

SIFAT Training Explores Opportunities in Costa Rica

SIFAT is now in Costa Rica! Our International Training Director, Kathy Bryson, moved to San Jose in late August to set up a base from which to operate in Central America and the Caribbean. She is networking with churches, universities, nonprofit and mission organizations to explore collaborative opportunities for training community leaders who work in marginalized areas in community development and appropriate technologies to meet basic human needs. Kathy is enjoying returning to the country of her birth to find new opportunities to reach many international community workers who cannot get a US visa to study at SIFAT in Lineville. It is easier for most of them to travel to Costa Rica. Additionally, we can develop year-round agricultural demonstration projects because of the tropical weather. She is currently exploring options for the best location to set up on-going trainings in Costa Rica. We will be working closely with local churches and universities in Costa Rica to coordinate new international training opportunities. Meanwhile, we will continue with our regular trainings at the SIFAT campus in Lineville, Ala.



(Left to right) Luci, Kathy and Evie Bryson in Costa Rica

SIFAT/ECHO Training Held in Honduras

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

In June, SIFAT invited ECHO to partner in working with the National Agricultural University of Honduras, where SIFAT has been working for six years. This event was an excellent opportunity to expand networks and share knowledge and training for students from small farm families in the most marginalized areas of Honduras.

During the week of training, we hosted three workshops with 98 students/staff, as well as an evening conference with more than 250 on technical and practical advice on saving

seeds. The students were so eager to participate that we had to limit attendance. The conference was packed with more than half standing for more than two hours. There was no need to emphasize the importance of saving one's own seeds. These people grew up on farms and often talk about the importance of food sovereignty, or not being dependent on outside assistance to be able to feed their families.

SIFAT is appreciative to ECHO for accepting the invitation to partner together in training and working to improve the lives of marginalized farm families in Honduras.

— See photo on page 8 —

May and August Field Trainings

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Each May and August, SIFAT leads a Field Study designed for university students and international community leaders working to combat world hunger and poverty. This training is also supported by the Sparkman Center for Global Health at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, which offers 3-6 hours of college credit to participants. This year, participants from 16 countries joined us for practical training in appropriate technologies to meet basic human needs coupled with community development processes. We all become students, as well as teachers, as those from very different backgrounds share their experiences in helping their own communities develop. The problems addressed in the training sessions are similar throughout the world — malnutrition, hunger, violence, injustice, poverty, environmental degradation and more. The solutions vary across cultures, but the principles they illustrate are the same, whether in Africa, Central America or Alabama.

SIFAT addresses problems in an integrated way, seeking to eradicate the reasons for poverty and looking for holistic answers from the physical, social, spiritual, and mental aspects of life. Hands-on, practical skills to make a difference include such things as purifying water, protecting and monitoring the community watershed, growing gardens in small spaces, making green leaf powder for micronutrient deficiencies, constructing fuel efficient stoves, harnessing solar energy, keeping healthy

where there is no doctor and forming microcredit groups.

Perhaps even more transformational were the moving personal stories that came out during the trainings. Barriers were broken down and replaced with bridges of compassion and understanding among different races, classes and cultures. This may have been the most profound between the Alabama participants in their sharing of their personal stories of race and prejudice.

During a class in community mapping, classmates shared their experiences growing up in the same city, but in very different neighborhoods, which allowed for soul searching and promoted a heart-to-heart conversation between Alabamians of different races. As all have opportunity to share their own struggles during classes, each student becomes a teacher. The participants learned to see each other as individuals, each with a valid story, each trying to make their part of the world a better place. Strangers turned into heroes, then friends, as everyone concentrated on how to help solve the pressing problems of poverty in their home communities. We learn from each other. This understanding and willingness to build bridges to those whom we do not especially like or understand

at first is the beginning of true lasting community development. Peace, love and other spiritual values begin to be evident as participants affirmed their commitment to work together for a better world.



Christian, Marisol, Joaquin and David are all graduates from the national agricultural university in Honduras, which SIFAT has been a partner in training with for several years. They arrived at SIFAT for our April training and stayed through the summer as international training interns, as well as helping around campus. (not pictured is Mario, who was at SIFAT until midsummer)

Matching Funds

Have you checked to see if your employer will match your donation to SIFAT? Many companies do!

