



SIFAT JOURNAL

SHARING GOD'S LOVE IN PRACTICAL WAYS

SPRING 2021

Remembering John Carr, our SIFAT Gardener

It is with heavy hearts and our deepest sorrow that we announce that John Carr, our beloved gardener, passed away unexpectedly on March 26, 2021. John made an impact on every person's life who came on our campus from the beautiful landscaping he created to the delicious vegetables he grew. He will be greatly missed, and we join his family in our grief.

Thank you for your outpouring of love and support. We received so many social media comments, e-mails and phone calls from around the world as the news spread among friends, former staff and SIFAT graduates. We will never know how many were touched by the wealth of knowledge John passionately shared during the classes he taught in our trainings, the tours he gave to visitors and the countless conversations held all over campus.

We hope you will join our SIFAT family and the Carr family as we celebrate John's life on July 31 at SIFAT. Time to be announced.



John Andrew Carr
May 20, 1960 - March 26, 2021

John Carr Memorial Butterfly Garden



One of John's first projects at SIFAT was creating a butterfly garden. He took a blank canvas of Alabama red clay and created beauty for our staff and visitors to enjoy. John even used bricks he recovered from the house he sold before moving here to create the paths. We have named this special area of our campus after John, who gave so much of himself to SIFAT during the past two decades.

In early May, SIFAT administrator Terry Haynes, Rusty McCombs and Sam Hansen finished one of John's last projects — rebuilding the cedar pole gazebo. On May 15, friends and family joined together to refresh the butterfly garden, so it continues to be a place of reflection and solace on our campus.

Meeting Immediate Needs in Ecuador

Marie Lanier
Promotions and Marketing Coordinator

When we first heard of COVID-19, we optimistically believed that our international mission teams would be postponed for a few months, and we would reorganize before too long to serve alongside our SIFAT graduates. As we realized the severity of this novel virus and its ability to spread, we were forced to make difficult decisions to protect our team members, staff, translators and the communities in which we serve. Here in the United States now, our daily lives are being minimally impacted by the virus. We may be required to wear a mask or need to self-quarantine after a known exposure. Great strides have been made in treatment, and free vaccines are available for those who choose to have them. No, the pandemic is not over for us, but we have many resources available.

But this is not the case for our friends in Ecuador. On April 23, a new month-long order went into effect that includes a weekend curfew from 8 p.m. on Friday night until 5 a.m. Monday morning, as well as a nightly curfew during the week for the same times. Driving between provinces is restricted, working from home is encouraged and excessive fines continue to be imposed for those not wearing masks in public, attending large gatherings and breaking curfew.

SIFAT Ecuador director Dr. Roberto Contreras and his wife Monica are leading our efforts with *SIFAT Doctor in your House* and *The Golden Bread*. More than just medicines and food, these programs give the local churches with whom we work a vehicle for outreach to provide hope and encouragement to their members and neighborhoods. Of course, physical needs are being met, but while making deliveries, the church

leadership also prays with these families, listens to their needs and offers support. They are being the hands and feet of Jesus by Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways.

In their latest e-mail update, Dr. Roberto and Monica asked that you continue to pray for the dire situation in Ecuador. They are in the third wave of COVID-19, and the public health system has collapsed. About 1,500 new cases are being diagnosed daily, and around 400 people are waiting for ICU beds. Only 1 percent of the population has received two doses of the vaccine, and another 1 percent has received one dose. Because he does not work in the public health system, Dr. Roberto does not yet qualify to receive one of the limited vaccines.

We wish we had room to share a profile of each person we help, because they all have touching stories. This month, we wanted to share a few examples of those receiving medication and healthcare from Dr. Roberto.

Nicolas, age 10

Nicolas lives in Puengasí with his mother, who is a single parent. Even at his young age, Nicolas knows what it means to fight for his life. After being diagnosed with COVID-19, he was hospitalized for two months. He survived, thankfully, but still has many complications: low weight, malnutrition, dermatitis, skin allergies, stomach pains and diarrhea. SIFAT Doctor in your House is providing all the medicines he needs for one month, as the public hospital system cannot provide them now.



or When Mission Teams Cannot Travel

Blanca, age 75

Blanca and her husband were small farmers in Machachi. They survived by harvesting vegetables that they planted on their small piece of land. But suddenly, Blanca's 80-year-old husband died from COVID-19. Blanca is insulin dependent because of diabetes and also has hypertension. Blanca has four cows, and she plans to sell them one by one to buy medicine. Meanwhile, SIFAT Doctor in your House has given her the medicines she needs for one month.

