



# SIFAT JOURNAL

SHARING GOD'S LOVE IN PRACTICAL WAYS

WINTER 2020

## A Model Sustainable Farm

Kathy Bryson  
International Training Director

Immigration is a hot topic in our country today. Few people are neutral on the topic—usually siding in terms of political affiliations with political solutions. While this debate drags on in the media, SIFAT is working with local partners in Central America to promote local solutions, so people have options to invest locally with hope for the future of their families.

Food insecurity and the failure of the family farm is a core problem throughout rural Central America. Drought followed by floods, loss of topsoil, and now inappropriate agricultural techniques contribute to loss of hope for a future locally. Many have migrated to over-burdened cities in search of work. Desperation and few opportunities have contributed to crime and the incessant migration trek further north, which splits up families and contributes to social instability at home.

SIFAT is addressing these challenges at their roots. Thanks to your support and the help of interns from the National Agriculture University of Honduras (UNA), we have begun 20 agricultural demonstration projects at our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica at the UMC Rural Camp.

In 2019, we had almost 300 Central American participants in our trainings there from Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica. They came to learn and to share practical solutions for hunger and poverty—things that people can reproduce and maintain in their own communities with their own local resources—everything from preventing

soil erosion, making low cost organic fertilizers and family gardening techniques to microenterprises, preventing child malnutrition and food preservation. Besides teaching practical skills and technologies, there is a harder to measure—but very vital aspect of promoting HOPE for a new future, for solutions to oppressive poverty. This has been most gratifying to witness and promote!

Our next step is to develop a two-acre Model Sustainable Farm,

so people see how a farm family can live well, providing nutritious food for the family while having aspects of income-generation for livelihood. We are working with community members and agriculture university partners from UNA (Honduras), CITEED-UNED (Costa Rica) and UNA (Nicaragua) to help design this demonstration farm, so it can be a realistic model to replicate in Central America. Plans are to incorporate small animals, fish, honeybees, a cow and horse in one area with another area for growing food staples, vegetables and fruits. Plans include an integrated system for animal food,

wood and continual reforestation. Appropriate technologies for rain catchment, irrigation and water pumping will be added. A special shed will be the center for organic fertilizers, organic pesticides and compost area. Another will show grain storage designed to prevent loss from pests and weather.

A demonstration family farmhouse will incorporate appropriate technology that promotes good health and environmental sustainability, such as a fuel-efficient stove, bio-sand water filter, solar energy, food preservation technologies

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# A New Leg for Fanny!

Marie Lanier  
Promotions & Marketing Coordinator

Linda Watson, a medical mission team member from St. Luke UMC in Pensacola, Fla., met an inspiring woman on one of her first trips to Ecuador. She was amazed at the tenacity this woman had as she faced a physical struggle — one of her leg's is partially amputated. Linda says that her heart was filled with tenderness and joy as she watched this woman not be held back as she cares for not only her own children, but often her extended family, too.

Many of our team members know Fanny from SIFAT project sites in Villaflores, Machachi and Cutuglahua. In her 30s, Fanny is a single mom to two sons, Jordy (10) and Matias (5). Her daily life is full of struggles many of us can understand, such as paying bills on a tight budget, loneliness and raising children alone. Linda always tried to spend a little extra time with Fanny, giving her love and encouragement. She felt God placing Fanny's situation on her heart and wanted to see what the options might be to help her.

When Linda was on last year's team, she was assisting Dr. John Baehr. She saw Fanny in the waiting area and asked Dr. Roberto Contreras, SIFAT Ecuador director, if Dr. Baehr could see Fanny. After the exam, Dr. Baehr wanted to help Fanny, too. They knew she would need to see specialists to determine if a prosthetic leg was a possibility, but the process could begin!

Pastor Rafael and his wife Anita, a SIFAT graduate, met Fanny six years ago. They learned that she was born with a problem with her right leg. Because of a lack of preventive care and rehab, Fanny's leg did not grow correctly. She faced rejection and discrimination during her young life, even from her own family who forced her to live with her grandmother. When she was 17, Fanny sought medical intervention, but it was too late. Because of more health complications, Fanny's leg was amputated from the knee down when she was 18. As an adult, her life continued to be an uphill battle as people took advantage of her circumstances.

