

SIFAT Journal



Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

June 2008



Ken and Sarah on their honeymoon.

Join the SIFAT staff in an outdoor barbecue honoring our cofounders! In lieu of gifts, Ken and Sarah ask that you donate to SIFAT's Sarah Fund.

You are cordially invited to join the SIFAT staff in honoring SIFAT's cofounders,

Mr. and Mrs. Ken Corson

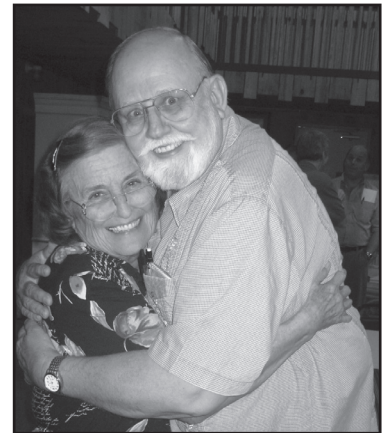
Celebrating Fifty Years of Marriage

on Saturday, the Sixteenth of August

*Two thousand eight
Time
at the SIFAT Lodge*

*Please RSVP
(256) 396-2015
info@sifat.org*

*Casual
Dress*



Ken and Sarah at SIFAT in 2008 - 50 years of ministry together!

We are creating a scrapbook for Ken and Sarah. If you have a favorite snapshot or story of either of them, please bring it with you or mail it to our office. Remember to include your name and when it was taken!

An Engineer's Heart

By Sarah Corson
SIFAT Cofounder

The building is finished. After three years, 60 teams composed of U.S. and local Ecuador community people and \$200,000, a large five-story day care building stands on the steep mountainside in Atucucho, which means Wolf's Mouth. Homes built in poverty flow all around it. But this slum area is on the move. Christian Community Development is more than just a class SIFAT teaches. It is a reality in the lives of the community of El Condor in Atucucho. Led by SIFAT graduates, Dr. Roberto and Monica Contreras and Cecelia de Cobo, a tremendous change has swept over this steep mountainside overlooking Quito, Ecuador.

I visited this place three years ago right after the youth of Woodbine UMC picked up the vision of their youth leader, Yolanda Cassidy, when she was suddenly taken away in an accident. Yolanda had been to Atucucho and was determined to make a difference in the lives of the hundreds of destitute children who had to stay looked in their little huts or tied to their doors every day while their mothers worked. Though she was called to heaven before she could do it, the youth group she led in Woodbine UMC in Alabama, fired with her dream, led the way which others followed. Today the dream is a reality. Now it remains to finish a few details such as painting the classrooms.

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Ecuador

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The dedication is scheduled for June 11.

However, the women of the community don't count it done yet. They want a church built right beside it. SIFAT teams have worked with them and already the basic infrastructure of two stories of the church are in place. But more is needed. The third story will be the parsonage and housing for other teams who visit. Services with Pastor Ramiro Balseca are held every Sunday at 3 p.m. His wife, Sofia, and their three teenage children lead Sunday School and youth in this partly finished building.

SIFAT engineer Edwin Contreras showed me around. I looked out the third floor window at the tiny shacks packed into every available foot of land all around this day care building. More than 10,000 destitute people live on the mountain of Atucucho. How impressive this tall, strong building looked rising out

of this mountain of poverty!



Engineer Edwin Contreras standing in front of the five-story Mama Yoli's House (left) and the church building teams are working on this summer.

As we left, Edwin stopped in front of the building, misty eyed, and told me, "There was a time when I felt proud of my accomplishments when I finished a building, but not now. God used many people working together from the U. S. and from Ecuador to build this one. I was just privileged to be the engineer to direct them. Many children will be cared for and taught of God's way in this building. Their lives will be changed for eternity. This building will serve not only the children around us today, but their children, their grandchildren and many more generations."

"I will die one day, and future generations of children here will never know my name. I don't want them to remember me. I want them to know God. Someday, instead of the Wolf's Mouth, this will be known as a community built on God's Love. That is worth more than anything else I could ask for in this life!" I felt sure that all those who helped SIFAT build it feel the same way.

As Edwin and I looked up at the building through tears of joy, I remembered a line in a poem by Vachel Lindsey: 'To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name'.

Upcoming STM Trips

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

Ecuador:

- July 5-12 Duncan Memorial UMC
Montevallo FUMC
- July 12-19 Alexander City Methodist Church/
Guntersville FUMC (Medical)
- July 19-26 Tallasee FUMC/
Albertville FUMC (Medical)
- July 26-Aug. 3 Liberty UMC/
Mt. Bethel UMC

Bolivia:

- July 11-21 South Carolina UMVIM
- July 18-28 St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church
- July 24- Aug. 2 Auburn UMC (Medical)

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.