Contact Diana, accounting@sifat.org, if documentation is needed for your company.

Shop for a Cause

You can raise money for SIFAT while shopping online. By using AmazonSmile and GoodShop, retailers donate a percentage of your total purchase to SIFAT.

www.goodshop.com/nonprofit/servants-in-faith-and-technology-sifat

www.smile.amazon.com/ch/63-0776048

Puerto Ricans Helping Puerto Ricans

Alicia "Cuqui" Lavergne
Puerto Rico Relief Project Volunteer

Editor's Note: SIFAT helps people help themselves, a process known as development, instead of simply giving handouts, which is relief. However, there are emergencies when relief is needed when people are suffering from natural disasters, war, etc. Because of generous donations from our supporters, SIFAT has distributed filters that have the capacity to purify a total of 1.75 billion gallons of clean water in Puerto Rico. A company in India, i-Solarlite, has donated 500 solar lamps. SIFAT only provided the cost of shipping. We received this report in May.

When SIFAT executive director Tom Corson was in Puerto Rico delivering water filters and teaching how to use them, he trained Cuqui Lavergne, a longtime SIFAT friend and supporter, and Angel Rodríguez, a community leader, as volunteers for this project.

Eight months after Hurricane Maria, there are still large areas on the east side of Puerto Rico that have no power and no water. This morning, Angel and I set out early to find the neighborhoods and homes that are most in need of clean water. We met with a community group, taught them how to use the Sawyer water filters SIFAT sent us and gave out 68 of them. We also took one to a house where a bedridden man lives.

We passed a church in a very poor area. There was a table full of clothes out front, and the pastor and some people were sitting there. The pastor saw us coming and raised his hand, so we stopped. I thought Angel knew him, and he was saying hello, but that was not the case. He told us the collected clothes were for the people in the area, because they shared with each other. We told him we had water filters. His eyes popped out. They had no clean water.

As we started to assemble 50 filters and buckets and show the people how to use them, a young man who seemed to be mentally challenged watched and wanted to try to assemble them. He was good with his hands and put the filters together well. He was so happy and kept saying, "See? I am good at this!" He felt useful, and the people there were telling him, "Yes, you are good at that. You are helping the community." So we served two purposes!

They shared the food they had with us. We had already eaten lunch, but I remembered Sarah Corson's lesson that we should receive from the people we want to help. In this way, we have a mutual friendship, not a paternalistic one. So we ate again!

This church told us about another church where the pastors helped a lot of people in the community, but they did not get much help and support for their work themselves. We found the church at the end of a road that went through a cemetery. The pastors live right next to the church. They were the nicest couple, happy and full of the Spirit. They live next to a creek, which they told us had been a blessing after the hurricane, because although unsafe to drink, the water was good to bathe, wash clothes and fish. They knew about the filters, because the Red Cross had given them 10 for the church, and they had given them to the families with the most children, but their other members needed filters, too. They do not have power, so we will go back to take the solar lamps to them when they arrive. They offered food again!!! She was cooking a sancocho, but thank God, it was not ready, as we were so full. I still ate a yogurt, and Angel drank coffee. We left 50 filters that they would give to their congregation the next day.

Angel will get more buckets from the Jesuit priest who is donating them, so we will have enough buckets for the rest of the filters SIFAT sent. Thank you for the opportunity to serve and receive so many blessings through these people that we met. It was such a joy to be able to help them get clean drinking water!



As the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria is marked on September 20, SIFAT thanks Cuqui Lavergne (left) and Angel Rodríguez for their leadership in our Puerto Rico relief efforts.

Get Past the Fear and Anxiety

Mark Allphin
Mt. Bethel Team Member

It took several years to heed the call, but I recently returned with the Mt. Bethel Missions team from Bolivia. As you might expect me to say, it was a fantastic experience. But, while fantastic, the operative word in that statement is really “experience.”

