

SIFAT Journal

Remember: any donations to be credited in 2008 for tax purposes must be **postmarked by Dec. 31**. If you are donating cash or gifts in-kind (like items on our wish list), we must have those at our office on or before Dec. 31.

Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

November/December 2008

Philippine Student Connects SIFAT with the Ukraine

By Sarah Corson
SIFAT Cofounder

For 29 years, SIFAT has been reaching out across the world offering training to Christian leaders in hard places. This year, students have come to study from our 81st country, the Ukraine.

Under the former Soviet Union, Christianity was repressed in their country. But 17 years ago, Elena Ryazanova was touched by the testimony of her friend and went to a service with a small group of believers in a home church. That night, Elena made the decision to follow Christ. A week later, her husband Igor Ryaznov gave his life to Christ. Since then, God

has been using this beautiful Russian couple to help others experience the love of our Lord. Today, they serve as family counselors and leaders in the prayer ministry of their church. They came to SIFAT to study Christian discipleship and agriculture, in order to help their community with more spiritual and physical food.

Igor and Elena learned about SIFAT through a missionary from the Philippines, Sarita, who is discipling their church leaders to expand their ministry into an impoverished slum area. Sarita has been working in the Ukraine for seven years and has learned their native language, Russian, which



Sarita Ladios, a Filipino missionary to the Ukraine, translated for our first Practicum students from the Ukraine. Pictured left to right are Sarita, Practicum instructor Tom LaPage of Chalmers Center for Economic Development, Igor and Elena Ryaznov

Continued on page 6

Merry Christmas!

From the SIFAT staff:

Ken, Sarah, Tom,
Kathy, Peggy,
Claude, Cheryl,
Nate, Haley, Marie,
Yollie, Sofia, John,
Erin and Andy



SERVANTS
IN FAITH AND
TECHNOLOGY

In this issue:

A Mother's Wish	2
A Christmas Miracle	3
Bridge Update	4
Christmas Gift Ideas	5
SIFAT Remembers	6
Bridging Cultures	7
Sarah Trust Fund Update	7
Desk of Tom	8

A Mother's Christmas Wish: Offering Hope to Other Mothers

By Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Tonight my little Luci is dreaming of what gifts she will find under the tree on Christmas morning. A new baby doll? A dress up set? A plush teddy bear?

Each day more than 26,000 children under the age of five will die in our world. And with each death goes a mother's dreams and part of her into the grave.

This Christmas, in the face of tragedy, I choose to find hope. As I wrap Luci's presents and envision her joyful face Christmas morning, how I wish that I could also wrap up a present of these simple technologies for each Mother on earth to know about—so that they would have their precious child to hug on Christmas morning too!

Instead of focusing on what has been, let's focus on what can be. We know that simple, low-cost solutions are available to prevent these needless deaths. A few examples:



Photo: Taken by team leader Joyce Henderson on a mission trip in Cayambe, Ecuador, in Oct. 2008

Give the gift of a scholarship!

If you would like to Share God's Love in Practical ways, why not make an investment in a SIFAT scholarship for a community mother to have training in practical technologies that would improve the lives of her children and her village? Please designate your donation "Scholarship Fund".

- Almost 50% of all child deaths are associated with malnutrition—often because of lack of knowledge of the right kinds of food needed.
- Another major killer continues to be diarrheal dehydration caused by unclean drinking water and poor sanitation. A simple mixture of sugar, salt and water (oral rehydration) could save thousands of children every day.
- Research shows that teaching mothers and the girl child how to read is one of the best investments for children to survive and thrive.

Years ago, in a remote Latin American village, a visiting mission team member asked me how I could keep from getting depressed and overwhelmed at the poverty and daily suffering of the people. I answered then as I do now—what an opportunity to make a difference! To be able to share with an illiterate mother how to make the special rehydration drink to keep her children alive...to empower her to take care of her own...to teach her how to read, so that she can learn much more...

I cannot think of anything better to offer someone this Christmas than sharing the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, a life more abundant beginning here and now, a life full of hope for a better future for our children and for the children of the world—by sharing God's love in practical ways.

Christmas Shopping Online?

Don't forget to use www.goodshop.com to have a percentage of your purchase donated to SIFAT.