Through the Villaflores church and its outreaches, Fanny found acceptance and encouragement. She was baptized in March 2019 and has opened her home as a place to meet for the church being planted in her neighborhood, Cutuglahua.

Each team that meets Fanny watches her use a crutch to climb flights of stairs multiple times as she brings people to the medical clinics. She is a leader in her church and does not let her physical limitations stop her helping others.

We learned that, at one time, Fanny did have a prosthetic leg, but it became uncomfortable and got to the point where she

could no longer use it. We also found out that for Fanny, the cost for fitting a new prosthesis, physical therapy and follow-up doctor visits would cost almost \$7,000. She could never afford this!

Fanny does not have a stable job. She sells items on the streets and at school entrances, such as toilet paper, detergent, toothpaste and soap. She cannot manage her crutches, these goods and the bus by herself, so Jordy helps her load her merchandise and set up each morning. He has to leave in the middle of the day to go to school. But, Fanny has not been stopped by adversity. She continues to fight for her family, and as Pastor Rafael and Anita shared, she has more hope because God is her comfort and strength.



*SIFAT Ecuador Director Dr. Roberto Contreras, Fanny, mission team member Linda Watson with some of the children in Fanny's extended family*

Team leaders Greg Davis and Dr. John Baehr agreed with Linda — Fanny needs a new leg! Team members from the St. Luke team are starting to raise funds to make this dream a reality. Dr. Roberto has coordinated the preliminary appointments to make sure Fanny is a candidate, and she is!

## Join a SIFAT Team to Ecuador

We still need more teams to Ecuador in 2020! Both construction and medical teams can sign up! Are you interested in leading a team from your church or joining an existing team? Learn more at [www.sifat.org/international-missions/ecuador](http://www.sifat.org/international-missions/ecuador).

# Saving Lives with Mammograms

Marie Lanier

Promotions & Marketing Coordinator

For almost two decades, Dr. Jay Crittenden, a radiologist, and his wife Leta, a healthcare professional, have been leading medical mission teams from St. Luke UMC in Pensacola, Fla., to serve with SIFAT in Ecuador. Their teams have primarily focused on providing checkups for the children in the daycare and after-school programs in our SIFAT Ecuador graduates' projects. During exams, Dr. Jay often talked to the mothers that were with their children. Because of his field of expertise, he would ask them if they had gotten a mammogram. Most would tell him no, because mammograms were too expensive.

Dr. Jay always thought about these women and their lack of access to a life-saving diagnostic tool. During one mission trip, he was sitting on the SIFAT bus, exhausted from a long day in the makeshift clinic in Villaflora. As he waited for the rest of the team to finish with the last patients, he was looking around the neighborhood. Right across the narrow street from the bus, there was a sign - Digital Mammography! Dr. Jay took this literal sign as a way to help

the women in this community.

The next day, Dr. Roberto Contreras, SIFAT Ecuador's director, went with Dr. Jay to talk to the radiologist in the imaging center. Dr. Emilio Ramirez was very receptive and excited that he could help women who could not afford mammograms to get them when needed. But, there was a hurdle — the imaging center's manager had to agree with an arrangement and negotiate the cost. After more talking and visits, a discounted rate of \$25 per mammogram was arranged.

"Sometimes, the line between our efforts and God's grace becomes a little blurry and hard to understand." Dr. Jay shared. "On the day we accomplished the cooperation of the mammogram radiologist and the clinic administrator to bring free breast cancer screening to the women in Villaflora, the line was sharply defined. This was the Lord's work!"

Even though the mammograms only cost \$25, it is still prohibitive for most women seen by our teams, so a fund was established through SIFAT and strongly supported by St. Luke UMC. This fund was named in honor of Leta Crittenden, a 10-year breast cancer survivor. These



*Above: Dr. Jay Crittenden reads a scan using light from the window in Villaflora, Quito, Ecuador. Dr. Jay began a fund to provide free mammograms for women in this community after seeing the need, which is especially important to him as a radiologist and in support of his wife Leta, a breast cancer survivor.*

screening mammograms are provided at no cost to the women referred by SIFAT medical teams.

