



GOOD NEWS

FIVE REASONS TO SMILE

BY Lisa Bendall

Care farms help people participate in the community.

FARM WORK GIVES NEW HOPE

NETHERLANDS Every year, about 10 million people worldwide develop dementia. That number is expected to rise as the population ages. In fact, many countries will see a doubling of the dementia rate between 2018 and 2050, reports non-profit Alzheimer Europe. The Netherlands is one of them, but it's also a leader in an innovative supplement to nursing-home care called care farms.

Care farms—the Netherlands has over 1,300 of them, a third of which cater to people with dementia—provide opportunities to spend two or more days a week in an outdoor natural setting, tending chickens or collecting vegetables, among other activities.

Here, people can be active, get fresh air and stimulation, and feel valued while interacting with other workers and volunteers.

Professional care staff are there to assist as needed. “They’re providing the same care as an institution would, but it doesn’t feel like an institution,” says Maarten Fischer, director of the Federation of Dutch Care Farms.

Some care farms serve people with developmental disabilities, addictions or criminal records. Although care farms have existed in a few countries since the 1970s and ’80s, they’ve been gaining in popularity. Fischer regularly receives calls from organizations

in Japan, Switzerland, South Korea and other locations. “Giving is important for self-esteem and for healing, but most people who receive care are no longer in a position to give,” Fischer notes. “On a farm, everyone contributes.”

Restoring Coral Reefs Using the Latest Technology

FRENCH POLYNESIA Coral reefs support at least a quarter of ocean life; half a billion people rely on these ecosystems for their livelihoods or food. Yet roughly half of the world’s coral reefs have died, or are dying, because of such factors as pollution and global warming.

A group of French Polynesians is committing to restoring them. Titouan Bernicot, 24, was just a teenager growing up on the island of Moorea when he realized the ocean life around his home was vanishing. In 2017, he founded Coral Gardeners. The organization grows pieces of coral in underwater nurseries and moves them to natural ocean reef sites around Moorea



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when they’re large enough to survive in less protected conditions.

Coral Gardeners has already replanted over 15,000 corals but intends to reach a million globally by 2025. This ambitious goal may actually be within reach, thanks to advanced technologies—like live video feeds and sensors at restoration sites—that are helping to track coral health.

Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children

NIGERIA In 2010, hundreds of children were falling fatally ill and others were developing brain damage in the northern Nigerian state of Zamfara. Community members there were mining on a small scale, processing gold deposits tainted with lead and inadvertently contaminating the water and soil. Young children were becoming poisoned just from touching dusty hands to their mouths.

But a joint effort between state departments and international agencies, led by Médecins Sans Frontières, has saved lives. Over 8,000 children were tested for lead poisoning, with the vast majority of them requiring treatment. Heavily contaminated waste areas were excavated. Local miners are also now trained in safer practices, like processing mineral deposits at sites far from their homes.

Cases of lead poisoning are now all but eliminated, and there have been no child deaths reported since last year.

Keeping an Inuit Language Alive

CANADA Miali Coley-Sudlovenick has created a way for Indigenous people to stay connected to their culture, no matter where they live. Since January, the Inuit consultant and instructor based in Iqaluit, in Canada's far north, has been teaching online classes in Inuktitut.

The language is spoken by almost 40,000 people yet is under threat from

generations of colonialization. When Coley-Sudlovenick's mother was growing up, she was routinely rebuked by educators for speaking Inuktitut at the school she attended.

Response has been enthusiastic, not just from people in her community, but from students all across North America. Coley-Sudlovenick hopes that by sharing her love for Inuktitut, she'll inspire other Indigenous language instructors to teach virtually.

ACTS OF KINDNESS

A Hospital to Save Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are common and beloved in the U.K., featured in folklore and such stories as Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggly-Winkle*. But the country's hedgehog population is two thirds of what it was in 2000, according to People's Trust for Endangered Species. Habitats have been increasingly disrupted by land development. These spiny creatures are also vulnerable to pesticides, parasites and humans who put out slug bait or rodent traps.

Sandra Lowe, a retired psychiatric nurse in Gateshead, rescues sick and injured hedgehogs. "They are just gorgeous. And they're gardeners' best friends because they eat pests," Lowe says. She started her hospital in 2018 in her laundry room, to

pitch in as other nearby rescue organizations struggled to meet the need; it has since expanded to several dedicated sheds. One is housed in another volunteer's garden, and the newest is behind the local community centre. The hedgehogs need medications, fluids, even amputations (they're taken to a veterinarian for any specialized medical care). Then they're treated, rehabilitated and released to the wild.

"I couldn't do it on my own," insists Lowe, who relies on volunteers as well as donors who have provided funds and supplies.

Last year, they looked after 186 hedgehogs. Not all survive, but the success rate is high. Says Lowe, "Every single one that is released would have died if it hadn't come in." **R**



COURTESY OF HOPE FOR HEDGEHOGS