I like to think I am fairly grounded in reality. I am aware that I have lived in a bubble and, at the same time, aware of what life is like for many beyond that bubble. But I am finding there can be a stark difference in between what I perceive and the reality of hearing, seeing and touching. Actual relationships, even more so those born of Christian brotherhood, change perspective in ways perhaps only personal experience can.

In this case, I am not talking about a sad and sobering realization that life is hard for many, but an understanding that our God is so much bigger, deeper, and lovingly imaginative than I ever give Him credit for. A God that would intricately create such diversity, of both culture and landscape, speaks more to

me of a binding thread of love than it ever could of separation and difference.



Now, back to that comment about heeding the call. Somehow, I have developed some anxieties and fears surrounding things like germs, foods, and even bathrooms. I guess it is somehow rooted in a fear of getting sick. These fears are some of the reasons it took me so long to sign up for a trip I have heard God whispering to

me about for years.

Pastor Jared preached earlier this year from the book of Joshua about God’s invitation to the Israelites to step into the Jordan. My takeaway from that sermon was a reminder to not look beyond the river into the land of unknown, where fear and anxiety live, but instead simply step into the river in faith and watch what God does. I finally decided that morning that I was going to Bolivia.

Here is what I am discovering. Those fears and anxieties of mine only serve to blind me to the greater, fuller, promises of God. Rich experiences lie beyond the fears and my own shortcomings — experiences that deepen my trust and joy in the Lord. Experiences that draw people together in relationships built on the foundation of love that Christ Jesus offers us all, in every corner of His beautiful creation.

Maybe you have some fears and anxieties as well. Perhaps we can help each other to see beyond all that and claim the power and promises of a God who loves us more than we could ever love ourselves.

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Visit our blog (sifat.org/blog) and find us on Facebook (facebook.com/sifatbook) or Twitter (twitter.com/sifattweets) for updates between newsletters! Sign up for our e-newsletter on our website (www.sifat.org).

Are you moving? Don’t forget to send us your updated contact information. E-mail info@sifat.org with your new mailing address, phone number and e-mail address.



Mt. Bethel UMC team members join the community to begin building an outpost health clinic, where Dr. Ruth Noemi can see patients.

Beyond the Mission Team

Peggy Walker
International Teams Coordinator

Mission trips are more than one week of service. This realization was brought home as we attended team reunions for the Mt. Bethel and Guntersville teams. We watched the interactions and listened to the stories told by team members. The impact on each life was powerful and long lasting.

Men from Mt. Bethel UMC in Marietta, Ga., have been going to Quesimpuco with SIFAT for 10 years. This is an all-male team and 150 men from Mt Bethel have served in Bolivia during that time. They told me about a breakfast prayer group they started in a diner near the church. They wanted to continue the friendships and support they had established from sharing every night with this group of men in the high Andes where there were no cell phones and internet to distract. This small prayer group soon grew so large that they had to expand to Tuesday and Saturday breakfast meetings as they continued to form this bond of intimacy and understanding with other team members, so often hard to find among men.

I mentioned to some that our dear Rupertina, the “blanket lady in La Paz” and wife of late SIFAT graduate Filipe, had died recently. Their concern and grief was real. They told me about a waitress who had served them for years at their Monday meeting and had asked for their prayers. She was going through trying times and did not feel she really knew the Lord. These team members prayed for her and became so close that she invited them all to her small home for dinner one night during Christmas. The gift they gave her was a blanket from Rupertina. This waitress’s life has been changed because of the love of Jesus she witnessed from watching these men as they met, talked about their faith and experiences, and planned for what the church can do in their community.

Guntersville FUMC has taken a medical team to Ecuador for the past 17 years. One of the doctors on this team even went with us while SIFAT was working with the indigenous in Caliata. The bond they have formed through the years was beautiful to watch, and in that group, three generations were represented by two families, while in another, the parents and all children have gone with SIFAT. Everywhere I looked in this home, there were reminders of Ecuador, and each had a story. There were paintings, carved bowls, crosses, blankets on the sofa and handmade gifts given to us at the goodbye ceremonies. Every time they glance at any of these, they smile with memories of the wonderful people with whom they have worked as they served in many Ecuadorian communities. The impact of their yearly week-long mission trips is long lasting and affects their daily lives in profound ways as they interact with their church, their work, their community and their family.



