Spanish), and positioned it as the best corn to grow for family consumption: providing energy to farmers, eliminating hunger in kids, and allowing mothers to make the best-tasting tortillas. The new FORTALEZA logo and marketing materials were debuted at a “Field Day” celebration with farmers from 25 different communities. For added credibility, we activated Semilla Nueva’s farmer-to-farmer network, turning farmers into brand ambassadors who brought their enthusiasm for FORTALEZA back to their communities.

RESULTS

10X more farmers showed up to receive the new seed than in previous years—so many that Semilla Nueva ran out of seed!

Over 3,000 families planted and harvested FORTALEZA, providing a year’s worth of protein for 18,000 children.

FORTALEZA is now the second most popular seed brand in the region despite being new to the market.

THE PROJECT: FORTITUDE THROUGH MAIZE

THE NEED: Despite the fact that Semilla Nueva was giving away the more nutritious corn seed, local farmers were reluctant to adopt it and their children continued eating nutrition-less corn every day.

WHAT WE LEARNED: Our market research revealed a disconnect—Semilla Nueva had been touting the benefits of high-protein corn, but farming families believed that corn already contains adequate nutrition. In addition, the technical seed name, QPM ICTA B9, was difficult to remember, and even those who remembered it were unwilling to plant an unfamiliar seed.



THE PROJECT: CAMPAIGN AGAINST WEEVILS



THE NEED: For subsistence farming families, each harvest provides a year’s supply both to eat and sell. Unfortunately, **farmers lose 20-30% of their harvest to weevils each year.** When crops end up feeding weevils rather than children, this waste of food leads to hunger, lost income, less diverse diets, and worsened stunting.

WHAT WE LEARNED: Appleaseed’s community research revealed that most farmers do not know where weevils come from or how to prevent them. We also discovered that there is one key behavior for preventing weevils: storing grain early. Farmers who do so typically can avoid weevil infestations, whereas farmers who leave corn in the fields too long typically lose much of their harvest.

WHAT WE DID: We created a humorous 30-second radio ad with Semilla Nueva’s budding marketing

department. The advertisement features a snarky weevil who asks a young boy to thank his father for growing such delicious corn. The PSA then sheds light on the causes of infestations, encouraging farmers to store grain earlier to prevent a loss of harvest. The ad played several times a day during harvest time on both national and regional radio stations.



RESULTS

1.3 million impressions for the radio ad, which cost \$1,500 to run

30% of farmers who recalled the ad stored corn earlier than in the previous year
30% of farmers who recalled the ad stored corn earlier than in the previous year

Nearly 300 farming households saved 20-30% of their annual harvests (equivalent of \$100,000 in income that would have been lost to pests)

SEMILLA NUEVA NEXT STEPS:

With marketing no longer a bottleneck, Semilla Nueva is now poised to expand their impact nationwide. In 2017, with continued support from Appleaseed, Semilla Nueva is promoting new seeds under the FORTALEZA brand and helping other seed producers to employ social marketing. The increased impact we have achieved together has garnered additional funding, allowing Semilla Nueva to begin building their own marketing department.

MEET DANNY

Danny is a farmer who worked with Semilla Nueva as a community promoter but had struggled to get his neighbors to switch to biofortified corn. After undergoing our initial brand training, Danny eagerly took his branding guide home to practice the FORTALEZA elevator pitch on his own. A few days later at the Farmer Field Day event, Danny nervously got up in front of a crowd of over 100 people from nearby communities. He started out quiet and shaky, but soon his personal excitement took over, and he began to speak from the heart about this new corn. He spoke of it being the best choice for growing stronger children—exactly what his community needed. Fellow farmers applauded when he finished; his message had struck home. This photo of Danny, relieved and proud, was taken moments after he finished his speech.





While our field team was working hard in Guatemala, we continued to remotely support our partner back in home in the U.S. Building on past successes, we collaborated with The Growing Experience to further help them improve children's diets.

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

THE NUTRITION CHALLENGE:

In Carmelitos, the largest low-income public housing community in Los Angeles County, typical diets consist of processed foods and fast food, rather than fruits and vegetables. As a result, children are at a very high risk for obesity and diabetes.

THE PARTNER & THEIR SOLUTION:

The Growing Experience (TGE) is a sustainable, organic urban farm located within the Carmelitos grounds. Run by the Housing Authority of Los Angeles County, TGE aims to provide local, seasonal, organic produce to the community at a very low price.

