



# ONBOARD

CANVASBACK MISSIONS | AGAINST ALL ODDS

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## FROM JAMIE SPENCE

What a year it has been! Your life—my life—we have all been impacted in major ways by COVID and its terrible spin-offs. Has it hurt Canvasback? Yes, it has! But overcoming seemingly impossible challenges isn't new to this 40+ year-old ministry. From our very beginning, people told us that attempting to build the world's largest sailing catamaran as a medical ship was "just a folly of kids playing with boats." Well, you know how that turned out.



With God at the helm and you as the world's greatest crew, anything is possible! That's what this issue of OnBoard is all about: the tremendous victories, the healings, and the changed lives obtained for the people of Micronesia— despite adversity.

Even our cover speaks of overcoming—teaching a young gardener how to enjoy the soil. I urge you to read every page of this issue, because each article is really a praise to God for overcoming a year of problems. With your help and prayers, we continued to provide blessings.

An example is your response to the need of an eye treatment called Avastin. It will literally restore sight to the blind. Yes, restore eyesight! The hospital in Majuro asked us for help to afford the cost and with your generosity, help is on the way.

Again, with your help, we are in the process of producing a *Steps to Jesus* book for distribution to the islands. Just like Jesus, we heal and then share the gospel.

Space will not permit me to write much more at this time, but check out the stories in this OnBoard about the tremendous strides that have been made with our Wellness Center, the almost \$2 million value of services provided, and a special offer for you regarding my new book *A Bird Told Me*.

Thank you again for doing so much to change so many lives!

In Faith,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Articles by Jim Ayer  
Design by Sterling Spence





# OVERCOMING DAUNTING ODDS!

Some years ago, government officials told Jamie and Jacque that their plan would never work. They would fail! Still, Jamie and Jacque were driven by a deep-seated love for the people of Micronesia. They had watched diabetes destroy the lives of so many people. They knew they had to try. They believed their plans of diet and exercise would work to change lives and they were right on!

Like the ladies in the photo, smiles are popping up everywhere because the Wellness Center has made tremendous strides in overcoming the twin destroyers of life in the islands—diabetes and heart disease.

**The Canvasback Wellness Center recently received major recognition from the National Diabetes Prevention Center.**

The following is a portion of the letter our office received for the highly successful work we are doing to reverse the dreaded disease of diabetes

“It is my pleasure to congratulate you and Canvasback Wellness Center on earning CDC Full Recognition for your diabetes prevention program. This designation is reserved for programs that have effectively delivered a quality, evidence-based program that meets all of the standards for CDC recognition. The sustained success of your lifestyle change program makes an invaluable contribution to the prevention of type 2 diabetes, both in your community and nationally.

It is immensely gratifying to see the science of diabetes prevention being implemented to improve the public's health. You and your colleagues should be extremely proud of this accomplishment. It is programs like yours that are turning the tide in the fight against the epidemic of type 2 diabetes. Thank you for all that you are doing.”

**Miriam T. Bell, MPH**

Team Lead, National Diabetes Prevention Program  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health  
Promotion Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



# WHAT'S UP AT WELLNESS?

For years, the Canvasback Wellness Center has strived to make it possible for people in Micronesia to live healthy lives. The biggest barrier has always been getting good, nutritious produce on islands with poor soil and limited space for agriculture. It's an incredibly difficult task and we've had to rely on the innovative minds of community members and nutrition experts to find solutions. The work started on the capital island of Majuro, but we've taken the lessons we've learned and spread them out across the Pacific!

Most recently, we've been working on the island of Jaluit. It is one of the most interesting places on the planet and we've been thrilled to build relationships with local schools, community leaders, and NGOs like the Taiwanese Technical Mission. With their help, the Wellness Team upgraded the Jaluit school garden to produce enough healthy vegetables to feed more than 500 students! We didn't stop there. Our Wellness cook, Wonak Jorju, trained the school cooks on ways to prepare tasty, healthy meals. Together, we are making a lasting impact on Jaluit and beyond!





# CAUSING THE BLIND TO SEE



We recently received a letter from Dr. Hemant Pathak, a Majuro hospital ophthalmologist. He laid out the need for a drug called Avastin. The hospital had been using it with great success but had run out. With a cost of \$800 per vial, the expense would have overwhelmed the hospital budget.

Without this medication to treat diabetic retinopathy, patients were likely to lose their vision. To make matters worse, the advanced forms of diabetic retinopathy lead to a very painful form of glaucoma. The good news is that Avastin often restores vision and can prevent irreversible causes of severe vision loss such as retinal detachments and glaucoma. Since many Marshallese do not have access to surgical retinal care, early and frequent treatment is the key to preventing blindness.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Without this miracle drug, many people in the islands would go blind.

According to Canvasback's lead retina surgeon, Dr. John Carlson, "With this treatment, parents can continue to provide for their families and take care of their children."