This year's team from Guntersville FUMC was comprised of many families. This picture includes all of the generations of women who traveled together to serve the people of Calderson by providing a medical clinic. Two families included three generations serving together.

Thank You to Our 2018 Mission Teams

Bolivia

Mt. Bethel UMC Men (Marietta, Ga.) • Auburn University Engineers Without Borders

Ecuador

Auburn University McWhorter School of Building Science (two teams) • Auburn University School of Nursing* • University of West Georgia's Department of Communication Sciences and Professional Counseling in the College of Education • Clear Lake UMC (Clear Lake, Texas) • St. Luke UMC (Tupelo, Miss.) • St. Luke UMC (Pensacola, Fla.)* • Faith UMC (Pinson, Ala.) • Guntersville FUMC* • Aldersgate UMC (Montgomery) • St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Mountain Brook, Ala.) • Eufaula FUMC • Montgomery FUMC* • Alexander City Methodist Church • Izagora Congregational Methodist Church (Bonifay, Fla.)* • Centerpointe Church (Palm Bay, Fla.)* * medical team

Projects Support Graduates' Work

Art Stephenson

Board of Directors' Graduate Project Committee

Thank you for caring about people who are struggling to survive. They are living better lives through SIFAT graduates' projects. Because of generous support during the past two years (\$169,000+ donated!), SIFAT has funded 24 sustainable, community projects in eight countries (Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uganda and Zambia). All of these projects were created and carried out by SIFAT graduates who live in and are leaders in these communities. SIFAT now has graduates in more than 90 countries.

Background

"SIFAT feels called to train in community development and appropriate technology. However, we understand that, though such knowledge is powerful, it often is not enough. With knowledge alone one cannot grow food. There must be a piece of land, seed, at least a hoe, fertilizer, sunshine and water. So SIFAT developed the SIFAT Process to help graduates get started in putting their training into practice. This means we will receive, evaluate and when merited, approve and help promote our graduates' Short Term Project proposals."

— Sarah Corson, *Guidelines for Graduate Projects*

How it Works

SIFAT asks the graduates to find their own resources within their community or from funding agencies, if possible. If they still are lacking, graduates may write a project proposal and submit it in English to SIFAT in March or October. We offer to be partners in promoting graduates' projects in the SIFAT Journal, by word of mouth and on SIFAT's website. SIFAT is a training organization, not a foundation to fund projects. We cannot guarantee that we can raise the funds, because we are dependent on God for moving the hearts of those to whom we promote the project.

Since 2016, 24 Projects are Funded

— Coffee plants are maturing and will soon provide school fees for children to be able to go to school when previously they could not.

— Hand dug (1) and borehole (4) wells and a water filter project (1) provide clean, healthy water where before only contaminated water existed.

— Farmland was purchased and is producing life giving crops for people who, previously without land ownership, could not do so.

— Three classrooms without roofs now have roofs to shield students from sun and rain.

— At a school that only went through 8th grade, 9th and 10th grade classrooms have been built and teachers supported to enable young girls to complete a required 10th grade, a prerequisite to attend college.



Raphael shows corn being grown on land purchased by funds raised for his project, which helps displaced people fleeing the violence in northern Nigeria.

— Fruit tree and palm plantations are growing to provide income for villagers.

— Solar arrays are providing power for a computer classroom where power was not available.

— Seminars have been held to train teachers in health practices to avoid cholera, worms, diarrhea, etc., so they can educate students and parents for years to come.

— Farming techniques have been taught and tools provided to enable people to grow their own cash crops.

— Goat and pig raising techniques has been funded and taught to provide needed protein and income.

— Women have been taught skills to deal with abusive husbands where this issue is far too common.

— Micro-industry techniques have been taught to provide income for single women without any other means.

— A Gari processing mill has improved cassava production by a factor of 10, yielding more product/income for women when previous production caused severe hand injuries.

