

## **FROM THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

I was once asked, “What’s a nice Asian gal like you doing in forestry?” In fact, I am the daughter of a plywood mill manager. For 20 years my father ran a small mill, first in Singapore and then in Malaysia. My father never wanted his children to be a part of his business. After seven banks turned him down for a loan, he sat my twin sister and me down at the ripe age of 10 and said: “Promise me that you will never run your own business.” Taking on the interim directorship of the World Forestry Center is as close as I have ever been to breaking that pinky promise.

I never worked in my father’s plywood mill. Instead of forestry school, I double majored in economics and religion, and later earned a Master’s in Public Administration. Nevertheless, I understood it was my father’s hard-earned livelihood in forestry that put me and my siblings through college and allowed my family to purchase our first house. When I arrived in the US for college and breathed fresh, clean air for the first time, I began to understand that forests not only provide jobs and homes, but also clean air and water, wildlife habitat, scenic landscapes, recreation opportunities, public health benefits, and vital climate mitigation.

It was my affiliation with the World Forestry Center—first as an intern 24 years ago, then as a program manager, and eventually director, of the International Fellowship Program—that opened my eyes to the diverse benefits of forests. I learned that the people who work in forestry all share a passion and respect for the land they are managing, whether it’s on family-owned woodlands, large industrial timberlands, public and private lands, or in urban and rural communities. The forestry community’s willingness to share their time and expertise, sometimes over a sack lunch in the field, rain or shine, never ceases to amaze me. Thank you.

So, what is a nice Asian gal like me doing in forestry? I am humbled and inspired by what my friends and colleagues in forestry do every day. It has been a great honor to work with them, to know that our efforts will make a difference close to home or even half way around the world. Our mission, “To create and inspire champions of sustainable forestry” recognizes that our success in the future rests on engaging and working with people here and abroad. Our International Fellowship Program, which has been bringing leaders in forestry to Portland from over 40 countries, is based on a simple belief: We invest in people so they can sustain the world’s forests.

I hope that you will partner with us and encourage others to join this important work. I sincerely thank all of our members, donors, partners, and friends for your support.

Sara Wu

Interim Executive Director