WHAT WE DID: We worked with TGE to market to a new audience who could get produce into homes: the kids themselves. TGE created a twice weekly Garden Club for 3rd and 4th graders who needed a safe place to go after school. By giving them a sense of ownership in the farm, we introduced healthy eating habits. Appleaseed designed activities that would keep our open-minded "Kid Ambassadors" engaged, having fun, and learning about fruits and vegetables. This included tending community garden plots and sampling healthy foods they would not otherwise be exposed to.

RESULTS

The Kid Ambassadors' Garden Club meets twice weekly. The are not only eating and growing produce, but also sharing their harvests with their families.

The kids really enjoy eating healthy snacks. One of their favorite things to pick and munch on is raw dinosaur kale!

The Kid Ambassadors have learned to identify a variety of produce that even adults in the community are unfamiliar with.

THE PROJECT: KID AMBASSADORS

THE NEED: When Appleaseed first partnered with TGE, the farm had been in operation for over 15 years. Nonetheless, few residents knew it existed, and 97% of their produce was being sold to restaurants and consumers outside the community. In 2015, we partnered with TGE to raise awareness and identify Community Champions through a Community Cook-Off event. Awareness was important, but still not enough to get healthy fruits and vegetables onto children's plates.

WHAT WE LEARNED: Reflecting on our work from 2015, we discovered a flaw in our plan: many of our Community Champions were transitioning out of public housing. In addition, those who stayed were balancing families and multiple jobs.





THE GROWING EXPERIENCE NEXT STEPS:

In 2017, TGE plans to take their work to a new level, using strategic marketing to launch a campaign that will significantly increase direct farmstand sales to Carmelitos residents. This project will involve fresh community research, strategy, re-branding, advertising tactics, and continuous evaluation. Success will mean many more families are able to purchase healthy produce rather than fast food. Also, the farm will see increased profits, which they need to sustain and grow.



MEET HOLLY

Holly is the Program Manager at TGE. Though happy with the level of engagement from the broader Long Beach community, she felt that engagement with low-income Carmelitos community members was lacking. In 2015, Appleseed conducted a focus group of residents, which revealed that residents felt disconnected from the farm. Some even had negative perceptions of the farm!“Although these were not the results we were hoping to hear, it deepened our determination to tangibly increase access to healthy foods in the community,” Holly explained.

The idea for the Carmelitos Community Cook-Off came out of this determination. For TGE, hosting the Cook-Off brought positive attention from a large number of residents and was such a success that residents approached TGE staff to express desire to participate a second year. In 2016, with Appleseed’s support, Holly led TGE to host the second annual Community Cook-Off, which was equally successful. Reflecting on the experience, Holly said, “Working with Appleseed on this event and on a community outreach strategy was not only a success that helped the residents... it empowered me personally and re-invigorated The Growing Experience with the inspiration and proof we needed to start reaching out to the community again.”



In August, while still supporting projects in Guatemala and the U.S., the Appleseed field team headed to Taiwan to work with a new partner. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans. A series of typhoons destroyed roads into the remote village where we had planned to work, forcing us to delay work and find an alternate village. The team also faced cultural challenges as we attempted to gain acceptance into indigenous Taiwanese communities.

TAIWAN

THE NUTRITION CHALLENGE:

When parents move to cities for work, children in rural, indigenous villages of Taiwan are left behind to be raised by grandparents. Living in an environment of poverty, instability, and generational challenges, the children often fend for themselves at mealtime. They frequently skip meals or, when they have a few extra coins, buy sugary, processed treats at convenience stores.

THE PARTNER & THEIR SOLUTION:

World Vision Taiwan created a **“Community Kitchen” in a tribal village**. The program provides professional culinary training to local women who then serve as chefs, preparing healthy, balanced meals for these “left behind” children three nights a week.

WHAT WE LEARNED: The Appleseed field team moved into Kiwit Village to dig into community motivations and perceptions of the Community Kitchen program. We discovered that chefs provided quality meals and children were attending dinners regularly, but the family-style format discouraged them from eating balanced meals. We also discovered that children used Community Kitchens as an excuse to leave home, making it even harder for elderly caretakers to watch after them. Overall, the villagers were unclear about the purpose of the program and ways to participate.

WHAT WE DID: After living in the village for two weeks, the Appleseed team produced an in-depth report in both English and Chinese, which provided WVT with recommendations for direct improvements and program replication. The report was presented to program directors, project designers, researchers, field coordinators, and social workers at WVT headquarters.

RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

WVT committed to using our recommendations to improve Community Kitchen in Kiwit Village, starting with a plan to establish a system of communication between the Community Kitchen and caretakers. Quantifiable improvements in child health will be seen in the next year when children are measured in school. **WVT has also decided to make foundational community research a priority** as they work to replicate the program in other villages throughout rural Taiwan.