Searching online? Use www.goodsearch.com to conduct online searches. Choose SIFAT as your charity, and GoodSearch donates to SIFAT every time you search for something!

A Christmas Miracle for Constance

One of our 2008 Practicum students is in the midst of a Christmas miracle. Constance came to SIFAT not to find medical help, but to gain knowledge she could implement in her work with women and girls in Nigeria. As one of eight daughters in her traditional Nigerian family, she understands the lack of appreciation for the “girl-child”. She was not sent to high school, but through her desire to learn and belief that God would help her, she was able to attain a GED and eventually graduate as a nurse. This amazing lady has touched the entire SIFAT staff.

We were all surprised to find out Constance has only partial use of her right arm. Throughout the Practicum, we witnessed her excitement and interest in the hands-on classes. One of the first to volunteer, she jumped in the midst of any activity. While Tom was teaching a class on well drilling, Constance outlasted many of the male students when it was her turn to hold the pipe and guide the drill bit. Constance asked to take part since the women in her country are the ones who carry the water. She said they could drill the well. She showed everyone women could definitely handle this technology.

As Tom praised her for the strength and determination it takes to force the bit into the ground in a constant rhythm, he jokingly asked her to “show her muscles” and pointed to her left arm. Constance quietly said, “I don’t have a muscle in my right arm; only my left one works.” In disbelief, Tom learned that this lady – who works so tirelessly – could not raise her right arm without lifting it with her left.

Tom began to question her. Sept. 25, 2004, stands out in her memory because that day she woke up and could no longer move her arm. Her husband, a district superintendent in their church, took her to the best doctor he could find in Nigeria. This doctor told her he had never seen anything like it. He could not help her, but kept a copy of her X-ray to show to his students in the medical college. He told her the only way to get help would be to travel the U.S. She accepted her arm

as it was and continued her work as a nurse, midwife, Bible teacher and counselor for women and girls. In her Bible seminars, she often quotes Queen Esther, telling the women, “We are like Esther. Who knows but what we are come into the Kingdom of God for such a time as this!”

During devotions, Constance is seen dancing out her praise to God. Although she finally came to the U.S., she felt she received her scholarship to learn things to help her people. If she took the time to seek treatment, she would not be learning technologies for the women of Nigeria. With no money to stay after the training, Constance prayed. She promised God that she would not ask for help unless someone asked about

her arm. No one asked until the eighth week of Practicum. By then, we knew most of her story, including her family selling her car for her airfare and the sewing and knitting machines used in her ministry.

We took Constance to the doctor. After consultations, X-rays and an MRI, a diagnosis was easily confirmed. A cyst on her spine was causing her bones to deteriorate. Too little bone in her left arm was left to fix, but her other limbs could be saved by placing a shunt near the cyst. On the way to one of her doctor’s

visits, Constance could be heard quietly muttering her name over and over. When asked what she was saying, she said, “Constance Ikwe, a Nigerian girl, can you believe this?”

After her diagnosis, the next hurdle was the financial responsibility for surgery. Constance does not have medical insurance, and unfortunately, SIFAT could not afford the bills. God’s Christmas miracle continued when doctors continued to wave their fees; they helped us get the hospital to cover the operation costs. Constance, is getting a Christmas present early. The first week of December, we received word that she would have surgery on Dec. 8. In the spirit we have all come to love, Constance broke out into a joyful dance that continued the rest of the day. Constance is back at SIFAT, recovering from a successful surgery.



A Present for Quesimpuco



Attaching the decking was one of the last requirements to finish the bridge.



The bridge is approximately 400 feet long. Now, residents can safely cross the Chayanta River during the rainy season



The river is about 100 feet below the bridge. In just a few short weeks, it will fill the valley and make crossing dangerous.

In January 2008, the SIFAT Journal first announced our new bridge project in Bolivia designed to connect a number of villages on the other side of the Chayanta River with Quesimpuco. For more than 10 years, these isolated people, who live beyond any roads high in the Andes, have asked for help to get a bridge, so that they could cross to the church, the high school, the hospital/health center in Quesimpuco. Now, we can celebrate the successful completion of the bridge. As the SIFAT staff sat down to Thanksgiving lunch, engineer Bolivar Sanga called and said that the bridge is now in use!

