

# Volunteer from Chatham assists Asia's Farmer-to-Farmer program

Chatham County's Michael W. Sturdivant recently completed a three-week volunteer assignment in Yangon, Myanmar as part of Winrock International's John Ogonowski and Doug Bereu Farmer-to-Farmer Program and the Food Security Working Group (FSWG).

The program offered by Winrock International, a nonprofit, helps small farmers in that region improve their management of natural resources and use climate change adaptive practices that enhance food security. The program also seeks to improve the local FSWG's understanding of women's roles in natural resource management and how to integrate women in improving agricultural practices.

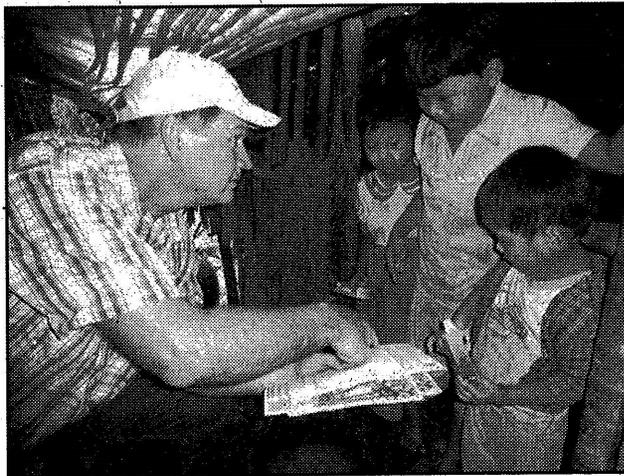
Sturdivant said, "I was touched by the Myanmar people's genuine kindness each and every day of my short time there. While I was selected as the volunteer to provide training and teaching, I gained valuable insights from the Myanmar people. The hospitality was overwhelming and exceeded my expectations."

Myanmar is an agrobased economy with over 70% of the population working in agriculture. A majority of agricultural workers live in rural areas and depend on small scale or family farms for their livelihoods. Small-scale farmers face an array of challenges, including the impact of climate change. Crops are threatened by rising temperatures and increasingly unpredictable precipitation, resulting in many farmers not knowing how to adapt agricultural techniques or unable to afford them.

Farmers in different regions in Myanmar encounter varying problems

In the "dry zone", many farmers lack access to water, use water inefficiently, or have poor irrigation systems. In other areas, deforestation is widespread due to clearing of land for farming as productivity of existing farmland decreasing.

Most Myanmar farmers do not know the benefits of planting trees on their land, for shade, spacing, soil nutrients, etc. In the



## Spreading the message . . .

Sturdivant shares conservation-theme coloring books and crayons with the children of Myanmar.

delta region, farmers experience problems with flooding of agricultural areas.

Sturdivant said that most small-scale farmers primarily use traditional agricultural practices, many of which are not environmentally friendly or sustainable. In addition, the misuse of chemical pesticides and fertilizers is fairly widespread, degrading soil fertility and polluting nearby water with agricultural runoff.

Myanmar does not have local extension services or other government programs to provide information on best practices and how to involve women in the wise management of resources, Sturdivant said.

"One afternoon, a field

analysis visit took us to a very rural part of the country in the mountainous region. I will always have a special memory of sitting down and enjoying the 'traditional feast' that the Women's Working Group prepared from their community gardens and generous hearts," Sturdivant said.

Sturdivant added, "I know I only received a glimpse of Winrock Asia's

Farmer-to-Farmer program and what the FSWG local members strive to accomplish, but I was humbled to be a small part of it. The Myanmar people are passionate and thirsty to learn new methods to improve their livelihoods, and are hopeful of a brighter future."

Winrock's John Ogonowski and Doug Bereu Farmer-to-Farmer Program fields approximately 125 volunteers each year to assist farmers, agribusinesses,

and local organizations worldwide. Under this program, skilled U.S. volunteers provide expertise in a wide variety of areas, including agricultural

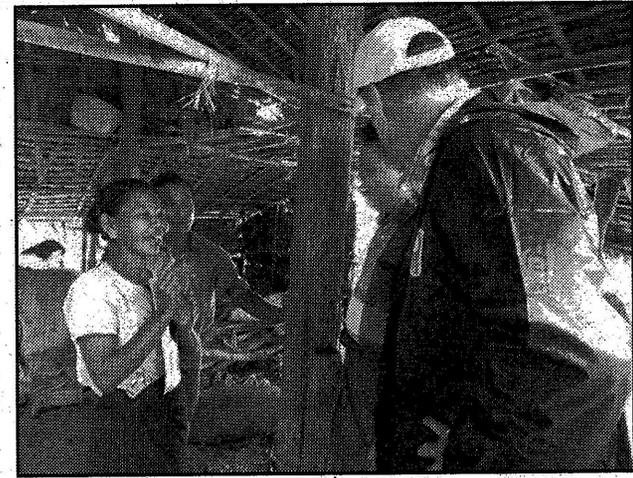
sciences, farming, and agribusiness; enterprise development, marketing, international trade, food processing, credit and financing, training, organizational development, and renewable energy.

Since 1991, more than 4,700 volunteers have completed technical assignments. Winrock's Farmer-to-Farmer Program currently operates in several countries across West Africa and Asia. Program funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the Food for Peace program under the US Farm Bill, covers volunteer travel expenses and makes the program possible.

Winrock International is a nonprofit that works with people in the United States and around the world to increase economic opportunity, sustain natural resources, and protect the environment. Headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas, Winrock maintains offices in Arlington, Virginia, and field offices in strategic global locations.

It matches innovative approaches in agriculture, natural resource management, clean energy, and leadership development with the unique needs of its partners. By linking local individuals and communities with new ideas and technology, Winrock is increasing long-term productivity, equity, and responsible resource management to benefit the poor and disadvantaged of the world.

For more information about Winrock International's Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteer Program and opportunities, visit [www.winrock.org/volunteer](http://www.winrock.org/volunteer).



## Volunteer assignment . . .

Chatham County resident Michael W. Sturdivant recently completed a three-week volunteer assignment in Yangon, Myanmar. He's shown above talking with a coastal fish farmer in Myanmar.



## Traditional feast . . .

Sturdivant shares a traditional feast with the Working Women's Group in Myanmar. He recently completed a volunteer assignment in Yangon, Myanmar as part of Winrock International's John Ogonowski and Doug Bereu Farmer-to-Farmer Program and the Food Security Working Group (FSWG).

# Candidate filing begins statewide

Candidate filing began Tuesday at noon across North Carolina, with the State Board of Elections estimating that roughly 2,500 candidates will file before the deadline at noon December 21.

"2016 came early this year," said Executive Director Kim Westbrook Strach. "We look forward to supporting the candi-

dating period to December in order to accommodate an earlier primary on March 15, the first election when voters will be asked to present acceptable photo ID at the polls.

"We are working with elections officials across the state to ensure that every poll worker is trained on photo ID requirements and exceptions," said