Esperanza, age 14

When Esperanza was 9 years old, she accidentally fell from the second floor of a building, fracturing her skull. She has 87 percent intellectual dysfunction, cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Esperanza lives in El Beaterio, where SIFAT Ecuador has begun a partnership with World Vision. She lives with her mother, who receives \$50 from the government as a monthly bonus for disabled people. But \$50 is not enough to buy food, much less medicine! Esperanza's mother sells candy on the streets to try to provide for them. Because of her extreme case and not having any other support, SIFAT has been helping Esperanza since 2020, most recently by giving her a one month supply of her four daily medications.

Cayambe Project

Pastor Tuquerres leads the Cayambe Project, where SIFAT teams helped build a large facility for the church's afterschool program and provided community medical clinics for many years. In this community, 30 elderly indigenous needed help to buy their medications. We extended our 15 percent pharmacy discount to help Pastor Tuquerres stretch the donations he received from local businesses to purchase the needed medications.

Keep SIFAT Doctor in your House / The Golden Bread Continuing through 2021!

Each month, it costs more than \$12,000 for each project and its extensions to buy food to distribute and for Dr. Roberto to purchase the vitamins, antibiotics and other medications needed.

We still need your help! With your support, we can serve our project sites, even when we are unable to travel! Please designate your gift *SIFAT Doctor in your House*.



Because of your support, 80 elderly people in Atucucho received bowls of fanesca, a traditional soup eaten at Easter. SIFAT Doctor in your House and The Golden Bread programs are serving the communities in which our mission teams normally help. With Dr. Roberto's leadership, we are providing virtual medical care, needed medications and food for those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

SIFAT Doctor in your House

One month supply

- \$30 Vitamins for a malnourished child
- \$30 Medications for someone with a chronic illness

The Golden Bread

Feeding the hungry

- \$4 One week of hot breakfasts for an elderly person in Atucucho
- \$15 One month's rice donation for a family of six

Finishing Aida Leon Construction

\$10,000 matching fund; \$45,000 goal

- \$3.50 10 concrete blocks
- \$7.65 50 kg bag of concrete
- \$250 Laborer for one week
- \$450 Total cost for one square meter of finished concrete work

Introducing GPC Small Projects

Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

SIFAT's Graduates' Projects Committee (GPC) announced a new initiative in March. Our graduates return home to share what they have learned in our training events, but often are thwarted by a lack of funds for basic materials to begin their projects. For example, they may be unable to afford transportation to a neighboring village to teach a seminar or to buy a roll of aluminum foil to teach a group how to build a solar cooker. We have shared about our graduates' projects, which are usually large scale with greater budgets. The small projects part will focus on proposals with needs up to \$200.

Proposals will be evaluated each year in February and in September and are open to all SIFAT graduates to help them start their community development. Nine projects were accepted this spring. The first one to get their project started and to send SIFAT a report was from three SIFAT graduates in one family in Tarija, Bolivia—Rev. Santiago Mamani and his daughters Eva and Sara.

The Mamani family had been personally touched by the classes on urban gardens taught by Dr. Martin Price of ECHO and SIFAT's resident gardener/teacher, John Carr. These graduates knew firsthand of the malnutrition and desperation of many urban poor who had no land on which to grow food. They had long wanted to provide this knowledge they had learned at SIFAT, but their funding could not pay all their projects. SIFAT approved their request for \$189, which helped 18 families learn to grow sack gardens for better nutrition. The class brought the families together to work on a common goal. It also strengthened the community as everyone was excited about the mini-gardens and began to visit each other to discuss them and see how their neighbors' gardens were growing. For \$189, 18 families are excited about learning to grow their own food even without land.

Eight other projects have been started. In September, a new group of up to 10 projects will be approved. You can sponsor one or more of these small projects, up to \$200 each, to make a difference in the lives of needy people and to share God's love in practical ways with the poor. For information about getting involved with our SIFAT graduate projects, e-mail GPC chairman Art Stephenson, stephensona@sifat.org. To donate to our small projects fund, please designate your gift *GPC Small Projects*.



Sara Mamani (left) and one of her younger sisters prepare for their training made possible by a small project grant for SIFAT graduates.

Learn More About SIFAT Graduates' Projects

Our large projects still needing funding are featured on our website. You can also review previous projects that have been completed because of the support of SIFAT donors.

www.sifat.org/international-missions/international-projects

If you would like more information about becoming a project champion to raise funds for one of our graduates' projects, contact GPC chairman Art Stephenson, stephensona@sifat.org.

