

SIFAT Journal

Join Ken and Sarah to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Details on page 4.

Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

July 2008

Learn & Serve 2008: Youth Invade SIFAT

By Jamie Waldhour
Learn and Serve Director

Learn & Serve 2008 has been amazing! We are at the halfway point of the summer. We have hosted 16 youth groups for a total of 220 people—already more participation than we had all of last summer. Groups have come from as far away as Girdwood, Alaska and Houston, Texas. We have also had groups from Mississippi, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Reviews have been overwhelmingly positive from the youth and their leaders. "Taking the whole experience together is fantastic," an adult leader shared in an evaluation. "It paints a very clear and real picture. This place called SIFAT is a blessing to all, so they can learn to appreciate and serve in humility."

There are four more weeks of Learn and Serve beginning on July 6. We have 17 more groups scheduled to participate, and we look forward to an amazing second half!



Students dig potatoes as part of the appropriate technology session. They used our cookstove models to prepare their lunch on Tuesdays.

Three Days in Atucucho, Ecuador

By Sarah Corson
SIFAT Cofounder



Sarah traveled to Ecuador this spring to teach in the Ecuador Practicum. While there, she visited our projects in Atucucho and stayed three nights with families there.

Cecilia de Cobo, director of SIFAT's work in the slums of Atucucho, parked her little car on the edge of the dirt road and said, "We'll visit three women who live up this street." Once more I had been given the opportunity to work in Ecuador...living with the people in this slum for three days and nights. As we climbed up the badly eroded street that ran straight up the mountain, I noticed it was filled with garbage—broken limbs of decaying trees, a pile of brush and weeds, a broken down pasteboard box, the dilapidated cushion from an old chair. At first glance, I was repulsed by the garbage, but then I saw the reason

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Ecuador

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for it. They were trying to stop the ruts from washing deeper. The women's homes and their lives were similar...on the surface they looked like junk, but when I took the time to see what was beneath the surface, I felt awe for the beauty and the determination of these women to live for God and to teach their children a better way than the one they had previously known.

A beautiful teenage girl stepped out of the door in a broken wall surrounding one house. "She is Maria," Cecilia said. "Her mother sold her when she was five years old to be a servant. She had a hard life. No one cared about her. They gave her very little food and worked her hard. When she was 14 she ran away with the first boy that asked her to marry him. She lives here with her husband's elderly mother and aunt. All three have accepted Christ and are in my discipleship group."

The two elderly women in the home joined Maria to welcome us. Surrounding them were other grandchildren. We gathered in their one room, which had a floor, and heard their stories. They had overcome so much and here they were quoting scriptures telling me how God had helped them out of their dark lives.

At first, Maria had hated her mother-in-law, she said, because she had never known a mother's love. When her young husband could not get work, and Maria had their first child, he decided to migrate to Spain to find work, as thousands of Ecuadorians do. He had to promise to work for a number of years to borrow the money for his ticket to Spain. It would be years before she would see him again.

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she told me how she and her

Upcoming STM Trips

The following teams are serving in Bolivia and Ecuador during August. Please pray for them as they prepare and travel to share God's love in practical ways.

Ecuador:

August 2-9	Robertsdale UMC Gulf Shores UMC
August 9-17	Auburn UMC (Medical)

mother-in-law and aunt had heard the message of Jesus from Cecilia, how all three of them had been changed and how God had taken her hatred for these women away and showed her how to love and respect them.



Sarah returned with many photographs and memories of her stay in Atacucho. One of her host families is pictured above.

Every home we entered was like entering a sanctuary. In each one, I heard testimonies of how Christ had helped them to love their own children, their spouses and their neighbors more. "Now we work together to help each other instead of just fighting for our own survival," one of them said.

As we left Atacucho, I saw it again...a broken down old fence on the side of the road with garbage around, but someone had planted a beautiful running rose that covered the fence and it was full of red roses. I saw the

ugliness of the slums, and I also saw God shining out of beautiful faces. The harshness and the joy! We choose what we want to see.

I am so glad that SIFAT is involved in Atacucho. I am so glad that Cecilia is part of the SIFAT team working in hard places in our world, piercing the darkness with the light of God's love!

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

Recent Field Study a Success

By Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

The news is full of sky-rocketing food prices and riots around the world where people lack their basic human needs. Every day, at least 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds. The World Health Organization estimates that poor nutrition or calorie deficiencies causes nearly one in three people on earth to die prematurely or have disabilities. Nearly one in three persons has parasites. Lack of clean water and sanitation also contribute to hunger by a cycle of disease, poor appetite and malnutrition.



