

Meijer Seafood Buyer Sees Business Trip Volunteerism Idea Grow

Three years ago, Meijer Seafood Buyer David Wier found himself knee-deep in mud, planting new mangrove trees in Thailand. Now, he's getting to see the results of his and his team's hard work.

In May 2018, members of the Meijer seafood buying and social compliance teams traveled to Thailand to look at facilities and a potential new item. The trip involved visits with Meijer partner Thai Union, a global seafood company with a dedication to sustainability. That's how the Meijer team found themselves in a van, headed to the shoreline on a mission to plant mangrove trees.

Projects like these were David's idea.

"This is something we do on all of our trips. We pick an environmental project, social project like working in an orphanage in Ecuador, or cultural project like visiting indigenous people in Chile near our salmon farms," he said.

In all, it took the team of eight from Meijer and Thai Union about four hours to plant more than 700 trees.

Mangroves are a critical component of the ecosystem in Thailand. The area where these trees were planted had been removed for salt mining – leaving the coastline and all its inhabitants unprotected and vulnerable.

"The way the trees grow and develop, their roots stick up out of the soil and become a nursery for everything that lives in the ocean – baby shrimp, baby fish, birds," David said. "[The trees] also protect the shoreline and homes from hurricanes and storms. They're amazing things."

Which brings us to 2021. David and his team's ongoing relationship with Thai Union recently afforded them an update: photos of the fruits of their labor, three years later.

"I was curious about what they look like today," David said. "I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe how quickly they grew. I would guess you couldn't walk through them now because they're so dense."

David's work doesn't stop here. He plans to continue working with Thai Union on other projects. Right now, he has his sights set on Maine, where he hopes to travel this summer to test new "ropeless" fishing gear that allows lobsters and snow crab to be caught without injuring the critically endangered Northern Right Whale.

Additional assets available online: [**Photos**](#) ⁽²⁾

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