The bridge was scheduled to be finished in October, but before the group of U.S. engineers left to help finish the last technical details, political problems broke out in Bolivia that prevented the team from going. Bolivar had never built such a bridge before, and he deeply wanted other engineers' advice on the last stage. Yet, prayer can reach where people cannot. God was with him; he directed the bridge to a successful conclusion in November.

Now, the neighboring village people can cross to Quesimpuco and hear the Word of God in the church, study in the school, bring their sick for care in the hospital—things they never had before. It only happened by the hand of God bringing together people with different abilities to build a life-changing bridge. We celebrate with hearts full of gratitude to God and to those who worked together with SIFAT. May you be blessed in knowing what a great present you have given to the Chayanta

Buddy, Can You Spare a Dime?

Most people today cannot imagine what the Crash of '29 was like, but we're beginning to get the idea. Many of us were raised by loving parents who lived through the big depression and tried to teach us to save and to be good stewards. Yet today, many of us find that our funds have diminished. The interest we planned to live on has dwindled to a frighteningly low amount.

Here at SIFAT, we have always tried to use our funding wherever in the world it helps the most. So when we speak of economic survival, we mean the survival of the people we write about, the people who struggle to find food and water, who work to help themselves.

This month, we want you to know that we are continuing in our mission. But this month the challenge is greater than ever. SIFAT itself is in need. We must have help now to be able to pay our staff and, unlike Wall Street, this includes our administrators.

So, when you consider your charitable funding, we hope you find your love for the work of SIFAT will prompt you to give and give all you can. Right now.

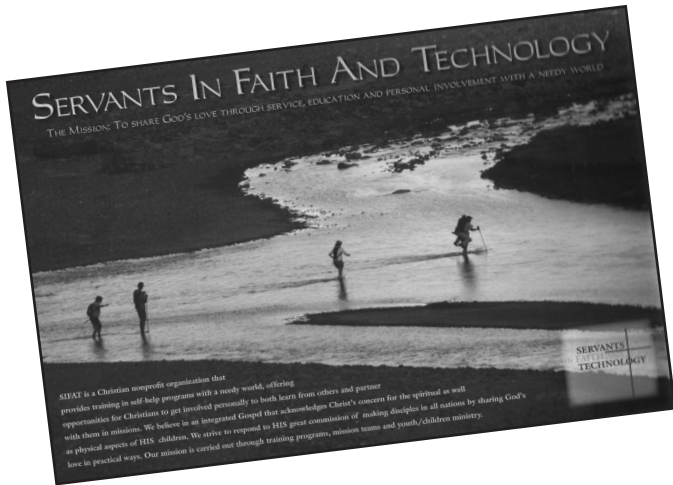
◆————◆
River Valley!

We would like to give a special thank you to Auburn UMC for raising funds for this project and Bridges to Prosperity for the enormous technical support!



SIFAT Journal

Christmas Gift Ideas from the Village Store



The SIFAT Village Store is offering Christmas items to help you celebrate the holidays and also support SIFAT and others with your purchase.

In 2009, SIFAT Ecuador will be working with Fundación Integrar, an organization that takes care of children with Down's Syndrome. The Village Store has 4"x6" **Christmas cards** with artwork inspired by the children. Each set has 10 cards with different holiday designs and costs \$8 plus shipping.

Our **2009 SIFAT calendar** is available for \$6 plus postage. It features beautiful photographs from our international projects, as well as inspiring verses and quotes. These make great Christmas presents, even for those unfamiliar with SIFAT's work.

Finally, **Village Store gift certificates** are available for youth coming to Learn & Serve, those that frequently visit or for the people on your list that you have no clue what to buy.

Contact Peggy (perdidopeg@aol.com) or Marie (lanierm@sifat.org) for more information or to purchase these items.



SIFAT's Christmas List!

SIFAT is blessed to have wonderful supporters whose generosity allows this organization to share God's love in practical ways, helping improve the physical and spiritual lives of thousands each year. Your monetary gifts give SIFAT the ability to continue our mission — from having comfortable offices and holding trainings in the U.S. to working with Practicum graduates in other countries and helping communities succeed. Without you, SIFAT would not exist.

You are a part of the SIFAT family, so we would like to share our Christmas list with you!