THE PROJECT: COMMUNITY KITCHENS

THE NEED: After launching the first Community Kitchen, World Vision Taiwan (WVT) was eager to replicate the solution in other villages. However, never having spent significant time living in remote Kiwit Village, WVT did not have a deep sense of what was and was not working. In addition, World Vision hoped to increase caretaker involvement in the Community Kitchen and have them provide farmed produce to supply the kitchen with ingredients. However, to do this, they first needed reliable assessments of caretaker perceptions and of the Community Kitchen program itself.



IMPACT BY NUMBERS

In 2016, across continents, time zones, and languages, Appleaseed proved that marketing can dramatically transform the way NGOs work. Our partners now have the tools they need to significantly scale their impact and create lasting change in communities. At the same time, the Appleaseed team demonstrated the power a small but mighty team can have when mission and values align with strong partner organizations on the ground. Here's a glimpse into how we measured some of our successes in 2016.

4 social marketing **project cycles** completed



3,200 families impacted

3,800 pro-bono hours of work provided to partners

33% increase in Appleaseed full-time staff (from 3 to 4)

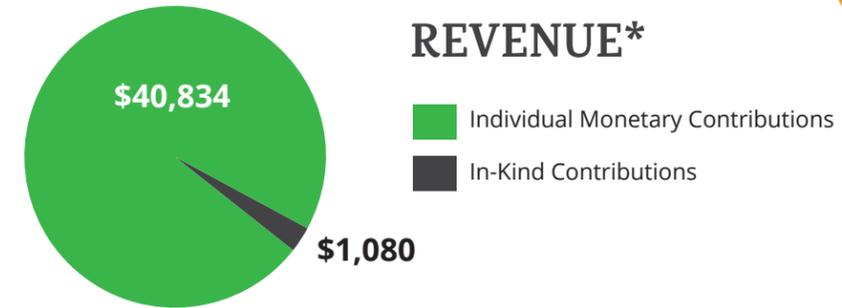
4 books read by Appleaseed book club

18,100 child diets changed

5 languages used for community research

18,200 messages exchanged in Slack, our virtual office

FINANCIALS

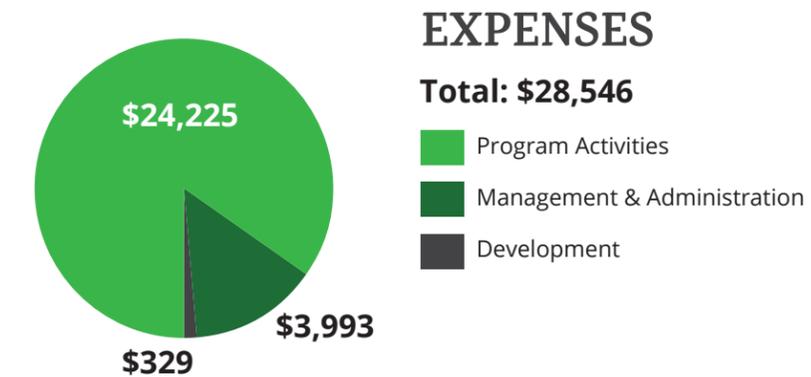


*All services are provided to our nonprofit partners at no cost; all revenue has come from donors

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

\$140,000**

**Appleaseed staff is unpaid and has volunteered more than 3,500 hours of pro bono work



“Working with Appleaseed has taken us to a completely different level.

When you go from just operating off of your gut instincts as an organization to then having that kind of professional ability - the science of social marketing—it can completely change how you do what you do. That was definitely the case with us... it was incredible! We're this little nonprofit with 20 people on staff and we're using the same kinds of tactics that multi-million-dollar corporations are using to change people's minds. There is such a disconnect between what development actually does on the ground and what it could do, and I don't know a single organization that couldn't benefit from going through the same process that we went through with Appleaseed—not one.”

- Curt Bowen

Executive Director, Semilla Nueva





Appleseed is grateful for the wide breadth of support we have received in 2016. We deeply thank our nonprofit partners who have invited us into their programs and communities. We are honored to have received both financial and volunteer contributions from all the individuals and organizations who chose to support us. Thank you!

GRATITUDE AND THANKS

Patrons of Change

Donors who made gifts of \$1,000 or more to improve what children eat

Andrew Kang
BC & Grace Hsieh
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Organizations

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Google
Intelligent Epitaxy Technology, Inc.
McClintock Family Dental
Sam & Laura Yang Family Foundation
Semilla Nueva
The Growing Experience Urban Farm
World Vision Taiwan

Volunteers

Alice Terry
Ledvi Beza
Mary Gamboa

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improving what children eat

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