In 2017 and 2018, a total of 74 mammograms and 26 echoes were performed. Of those, 40 women received check-ups and follow up by an Ecuadorian doctor. The others were referred to the health center closest to their homes. After the team's 2019 clinic, another 40 women were waiting to get their mammograms.

Dr. Jay and the team would like to expand the mammogram program, and Dr. Jay is diligently working to find foundations with grants, so that even more women in SIFAT projects benefit!

If you are interested in being part of the mammogram project or have information about applicable grants, contact [internationalteams@sifat.org](mailto:internationalteams@sifat.org).



*Free mammogram team (left to right) Dr. John Baehr, Dr. Roberto Contreras, Dr. Jay Crittenden, Dr. Emilio Ramirez, Clinic Administrator, breast cancer survivor Leta Crittenden.*



# A Renewed Motivation in Bolivia

Sarah Corson  
SIFAT Co-founder

Benjo Paredes and Ken Corson started CENATEC, a Christian nonprofit, more than 42 years ago. He has led the way to take the Gospel to thousands of Bolivians, taught seminars, helped 85 villages get clean water and helped thousands of people have more food to eat. But, the years have taken their toll.

Benjo is 80 years old now. His son Isaac had taken Benjo's place as director of CENATEC, because Benjo was getting older and had back trouble. Some days, he could hardly walk. Dimmed eyesight. Joints swollen with arthritis. His whole body was just worn out from more than 40 years traveling a 500-mile circuit over the rugged Andes Mountains. He had given most of his life to help his people. He could do no more.

Last year, Isaac died in an accident on one of those isolated Andean roads. What would happen to CENATEC? There was no one to lead it into the future. Their board of directors met and decided they would have to close the organization.

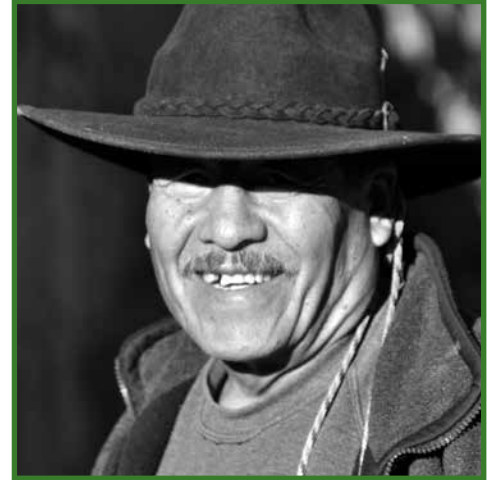
In January, Benjo was in the city to see a doctor. He went to church with Huber Ramos, who had been Isaac's assistant at

CENATEC. The minister preached on Moses, who was 80 years old when God called him to lead the Israelites out of slavery. During the service, a church leader rose and pointed to Benjo. "Our visitor is 80 years old," he said. "The same age Moses was when he received God's call! Brother Benjo, God is calling you too! He has work for you to do!" Benjo heard these words.

Benjo is revived! He has spent this month praying and talking to others who have helped in the past. A number of them have joined him, including Huber and Angel Roman, a SIFAT graduate who works with our teams. They have a plan to make CENATEC self-supporting, so that they can continue the work for the Kingdom of God started 42 years ago.

Benjo calls us weekly, telling of the progress they have made. He is so excited at how God is helping them and has given him new strength for the task. He talks for an hour, sometimes two. Each time, he tells us again in vivid detail about the experience in the church when God called him back to work in CENATEC like he called Moses.

"Things have fallen in place so that we can work with success," he tells us. "We didn't have water to plant during the dry season before, but now Auburn's



Engineers without Borders have brought irrigation systems into the area around Quesimpuco. Not only can we plant more food, but we can start a flower project, which will give food to the bees. That means we can expand the honey project, as well as sell flowers to make a profit to maintain CENATEC. The people in Quesimpuco are excited and want to join us in keeping CENATEC alive! We also want to start a guinea pig project for more food and profits. And, we have three more projects for the tropics in the Alto Beni. I am going to write up the projects as grant proposals. If we get seed money to start them, we can produce enough to keep CENATEC serving some of the most needy people in the world. We can make a big difference in hundreds of people's lives!"