Students in the field study course had the opportunity to learn how to drill low-cost wells. Interested? Join us in the October field study.

Yet, we must remember that there is hope! It doesn't have to be this way. Specific, low-cost technologies coupled with good community development can greatly impact hunger, malnutrition and the health and survival of many around the world.

SIFAT is committed to making a difference. We offer a variety of training in practical skills to address basic human needs yearly through workshops, seminars, conferences, field studies and the 10-week Practicum in the fall. We welcome you to join us and spread the word that there are proven solutions to make the world a better place!

Some 28 university students and community leaders from eight countries joined together to participate in SIFAT's two-week intensive Field Study in World Hunger and Malnutrition: Practical Skills to Make a Difference. The University of Alabama in Birmingham and the Sparkman Center for Global Health cosponsored this training.

Students left the traditional classroom and went into SIFAT's Global Village to learn new skills to implement at the community level. The Field Study included modules on urban gardening, maximizing small garden plots for family nutrition, low-cost well drilling, clean water and sanitation technologies, child survival, food preservation, using green leaves for fortification, fuel-efficient cookstoves, assessing community malnutrition and strategies for community development. Plans are



Dr. Martin Price (right), of ECHO, teaches SIFAT students how to create a rooftop garden without soil.

to offer similar intensive three-week courses for college credit each May.

Upcoming Training Opportunities:

Aug. 10-12 "Lab in a Suitcase" Training for remote medical teams and community clinics to run essential laboratory diagnostic tests with appropriate technology portable kit. (CEUs available)

Aug. 27-Nov. 7 Practicum in Appropriate Technologies for Basic Human Needs and Christian Community Development. (10-week certificate program)

Oct. 6-17 Field Study in Water and Sanitation Technologies for the Village Level. (Cosponsored by UAB and the Sparkman Center for Global Health)



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!

Global Christians

Globalization has entered our vocabulary in recent years. Though this word, when used in the context of global economics, is based on principles that often bring negative results, globalization remains a part of our lives. Who could doubt that the whole globe is integrated and each area affects all the others, when we consider health epidemics such as HIV/Aids. Television, cell phones and a host of technologies connect every place on our earth and increasingly are giving us a global culture. Several centuries ago, John Wesley thought globally, also. He declared, "The World is my parish!"

The day when peasants belonged to the lord of the manor and to the land is mostly in the past. But, just as surely as the peasant had limited vision of the rest of the world, so today many people think only in terms of their own region or, at most, their own country. This ingrown thinking cannot adequately deal with the situation in our world today. Those of us who claim to follow Christ must realize that we are a part of everything. We belong to the whole earth, not just to one group, one country, one denomination. While some people divide their fellow human beings into "us" and "them", Christians are taught that all humans are meant to be brothers and sisters. We are to be neighbors and love, not only our neighbors, but even our enemies. We must think in terms of what is best for everyone, not just our own group.

Humanity's march through time is lost if we but see the present. The hymn writer said "To serve the present age..." This indeed is our calling, but we are part of a process that comes from the past, gives us the present in which to live out our time on the stage of life and moves into the future. We are a part of the process of life and members of the human family. The teachings of Christ make sense when we grasp our role in this time, not only as part of our immediate family, but as part of the human family and in turn as part of the planet.

Ken and Sarah to Celebrate 50 Years of Marriage

You are invited to help the SIFAT staff celebrate our cofounders Ken and Sarah Corson's 50th wedding anniversary on August 16 at 10 a.m. Ken and Sarah left on their honeymoon to serve in Cuba. Their marriage has been a legacy to missions, with almost 30 of these 50 years given to SIFAT.

We would like to make a special scrapbook for them with photos and stories. **Please bring your favorite photo and/or story to contribute to this memoir.** If you are unable to attend, feel free to mail your contribution to us.

Ken and Sarah ask that anyone wanting to give a gift in their honor send it to SIFAT to the Sarah Trust Fund.

Join us at the Lodge on SIFAT's campus for visiting and lunch, but **please RSVP by Aug. 1.**

Correction

We accidentally left out the time for Ken and Sarah Corson's anniversary celebration in last month's invitation. It will begin at 10 a.m. on August 16, 2008.

Please join us with your photographs and memories as we help Ken and Sarah celebrate 50 years of marriage. If you plan to attend, please call (256) 396-2015 or e-mail lanierm@sifat.org by Aug. 1.

