



Twenty Years of Blessing in the Rearview



**“Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.”**

Romans 12:12



Happy New Year to you from all of us at First Steps! As we begin 2021 with a hopeful spirit, we once again put our trust in God's incredible plan and His amazing grace. We continually experience His loving kindness through your generous gifts, which we recognize as a reflection of God's love in each of you. We look forward to continuing this journey with all of our supporters, partners and volunteers in 2021 and the years to come.

Each year, children, babies and mothers continue to lean on your support for essential nutrition, health and growth. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic unique challenges arose for those who rely most on our support—difficulties which are carrying over into the New Year. As this newsletter goes

to print, our friends in North Korea (the 10 cities where we work) face temperatures ranging from -10 to -29 degrees celcius, many without heating, electricity, running water or medicine. It is in times like these that we are especially appreciative of your prayers, and we urge you to continue praying for the vulnerable in North Korea.

Every new year seems to come with the promise of a fresh start. Having been renewed by the joy of the Christmas season, January comes as a time to celebrate how far we've come, and to ponder the journey still ahead. While 2020's challenges have not disappeared, we pray that this letter encourages you with the promise of God's constant presence and provision for 2021.

Susan Ritchie
Executive Director

Multiplied: Tracing God's Goodness...



September 2000

This is a very special picture to us at First Steps. The woman in the photo is Kim Soon Nyeo. As the mother of twins, she was undernourished and unable to provide adequate breast milk. Her babies had no other supplemental nutrition. Her heartbreaking situation was a catalyst in the formation of First Steps, one year later in September 2001, nearly 20 years ago.



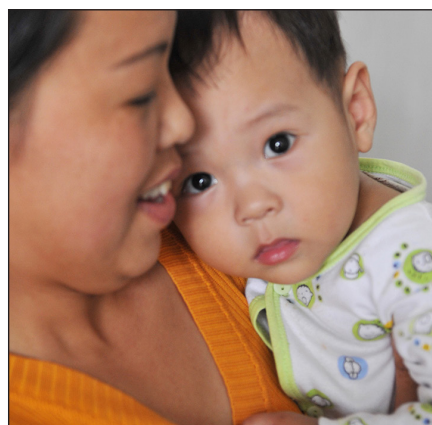
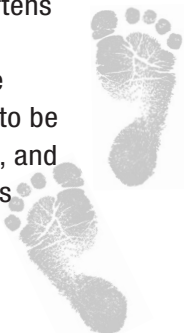
May 2005

Here are a few of the 15,000 children who were receiving soymilk through First Steps at the time this picture was taken in 2005. Just two years earlier, our goal was to double the number of children being reached from 400 to 800. The miracles of God are unparalleled.



August 2006

Before First Steps was providing orphanages, daycares and kindergartens with soymilk, these caregivers were wholly committed to caring for these vulnerable children. We are grateful to be able to encourage and support them, and for all the ways they have inspired us from the beginning.



July 2009

In 2009, only two years after we started the Sprinkles program, First Steps had supplied nearly 3 million sachets of Sprinkles to mothers and babies in North Korea. Thanks to the stellar results of a study conducted

by the Institute of Child Nutrition in North Korea, we were asked to partner in a public health campaign to promote the effectiveness of Sprinkles. We are always grateful for our counterparts in DPRK who are passionate about reaching more mothers, babies, and children—like this beautiful mother and son at the Yangji Polyclinic in Wonsan.



... and Grace Through the Years

This upcoming year marks First Steps' 20th anniversary! In this New Year's edition of our newsletter, we've included a few highlights of the work that God has led us to do throughout the past two decades. In the months to come, you can look forward to a fuller selection of photos from the past two decades. We hope you enjoy them as much as we have.



May 2011

These women have committed their life's work to children. They believe in the generation they are serving and they love the children as their own. In some areas of North Korea there is little to no electricity. In these places, workers labour through the night to use the only available electricity to produce soymilk. The VitaGoat has been a great addition to these areas, since it uses combustible fuel, wood, coal or dried corn cobs.



March 2018

At a clinic where we work, a young mother like this one explained that the first time she was pregnant, even at six months, she could not feel the baby because it was so small. Sprinkles changed her next

pregnancy. Even at early stages, she told us, "I am able to feel my second baby move." The growth of these children and the improvement of their health is a testament to God's work in providing Sprinkles to 20,000 women and their babies each year.