We are amazed at the change in Benjo's health and strength. When we believe we can do something, it goes a long way to helping us do it. Jesus said that if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can move mountains. Even Benjamin Franklin said, "You can do what you think you can. If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you can't." We welcome your prayers for Benjo's continued health and for CENATEC to be used of God for His purposes.



## Helping the Bahamas

SIFAT donated 50 water filters to The Bridge Christian Center to assist residents of the Bahamas affected by Hurricane Dorian. They are working with Dr. Dave Burrows and Bahamas Faith Ministries in the ongoing recovery efforts. Fred Smith, pastor of The Bridge Christian Center, is pictured receiving the filters.

# Supporting the Paredes

After Isaac Paredes unexpected death last year, many former team members and long-time supporters wanted to honor his legacy and help his family. One of the most important things to Isaac was his children and their education, so we accepted donations from you to help pay their school tuition, as the Paredes family began the next chapter of their lives without Isaac. The new school year began in early February, and because of your gifts, they are able to attend a wonderful school in La Paz.



## Take a SHARE in SIFAT!

Be part of SIFAT all year! Our monthly commitments — the SHARE program — help us budget effectively. Sign up at [www.sifat.org/donate](http://www.sifat.org/donate) or contact Marie Lanier, [lanierm@sifat.org](mailto:lanierm@sifat.org).

## Plan 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, [corson@sifat.org](mailto:corson@sifat.org), for more information.

## International Training

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and a model latrine. A family would live and work the demonstration farm, open to the public and for use as a premier training location to show concretely what is possible using ingenuity and local resources to have a sustainable family farm in Central America. We are drawing from best practices and experiences of people in Central America and are incorporating additional appropriate technologies from around the world to bring this all together visibly in one place.

We offer you an opportunity to invest in proven long-term solutions that can make a big difference in the lives of many who are today looking for hope. We want to encourage them to look in their own back yard to see the possibilities within their reach for sustainable living.

We are also in the preliminary planning stages for future mission teams to be part of this project and others at the training center in Costa Rica. If you would like to know more about this project or future team opportunities, please contact [info@sifat.org](mailto:info@sifat.org).

# Agape Update

Peggy Walker  
International Team Coordinator

*Editor's Note: In Uganda, SIFAT supporters helped SIFAT graduate William Nsubuga build an orphanage, Christian high school and farm—Agape. As the Agape students graduated, donors continued paying for their education at technical schools and universities through a scholarship fund to help these young adults have a bright future.*

Our Agape students and graduates in Uganda wanted to give something back to the village in which the school and orphanage is located. They decided to have a one-day health fair and clinic for the community. Anothiat, one of our graduates who became a nurse, and Jemimah, who is currently in nursing school, led the effort with several others who have studied in the field of healthcare. They raised funds and provided a small amount of medicine to those in need and were able to provide care to more than 200 people. We are so proud of these young adults who came to Agape from such sad circumstances. Not only are they now able to provide for themselves after leaving Agape, they also return often to give encouragement to the younger students who still live in the orphanage, showing them what their lives can be if they graduate and go on to college or trade school. Our scholarship fund has been depleted, and we can only send money for the children whose sponsors decide to continue their support through trade school or university. If you would like to help these young people continue their path to a better life, designate your donation *Agape Scholarship Fund*.



*Anothiat and Jemimah (right) joined other Agape graduates to provide a one-day health fair for the community in Mukono, Uganda.*

# Ministering in a Refugee Camp

Sarah Corson  
SIFAT Co-founder

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too."*

2 Cor. 1:3-5



Bullen, SIFAT's only graduate from South Sudan, recently sent a letter to SIFAT that began with this Bible verse. He knows from the core of his being what affliction means, and just as real to him is the God of all comfort.

His people have been exploited and enslaved for centuries by the Arab Northern Sudanese fighting for ivory, slaves and later, oil, against the African Southern Sudanese. Finally, South Sudan gained its freedom and joined the United Nations as the world's 193rd nation in 2011. But in less than a year, terrible atrocities were started again, and the population in this war-torn, impoverished nation is suffering enslavement, savage acts of torture and destruction of life and property.

