

SIFAT Journal



Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

August 2008

Friendship and Love Overcome Obstacles

By Kristii Hanna

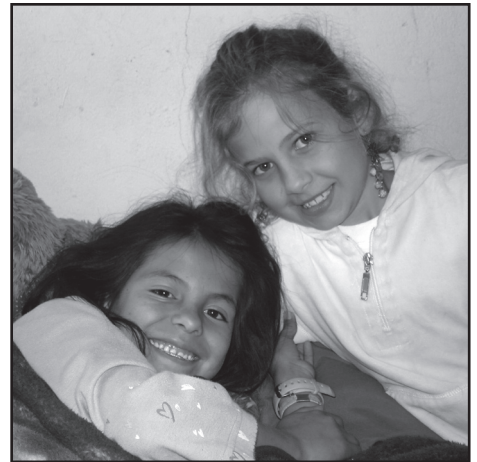
Alex City Methodist Church

When our 9-year-old daughter Lauren arrived in Quito, Ecuador, to work at Mama Yoli's, she came with a mission from her father. He wanted her to meet Dayana, the little girl who met his team every morning last year with a smile and a wave as they exited the bus to work. However, the Sunday that Lauren, her sister and I arrived at Mama Yoli's, Dayana's smile was not waiting for us as we got off the bus. Later, we learned that Dayana's legs had been badly burned in an accident and that she was unable to stand or walk most of the time.

God knew these two girls were meant

to be friends. Dayana's mother and family welcomed Lauren into their home daily, where she and Dayana met, giggled and became friends. Lauren and Rachael Petry, a translator from the Guntersville UMC team, would spend every afternoon with Dayana sharing the Bible story from VBS, blowing bubbles, coloring and building a friendship. As the two girls said their good-byes through tears Dayana said "hermanas," which Lauren knew meant sisters.

These two young girls are an example that Christ's love is the one language all of his children understand no matter what language they speak or where they are in the world.



Lauren Hanna (right) visited Dayana's home each day. Dayana's legs were burned in a recent accident, so she could not attend VBS at Mama Yoli's.



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Bolivia Bridge Work Progressing

By Glenn Glover
Auburn UMC

A small bridge team from Auburn UMC worked with Zoe Pacciani, Bridges to Prosperity; Bolivar Sanga, SIFAT foreman; and local villagers during a two-week period in August to complete the bridge towers on the 350-ft pedestrian bridge across the Chyanta River, 3,000 feet below Quesimpuco, Bolivia.

During August, locals will transport sand, cement, cable and wood to the bridge site in anticipation of a Mt. Bethel UMC (Marietta, GA) team in September who will work on anchors and placing the cable and a third Auburn UMC team in October who will set the final location of the cable and begin to place the decking. If all goes well, the bridge will be completed before this year's rainy season. The bridge will allow safe crossing of the large, dangerous river during the rainy season, giving thousands of people access to health care, transportation and the Christian School in Quesimpuco.



August 2008

My Life as a Cinder Block

Alan Graham, a member of the Alexander City Methodist Church team, wrote the following poem after spending a day at Mama Yoli's House unloading a truck load of cinder blocks to use on the third floor of the church. He shared this with his team during their nightly devotion and gave each team member a small handmade bag purchased from Sister to Sister with a small piece of cinder block inside, so each person held a piece of Mama Yoli's House in hand as he read this poem.

I am only a cinder block
Made of good but generic stock
Unnoticed by all
Just answering my call
This is my life.

But around me now, all I see
Is pain and sickness and poverty.
I hear the innocent wail and cry,
And I ask my God...
Why, Oh Why?

But today I swear I felt
Loving hands cradle me well
Strong hands that hold me tight,
A trail of people...
What a sight!

Although I'll never dance and sing
I'll hear the sounds of Angels' wings
To have a purpose-I'll hold dear.
But what can a cinder block do...
I fear?

Alone I can do but very little
Small, dull and very brittle
But together with my family and friends
We can withstand the strongest winds.

I will be but a part of a place
Where Jesus will ever shine his face
And where there is children's laughter
The presence of God will follow after.
This is my wonderful life.

Upcoming STM Trips

*The following team is serving in Bolivia during September.
Please pray for them as they prepare and travel to share
God's love in practical ways.*

Bolivia:

September 4-13

Mt. Bethel UMC

Are you interested in leading a SIFAT short-term mission team? Contact Peggy Walker, international team coordinator, at perdidopeg@aol.com for more information.

Ecuador Friends

Many of our mission team members have called and e-mailed asking for updates on Edwin Contreras and Dayana. For those who have not heard, SIFAT engineer Edwin was hospitalized with Guillain Barre Syndrome. He was given plasma transfusions and is undergoing some physical therapy. However, he is already back at Mama Yoli's! Please keep Edwin and his family in your prayers as he continues recuperating. He would love to hear from his friends at edwincontrep@yahoo.com.

