

Raphael Returns to SIFAT

Tom Corson
Executive Director

SIFAT Graduate Raphael has returned to SIFAT various times since first participating in our 10-week training practicum. He has taught in our trainings after using what he learned and implementing appropriate technology in his ministry in Nigeria. In his heart and mind, he believes what SIFAT believes is the Heart of the Gospel: sharing God's love in practical ways—love for God, for everyone, even for our enemies. And wherever Raphael lives, a little part of the Kingdom of God develops around him. He came to SIFAT this September to visit and to serve us by repairing the Nigerian houses he helped Learn & Serve youth build in our Global Village during a previous visit. When he leaves SIFAT, he plans to visit friends and supporters.

Years ago when Raphael returned from SIFAT to Nigeria, he was moved to see migrants escaping from the part of the country where terrorists were taking over farms and killing people. These people had lost everything and were fleeing for their lives, hungry and destitute. SIFAT's Graduates' Project Committee partnered with him to raise money to buy 24 acres of land, which he divided into mini plots on which 30 migrant families could grow enough food to eat and have extra to sell for profit. In three years, the average migrant family worked these tiny farms, harvested their own food and sold enough to provide for their needs. Additionally, most were able to save enough to buy their own farms, which freed the land Raphael was loaning them for others to begin this process. This plan is still working today! The migrants believe in Raphael's testimony, because he not only told them about Jesus, he lived

out the Gospel with them every day.

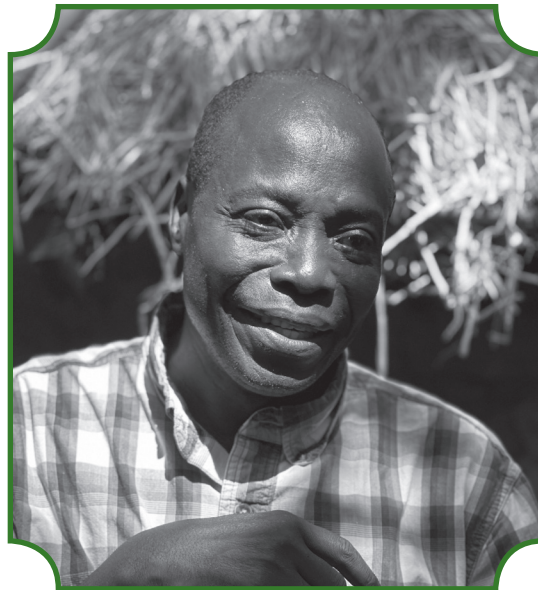
Many cultures are represented by these migrants. Raphael says that we must live in the culture of the Kingdom of God. He constantly goes out to the villages around him, giving seminars of appropriate technologies for their needs, developing relationships with the people. He recalls the first village he taught how to purify their polluted water with the bio-sand filter. He said before he came to SIFAT, he would visit

them and start by preaching to them. He learned from experience that not many wanted to hear a sermon from a stranger. This time, he offered the seminar on clean water. Most of the villages were infected with parasites that came from their one water source, which was used by both animals and people. His seminar lasted three days. The local people began to come, and they began making their bio-sand filter, the ingredients for which were readily available. During the day, the villagers worked together on their filters, and at night, Raphael showed the Jesus film and preached a Gospel message. All the people came—from all religions and cultures. He remembers the great celebration at

the end when they poured their dirty water into the filter. As it came out, Raphael tested the water, and it was pure! Not only had the community worked together with Raphael to get clean water, but now they continued working together and living out Jesus' teachings of loving each other. That is the result, Raphael says, of Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways. He has worked under that belief, and he has seen it work.

Once when he and his family lived in a suburb on the edge of Jos,

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Take a SHARE in SIFAT!

Be part of SIFAT all year! Monthly commitments — our SHARE program — help us budget effectively. Sign up at www.sifat.org/donate or contact Marie Narváez, narvaezm@sifat.org.

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.

Leave a Legacy

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

Matching Funds

Does your employer match your donation to SIFAT? Many companies do, and some even match donations of retirees or spouses of employees.

Questions or Need Help?

Contact Diana, accounting@sifat.org, if documentation is needed for your company's matching funds or for questions about getting your IRA donation sent directly to SIFAT.