Continuing to Help People Through Gardens

Written by Eva and Sara Mamani
SIFAT Graduates from Bolivia

Translated by Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

The impact of pandemic quarantines brought Bolivia its worst economic year in decades with a wave of layoffs of workers, the closure/reduction of companies and losses of the means of subsistence of the most humble families. Because of the crisis, food prices have risen and families can barely afford rice, let alone fruits or vegetables. We applied for a SIFAT Graduates' Projects small grant of \$189 to start urban gardens in sacks of dirt in areas where people have no land to farm. Thanks to help that SIFAT sent, the project is working!

SIFAT has always been blessed to have committed servants who dedicate their lives with so much love to sharing pearls with international students—the same pearls that we trust will adorn their crowns for eternity. One of those great teachers was Brother John Carr, who taught us how to grow a garden even when there was no land. What an interesting lesson! We will never forget the passion of our teachers for producing food. All the students were blessed by our teachers at SIFAT and will always keep the memory of such noble work alive. We named our project for our teacher and friend John Carr.

This is to the glory of God! “Precious in the eyes of God is the death of his saints.” Psalm 116:15.

We created a poster to invite poor families of our region to learn how to make sack gardens. We asked local pastors to tell their members and neighborhoods as our purpose was to reach all families, not only church members. Good community development involves participation of everyone.

Another important principle is that it

is not a paternalistic handout. Those families who chose to join had to work together with each other and with their neighbors. The children gathered small stones; the parents, soil and old cardboard. The rule was that the whole family should help make the garden and not leave all the work on the shoulders of a single person. Many families signed up, but only 18 collected the stones, soil and cardboard on time. These families received the SIFAT donations of the other materials needed—compost, a sack, seedlings and cell phone data credit to connect to the gardening class we would give online via Zoom. The other families will have a chance to participate when we give the second class.



Because of COVID-19, materials are in short supply, and some suppliers failed us in deliveries. We were discouraged, because the Zoom workshop was already scheduled. These suppliers had given us their word that they would have the plants and compost. But God's plans are perfect. He led us to other suppliers who lowered their prices considerably, because they really liked the project. Glory to God! He is always ahead of us!

The participants were emotional the day before the class. They had collected

their materials with great hope and joy. When they received the plants, they carried them home carefully as if they were carrying a small baby. Their favorite plants were strawberries.

We began the class with a devotion sharing from the Bible, “The one who supplies seed to the one who sows will also supply bread for him to eat, will increase the crops and will cause you to produce an abundant harvest of righteousness.” The Lord will provide His children with everything they need. All the families connected to Zoom from their cell phones. The children of each family helped their parents with this, since they currently attend school online. During the workshop, the families followed our instructions step by step to build their gardens.

Two of us taught by building our own garden while explaining. The other one of us watched each of the families on Zoom to make sure that no mistakes were being made and offered help, if needed. We noticed that Juanita could not build her garden very well, because her family was late getting home, and she was trying to do it alone. When we told Juanita's neighbor Catalina, she left her husband and children to build their garden and rushed over to help Juanita. It was a beautiful moment to witness! When Juanita's family arrived to finish the garden, they gave Catalina hugs of gratitude for helping their mother.

That day these families not only planted plants, they also planted love, companionship and hope to have more food. An idea was planted in their minds and hearts. Urban gardens were totally unknown to them, but now they can do it again wherever they are in the future, as well as share with their neighbors in the same way that John shared with us so clearly with simplicity, humility and love.



From Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day Weekend, SIFAT sponsors a worship service on Lake Wedowee. In town? Join us! Visit www.sifat.org/wow2021 for more info.

Shop for a Cause!

Everyday online purchases can raise money for SIFAT! Whenever you shop online, you can support SIFAT.

Thousands of retailers donate a percentage of your purchases to SIFAT. Use Goodshop or iGive, search for your favorite store and follow the link to its website to shop with purpose. Coupons are also linked to help you save.

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

www.igive.com/sifat

AmazonSmile donates .5% of each purchase to SIFAT.

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

Android and iPhone users can turn on AmazonSmile in their updated app's settings.

Beginning Renovations in Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

We have been hard at work this spring repairing one of the buildings that came with the land we acquired to develop into our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica. This center will be accessible to people from Central America, Haiti and beyond. We have the main structure ready now, but we need your help to finish the kitchen and to furnish the house, so our interns can move in this summer!

