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In January 2004, Steve and Jennifer Lorch founded a company called Hydromissions International. But unlike many entrepreneurs, the Lorches are not in it for money or fame.

The goal of their company is to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ worldwide by providing safe drinking water for the needy through low-tech products and services. Hydromissions is a support ministry that works with churches and missionaries to help them find solutions to water problems encountered in third-world mission fields.

At first glance, the Lorches are an average American couple. Steve works as a surgical nurse at Shriners Hospital. Jennifer works with Babynet, helping children age birth to 3 who have developmental delays. They enjoy hobbies, and they both love to travel. Unlike many Americans, however, the Lorches usually don't vacation in places like Europe or Cancun. Instead, they often end up in a remote third-world village or jungle.

Through their travels they became aware of the reality that 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water and began researching and developing

"I get ideas in the middle of the night and I run to the garage with the PVC pipe," Steve said with a laugh.

Jennifer added, "He's a nurse and I'm a Babynet coordinator, so these are just ideas that God's given us – it's not the kind of stuff we would come up with on our own."

Hydromissions sells the equipment to churches and missionaries, and although the Lorches have a dozen patentable ideas, they are not interested in pursuing monetary gain.

"You should be able to look at one of our products and say, 'I can make this,'" Steve said. "That's the point – for someone in a third world country to be able to replicate it."

The Lorches also are available to accompany groups and lend their expertise in water management.

"We go in and do a comprehensive analysis," said Jennifer, "addressing the need for clean drinking water, irrigation and waste management. We assess the condition of current conditions and decide what to do from there."

The Lorches do not charge a fee to accompany a group, but do ask that their airfare and ground expenses be paid.

"When we go with a church team, we eat what they eat, sleep where they sleep – no special treatment for us as consultants," Jennifer said. "Our goal is simply to be in the field full time as soon as possible."

Hydromissions has several needs. "Our biggest is prayer," said Jennifer. "We want to make sure that people understand that we are there for the Gospel.

Hydromissions is a tool to share Jesus as the living water. If we lose sight of that, we become just another relief organization."

The Lorches also are looking for people willing to donate frequent flier miles for missionary travel.

"Getting there is our biggest expense," Steve said. "If people are willing to donate frequent flier miles, they can make a major difference in a way that does not cost them anything out-of-pocket. We have a frequent flier list and we only call each person about once every two or three years to ask them for miles."

Though they are not yet a non-profit corporation, Hydromissions does accept donations. "We would love to go non-profit, but our plate is pretty full with design and development," Steve said. "We're not attorneys or financial people, so we are looking for CPAs and lawyers to volunteer to do the legwork involved in becoming a 501(c)(3)."

Currently, more than 80 percent of every dollar donated to Hydromissions goes directly to the field. "We're actually tighter than most non-profits," Steve said. "Even though the donation is not tax-deductible, you know where your money is going."

Since its inception, Hydromissions has sent equipment to China, Nicaragua, Kenya, Peru and other parts of the world.

For more information, visit the Hydromissions Web site at www.hydromissions.com or call 864-967-7865. Hydromissions also will have a booth at the World Missions Conference at Brookwood Church on Oct. 3, 2004.



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