The good news is that, as always, Canvasback donors came through! With your support, we were able to send Dr. Pathak a shipment of the precious vials.

One injection recipient said, "My eyesight in my right eye was so bad I couldn't read anything on the chart. I started to get problems in my left eye also. By the time I was ready to receive the first treatment, I couldn't read a book or cut my toenails. Within one day (yes one day) of taking Avastin, my eyesight in my left eye had improved dramatically and I could read again!"

Through your support, Canvasback is overcoming challenges and continually changing lives in Micronesia.

[www.canvasback.org](http://www.canvasback.org)





# BOOKS, BOOKS,

## & MORE BOOKS

Do you remember the feeling when you were a kid of getting lost in a good book? It was a world you could dive into, a place that belonged to only you. Maybe you've had kids of your own. Can you recall the times you read to them and watched their faces light up so bright it felt like you could almost see their imaginations sparkling behind their wide eyes?

Those experiences are life changing. Reading stretches our minds, aids our development, and expands our world. On a tiny island, that's huge! Tanner and Kristin Smith, our Wellness



Center Directors, have kids of their own, so they know how meaningful it is for children to grow a love of reading. They sent a request for Canvasback supporters to send books for the local schools so students would have a library to explore.

The response was heartwarming as over 3,000 books poured into our office! One couple, former teachers in the islands, even drove over 400 miles to bring us a carload of beautiful books and school supplies.

With all the donated books, we had a new challenge. Books are bulky and heavy and that makes them expensive to ship from California out to the middle of the Pacific. Enter Triple J Enterprises! They generously agreed to get the books to the kids for free! Watching everyone come together and give what they can is one of the most fulfilling parts of our work. We are incredibly grateful for everyone who made this project possible!



# IN MY OWN LANGUAGE



leaders on Guam. They are ready to engage people throughout the Marshall Islands on Ebeye, Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, Utrok, Majuro, Jaluit, and beyond.

Your prayers for this exciting project would be greatly appreciated as we ready thousands of copies for distribution.

Many years ago, Canvasback was given English copies of *Steps to Christ* to give to local churches in Micronesia. People really loved the books and we found that they were passed around hand to hand until the pages were worn and dirty.

Recently, we became part of a team working to translate *Steps to Christ* into Marshallese so that it can reach an even bigger audience. We're calling it *Steps to Jesus* and we're happy to be working with pastors on Majuro and Guam to make it a reality.

Many people are very excited about this project. Plans have already been made for distribution by student missionaries and





A Couples Quest for God's Plan for Their Lives

# *a* BIRD TOLD *me*



**True adventures of survival off the grid  
and in the South Pacific islands**

**CAPTAIN JAMIE SPENCE**

## CAPTAIN JAMIE SPENCE

HAS WRITTEN AN EXCITING  
NEW BOOK CONTAINING  
STORIES STRANGER  
THAN FICTION:

While lost  
at sea, a bird...  
yes, a bird, led Jamie  
and Jacque to safe harbor.

His new book, *A Bird Told Me*, chronicles the amazing encounters and hair-raising events that happened while he and Jacque sailed the South Pacific. You won't be able to put this book down. Chapters like "Kustom Killers," "Shipwreck," and "Floating Coffin" will grab ahold of you and not let go.

As a young couple, Jamie and Jacque sailed the seas for seven years. The direction of their lives took a drastic turn when, lost at sea, a bird came to Jamie and guided them to safe-harbor. That was only the beginning of their wild adventures!

With a smile, Jamie shared, "I believe the reader will find our adventure extremely engaging. We never knew what the next day would hold... except adventure. I hope people will enjoy it."

Get your copy of *A Bird Told Me* today so you can be introduced to the Kustom Killers. In addition, Jamie will be happy to autograph your copy. At this time, the book is free with your gift of \$12 or more at: [www.canvasback.org/donate](http://www.canvasback.org/donate)

[www.canvasback.org](http://www.canvasback.org)





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## A YEAR OF BLESSINGS FOR THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA

The numbers are in and despite COVID, your financial partnership with Canvasback enabled our teams to provide almost \$2M in services to the people of Micronesia!

**EAR NOSE & THROAT SUPER TEAM:** 439 individuals were examined, 50 life-changing surgeries, and 77 hearing aids dispensed to restore much needed hearing—hearing that allowed mothers and fathers to hear the voices of their children for the first time in years.

**ORTHOPEDIC SUPER TEAM:** 238 exams conducted, 35 surgeries, including 24 total knee replacements. Terrible, disabling pain was finally gone and our patients were able to throw away their crutches!

**WELLNESS PROGRAMS:** The Wellness Center helped reverse the deadly epidemic of diabetes and heart disease through Community Lifestyle Programs, Cooking Demonstrations, Gardening Programs, Wellness-Fitness Programs, Diabetes screening, and—perhaps the largest project of all—youth outreach. When you reach the youth, eventually you reach everyone!