Dayana, who lives at the top of the hill above Mama Yoli's House, suffered severe burns on her legs in an accident this summer. She is going to the hospital every other day to have the burns cleaned and bandaged. The doctors have not decided whether she will need surgery. If surgery is necessary, several teams have generously pledged to help cover her medical bills. Please keep Dayana and her family in your prayers during her very painful recovery. Send cards to SIFAT in care of Peggy, and we will make sure these get to Dayana.

Help SIFAT continue making a difference in our world:

Become a SHAREholder by pledging to give monthly.
Together, we can demonstrate Christ's love to impoverished peoples.

Contact Marie, lanierm@sifat.org, or visit www.sifat.org/share.html.



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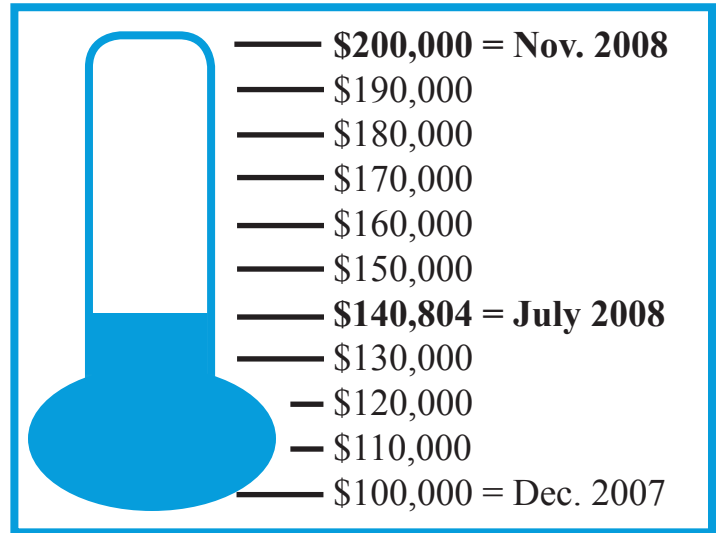
In Ixiamas, Bolivia...

Many people have been reading the SIFAT blog this summer and followed our four summer interns from the Wesley Foundation at Auburn University. The interns have returned from the jungles of Bolivia, where they worked with our boarding home (internado). Next month, we will share some of their experiences.

One of our 2007 Practicum graduates and current intern, Vicky, is keeping the staff updated with everyday life at the internado. We are finding that some important details get left out of standard reports, such as our new dorm mother's dislike for insects and bugs!

Kidding aside, we welcome Ruth to the Ixiamas staff as the new dorm mom. Ruth is from La Paz, and Vicky shares that she is already very good with the students. Vicky also asks that we join in praying for Ruth as she adjusts to the internado, including the insects, bugs and an alleged snake seen by some of the girls.

Sarah Trust Fund Update



To contribute to the Sarah Trust Fund, please write "Sarah Fund" in the memo field of your check.

SIFAT Ecuador Training a Success



Some 14 community leaders recently completed a two-week intensive SIFAT training in Christian community development, conflict resolution, and community health.

SIFAT worked closely with Compassion International and MAP International to select key community leaders for this training who would return to their home areas to train others in what they learned.

We are excited to offer this training as part of an ongoing interagency partnership in development that we have in Ecuador between Compassion, MAP and SIFAT.

Dr. Roberto Contreras, Cecilia de Cobo and Sarah Corson taught in the Ecuador Practicu. They pose for a class photo with the 14 graduates.



SIFAT Remembers...

As SIFAT approaches our 30th year of sharing God's love in practical ways, cofounders Ken and Sarah Corson are writing this column to focus on accomplishments, struggles and important moments from past years. Ken is posting bonus material on our blog, too. We hope you enjoy remembering these years with us!

What Counts in Life

How do we determine what really counts in life? There are those who pursue such things as wealth, fame, security, and pleasure. In themselves these things are not wrong, but if they are our highest goals in life they are inadequate to satisfy the deepest human aspirations.

Students from around the world come to SIFAT for our International Practicum in Christian Community development. Most of these students are from the Two-thirds World, poorer countries. We do hear some comments on how they feel about what they see when they come to America, but we can only imagine what they think about the prosperity displayed in our roads, our houses, our stores and the surplus of foods we have to eat.

The students who come to the SIFAT practicum do not come to stay in the United States. They come with the intention of learning things that will empower them to train their people in their country in ways of self-help and ways out of poverty. The Spirit of God cannot be pleased that the few find comfort and luxury while so many more languish at the brink of starvation, malnutrition or lack of opportunity. To see wealth and return to poverty takes a commitment to higher values. The typical SIFAT student lives out this commitment.

These students become ambassadors of hope and instruments of community development. It is not likely that their government, church or charitable organization

will provide enough welfare to eradicate poverty, nor should they. If communities, villages, cities and regions are to escape the shackles of poverty the force to overcome must come from within these social groups themselves. Our task is not to extend welfare, but to provide training and opportunities for self-help.

Values do get confused. We need to become more aware of what our own values that drive our lives really are. Greater awareness of those sources that have become the standard for our lives could lead us to some re-evaluation. The following paraphrase of a line from a poem cuts through much of the material clutter in many of our lives and takes us to a simple time of basic necessities.