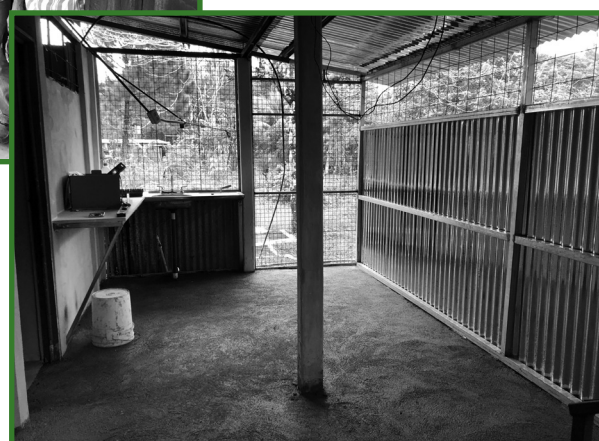
Plans are for this *casita* (small home) to house 10 agricultural interns who will volunteer to help SIFAT establish a sustainable family farm on a small plot of land. This farm will be full of demonstrations of practical ways to maximize food security and prevent malnutrition. These interns come from Honduras and have had special agriculture training tailored for our training goals. Their professors from the National Agriculture University of Honduras will be offering additional technical support as needed.

The interns will receive training in community development and additional appropriate technologies while they are here with us. Thus, SIFAT is also investing in the lives of these Honduran young people who can implement what they learn here when they return home to their rural villages in Honduras. The work they leave behind here at SIFAT will be used to train others from different countries who can replicate the models in their own communities.

Please designate your support to *Costa Rica Intern House*. For more information, email brysonk@sifat.org.



Left: Don Jose and his helper Alex are already renovating the existing living space in the intern house at our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.



Right: This area will be transformed into a semi-outdoor kitchen, which is a popular design in Costa Rica.

Reclaiming Land for Food Security

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Located in rural northern Costa Rica, the Maleku is likely the smallest indigenous people group in the country. Only about 750 remain in three neighboring villages. Their culture, heritage and very existence face both internal and external threats. The leaders are valiantly trying to keep their language and traditions alive. The Costa Rican government has assisted indigenous groups with basic necessities, such as potable water, health clinic access and elementary schools that include indigenous language and culture appreciation.

Years ago, the indigenous lost most of their original lands to encroachment and usurpation by mestizo farmers. Through the years, this land has been bought and sold by subsequent farmers and is mostly used to raise cattle. Consequently, most of the original forest has been obliterated, and erosion and environmental problems have increased tremendously. The government has started a program to buy back the indigenous land. The Maleku have benefited recently from this. However, their challenge is to restore the land that was cleared for cattle. Then, they can better use it to raise their traditional crops of corn, squash and beans, which now they mostly have to buy.

SIFAT recently joined with Laura of the Abuela Ecologica, a small community association that maintains a tree nursery and promotes community reforestation, to help the Maleku reclaim their newly acquired former land. For two days, we stayed in the tribal leaders' homes, ate with them and learned of their hopes and dreams for a future for their people. Top on their list was food and economic security and keeping their tribe and traditions alive. Environmental changes in the area have greatly impacted their lives and will somewhat determine their future. They were thankful for assistance to help plant trees on their new land and to look for more sustainable ways to manage land, agriculture and animals. SIFAT is considering joining with the Abuela Ecologica in an intensive effort with volunteers to plant 10,000 trees in this area later this year.

Laura introduced us to the village grandmother that she knew from her previous visits. She knew that central to the Maleku culture is the ritual of drinking cacao (the fruit that is processed to make chocolate) daily. They believe it promotes health and well-being and that God created it especially for their tribe as a gift. However, years ago a fungus wiped out almost all of their cacao trees left on their reduced land area. On our way, we had visited a mestiza woman whose family owns hundreds of acres upon which they grow cacao. Because they were wealthy, they could pay for new blight resistant varieties and treatments. Now, this family has a thriving business selling pure cacao powder and delicious cacao confections. Laura bought some of the pure cacao powder to take to the village grandmother, knowing that it would make her so happy. I could not help but think of the irony of the original indigenous landowners now having only occasional access to their ancestral drink that previously sustained their people daily. Even if she did have transportation out of her village, she would not have the funds to buy the cacao with the export prices they charge.

This experience reminded me that some poverty has its roots in the injustices of history. Solutions will likely take longer to find, but will be worth it in the long run. Our presence with the indigenous signified solidarity with them in their struggles for survival. Additionally, we can help them in a concrete way by starting the new reforestation effort with a few dozen trees. SIFAT is often called upon to stand up in the face of injustice on the side of the oppressed—sometimes with the ministry of presence and advocacy.