A refugee in the U.S. for eight years, Bullen was able to finish his schooling to be a minister with the help of American Christians. Then, he came to study with us at SIFAT. He is such a beautiful, kind, compassionate person, one could hardly believe what he has had to overcome during his growing up years. What a witness to the saving power of Christ! He could have stayed here in the U.S., but in his own words, he said, "During my time in the States, I knew God wanted me to return to share the love of Christ with my people in South Sudan. What I didn't know was that I would be in another country, Uganda, and God would bring over a million of them here to refugee camps." He adds, "A million refugees is not just a number. Friends, these are PEOPLE and in need of the Gospel! Each one has a story to tell, how they were separated from their children, or their spouse by the village raids, and some don't know what happened to the rest of their family. Others saw their family members tortured and killed." Every one of these people KNOW what affliction is. And more and more are finding comfort in Christ through Bullen's work.

Bullen started Bible studies in the refugee camp three years ago. We received a letter from him with a picture of the congregation at the dedication service for the church God helped him start at Ombechi Refugee Camp. SIFAT became partners with Bullen through our International Graduates' Projects, which helps raise funds for approved projects. Bullen's project was to build the church with a large garden around it, where the refugees can grow much needed food. He is using the agricultural training he received from SIFAT gardener John Carr to help them have more food. Refugees from other camps where Bullen also works have seen the success in Ombechi and are asking for a church and gardens in their camps, too.

He is now training more Christian refugees to be pastors in the other camps. He states, "Our first task is to let God use us as disciple-makers. We can help others hear God clearly through our kindness to them and sharing the Bible with them. We are witnesses among everyone we meet. God wants us to have a relationship with Him and with everyone around us." People see Jesus in Bullen. This church in Ombechi is growing fast, and the people there are growing food to help others who are hungry, too, sharing God's love in practical ways.

Bullen has a long prayer list and asks for our prayers, including his health needs as he is recovering from malaria. But the first thing on his prayer list is to pray for him and all the people there to know the Joy of the Lord. He says they can do great

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## #GivingTuesday is a Success!

Thank you for supporting SIFAT on #GivingTuesday! Because of your faithfulness and generosity, we easily surpassed our \$125,000 goal and raised a **total of \$186,200**, including our \$60,000 matching fund. This is the highest amount we have ever raised on this annual global day of giving. From encouraging others to give to donating yourself, you helped with the record breaking success of #GivingTuesday. It was an exciting way to end 2019 — celebrating our 40th anniversary, knowing our SIFAT family continues to grow and see us into the next 40 years!



### Graduate Project

(Continued from Page 6)

things for God as long as they have the Joy of the Lord in the midst of all the suffering.

SIFAT has a network of graduates like Bullen in many countries. The Graduate Project Committee is accepting new proposals from our graduates to help them get seed money to carry out the things they learned at SIFAT. Those of you who support SIFAT are helping us to train more graduates to go into more hard places in our world. You are also helping us to get their seed money to get started. Thank you for being part of the global ministry of SIFAT.

To see our active graduates' projects and our fully funded projects, visit our website:

[www.sifat.org/international-missions/international-projects](http://www.sifat.org/international-missions/international-projects)

## Corporate Matches Increase Gifts

Diana Cline  
Accounting

In 2019, three of our donors took advantage of their employers' matching funds. Many employees do not take advantage of this benefit, and it is fairly easy to do. Usually, an employee fills out a form and turns it in to the appropriate office of their company. The company will contact SIFAT, and after an online verification process, we will receive a match!

Our corporate matches last year were all slightly different. One donation was eligible for a one to one match, so our donor's gift was matched dollar for dollar, doubling the amount. Another donation was a two to one match, so the company matched twice the amount given. The third donation was matched three to one, so for example, a \$50 gift became \$150 for a total of \$200 with the match. Because of these three corporate matches, \$11,950 in gifts from SIFAT donors became \$35,400 when our supporters accessed their employee company benefits!

Our accounting department would love to work with more donors to help SIFAT become your charity of choice! If you have questions or need to start the process with your employer, please contact [accounting@sifat.org](mailto:accounting@sifat.org).

### Matching Funds

Have you checked to see if your employer will match your donation to SIFAT? Many companies do, and some even match donations of retirees or spouses of employees.

### IRA Contributions

If you are required to take a disbursement from your IRA, you can donate a percentage or all of it directly to SIFAT. By donating to a nonprofit without receiving the disbursement, you do not pay taxes on the disbursement.