If all you have left is but two pence, take one and buy bread. With the other, buy hyacinths for the soul.

The values of the world are worldly values and, as such, have limitations and consequences. The values of the Kingdom of God are those values that are worthy to endure an eternity. The values of the Kingdom prod us to live beyond ourselves and our mortality. Caring and mercy are aspects of love, an eternal value. Investments in community, society and planetary matters reflect citizenship in God's domain. *Sharing God's love in practical ways is not only a reflection of where SIFAT has been, but where SIFAT is and where it is going in the future.*

SIFAT Offers Unique Field Trips for Students

Laughter and yells filter through the trees as you walk into our Global Village. You smell a wood fire and hear a rhythm form as bamboo poles are clicked in time with Asian music. What is happening at SIFAT? Haley Lewis, program manager, smiles and says, “Welcome to a CARES event!”

This fall, students from public, private and home schools, as well as church groups and clubs, will visit our campus to participate in CARES, an educational field trip program.

Groups have the opportunity to choose between two programs: *Around the World* and *Appropriate Technology*.

Around the World, a geography-based program, allows students to walk into our models of developing countries and learn about the country, its people and customs. As they travel through Asia, Latin America and Africa, students are involved in hands-on activities showcasing daily life, cultural entertainment and native jobs.

Designed for third through twelfth grades, **Appropriate Technology** focuses on meeting our basic human needs with what is available to us. Students explore how to get what you need if you lack money, electricity or access to stores.



SIFAT volunteers Miguel and Elba Roman present a module on Bolivia. Students have the opportunity to wear indigenous clothing, play musical instruments and explore a home from the Andes Mountains.

Students learn how to obtain and purify water, grow and gather food, preserve and cook food and build shelter. Not only does our Appropriate Technology program look at survival, it requires students to be creative and inventive.

Groups may add the Hunger Banquet to their program. The statistics of world hunger come alive as participants are separated based on the percentages of those who have food and those who do not. Everyone eventually receives lunch, but the reality of hunger stays on each person’s mind.

Reservations for the 2008 Fall Season (September 16-November 15) are being taken now. CARES events are held Tuesdays, Fridays and the 3rd Saturday of the month. CARES events run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., but programming may be amended to accommodate your group.

To learn more about CARES, booking and price info please visit www.sifat.org/cares. If you are interested in bringing a group to CARES or have questions, contact Haley by e-mail (lewish@sifat.org) or by calling the SIFAT office (256) 396-2015.



Students learn how to cook using solar energy for heat. Alternative fuel sources and fuel-efficient cookstoves are important subjects in appropriate technology.



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SIFAT's Vision: Bridging the First and Two-thirds Worlds to alleviate spiritual and physical poverty, encouraging people to develop their God-given potential.

SIFAT's Mission: To share God's love through service, education and personal involvement with a needy world.

From the Desk of Tom Corson

Fifty years ago this month my Mom and Dad were married. They left the wedding at the Wedowee Methodist Church to go to a mission assignment in Cuba. Not long after, Castro succeeded in his revolution there. That was the first of several revolutions my parents lived through in different countries. Their mission was to serve Christ wherever He led them.

From the beginning, they made an agreement that money would not be the criteria which would guide them. Their lives have been based these 50 years not on security, stability or predictability, but on what they felt God was doing to advance His Kingdom in this world and what He called them to do in that task. Many times when they felt sure God was calling, they started out, not knowing how they would find food for our family. That was the situation when they were led to Puerto Rico three months before I was born. When the money they had to live on was gone, Dad picked up his camera and began to take and sell pictures. Theirs was a life of faith, and just like He did with Paul, God always provided a job my parents could work on the side to support us, or God surprised us by sending help from others.

Through the years, Mom and Dad supported us by doing many jobs, whatever God provided, so that they could keep their eyes on the goal of serving Him in the different countries where He led them. They taught school, cut hay fields with a borrowed tractor, ran a photographic lab, sold class rings to high school seniors, took funeral pictures (yes, people in some cultures want pictures of their funerals) and many other things. All work was holy to them, because they used it as a platform to reach others for Christ. They survived hurricanes, floods, volcanos, gangs, criminals, political unrest, lack of resources, as they followed God into dangerous situations to take His love to the lost. Dad always said there is a fine line between faith and foolishness, and I have been with them on both sides of that line.

When I was ten years old, I felt devastated that my parents would take us four children into the remote jungle to live in South America. I declared I would never treat a child of mine that way. But today, I thank God from the bottom of my heart for their dedication to serve God in whatever circumstance—a dedication they lived out before us children. As a result, God used them to begin SIFAT 29 years ago, not knowing how it could be accomplished. Although times were often hard, God was faithful. And through these past 29 years, thousands of people have found a place to serve God through the ministry of SIFAT, which is worldwide today. This month we celebrate the 50th anniversary of their marriage and mission. Thank you, Ken and Sarah, for being true to God's call. Thank God for allowing those of us on the SIFAT staff today to continue to follow that vision. And thank God for each of you who give of your time and resources, that many more people might continue to be saved both spiritually and physically through the ministry of SIFAT.