Interns to Ixiamas, Bolivia

Addison (center, left) and Jarred (center, right) pose with the Internado Cristiano Ixiamas boys' soccer team. Addison and Jarred interned at SIFAT's boarding home in Bolivia from February through April.



Clean Water for a Community

By Addison Shock
Intern to Ixiamas, Bolivia

This spring, I lived in Bolivia for three months. For one month, I lived with Terry Waller and his family, where I learned and drilled wells with Bolivian men.

We would leave with all the supplies needed and camp out at each drill site. When the well was completed, we left. The hardest five days of my life may have happened when we dug a well in San Julian. It rained the entire time, but we were still able to drill 54 meters!

After learning to drill, I returned to Ixiamas and drilled five test wells there. Only two of these were successful. I was able to hire eight men to help and teach. The well we drilled at the internado

produced a little bit of water, which helped irrigate some of the gardens.

The well we drilled at the hospital produced a good bit of water, and hopefully, will allow them to use clean water when needed.

If you are interested in the technology we used to drill these wells using manual labor, visit Water for All International's website, www.waterforallinternational.org.

Besides a lot of physical work, I also got to spend time with the students living in our boarding home (internado) in Ixiamas. I really miss them – God worked in some incredible ways through the wonderful people that I met and worked with in Bolivia. Thank you for all the love and support!

How was Bolivia?

By Jarred Griffin
Intern to Ixiamas, Bolivia

I have found it difficult to know what to say to people when they ask me, "How was Bolivia?" I usually respond with a one word reply of "good."

It was an experience where almost every day was filled with adventure, trials and ultimately, a new understanding of not only who God is, but also how God is. That is what I find hard to express in words.

I can tell you that we taught English classes and helped harvest more than two tons of rice, or that we drilled wells, but in and of themselves, those have little to do with why we went or how God is. Such activities allowed me to interact with people who God loves and calls his children. From that, I was reminded daily of God's limitless love and at times it was so overwhelming I literally tried not to think about it; if that makes sense.

I saw the love of God in the beaming brown eyes of children at the Internado, in the animals that would roam onto our property, in the work ethic of Pastor Eliseo, in the stench of body odor of a man working to lower the Internado fees of his younger sister, from people on the bus rides, in the unsightly fungus on my legs, in the Tenorio family of El Alto and through countless other observations and experiences. Although I cannot yet fully explain my three months in Bolivia through words, I experienced God while I was there and will continue to reflect on my time in Bolivia.

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!

Community is Important

The idea of community is one that is frequently found in our speech. The importance of community began to have new and greater meaning for us beginning with our experiences in Costa Rica.

Early America came by community naturally. People's labor, local businesses and professionals served needs of the community rather directly. The church and school have been, and sometimes still are, a locus for some communities, as have civic groups and social organizations. In modern times, mass production and technical means of communication and transportation have made it harder to find the spontaneous types of community of the past.

Sarah grew up in a rural Southern culture. My childhood experiences were different, coming from an urban, industrialized Northern city. When we stepped outside our respective cultures, we found social structures that differed from those with which we were familiar.

Going into small, newly formed homesteading villages as well as urban slums, we often found a lack of the sense of community. People's loyalties were often limited to family, tribal group, place of origin and, at times, a church or political party. Socially, these cultures were sometimes a jungle—often characterized with suspicion

and lack of trust in others who were different.

We have witnessed charitable organizations introduce new programs, skills or technologies hoping to raise the community to a higher level socially, economically, educationally and spiritually. But often some of the smarter people learned something useful, and instead of becoming an asset to the village, they moved to the capital city where they could make a better living with their new skills. We began to realize a sense of community was needed so that new skills or technologies could elevate the whole town instead of just becoming a social ladder for individuals.

Often the poor do not have the self esteem to try to contribute to the community. We came to believe that building community started with building positive self images in people, and helping them to trust each other. Then if they chose to develop certain skills or technologies, their community could indeed develop.

SIFAT trains community development workers. It would be near sighted to train them only as individuals, even though an individual could profit from the training. We seek to instill a sense of belonging to the community and a sense of opportunity and responsibility in our students to share what they learn with their communities.

Become a part of the SIFAT community by volunteering!

Whether you come daily, monthly or for an extended stay, your skills are valuable and needed. Our volunteers help maintain the campus, present our programming and serve everywhere in between!

Contact Haley Lewis, lewish@sifat.org, to find out how you can volunteer.