Training Extension in India

Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

SIFAT has partnered with Daniel* and GloBle, the nonprofit he founded, to begin a SIFAT training extension program in India, his home country. Daniel gives a basic seminar on understanding community development in churches, universities and seminaries that request it. The first training event took place at Radiant Bible Seminary, where 24 Master of Divinity students from five states in India and from Nepal participated in the seminar on July 3-4.

These Christian workers wanted to help the poor, but they were not sure how to start. Daniel started the course by having them write down what they wanted to do to help the poor in the area where they would work. They wrote down lists of charitable acts, such as distributing clothes, blankets and food freely to all in need. By the end, they had changed their plans. One student wrote, "Instead of my list of what I wanted to do to help, I realized that I need to hear what the poor say they need and what they can do for themselves. Then I need to facilitate their work to develop themselves. I learned the difference in relief and development. Relief, or handouts are needed when there is a calamity, such

as war, flooding or an earthquake, but it is not sustainable. The poor need and want to help themselves. We need to facilitate their own development."

Brother Rhumba from Nepal said, "I loved this course on community development. It has transformed my understanding of working with poor communities. I now feel confident that I can meaningfully work with the poor." The students from Nepal have asked Daniel to bring the seminar to their country, too.

In August, Daniel gave another training to 42 working professionals of the Mennonite Church in Hyderabad. He will follow up with more sessions on the second Saturdays of each month.

Daniel, a 2009 SIFAT graduate, has taken our training to several overseas countries. He has worked for SIFAT and other nonprofits in training church and community leaders. Daniel is a SIFAT Global Trainer. He has focused on solutions for development in the context of India, Central America, Africa and the Pacific Islands. We are happy to partner with Daniel and GloBle again with the SIFAT Practicum Extension Training in India.

** Names of people and places have been changed for the safety of our graduate.*



Thank you Summer and Fall Mission Teams

We cannot miss saying thank you to our mission teams from this summer and fall. Their love for the people of Bolivia and Ecuador was evident in their hard work and compassion. Your time serving these communities will impact our projects for years to come.

In 1 Chronicles 16:8-11, we read, “Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.” Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus and sharing His love with the people of Machachi and Quesimpuco. You are making Him known!

Are you interested in joining or leading a SIFAT team to Ecuador in 2024?

We need teams to help finish the construction project and teach VBS in Machachi or to provide medical care and VBS at our other projects. Visit www.sifat.org/international-missions/ecuador for a 2024 brochure with more details or email internationalteams@sifat.org.

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Honor friends or family in a special way: buy a commemorative brick in Sarah's Garden! For more information or to place an order, visit the Sarah's Garden tab under

Get Involved on www.sifat.org. Questions? Email info@sifat.org.



Carrollton FUMC
Solid Rock Youth
Carrollton, Ga.

Clear Lake UMC
Houston, Texas



Auburn University
Engineers
Without Borders

Auburn University
McWhorter School
of Building Science
Fall Team



Grueling Success — A Trip to Quesimpuco

Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator

This year's Auburn University's Engineers Without Borders team had a grueling, but successful, trip to Quesimpuco. They continued their five-year project to supply water to remote villages in the Chayanta Valley in areas with food insecurity. On this trip, they erected towers to support the pipeline carrying water over ravines from a wellhead in the mountains to the villages. This complicated and daunting process involved transporting heavy pipes, rebar and cable on washed out roads and climbing down and over very rough terrain in deep, narrow gorges. We need more teams, but after seeing photographs from this trip, you will agree this takes a special group of people.

While there seemed to be much reminiscing from former team members about the old days when it was truly rough in Quesimpuco—the end of the road, they were excited because the bunkhouse now has electricity, tepid water for showers and a refrigerator. All these advances have improved life in the villages.

In the report sent by team leader Joe Ragan, he included this detailed list of the work they accomplished:

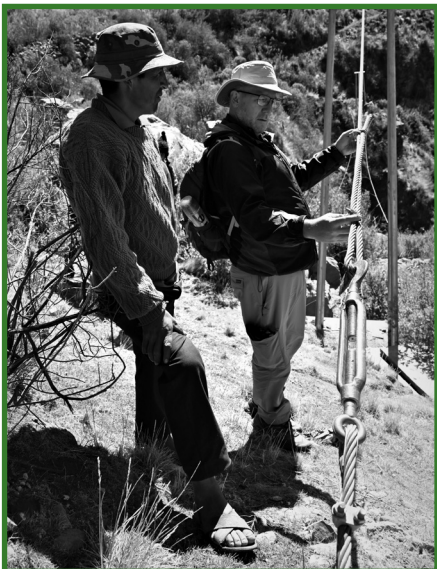


The EWB team overcame missed flights, lost luggage, rough terrain and high altitudes to continue to bring water to farmers in Bolivia.