SIFAT Graduates Move to Uganda

Agape Total Child Care Center Uganda (ATCC) is officially open! William, Adella and Sean graduated from the SIFAT Practicum in November 2007 and left for Uganda in January 2008. Their journey has been one of faith, trust and hope.

William grew up in Rwanda, and his wife Adella is from Tanzania. They met while living in Birmingham, married and had Sean. Each year, they returned to Africa to visit. William felt a calling to leave Birmingham, where he owned a business and was pursuing “the American dream”, to go back to Africa and minister to the people.

Though Uganda is neither William nor Adella’s native country, both knew it was where they were most needed. William shared that Uganda registers more than one million AIDS orphans under the age of 17.

ATCC is an orphanage for children whose parents have died because of AIDS. William and Adella are currently parents to 15 girls and 15 boys, ages 6 to 12. William and Adella returned to the United States for a few weeks and have had the chance to share with our staff, speak to some of their supporters and attend the recent field study training.

William and Adella are using their training to make a difference in the lives of these orphans. They have already built a rocket cookstove in their new kitchen. After attending the field study course, William has plans to build an urban garden when they return. Because of gas prices, their planned food costs have doubled. Being able to grow the center’s food and use less firewood helps ATCC run on its small budget.

The community is involved with this ministry by providing manual labor to paint the buildings and build the stoves. William and Adella are looking for sponsors for the children. Each month, \$60 per child is required to meet the costs of housing, tuition and administration. Gifts can be given to ATCC through SIFAT by designating “ministry of William and Adella” on your donation.

William and Adella will be writing periodic updates in the SIFAT Journal as they continue ministering to the orphans and community of Lugazi, Uganda, East Africa. William invites you to visit the ATCC website for photos and updates at www.agape4kids.org.



Adella, Sean (13 months) and William recently visited the SIFAT campus while they were in the United States. Their family founded Agape Total Child Care Center in Uganda, where they care for 30 orphans whose parents have died from HIV/AIDS.



The new kitchen features cookstoves built using the appropriate technology William learned at SIFAT. Community members helped build these stoves and began learning how to make fuel-efficient stoves for their own kitchens.

Don't forget: you can donate online!

Visit www.sifat.org and click on “donate”. Do you want to designate your gift for a particular fund or in honor/memory of someone? If so, e-mail Claude (hurttc@sifat.org) after donating, and he will credit it appropriately.



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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



Daniel Perez, Yolanda Cassidy's son, interned in Ecuador last summer and took part in the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

I stood at the top of the dirt street and looked down the mountain to a beautiful five-story building built into the steep hillside. It was surrounded by little houses, some with broken fences or roofs, but all testifying to owners struggling valiantly to build homes and care for their children in this slum area called Atucucho. This building high above Quito, Ecuador, looked out over the international airport with an impressive view that could take your breath away. But looking close around the building, the evident heartache of poverty could take your breath away, too!

During the four years since SIFAT started this building, the youth of Woodbine UMC in Pace, Fla., have grown from kids to young adults. They were the first to commit to building this center in memory of their youth leader Yolanda Cassidy, who died in a tragic accident. These teenagers replaced their sorrow with helping others—especially neglected children with little hope.

They succeeded. At the ribbon-cutting celebration, there was joy and hope in the faces of everyone! Atucucho is in the process of being transformed. Their church has opened next to the day care building as part of the Mama Yoli Center. Parents are now working together—sharing their faith, praying and encouraging each other—seeking solutions to their crime-ridden neighborhood.

But it is not just the people of this community who have been changed forever. All the teams who went with SIFAT to help work on this building, and especially all the youth...all these North Americans have been changed forever, too.

One evening at devotions, a young man from Woodbine spoke. He said, "This celebration is giving closure to a project that has claimed the focus of our lives for the last four years. During these years, we have spent hundreds, maybe thousands of hours planning, dreaming and working to make this a reality. We have sold Christmas trees, pumpkins and cooked and sold plates at dinners. We have washed cars, collected blankets and other needed articles for the children. This has been more than taking a mission trip every year; we have lived this mission daily. We are proud of this building, but more of what it represents...the hope and loving care for these children to know the abundant life that Jesus gives. There are now people in place to carry this ministry on and our building part has been done. But one thing I know...my life will always be different because I spent countless hours working in this ministry. Now I plan to spend the rest of my life on my knees praying for these children who will have a start in life because this building...this ministry... is here!"