Pastor Obi's Well — Success Story

Graduate, Pastor Obi submitted a \$5,000 project proposal for Kumbu, one of the communities in which he works in Nigeria, to dig a well. We encourage you to watch the video he created. The joy members of the community express warms my heart, and I am sure it will warm your heart, as well. (<https://youtu.be/pFIr8DFvSMQ>)

Current projects needing funding can be found at sifat.org/international-missions/international-projects.

My Family Grows

Luci Bryson
Ecuador Intern

Editor's Note: High school junior Luci, daughter of SIFAT training director Kathy Bryson, spent six weeks this summer as an intern with SIFAT Ecuador. Visit www.sifat.org/blog to read her three journal entries.

Since I returned to Sweet Home Alabama, I have never felt more exhausted in my life, but I am warm and content. I immediately went to Brasher Springs Camp Meeting and a family reunion. A few days later, Jennessa, Evie and I visited Brianna in Chicago. My sisters and I had not been together in seven months, so we enjoyed spending time together before Jennessa returned to school in Boston, and Evie and I moved to Costa Rica with Mom. If I learned only one thing this summer, it is how much of an importance family is. But, family is a broad term.

Webster's Dictionary defines family as, "A person or people related to one and so to be treated with a special loyalty or intimacy." I have family in Alabama, but I now have family in Ecuador. I will always remember how the St. Luke's Episcopal youth brought seeds for a VBS lesson. They taught how it was necessary to water and care for the radishes. After the team left, the seeds started to sprout and bloom, and although the team members were not there to enjoy the outcome, they planted something far greater in these children's hearts — knowing that someone cared and believed in them. I saw my fellow Alabamians crying and hugging the necks of these kids, exclaiming of what an impact they felt from their time together. What they should also realize is how much of an impact they left in Ecuador with effects that will last a lifetime.

My last week was spent with the Montgomery FUMC medical team. As I translated for a doctor, I found myself shocked at the improvement in my Spanish versus when I first arrived. I am constantly amazed at the power of language. It is something that is rewarding — uniting two groups of people together.

How eye-opening it was for me to see such a variety of patients we served. From a two-day old baby to Quichuan families who traveled by foot to receive medical care — many seeing a doctor for the first time. The team made each patient

feel welcomed and supported with no judgement, just God's love that carried on past our "9 to 4" schedule each day.

There were young mothers around my same age who I got close to during my time in Ecuador. I would get asked countless times: "How many kids do you have?" That question broke my heart.

It was inspiring to me to see teenagers on our teams give Bible lessons to the after-school program kids with speeches written in Spanish. This was definitely out of the comfort zones of these youth, but it was their will to bring about God's love and let these kids — many in bad home environments — know that there was someone who cared about them. I started to have a strong understanding on why many of the kids were clingy and starved for attention.

On my last day in Aida Leon, a group of girls tackled me to the ground with the tightest hug exclaiming how much they were going to miss me. And oh, how I miss them! I became a member of the church — of their family. Aida Leon has a mission, and that is serving God's love in practical ways, both physically and spiritually.

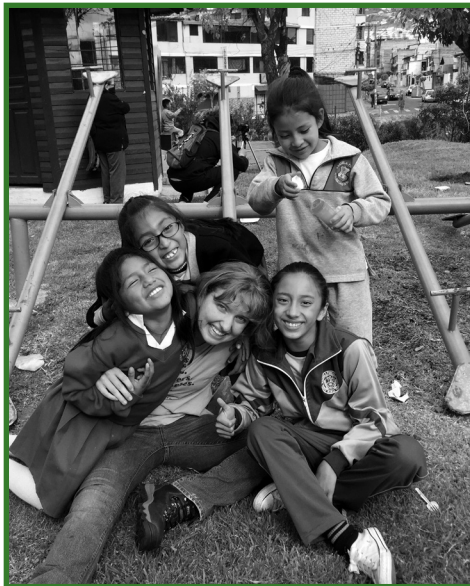
Ecuador has left a mark on my heart. I feel a new level of understanding in poverty because of my experience. I hate the word "mission trip" because this work is a life's mission.