1. Prayer. For our staff, Practicum students and projects.
2. Take a SHARE in SIFAT. By pledging to give each month, our staff can more effectively budget and evaluate our projects.
3. Give a gift to SIFAT in honor or in memory of someone special. We send a gift acknowledgement for you.
4. Donate an item on our wish list. These can be new or used (but still in good condition). You can view our wish list on www.sifat.org/wish.html or e-mail Haley (lewish@sifat.org) for more information.



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!

Working Together to Build the Galilee Campus

When the land that became the SIFAT campus and international headquarters was purchased in 1982, there was one building...the brick house that is now a guest house. The roadway that goes past The Village Store and the Lodge was once a public road. The cable pedestrian bridge was once a concrete bridge on the county road.

At the time SIFAT came to occupy the land we called Galilee Farm, there was no administration building, cafeteria, Lodge, Village Store, Global Village, Education Building, SIFAT Sheraton, Strawbale House, Hi-Rise duplex or pond-side Duplex, International House, playground, RV campground, outdoor worship centers, pastures, fences, farm buildings and farm animals. The windmill, concrete water tank, gardens and landscaping were added.

The heavily eroded farm roads were improved and topped with gravel. We added numerous water wells and septic facilities. Nature trails were created, and various plants were brought in to demonstrate the native plants of the

different countries in the Global Village. The Quonset building became place for worship services or a theater. A workshop became necessary. All together the Galilee Campus is likely the most international facility in our area.

We are proud of the facilities and thankful for the funding to make them possible. And it is the programs and people who make SIFAT what it is, a unique window on the world. In a future column I will "remember" some of these programs and people.

SIFAT is a faith-based organization, made up of all the volunteers, of those who prayed for us, of those who gave of their resources, both past and present. God used every one who participated to make SIFAT what it is today.

And God will use us all, working together...staff, volunteers, people who pray, who give material things and money...to make SIFAT what it will be tomorrow.

Ukraine (Continued from page 1)

allowed her to be a translator.

Over the years, 25 students from the Phylippines have graduated from the Practicum. As they returned to their country, they worked together and established SIFAT Philippines as a legal nonprofit Christian agency. They conduct their own SIFAT practicums and have graduated several hundred students there using their own resources. This group of Filipinos have

a goal of reaching all of Asia for Christ. They have taken the SIFAT teaching to Hong Kong, Thailand, Myanmar, China, Tibet, Vietnam, Cambodia and now with Sarita, into Europe.

SIFAT graduates have been lights empowered by the Holy Spirit to dispel darkness and bring God's healing to suffering people in places where we cannot personally go. Our base is strong. Our infrastructure reaches suffering, grassroots people on five continents. Already, we have applicants for next year's training waiting for our

response. We cannot stop now. We must go forward and reap the harvest we have planted for Christ.

Like so many in our country, SIFAT is facing a financial crisis. While the demand for training is greater than ever, we do not have funds to continue this training without help. Thank you for your support in the past. **Will you help SIFAT continue to take the hope of Christ to our world one community at a time—in training that is reaching not only the Philippines and Ukraine, but other needy places in our world?**

Bridging Cultures with the Gift of Love

By Joyce Henderson
Short-term Mission Team Leader

I have so many memories of our three years with the wonderful brothers and sisters in Cayambe. My husband Phil and I first met Silvia when her daughter Daniela was a baby. Silvia reminded me of my daughters, since her baby was the same age as my granddaughters. During the course of several mission trips, I had opportunities to talk with her, to praise her mothering skills, to share a few minutes together every year.

In 2007, just before our trip, I wondered if she might have had a second baby. A few days later, we met three-month old Kelvin. Silvia and her husband Daniel asked Phil and me to be his godparents, and the pastor arranged a worship service for his baptism. I bought a white shawl and draped it across Silvia's shoulder and Kelvin, explaining that our custom included dressing the baby in white to symbolize his purity. We praised God who brought us together and now linked us forever.

This year, when we visited Cayambe, we brought them a small photo album filled with pictures we had taken of them during the past three years. Silvia invited us to her home, shyly opening up more to us. We sat on a well-loved couch in a mud-brick house so old no one knows its age. Kelvin toddled around giving us wary looks. How strange we must seem to him, giants with white skin and different clothing. Daniel gave us a letter written in Spanish and translated by what seemed to be an Internet translator. The Spanish version, even with my limited language ability was easier to read.