Evie Bryson visits with the village grandmother of the Maleku, an indigenous group in Costa Rica. A major project with the Maleku involves reforestation of their traditional lands that they have reacquired, which will allow them to begin growing crops for food security.

"Your hope waters the roots of the flowers that have yet to bloom" - Anonymous

Happiness Spiced with Turmeric, Ginger and Sweet Potato Pancakes

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

We made friends with our regional agricultural extension worker, Jose Redonet. He is very supportive of SIFAT in our efforts to promote community development. In late April, he took us to visit a Costa Rican farm family that lives about 25 minutes from us. They are entirely self-supporting, since they have started a small-scale spice operation. Turmeric, or curcumin, and ginger grow very well here in the tropics. So do sweet potatoes and other tubers. On the SIFAT farm, we harvested nearly one kilogram of ginger roots from one plant! We are interested in what we can do with this.

The family we visited has mastered the art of drying and grinding these spices to turn these tubers into flour. They learned to package them and have gradually built a local clientele in nearby towns where their products are sold in local stores. Now, they have their own home, a healthy son and live well off what they produce on their land. Besides income, they cherish their mental health and well-being that results from their connection with nature and their small plot of land. They use organic fertilizers and eat healthily from their own produce. They served us delicious sweet potato flour pancakes with local honey and fresh Costa Rican coffee.

Of particular interest to me was the main component of their operation: a simple appropriate technology electric grinder

made out of an old bicycle wheel, a fan belt, a hand meat grinder and an old washing machine motor. This electric grinder makes their business viable—more than the hand grinder.

After spending the afternoon with this beautiful family, I am once again reminded that there are often simple solutions within reach that can greatly improve the lives of people who are struggling. I asked the couple if they would be willing to share their experience with SIFAT students who

come from many different countries to learn practical solutions to poverty. They were thrilled that we would give them the opportunity to share their passion with others! We also invited them to our upcoming workshops that can help them with incorporating leaf-drying to preserve micronutrients into their business.

One of the big lessons I have learned after working at SIFAT for 28 years is the importance of always being open and willing to learn from others. None of us has all the answers for poverty, but examples of sustainable, replicable solutions abound around the world. How wonderful it is to have the context in which to promote the interchange of ideas that work! That is what

always happens during SIFAT trainings. Together, we can accomplish much more working for lasting change and a brighter future full of hope! Thank you for making SIFAT possible—to have a place to promote these practical solutions that make a difference!



Kathy met a family in Costa Rica that created an appropriate technology electric grinder to prepare the crops they grow into products to sell. They are now able to support their family and have agreed to share in future trainings at our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13



The main building on the property in Costa Rica will undergo renovations to better use the space for classrooms, meeting areas, bathrooms for training events downstairs, while the upstairs contains bedrooms and bathrooms for guests. In the picture above, the SIFAT office is on the bottom floor where the window is.



In March, SIFAT staff from the USA traveled to Costa Rica to tour the new property, meet with our attorney as we work to become a legal nonprofit there, research for future mission teams and begin the renovation plans. Don Jose (left) leads executive director Tom Corson (center) and administrator Terry Haynes on a tour.

UNA Professors Help in Costa Rica



Oscar Fereira, a forestry professor from Honduras, visited Costa Rica to help design our tree nursery to cultivate endangered species and promote fruit trees locally. This will serve as a replicable model for other countries in dire need of reforestation to restore the soils and environment, impacting hunger and water availability and quality, as well as restoring wildlife.



Our farm manager Don Jose (left) and agronomist Jose Matute of the Honduran National Agriculture University (UNA) discuss project plans for the Honduran agricultural interns to help establish the SIFAT demonstration farm this summer and fall. A group of professors from UNA visited in February to begin planning the design of the agricultural projects.

Interns in Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

We are preparing the Costa Rica Campus to receive 10 Honduran interns who will work hard on developing the Demonstration Farm with models of sustainable family gardens, organic fertilizers, small animals, and appropriate technologies. These interns are senior students from the National Agriculture University of Honduras, with which SIFAT has worked since 2011. They bring solid technical skills and life experiences in agriculture with them.

Most of these students come from small farms in rural areas of Honduras. They are from limited income families, but were blessed to receive scholarships to study. Now they will come to SIFAT to put into practice what they have learned. While with us, SIFAT will also train them in community development and appropriate technologies that they can implement when they return to their family farms in rural Honduras. They will learn from the experience of being in Costa Rica as well.