Dear God,

I thank you for opening my eyes and giving me the opportunity to be blessed by your presence in every smile, every sob-filled hug, every laugh and joyful fellowship of thanksgiving. I pray for the future SIFAT groups coming to work at Aida Leon; give them the strength and courage to share your love to those less fortunate. Thank you for placing such a wonderful support group in my life that have paved the way for this experience to be possible for me. Continue to work in the lives of the children in Aida Leon with this new after-school care center.

Bless all of the hands that have come together to build it and bring forth their time and offerings for your glory.

In your name I pray, amen.



Donate your “Change”

www.sifat.org/change

Take a SHARE in SIFAT

Be part of SIFAT all year! Our monthly commitments — the SHARE program — help us budget throughout the year. Sign up at www.sifat.org/donate or contact Marie Lanier, lanierm@sifat.org, for more information.

Planning for SIFAT’s Future

Did you know that you can donate stocks or leave provisions for SIFAT in your will? Contact executive director Tom Corson, corsont@sifat.org, for more information.

Give Online

www.sifat.org/donate

SIFAT/ECHO Training in Honduras



In June, training director Kathy Bryson (far right) traveled with ECHO staff (three on left) to hold a training at the National Agricultural University of Honduras. Here, they meet with local seed experts. Read the full article on page 1.

Work Teams

Angie Stryker
Campus Director

Two to three times each year, some of the staff of Shocco Springs Conference Center in nearby Talladega, Ala., take three days from their campus jobs to come to serve SIFAT — another campus. We are blown away every time we get the call. They tell us, “We are ready to come back, just tell us when and what projects we can do!”

They always bring incredible dedication to the work, joyful service and fun spirits with them. In the past year, they have: rebuilt a row of houses in our Urban Slum, weeded flower beds at the campus director’s house, put down weed cover in the upcoming fruit forest, relocated a huge pile of donated mulch to various places, lined flower beds with pavers and cleaned out overgrown bamboo. They even slept in our Global Village in hammocks while doing these tasks. We are so grateful for their serving hearts.

They return to serve in October. Will you? We utilize work teams throughout the year to offset our labor costs for maintenance projects and large construction projects. Join us this fall with your church or staff! Contact me by e-mail strykera@sifat.org or by calling the SIFAT office for more information.



Work teams are a valuable resource for our campus. Shocco Springs in nearby Talladega brings some of its staff to serve SIFAT each year. Would your civic organization or church group be interested in helping on our campus in Alabama? Contact Angie, strykera@sifat.org, for a list of projects for skilled or unskilled volunteers.

Tube Steel House Walls are Built

Kishore Karnik
Appropriate Technology Intern

Work on the Tube Steel House, started by Trent Huffines and Matt Bell as a project for their master's degrees from Auburn University's McWhorter School of Building Science, is continuing with new personnel. This summer, Danson Smith, Andrew Freeman and I developed a plan to complete the Tube Steel House and make it liveable using various appropriate technology methods. Danson is a missionary who has lived in Haiti for four months and has extensive experience in construction with tiny homes and greenhouses. Andrew is a civil engineering student at Georgia Tech who has done projects with appropriate technology cooking fuel. I finished my master's degree in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech, focusing on building energy, and have experience with Engineers Without Borders and with college ministry.

Our plan will take the house from the tube steel frame and studs and transform it into a complete living space using appropriate technology. Each wall will use a different appropriate technology technique. The walls will use various waste/recyclable materials, such as plastic water bottles, glass bottles and bamboo, for insulation and will use stucco, appropriate technology bricks, concrete and mud (similar to wattle and daub) for the walls. For water, the house will have a rainwater catchment roof system that will not only provide water for a kitchen and bathroom in the house, but will also provide water for an irrigation system for the Plastic Bottle Greenhouse our international interns built next door. The kitchen will have a rocket stove grill, a sink and a bathroom with an appropriate technology shower and toilet system. Finally to make the house fully usable, there will also be furniture (a bed, couches, tables, etc.) built out of bamboo.

