

## Boy Who Dreams of Fish Turns Passion Into Project to Feed the Hungry

By Dinah Eng May 6, 2020 11:07 am ET



Miles Lin, 9, helps to test the Ph level of the water with local students from Tenali, India in 2014.  
Cory Hill

When Miles Lin was 3, his grandfather started teaching him how to fish. By the time he turned 9, fishing had become his passion.

“Almost every night, I would dream about fishing, and the fish I would catch,” says Lin, now 15. “When my parents told me not to waste food because there are people in the world who don’t have the food and the privileges I have, I started wondering if there’s a way to use fishing to help others.”

So in 2014, the 9-year-old boy (with his parents’ help) launched I Dream of Fish—its mission, to end world hunger, one fish at a time.

Lin started researching fish farms, and stumbled upon aquaponics, a sustainable farming method that raises fish and vegetables together through shared water. His mom, Sophia Lin, had started an eco-friendly fair-trade fashion brand named Raven and Lily, and his dad, Dan Lin, was a Hollywood movie producer, but neither knew anything about aquaponics.

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So when his parents happened to meet Garrett Futrell, the chairman of Harvest Craft, a non-profit that helps developing countries through sustainable food production at a leadership conference, it was kismet. Futrell was an expert in aquaponics and was looking for funds to start a project in India that would feed children in an orphanage.

“Dan had just wrapped the first Lego movie, and we decided to do an early screening for kids, and educate them about aquaponics,” Sophia Lin recalls.

Their son was ecstatic. *The Lego Movie* screener, which raised \$37,000 in partnership with Warner Bros., became the model for other I Dream of Fish fundraisers, including early screenings of *Cinderella*, sponsored by Disney, and *The Lego Batman Movie*, with Warner Bros.

“Our first project was in (Tenali) India,” Lin says. “Going there was one of my first international trips. Seeing how different it was from the United States was shocking to me. Every day we lost (electrical) power. But meeting the people at the orphanage was really cool, and I’m proud of it because it was a gateway for the other farms.”

After the India project came a fish farm in Uganda, two chicken farms in Haiti, and a frog, fish, and chicken farm in Cambodia. All are run in partnership with local community groups.

The latest project, in Kampong Cham, Cambodia, is on a large campus that houses a school for low-income children and a safe house for previously sex-trafficked women. The food from the farm goes to campus residents and the surrounding community.

“The farm helps teach the community and girls the idea of raising animals and how this will benefit them,” says Pisal, the farm’s project manager, in an email. “This also keeps them in the community by providing them with a job, so they do not have to seek elsewhere for work.”

Pisal runs the group that houses and trains the previously sex-trafficked women, and asked not to be fully identified.

While aquaponics is not the focus of every I Dream of Fish project, the goal of feeding the hungry is. Projects in different countries raise farm foods that appeal to their local communities.

“The idea is to do sustainable farming to fight hunger,” Lin says. “Cambodia has catfish, frogs, and chicken. The other fish farms have tilapia. In every country, people are really thankful, and you get to learn about them from their view of the world.”

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The cost to build an aquaponics project for a community ranges from \$15,000 to \$25,000, and I Dream of Fish encourages students to raise money for aquaponics projects in their own communities. Smaller systems for personal use can be built for less.

Lin's mother is thrilled at what her son has accomplished.

"Like any parent, we want our kids to know that they're blessed, and to think beyond themselves," Sophia Lin says. "I'm so proud of Miles. Helping others is super exciting to him, and I Dream of Fish will continue to change as he grows, and his abilities grow."

Lin's next project will be in Southern California, part of a school assignment on social innovation initiatives.

"I'm trying to build a local farm, concentrating on educating young people about aquaponics," Lin says. "My end goal is to build aquaponics on a large-scale basis, and get involved with other kids who want to help others. It's all about ending world hunger."

And yes, Lin still goes fishing every chance he gets.

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