



Servants in Faith and Technology /
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Lifelong Lessons from Summers at Learn & Serve

Editor's Note: This month, we are sharing two articles written by youth leaders that brought their groups to SIFAT this summer. One has attended Learn & Serve for years, while the other had her first experience alongside her students. Both believe in this program and its valuable lessons for both youth and adults. Thank you for supporting SIFAT and our programs both here in Alabama and internationally!

By Clinton Wheeler

Youth Minister, Cookeville FUMC (Tenn.)

SIFAT has been a part of my life for a long time. I came to my first Learn & Serve Summer Experience when I was in middle school. I remember walking across the bridge one morning and saying to myself, "I don't ever want this feeling to end." For the first time, I heard God's voice telling me that I was called to youth ministry and that this is what he has in store for me. The next night, I accepted Christ as my savior and have been involved with youth and SIFAT ever since.

As I continue to go through Learn & Serve programming, I learn new things and have different experiences that change how I view my life and the world around me. For example, I went on a mission trip with my youth group to

Quito, Ecuador, when I was in 11th grade. The next year, I went to SIFAT for the last time as a camper. When it was time to go to bed in the Global Village, the country that I slept in just happened to be Ecuador. I remember laying on the wood floor and looking at the stars through the roof. I thought to myself that someone from Ecuador is going to sleep just like I am right now. I had been to SIFAT several times before this, but this is the first time that I really had a sense of empathy for others around the world. Without SIFAT, I do not think I would have had this feeling and this realization.

Growing up, I knew that I wanted to be a youth minister, and it was always a dream to take my group of students to SIFAT one day. I have gotten to do that for the past two summers, and the results have been incredible! Students are learning for the first time that they truly have everything they need. Not only have their hearts grown for people around the world, but also in their own communities. Our youth want to help with anything that can bring service and love to someone who needs it. I give all the credit to SIFAT. Thank you, SIFAT, for the impact that you have made with my students, and thank you for the impact that you make with people around the world.

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By Luv Dubose

Assistant Director of Youth Ministries, FUMC Montgomery

First United Methodist Church of Montgomery has always been known for the way our students have served others. Fighting poverty, promoting justice, serving others and sending out disciples are core values of our youth ministry. The youth department provides service and missions opportunities throughout the year, such as an in-town missions week, Angel Tree Christmas gifts and mission trips. This summer, we decided to do something different for our middle school mission trip.

I had heard a lot about Learn & Serve, but I had never participated. It fit perfectly in our summer schedule and seemed like a great opportunity for our students. I am not entirely sure I knew what I was getting into when I signed up our church—but to say it would be a life-changing week would be an understatement.

I took a group of middle school girls and our summer intern, loaded up our church van and headed to SIFAT for a week. We had NO idea what the week had to offer. When I say I went in as blind as my girls, I am being completely honest. We were unprepared! But that made our journey more realistic. As we set out as refugees, we truly felt displaced. We were confused, hungry, frustrated and more. It was beautiful to watch our girls take on jobs, fight for justice, witness to people and work to feed their



friends and families in these simulations. I watched them learn about global poverty in a hands-on way. I cannot describe how much we took away from this week, because it is truly something that you must experience in person!

Shortly after my time at SIFAT, I led a trip to Costa Rica, where we spent time serving in the slums of San Jose. I was able to be so present with people and serve well. I attribute that to the training I received during Learn & Serve. SIFAT does such a great job of helping you to SEE people instead of seeing circumstances. They equip leaders and students to go into the world to share the love of Jesus by loving people in practical ways. I am so thankful for the opportunity I had this summer to take my students to SIFAT! I encourage everyone to go.

Plan a Trip to SIFAT Today!

Don't miss out on a SIFAT experience! Whether you bring a group to tour our campus, learn more about appropriate technologies and see our Global Village or plan a weeklong retreat, SIFAT trips can be customized for any age. Our fall weekends are filling up, and we are already scheduling spring events. Come be a part of Learn & Serve today. Take a step in their shoes and have an international experience without having to leave the country.

Explore our retreat packages at www.sifat.org/learn-serve or contact Caroline Corson at learnandserve@sifat.org for more information, available dates and pricing.

Learn & Serve retreat options include:

Slum Experience
Global Village Overnight
Challenge Course

Global Feast
Prayer Walks
Around The World