Will you invest in these future leaders of Honduras? Currently Honduras is one of the poorest nations in Latin America with much poverty and many social problems that puts pressure to immigrate. We are convinced that investing in this future generation of Honduran leaders is the best way to work for long term positive change in the country. We have a wonderful opportunity to impact their lives while they give their time and energy for a three month internship at SIFAT.

We need your support to pay for their living expenses while on campus. This includes food, lodging, transportation, and educational field trip opportunities. Please designate your donation to *Costa Rica Interns*. For more information, email brysonk@sifat.org.



Previous interns from UNA in Honduras have helped set up demonstrations and lead trainings. These students receive credit for their work and are an integral part of installing gardens and appropriate technologies at our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.

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 or contact Marie Lanier, lanierm@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.

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, corsonnt@sifat.org, for more information.

Questions or Need Help?

Contact Diana, 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.

Let's Complete Aida Leon

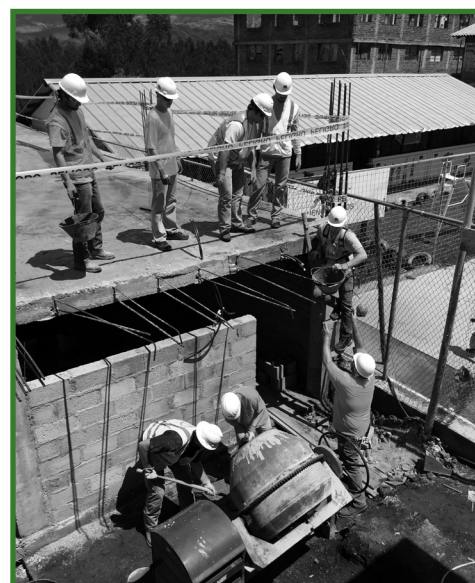
Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator

When our last SIFAT mission team left Ecuador in October 2019, we had no reason to think the first construction team of 2020 would not be back in March, ready to continue building the afterschool facility for the children in Aida Leon. We hugged our friends after the going away ceremony and said our quick goodbyes, never doubting for a moment that we would be returning soon to complete the project teams had been working on for two years. What a surprise!

Knowing how much that building is needed to provide safe shelter and a kitchen for church mothers to prepare food for the many children in need

during this horrible time of COVID-19, SIFAT is hoping to raise \$45,000 as soon as possible, so we can complete the project before the end of 2021.

A generous donor and former team leader has provided a \$10,000 matching fund and is challenging other teams to help raise the money needed. The name of the project is Esperanza Eterna, Eternal Hope. Our hope is that we can complete the project this year using local labor, not only providing an income to many desperate families needing work in Aida Leon, but also giving the community ownership in the construction of the building. With your support, we can make this happen! Please designate your gift *Aida Leon Project*.



Construction on the Aida Leon project was scheduled to be completed in 2020. Because of the pandemic, teams still cannot travel. We need your help to raise \$45,000 to finish this facility.

Updates from Bolivia

Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator



This is one of our favorite pictures that captures the excitement and joy resulting from the gift of micro-irrigation systems in a region that is food insecure. Communities can now have three harvests each year, providing enough food so their families are no longer hungry.

Auburn EWB in Bolivia 2022

SIFAT is excited to announce that Auburn University's chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) will continue working on the Pararia community irrigation project in the Anders of Bolivia as soon as it is safe to return in 2022. The project application was recently approved by Engineers Without Borders USA once again to make Quesimpuco a project site for the next five years. Auburn EWB teams have been working with our SIFAT staff for the last five years to improve food security in this barren region near Quesimpuco.

Teams of engineering students, professors and alumni have been serving in Quesimpuco since 2010, and we are excited to continue this partnership!

Prayer Request for Huber Ramos

We have just learned that Huber Ramos, CENATEC/SIFAT Bolivia director, and his wife, Aurora, both have COVID-19. Aurora has developed pneumonia and is very ill. Medical care is limited, and she is using supplemental oxygen. Their children are quarantining with Aurora's mother. Please pray for the Ramos family and their complete recovery.

As the USA is reopening and normalcy is returning, please remember that Bolivia, Ecuador and other countries where our SIFAT graduates work do not have access to COVID vaccines. The pandemic continues to spread at an alarming rate. Please include all our SIFAT family in your prayers, as they work daily with the threat of contracting this horrible disease.