Developing communities in part involves helping the community live in reliable, sturdy and sound homes. It is also important to make sure that these structures are sustainable,



not only using resources that the community has, but also turning the community's waste into usable resources, which helps the community be good stewards of what they have. "With this project, we are showing how people around the world can use what is usually seen as waste to build structurally sound, well insulated housing," Danson said. With the building methods that are being used, waste disposal and home construction are working together in a way that communities around the world can replicate.

During the past three months, the focus of the project has been to make a sound plan and start insulating the walls. On July 27th, the first milestone of the project was reached — one wall was fully insulated with approximately 1,600 plastic water bottles! The next project milestones are insulating the other three walls with plastic bottles, glass bottles and bamboo, then stuccoing and making bricks for the walls. Danson and Kishore are continuing the work on this project (Andrew has returned to Georgia Tech to continue his studies) and continuing to teach these building methods to work groups, Learn & Serve students, international friends, members of the community and others.

Save the Date for #GivingTuesday 2018

As you celebrate Thanksgiving and shop the Black Friday deals and Cyber Monday steals, don't forget about the international day of giving on #GivingTuesday! We need supporters to create our annual matching fund for this record-breaking day. To become part of this fund, contact Marie, lanierm@sifat.org.

Mark your calendars for #GivingTuesday 2018 — **November 27, 2018**. Details will follow, so make sure to sign up for our e-newsletter (www.sifat.org) and follow SIFAT on Facebook (facebook.com/sifatbook) and Twitter ([@SIFATtweets](https://twitter.com/SIFATtweets)).

From Camper to Counselor

Robby Pearson
Learn & Serve Counselor

Identity. We all have something with which we identify — something that defines who we are as a person, and a lot of the time, the way that people see us. Much of my identity — the ways that I have seen myself grow over the years into the person I am today — comes from my experiences with SIFAT.

April 2012 was the first time I attended church. The father of a close friend of mine was the high school pastor of a local church, and he invited me to attend their youth group. I accepted the invitation and during the next few months, there were multiple mentions of a place called SIFAT. Two days before they left to attend the Learn & Serve (L&S) Summer Experience, I was invited to fill an open spot they had. I accepted, not knowing it would be one of the most incredible experiences I would have.

SIFAT teaches about the world, but at the same time, it teaches much more than that. The idea behind SIFAT was that we can help people through God

and through the gospel, but we can also help them through our actions. Specifically, we can share God's love in practical ways that foster an environment through which they know that God loves them. This helps others use the things around them to improve their quality of life, a concept that SIFAT calls appropriate technology.



After participating in L&S three times as a high school student and having just

completed my third summer working on the L&S staff, I have had my eyes opened to the way that people live around the world. I have learned that many people will never have an opportunity to leave our country and learn about the world, but SIFAT is bridging that gap through the work that it does. I have learned that if I can leave the country to be with our brothers and sisters around the world, then I should. However, if I am unable to do so, I can think globally and act locally in the ways that I spend my time and associate myself with my community. I have learned that God moves outside of church, sometimes in the most unexpected of ways and in the most unexpected of places, but that he is always there and that we can use his love and grace to affect anyone and everyone around us and even people that are not around us.

We all have an identity, and much of the way that I see myself and the world around me comes from the things that SIFAT has taught me. What better way is there to learn about the world than to experience the world so close to home?

Open Spaces Sacred Places™ Grant



Marie Lanier
Promotions & Marketing Coordinator

Despite a summer afternoon rainstorm, the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama and SIFAT held a groundbreaking ceremony for Sarah's Garden and Ken's Path on July 13, 2018. SIFAT was recently awarded a \$10,000 Open Spaces Sacred Places™ Grant through the foundation. Open Spaces Sacred Places are spaces intended for the encouragement of community well-being and resilience of mind/body/spirit of both individuals and communities.

Construction began on August 21, and the first order of bricks arrived on September 19. Order your brick today - see next page for details on how to order!

More Than Worth the Nine-hour Drive

Sadie Reed
Williams Memorial UMC

Campus Director's Note: The reviews are in! 2018 was another amazing summer experience. Longtime participant Naomi Richardson says, "Every aspect was top notch. I think this was the best summer yet." We hope you enjoy reading this article by one of our youth leaders who participated this summer.