### Questions or Need Help?

Contact Diana, [accounting@sifat.org](mailto:accounting@sifat.org), if documentation is needed for your company's matching funds or if you have questions about getting your IRA donation sent directly to SIFAT.

# Book Your Next Retreat at SIFAT!



*On the Challenge Course, participants work together to complete tasks.*

Sam Gochey  
Campus Director

SIFAT's beautiful 176-acre campus is the perfect place to plan your next retreat! We offer a number of different programming options and can customize the perfect retreat for you! From school field trips in our Global Village exploring what daily life is like for those living in developing countries to learning about life-saving appropriate technologies, such as water purification and fuel-efficient cookstoves, participants can experience other cultures on SIFAT's campus in Alabama. We also offer team building exercises on our low ropes Challenge Course that can be tailored for any age group.

Here at SIFAT, we have witnessed countless life transforming experiences take place as people learn more about themselves and more about others around the world. We would love for you to join with us and be part of what God is doing here!

For more information or to schedule your group, e-mail [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org) or call the SIFAT office at (256) 396-2015.

## L&S Summer 2020 is *Enough*

Collin Campbell  
Campus Program Manager

The first week of our Learn & Serve (L&S) Summer Experience begins on June 7. This year's theme is *Enough*. Throughout each session, we will explore what it means to be Enough and how God is Enough for us.

**What is L&S Summer Experience?** The Summer Experience is a five-day retreat (Sunday-Thursday) during the summer. Students (rising 7th graders through graduated 12th graders) will learn about life in a developing country through firsthand experience. They will spend a night in our Global Village, which has homes from nine countries, such as Guatemala, Bolivia, Nigeria and Nepal. Students are introduced to some of the appropriate technologies that SIFAT teaches. Last summer, students built fuel-efficient cookstoves and learned how to purify water. At the end of the week, they will be given an opportunity to take what they have learned and use it to do service projects in our local community.

**Register Today!** Spaces are still available for both groups and individuals. Learn more at [www.sifat.org/learn-serve/summer-20](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve/summer-20) or e-mail [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org).



### Register Groups or Individuals Today!

<b>Week One:</b>	<b>June 7-11, 2020</b>
<b>Week Two:</b>	<b>June 14-18, 2020</b>
<b>Week Three:</b>	<b>June 21 - 25, 2020</b>
<b>Week Four:</b>	<b>July 5-9, 2020</b>
<b>Week Five:</b>	<b>July 12-16, 2020</b>
<b>Week Six:</b>	<b>July 19-23, 2020</b>
<b>Week Seven:</b>	<b>July 26-30, 2020</b>

**Cost: \$299 per person**



# My Role as a Counselor

Connor Campbell  
Learn & Serve Summer Counselor

*Editor's Note: SIFAT is currently accepting applications for counselors for our Learn & Serve Summer Experience. The college-age students are responsible for helping connect what SIFAT is doing around the world and what God calls us to do in our local communities. Connor, 20, recently shared a reflection about his experience as an L&S counselor.*

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" Luke. 14:26 (ESV)

In this haunting proclamation, Christ implores his listeners to weigh the sacrifice of the true cost of being a disciple. The reality of following the light is that it often involves forsaking the things of this world that we hold so dear. To follow Christ, one must understand the sacrifice: none other than their own life.

When asked to reflect on my role as a counselor, I was struck with this notion of sacrifice, both in myself and what I witnessed in my students every day. After an especially challenging Global Village and Slum Experience, when students were required to live a life reflective of those in the developing world, spirits were exhausted from contemplation and learning. During our small group time,

I noticed one particular student who seemed to be simultaneously somber, yet hopeful. When it was his turn, he turned to the group:

"My father is no longer with us, and I never really knew him. All I remember about him was how hard he worked to provide for my family and me. Coming out here, I thought I would be just like him. But now I realize just how hard it is to work as much as he did. I feel like I finally know him. I finally know my dad!"

After this, I could tell there was a burden that had been removed, as though it was something that he simply needed to express.

Sometimes, ministry (including SIFAT) requires personal sacrifice and suffering. But sometimes, it is through this suffering, that we are intrinsically connected both to Christ and to our brothers and sisters, and even to our fathers.