They explained that they are separated from their families in a culture that prizes staying close to family and depending on their support. They are lonely; just as we miss not living close to our grandchildren. We spoke about their church family and understanding the importance of being brothers and sisters in Christ. Then we prayed with them.

At that moment, my Spanish failed me. I prayed from my heart with words and tears that God understands, and Silvia and Daniel joined in murmured prayers and tears. We know that we might never see them again in this

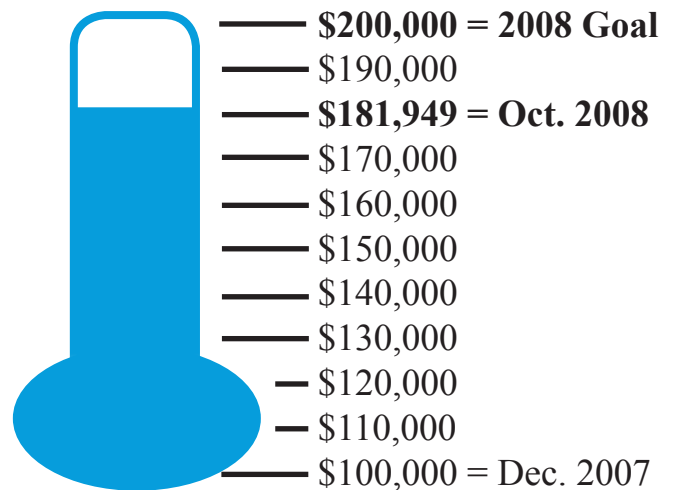


Joyce Henderson (far right) has led teams to Cayambe, Ecuador, for several years. Developing close relationships with families like her friend Silvia (left) taught Joyce what missions really means.

life, but we can trust them to God's care. Kelvin's picture graces our refrigerator door alongside those of our nine grandchildren. When he is old enough, we will sponsor him through Compassion International.

Missions is all about people creating one to one relationships cross-culturally because we are brothers and sisters in Christ. With God's love, a homecare nurse and an engineer from Florida are forever linked to a young family in Ecuador.

Sarah Trust Fund Update



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



**Southern
Institute
For
Appropriate
Technology**

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Bham, AL
Permit # 3029

**2944 County Road 113
Lineville, AL 36266**

**Phone: (256) 396-2015
Fax: (256) 396-2501
E-mail: info@sifat.org
www.sifat.org**

Return Service Requested

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

Each day as I drive past my mother's drive next door, I see a beautiful well filled out little magnolia tree. Two years ago, I accidentally backed the bush hog over the struggling little tree and cut it off at ground level. I thought I had killed Mom's tree. But this year, it came up from the roots, better formed and filled out, and actually prettier than the other one near it that never was cut down. That's how our God is! When bad things happen, if we put them in His hands, He will bring good out of them. Today that little tree is thriving!

SIFAT is a beautiful place to work. John Carr, our excellent gardener, and his helper Andy have made the gardens and grounds an inspiring place, even in the winter. But we have gone through flooding, droughts, insect plagues and wild animals eating the plants. Many times John has had to start over with a planting. And yet, he keeps focused on his goal... to produce healthy food for our visitors, students and staff, and to make the campus an inspiring place to study and work. When the bad times come, he keeps going from early till late, trusting that good will yet come out of the bad times.

As this year ends, we are all facing some of the hardest times of our lives. Each day there is more shocking, bad news. Many have fallen into deep depression as their finances disappear, and people wonder how they will be able to make it. But our God is the same as He has always been. Whenever bad things occur, God can turn them into good! Who would have thought that He would take something as fragile as a newborn babe and turn Him into the Savior of the world! Who could have thought that a cross... like a hangman's noose or an electric chair... would be used by the Creator of the Universe to bring Peace to our hearts and, someday, to our world. No matter how dark the days ahead, our God is in the business of bringing good things out of bad. We will come through these economic hard times and if we keep our eyes focused on that Babe in the Manger who became our Savior, we will come through it stronger and our spirits will be more beautiful. Like the magnolia tree, we will become better formed Christians, more lovely for the Kingdom of our Christ.

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.