Keeping in Touch with Awon

By Sarah Corson
SIFAT Cofounder

SIFAT is thrilled when we hear from our graduates who return to their homes and teach others what they have learned at SIFAT. Ken has often said, “It is not just what we can do for Christ, but also what we can inspire others to do.” The multiplier effect definitely works here.

In a mountainous rural village in Manipur, India, which is home to SIFAT graduate Awon, there is an increasing number of patients and frequent deaths with HIV/AIDS. Awon studied about AIDS at SIFAT and wanted to share ways to help these victims. Women are not usually allowed to lead in her culture, but her church leaders realized the great need, and none of them were trained in how to deal with it. She won their respect and was invited to organize and carry out a two-day seminar on health education for Christian ministry. The seminar was held April 2-3. They emphasized prevention of HIV/AIDS and caring for family members who have AIDS. They also taught believers the importance of spiritually reaching out to AIDS victims.

Awon was not sure that her people would attend this unprecedented seminar, but 150 came. Many key leaders of the village and the church participated. A pastor from a neighboring village invited her to have a similar program in his church. Using the method SIFAT taught of networking with other agencies to multiply both groups’ outreach, Awon obtained the help of their regional World Vision staff person for counseling. She and another

pastor taught ministering to patients’ spiritual and emotional needs. The seminar ran overtime because no one wanted to end it. They all wanted to learn more.

Awon wrote us, “I shed tears many times listening to the stories and seeing the openness of the hearts of some of the people who attended.” She told of two young widows whose spouses died with AIDS. Both widows said that they wanted to commit suicide when they found out they had AIDS, too. One has four small children and the other five. They are so poor their children cannot go to school, except for one in each family who are being sponsored by World Vision. These mothers were strengthened spiritually as they talked about their problems and prayed together with other Christians.

One of the elders of the church remarked that because Awon, a woman, was helping to lead this seminar, it would make freedom of speech more real for the other women present who traditionally were not granted that right in their culture. On April 27, Awon’s church commissioned her as one of their workers in Christian Education.

Most of us will never be able to go to Manipur to minister and be a witness to the grace and love of Jesus Christ. But those who helped pay Awon’s training are actually ministering there in India



SIFAT graduate Awon (center) sits with her prayer team, which has spent much time praying for Awon’s ministries, including seminars on HIV/AIDS and Project Light (English as a Second Language) classes.

today through her. Awon is just one of the SIFAT graduates across the world trained to share God’s love with those in need.

You can help national Christian workers study at SIFAT. You can become a missionary through them as they return to their often remote and poverty-stricken communities.

Ways to support our Practicum students this fall:

1. Prayer
2. Scholarships
3. Weekend Outings
4. Community Meals on Tuesdays
5. American Friendships

For more information, contact international training director Kathy Bryson, brysonk@sifat.org.



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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



The AUMC team with Bolivar (front row, second from left), a graduate from our high school (center right, wearing scarf), her sister and her father.

Last month, a SIFAT team from Auburn UMC went to Quesimpuco, Bolivia, to help Ecuadorian engineer Bolivar Sanga and the local Bolivian people begin construction on a 350-foot pedestrian bridge in the rugged Andean Mountains. For the last three months, far from anything that could be called civilization, Bolivar has lived with the local people, eaten their sparse diet, slept in a tent and worked on the bridge with hand tools. Engineers from Auburn were pleased with the work done.

For years, the communities on the other side of the river from Quesimpuco have asked us to help them build a bridge. Each year, some die crossing to reach the hospital, school or church built by SIFAT. With appropriate technologies and help from Bridges to Prosperity and help from Auburn UMC, the bridge over one of the harshest river crossings in the world is now being built.

It was not easy for our team to work there even for a week, but it was worth it when a graduate from our high school stopped at the work site on the last day of our trip. She was returning by a circuitous route from the university some 12 hours of walking time away. She came by to thank us for the bridge.

"I graduated last year from the school SIFAT built," she explained. "We risked our lives to cross this river every weekend to go home all during my high school years. Some of us did not make it. Now, I am determined to study and become a dentist. I want to come back with skills to help my people, and I just had to come to say thank you! Thank you for the school, for the church, for the hospital. Thank you for the bridge that will let people in my village reach the other side safely.

Although she has no money, we are committed to helping her continue her education. We feel deeply that we must help her find the resources to keep studying. She was a little shepherd girl who would have spent her life tending sheep had the SIFAT high school not been there. But it was there, and now the bridge will be there to help others in her village. This bridge is helping us do much more than just crossing a river; it is helping save lives, provide education, giving opportunities for people to go to church. It is opening up the world to these very needy people. Thank you for helping SIFAT help them.