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (ESV)

If you or someone you know is interested in serving as a Learn & Serve Counselor, contact [campbellc@sifat.org](mailto:campbellc@sifat.org) or visit [www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve).



*Above: Connor Campbell, a 2019 Learn & Serve Counselor, shares one of the lessons he learned during his summer at SIFAT.*

*Below: Counselors lead the activities for our Summer Experience each year.*



## Stay Connected with SIFAT for our Latest News!

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

**Are you moving?** Don't forget to send us your updated contact information. E-mail [info@sifat.org](mailto:info@sifat.org) with your new mailing address, phone number and e-mail address.

# An Experience of a Lifetime

Anna Ponder-Twardy  
2017 and 2019 Farm-to-Table Intern

*Editor's Note: Our Farm-to-Table Internship began in 2014 and aim to connect our demonstration gardens with the food served in our campus cafeteria. College-age students work under the guidance of SIFAT gardener John Carr to learn appropriate technology techniques for sustainable gardening in developing countries and about the plants that can help common nutrition deficits. During the Summer Experience, our Farm-to-Table interns make presentations to the Learn & Serve participants, work in the garden, help develop menus using produce from the garden and cook in the cafeteria.*

In my original SIFAT application, which I sent in the winter of 2016, I discussed that I felt closest to God in the quiet, in nature. There, looking upon earth and thinking of the maker of it all, is where I feel most fulfilled and connected. My summers at SIFAT surely proved this experiential point. I am an alumna of Auburn University, where I studied nutrition and dietetics and minored in stewardship-based agriculture. I am currently getting my masters degree at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in nutrition science to become a dietitian. I spent two summers as a Farm-to-Table intern at SIFAT. Those summers were genuinely some of the most enriching, life-altering experiences of my life. I developed a deep level of understanding and grace for those who experienced life differently from me.

My SIFAT experience has catered to my future career as a dietitian. I am familiar with food systems and am able to confidently discuss the nutrients and origins of the food we grew during my summers. Public speaking in front of Learn & Serve students greatly increased my confidence in speaking to other medical professionals and patients regarding aspects to my future career. Most importantly, I have strengthened my ability to work in a team with others.

I developed a deep affection for agriculture while working at SIFAT. Tending to the soil and connecting my hands with the earth has opened my heart and expanded my mind for something bigger than myself. There is a season for

everything: preparing, sowing, reaping and, finally, resting the land for the hope of a new season. My summers at SIFAT prompted the preparing, sowing and reaping of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The first few weeks are always so exciting, making rows and planting seeds. The other interns and I would dream of how big these plants would grow and think of funny and interesting tidbits to share with the students. It is a joy to be able to discuss the actual fruits, vegetables and recipes that I often ask my patients to incorporate into their diet. There is often a common ground to be found, because a hobby in gardening and an interest in plants is common.

The Ag Days during Summer Experience were so fun, in particular. As an intern, I developed skills to be a teacher and speaker for the SIFAT students. I had to learn which questions

were suitable to ask and develop my ability to answer questions in a simplistic manner. It was rewarding to have the students so interested in what the Farm-to-Table Interns were doing. We played games with them, made vegetable jokes, had tastings and even baked desserts with leaf powder with them. The interactions with the students made all of the labor worth it. Additionally, it has advanced my confidence when approaching and talking with patients as a dietetic intern.

Something not every person starting a job thinks about is the friendships that are inevitably made in the process of hard work. The camaraderie was amazing. You dig into the dirt together, sleep under the stars together and execute projects and ideas together. Friendships built on communal hard work are a wonderful place to find rest, hope and to

experience the companionship of a team. Furthermore, it has developed my skills and confidence in how to work with a medical disciplinary team as a future dietitian.

SIFAT has this effect where it pulls a person in and captures their heart. My experience at SIFAT was beautiful, and I would recommend spending a summer as a Farm-to-Table Intern to anyone. The work was difficult and tedious. We found weeks monotonous at certain points, but each day we found ourselves laughing to the point of tears and sharing an experience of a lifetime.