2-in-1: Local and International Missions Meet

Marie Lanier
Promotions and Marketing Coordinator



On May 8, Wedowee FUMC combined international and local missions by volunteering at SIFAT. SIFAT's campus in Alabama is not only home to our international headquarters, but also serves international community leaders during training events, while our campus programs bring awareness to those living in the United States about what life is like in other countries. Wedowee FUMC asked if they could help SIFAT with a work day. Oh, yes! From young children to retirees, the whole congregation was engaged in work projects.

On one side of campus, our main entrance received a makeover with new plants being added around the SIFAT sign and the iconic white fence getting repairs and a fresh coat of paint. On the other side of campus at the new SIFAT Village Store, shelves were installed inside, while a wheelchair ramp was built outside. The large porch was pressure washed, and the hillside received a much needed mowing and weed eating. If that was not enough, a group inside the store worked on preparing merchandise to sell. In one day, these projects were finished, which would have taken our staff a week or more!

Our staff enjoyed working alongside our neighbors, and we hope to continue this relationship of combining a local missions outreach for them that has an international impact. Thank you, Wedowee FUMC, for your long-time encouragement and financial support, but especially for your hands-on participation this year!

If you would like to plan a work day or bring a work team from your church, please contact Josiah Corson, corsonj@sifat.org. We have both skilled and non-skilled projects available for any age group, and you can come for one day or for a longer work team. If you are local, we also have volunteer opportunities, whether you come once a week, once a month or as needed.



Blessing Others Because of You!

COVID-19 created an air of uncertainty and many unknowns. Because we depend on donations from churches and individuals and income from campus events, we immediately began tightening our budgets and keeping you updated regularly about what we were doing internationally and here in Alabama. We are continuing to be blessed, because our income remained steady. Yes, we worried, but we also prayed and tried to be the best stewards of our resources. Throughout the pandemic, God blessed SIFAT, and we are so thankful.

Because of your generosity, we have been able to keep our small emergency fund that we can use when extraordinary needs arise. While we wish we could fully fund every request, we must be selective and discerning. However, when Michael, a SIFAT graduate from Uganda, sent a request earlier this year, we knew it was our turn to “pay it forward” and bless someone else.

Barbara, age 8, was recently knocked down by a runaway motorcycle. Because her family is poor, the hospital sent her away since they could not pay for services. We were



able to provide funds for her hospital visit, X-rays and to begin treatment. The community is now raising money for follow up care. Thank you for your continued support that allows us to serve others in unexpected ways.

A New Spot on Campus: Sarah's Garden



Sarah's Garden is officially open! Recent groups have enjoyed eating lunch in this beautiful space next to Mad Indian Creek. When you plan your next visit to SIFAT, be sure to request an evening devotion around the fire pit or a picnic lunch, so you can enjoy one of our favorite spots on campus. Listen to the soothing sounds of the water and enjoy the peaceful view while you are here.

Sarah's Garden is part of Open Spaces, Sacred Places and received a grant through the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama. We are thankful for their support and help to make our vision a reality. We also must thank the Wedowee Garden Club and the East Alabama Master Gardeners for their help in landscaping this area.

Giving a commemorative brick in lieu of traditional presents is a great way to honor or memorialize your loved ones with a memorable gift that creates a lasting legacy. Custom bricks are available in two sizes: 4"x8" for \$75 or 8"x8" for \$125. You can order online at www.bricksrus.com/order/sifat. To order by phone or mail, contact Marie Lanier, lanierm@sifat.org.

From Counselor to Coordinator

Shelby Dickey
Learn & Serve Coordinator

I have known and loved SIFAT for more than 20 years and have served as a camper, counselor and as a youth leader, bringing groups for the summer SIFAT experience. My visits have always looked different, but each experience always drew me closer to God and gave me a greater purpose to serve the communities around me. Each time I would visit SIFAT, it reinforced what I had learned as a young camper; love people as Jesus did, but don't just stop there. Care for them.

As a youth leader, I wanted my students to have a greater understanding of the word service, and I knew that SIFAT would open the door for new opportunities, and would create a paradigm shift in their thinking. And while other summer experiences can be meaningful and important, SIFAT helps you understand yourself and the world around you in a way that can be absolutely life altering. I know it did that for me, so I wanted that for my students.

Now, as I have changed from church leadership to the new Learn & Serve Coordinator, I know what youth leaders around the country are facing. Students and parents are becoming more and more busy, and planning summer youth trips is nearly impossible, which is why I am so excited to be a part of some of the new changes happening for SIFAT's Learn & Serve programs. The new retreat packages are a great way for youth leaders to plan what is best for their groups, and what's even more amazing, is that you don't have to squeeze it into summer, as we will be offering the packages year round now.