Russell and I travel nine hours to take our youth to SIFAT, so I thought I would

explain why we continue to go back year after year. I have always had a love for SIFAT since I attended Learn & Serve the summer after my freshman year of high school. SIFAT is so different than any camp we take our youth to because they change lives; they change the lives of camp participants, people in their community, and people around the world. The Learn & Serve program is run by college-aged people. I do not know how SIFAT does it, but every year they are able to find the most kind, loving, caring and compassionate individuals, which is why our youth talk year round about the counselors they meet. One of my favorite parts of SIFAT is probably the hardest part of the week, the poverty simulations. The Global Village consists of houses built like those around the world. Students are divided into families and spend the night in one of these countries living as the people would: they cook their own food, build their own fires, and grow closer together. SIFAT also has an Urban



Slum. I love that our students get to experience what it would be like to live in these conditions. Much like the Global Village, students spend the day finding work to raise money for shelter and food for their family. The purpose of these simulations is not to make our youth feel guilty, but to give them a new perspective on the way we live versus how others are living around the world.

As the week continues, students are given multiple opportunities to learn about appropriate technology, which is using resources around you to meet basic human needs. Graduates of SIFAT training take this appropriate technology throughout the world, so while they are literally saving lives, they are also spreading the love of Christ! My love for SIFAT grows each time we return. This summer was our third year to attend with our youth group, and we are already planning for next summer. This is a trip I highly recommend youth attending. They are able to grow friendships to a deeper level, grow in their faith, and receive a true understanding of poverty and brainstorm ways that they can make a difference.

L&S 2019 Dates

Join us for L&S 2019 *Bloom* for \$299 per person — discounts are available for registering by Oct 1. To reserve spots for groups or individuals, e-mail learnandserve@sifat.org.

Session 1	June 2 - June 7	Session 5	July 7 - July 12
Session 2	June 9 - June 14	Session 6	July 14 - July 19
Session 3	June 16 - June 21	Session 7	July 21 - July 25
Session 4	June 23 - June 28		

Buy a Brick for SIFAT's Commemorative Garden

Plans are being made to install our commemorative garden! Two sizes of bricks are available and can be personalized in honor or memory of your favorite people.

Don't miss having your brick in our garden! Order online at www.bricksrus.com/order/sifat or contact Marie by email, lanierm@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

This morning, I was looking at photos from 2001 that Benjo pulled out of one of my photo albums. We were in Chayanta, Bolivia, where they worshipped a stone idol. We were with Covenant Life, out of Alexandria, Ala., hiking on narrow trails over the mountains, sharing the Jesus film. The entire town came out to see the story of Jesus, and many came to Christ that night. At that time, we had to walk a good part of a day to get to Chayanta. We continued walking for a week, stopping each night in a different village to show the film. The Bolivian Bible Society was with us and provided Bibles to those who came to Christ. Benjo had been teaching them how to read.

This year, we visited the town again with Mt. Bethel UMC and later with Auburn Engineers Without Borders. Fast forward to present day, they have a clean water system Benjo helped them build. We have started work on a medical center for our own Dr. Ruth Noemi and her husband, Pastor William, to be able to use in serving these same people through medicine, public health and spiritual formation. Chayanta now has a permanent church and a local pastor in the town sharing the gospel.

Dr. Ruth and Pastor William visit each month to heal and share with the townspeople.

They are joined by our dentist, Rebecca Churata, SIFAT graduate Pastor Filipe and Rupertina's daughter. She completed high school and dental school thanks to SIFAT supporters. She has committed to return to the Chayanta Valley to use her skills to give back to the people of Bolivia. And now there is even a new road that allows us to drive to the village in about 30 minutes from Quesimpuco.

So, we have old pictures of showing the Jesus film in 2001 and new pictures of our teams building the medical building this year (see page 4). What a difference God has made in the lives of these people during 18 years! As I looked at the pictures with Benjo, we are inspired to see how far God has led us! Thank you for financially supporting SIFAT and thank you to those of you that go and are part of sharing Christ to this impoverished region of Bolivia. You are part of the solution!