# Creating Covenant Partnerships

Marie Lanier  
Promotions & Marketing Coordinator

Since SIFAT began 41 years ago, our financial support has come from individuals and churches. Long-term partnerships with churches of different denominations are the foundation of our survival, especially during the early years when SIFAT was establishing itself and building infrastructure. We can name so many churches that came to build our facilities, began international projects, sponsored training scholarships and brought their children and youth to our campus each year. But we have never officially recognized these partnerships!

But that is changing! We now have a name and plan for our ongoing relationships with churches—Covenant Partnerships. We will be adding a section to our website to recognize the churches that come alongside of SIFAT to support us through prayer, participation and giving. Each covenant agreement can be tailored for the congregation and SIFAT, but a template will also be available and SIFAT staff members will work with church leadership to create a covenant that is beneficial to both the church and SIFAT.

Our first official Covenant Partnership is with Clear Lake United Methodist Church in Clear Lake, Texas. Our covenant agreement is a one page document that reads, in part:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

Clear Lake United Methodist Church covenants to support SIFAT by:

1. Declaring a covenant relationship with SIFAT in the church's publication.
2. Recruiting church members to participate in SIFAT work teams on the campus of SIFAT.
3. Recruiting church members to join SIFAT short-term missions in countries where SIFAT serves.
4. Making available information about SIFAT Graduates' Projects around the world needing funding.
5. Contributing to the SIFAT General Fund each year (no amount is too small).
6. Praying for SIFAT's ministry, leadership, and those SIFAT serves in more than 90 countries.

SIFAT covenants to support Clear Lake UMC by:

1. Declaring our covenant partnership with Clear Lake UMC in SIFAT's publications and at SIFAT.
2. Promising to lead by following the example of Christ in serving those in need.
3. Being good stewards of resources provided to SIFAT for the benefit of those SIFAT supports.
4. Working to make sustainable, long-term investments in SIFAT graduates' communities.
5. Praying for our covenant partner, Clear Lake UMC, their pastors and leadership, congregation and ministry.

Please share this exciting news with your pastor and missions committee. We want to begin cultivating covenant partnerships with the churches who regularly support SIFAT, so that we can become more intentional in building stronger, long-lasting relationships. For more information about covenant partnerships, to start creating a covenant agreement or to schedule a SIFAT speaker for a missions event, please contact Marie Lanier, [lanierm@sifat.org](mailto: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

In January, I attended the men's breakfast at our church. A nurse practitioner from our local hospital spoke about wanting to help the poor in our county, especially those with health issues. His church raised funds to help a bedridden man have money for Christmas presents. When he went to deliver this monetary gift, the impoverished condition of the man's home saddened him. After receiving the money, the man asked, "Why did you bring me this? I didn't ask for it." After the visit, the NP discovered that his actual visit meant much more than the money. The point addressed during this talk was, "How can we help the poor here?" He concluded that the first thing needed was our friendship, not looking at their circumstances in a judgemental way.

He was saying something that SIFAT teaches in our classes: the poor do not need our sympathy. They need our friendship, and we need theirs. It is amazing to me how many people who have plenty think if the poor would work harder or were smarter, they would have more economically. Why do YOU think people are poor? The erroneous belief that people get what they deserve condemns the innocent. The book of Job shows us how untrue this belief is.

How many truly poor people are among our friends? Are we close enough to them, so that they would

be sad if we died? If we have not walked in the shoes of the poor, we do not know them well enough to notice the roots of poverty in the environment into which they were born. Jesus reached out to the poor and loved them. He understood why they were poor. We need to understand the roots of poverty, too. If we were to invite the poor into our homes, we might be shocked at what they could teach us! (Isaiah 58: 6,7)

One friend responded to the talk by saying he would like to have friends among other socioeconomic groups, but he did not know how to start friendships. One way might be to visit a soup kitchen, not to serve, but to sit, eat and begin a conversation. Too often, when we see someone in need, we throw money at the situation. Money certainly can help solve some problems. But we need to do MORE than this. We need to become friends and see them as the creation of God that they are! People are much more likely to be able to pull out of poverty when they have friends who believe in them and who let them know God made them for a purpose!

People know that Jesus' words *It is more blessed to give than to receive* are true. All of us are poor in some aspect. Building relationships helps each other mutually to become the very best that God made each of us to be.