I love being a part of something that has brought so much change to my own heart. And I can't wait to see how SIFAT can affect the upcoming generations as they search for new ways to reach the world and their own communities through service and outreach. We hope you will join us this year and start the journey.



Shelby began her experiences with SIFAT as a Learn & Serve counselor and later brought her youth groups to campus and co-led a team to Ecuador (above in 2007) as a youth leader. Now, she has joined our staff as Learn & Serve Coordinator (below) and wants to help connect your group with SIFAT.



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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.

High School Students Receive School Credit for Learn & Serve Retreat

Caroline Corson
Campus Administrative Assistant

Like everyone, we were nervous for what opening up after COVID would be like. A full year without groups on campus and a staff changeover could have been a wonderful thing or a not so good thing. Thankfully, since we had our first group in February, everything has gone better than we could have hoped. We have had wonderful groups visit that I really believe left changed because of their experiences here.

One of those groups is Bowdon High School. In Georgia, high schoolers can receive an International Skills Diploma Seal (ISDS), which means that they have had four international experiences and 20 hours of international-related community service. Spanish teacher Carrie Gay has brought her students to SIFAT for a couple of years to help them earn this seal.

Mrs. Gay told us that out of all of the experiences through which she takes her students, none of them hold a candle to the life-giving message that SIFAT has to offer. She mentioned that even after they left, she continued to see a change in their worldview. The students gave group presentations of all four experiences, and Mrs. Gay said that, by far, the best presentation was about SIFAT. "You could see the excitement as they talked about your organization much more than the others!" she said.

At SIFAT, we are not only about international exposure, but more so, we are about opening up American minds to the possibility that others in the world do not live like we do. Rose Jabat, a senior at BHS, shared that after she came to SIFAT she truly understood more about world poverty. She said, "I'm not a 'look at a problem and move on' type of person. I want to come back to SIFAT and learn how I can make a difference!"

Hearing statements like this from the youth of America makes everything we do and teach at SIFAT worth it. Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Learn & Serve programs. Whether by donating to SIFAT or by participating in campus programs, you are helping make a difference!



Bowdon High School participated in an overnight retreat as they worked to receive ISDS recognition on their diplomas. Learn & Serve retreats can be tailored for church, school and civic groups of any age. Book now!

Schedule Your Retreat Today!

Learn & Serve offers retreats for all age groups. This year, we have introduced three retreat packages from which to choose, or you can build your own retreat. From one day field trips to multi-day experiences, our staff can customize an event perfect for your children's ministry, youth group, school or university class or adult group. Book for summer or fall now!

Visit www.sifat.org/learn-serve or email learnandserve@sifat.org to plan your trip!





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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

A definition of *hope* is a wish or desire with anticipation to want something to happen. Hope is part of everyone's life. We all want something; it is part of being human—a desire for things to change for the better.

Since 2010, Auburn University's Engineers Without Borders (EWB) has taken teams to the poorest area around Quesimpuco, Bolivia, where each dry season the communities experienced hunger. People died from a lack of food. Because EWB installed irrigation, several communities can now grow three crops each year. But more villages are still hungry. We are thrilled that Quesimpuco has been approved again by EWB USA as an official project site (pg. 11).

When the team joined the people walking miles beyond the end of the road to carry materials for the projects, the community members felt cared for and were greatly moved. The local mayor publicly said, "We are amazed at your willingness to tread on our soil. No one from our government has ever come to our remote area and showed such concern for us."

In the Fall 2020 SIFAT Journal, we shared about the road to Pararia that will allow materials, equipment

and our teams to reach these remote villages more easily. With tremendous effort, the people of Pararia worked for months to complete this road! They expressed their joy in being able to provide their part of the project effort. Why? "Because you have given our families *HOPE!*" they told us.

Pastor William and Dr. Ruth Neomi, graduates of SIFAT's high school in Quesimpuco, are the only pastor and doctor in the entire area. "SIFAT teams built the first high school, hospital, boarding home for students, church, a 450-foot long bridge and irrigation systems in our impoverished, isolated part of the world. With all those great things your teams did, they have impacted us in an even greater way," they told me. Similarly to the mayor, they said, "You walked beside us. You loved and cared about *us*. You gave us *HOPE!*"

It is impossible to be spiritually, emotionally or relationally healthy when discouraged. The greatest gift you can give anyone is *hope*. We are so grateful to each of you who give of yourselves and your resources to join SIFAT in giving hope to our brothers and sisters around the world. You have been an encouragement, not only to those in Bolivia, but to all of us, in a time we need it most. Thank you for *Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways!*