June 2012

Smiles all around! Though their lives can be hard, their smiles are uncomplicated. Their need for nutrition and their right to childhood is fundamental, and worth working for. We are blessed to have been able to serve the vulnerable children of North Korea for twenty years, and hope to continue doing so as long as there is need.



December 2018

Through God's amazing grace and your faithful support, the number of children being blessed with a daily cup of nutritious soymilk has risen from 400 in 2003, to over 100,000 today.



November 2019

At the Tongchon, Botan-ri Daycare, the kids were outside playing, warmed and energized by their daily cup of soymilk. Inside, Susan was deep in discussion with the daycare director and health officials, with First Steps' notetaker close at hand. These undocumented moments during our visits are vital for nurturing relationships, assessing effectiveness and gaining valuable insights to improve our programs.

During crises, it is trust and faithful friendships that gain our shipments priority at borders, favoured permit applications, and expedited shipments throughout the country.



March 2018

In the Hanggu district, Mr. Yon has been delivering soymilk to children by bicycle, rain or shine, for over 12 years! In the beginning, plastic containers were used. Now we ship food-grade stainless steel milk cans, which are cleaner and keep the soymilk warm while it is transported—frequently still by bicycle.



“Use us, Lord, to make a difference in this land”

To all our supporters, volunteers and partners, we are immensely grateful. The above headline (“Use us, Lord, to make a difference in this land”) was used in one of our very first newsletters. And that’s what God has accomplished over the years through you. The past 20 years would not have been possible without you.

We thank you, our supporters. You have been so generous with your gifts and your time in prayer. Your faithfulness in difficult times is a great encouragement to us. You have made it possible for us to provide essential nutrition for over one hundred thousand undernourished children, infants, and pregnant and nursing mothers.

We thank you, our volunteers. You cheerfully give of your time, often in between challenging courses, jobs and other demanding commitments. You bless our staff with much-needed help and in turn help those in North Korea with their work.

We thank you, our multi-talented friends of First Steps. You are always on standby to help with editing, design or any other task that requires special expertise. You put your best into all you do for the sake of children and mothers you’ve never met.



Some of our faithful Calgary volunteers at the Calgary Korean Food Festival, an annual fundraiser for First Steps.

Lastly, we thank you, our staff in Canada and our partners on the ground in North Korea. You are government officials, daycare workers, kindergarten teachers, VitaGoat operators, delivery truck drivers, supply centre directors, doctors, midwives and more! For almost 20 years you have surprised and encouraged us with your diligence, love for the children, eagerness to collaborate, and utter commitment to your work.

Finally, to all of you—we see your compassion as beautiful demonstrations of God’s abundant providence. May you be blessed with the encouragement of His presence and the joy of His work in your lives.

This new year, we invite you to pray with us for God’s blessing on these people who make and distribute a cup of soymilk to His little ones each and every day.



Susan and partners at the Nampo Waudo daycare and kindergarten supply centre.

Gifts of Kindness



Soybeans are shipped from Canada to North Korea to make soymilk. One cup of soymilk costs just 3 cents, including shipping.

Donate \$ _____ towards soybeans.



Micronutrient Sprinkles are sachets containing a blend of vitamins and minerals that are added to food. Sprinkles prevent anemia and rickets and lower the rates of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in children under two years of age. A \$50 donation to the Sprinkles program provides nine months of sachets for a pregnant and nursing mother and 18 months of sachets for a baby (6 to 24 months).

Donate \$ _____ towards micronutrient Sprinkles.



20-litre **stainless-steel milk cans** are vital for storing and transporting soymilk from production centres to the children we serve. They cost \$100 each.

Donate \$ _____ towards milk cans.



The **VitaGoat** is powered by *combustible fuel* (wood, coal, etc.). It processes soybeans directly into nutrient-rich soymilk and provides about 1,500 cups of soymilk per day to hungry children. The cost of a VitaGoat is \$5500.

Donate \$ _____ towards a VitaGoat.



VitaCows process soybeans directly into soymilk providing children with a warm and protein-rich drink. The VitaCow is powered by *electricity* and can produce 2000 cups of soymilk per day to feed hungry children. The cost of a VitaCow is \$7000.

Donate \$ _____ towards a VitaCow.

name _____
address _____
city _____ prov. _____ postal code _____
phone _____ email _____

Please make cheques payable to First Steps Health Society and forward to: 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada BIN: 821724036 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes.

For further information contact us at 604.732.0195 or visit our website at www.firststepscanada.org

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