1. Starting at an altitude of 14,000 ft., we hiked the entire length of the project including the water catchment point, the water supply line from the catchment to proposed storage tank (6 m x 6 m x 2 m) [2.5 km], and down through the fields that will be irrigated. This helped orient the team and gave each member firsthand exposure to the scope of the project and complexity caused by the unforgiving terrain.

2. We measured water flow rates at key locations including the existing catchment (which was installed last year), as well as water sources that we plan to capture during the next phase of the project. The students proved to be bright and creative, and I was impressed by their ability to think outside the box during this exercise.



3. Using precision GPS (sub 50 cm), we mapped the main catchment location, each pipe bridge start and stop location, the proposed storage tank location, four future water catchment locations, the key points for main distribution system from the proposed tank to the three major field zones, and a possible future potable water system (supply, tank and termination) that would serve 10 families.

4. We advised the local fabricator and tower installers on their concerns about the large pipe bridge that we designed to traverse a long stretch of unstable land. The suspension bridge will span 81 meters and requires towers that are 6 meters tall.

5. The students tried their hand at manual work at high altitude. Chipping in side by side with the community members, the students worked hard to move soil and rock to clear the way for bridge construction. This activity has the combined benefit of helping us understand how hard the locals work, while also building a sense of community between us and our Bolivian friends.

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Sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter at www.sifat.org (bottom right corner).

Visit our blog on our website or follow us on social media (facebook.com/sifatbook, [@sifattweets](https://twitter.com/sifattweets) or Learn & Serve's Instagram [@sifatLandS](https://instagram.com/sifatLandS)) for updates between issues of *The SIFAT Journal*!

Are you moving? Email your new mailing address, phone number or email address to info@sifat.org.

Would your church like copies of *The SIFAT Journal* or brochures? Let us know how many you need.

International Graduates' Projects

Visit our website to see current projects and fully funded graduates' projects.

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

We have approved projects that are ready to start fundraising but need a project champion! To become a project champion to raise funds or for more information, contact GPC chairman Art Stephenson, stephensona@sifat.org.

Raphael

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radical Muslims planned an attack on Christian communities. A large group rushed into the Christian communities during the night to set fire to their businesses and homes. It was an intense and widespread attack on the places where Christians lived. After the police caught the perpetrators, they asked them one question, "Why did you burn all the Christian urbanizations, except one? You left this one in the middle untouched?" They answered, "Because Raphael lives there, and he loves us."

"These people are God's children," Raphael says. "A group of Muslims stopped to help me when my car was stuck in the mud. When I offered to pay them, they refused. They just wanted to help. Many Muslims love God. Unfortunately, some of them are radical and want to destroy those different from them. But I have always offered my seminars to everyone. As a Christian I teach everyone—and they have responded with friendship and kindness. If a radical wants to do me harm, it is my duty to pray for him and love him. Jesus was clear in His teachings on loving our enemies. I have found that when we treat them with love, it almost always turns their anger away. And even if it doesn't, we are Christians! We follow what Jesus told us to do!"

SIFAT is so blessed to have Raphael with us this September. I John 3:18 says, "Let us not love just in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." SIFAT has a network of graduates in many countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America who are living out the Gospel in word, in deed and in truth. Thank you, Raphael, for being a dynamic leader in this network for the Kingdom of God! And for taking time from your busy schedule to come back to SIFAT to repair our Nigerian houses in the Global Village. You help teach us true evangelism, helping people in need.



Our SIFAT Family is a Blessing in this World

Marie Lanier Narváez
Promotions & Marketing Coordinator

As I write this article, I just returned from spending three weeks in Ecuador with two mission teams serving in Machachi, south of Quito. During my trip, I met new friends and reconnected with others I had not seen in months or even years. Though our teams were small in number, they were mighty in love, compassion and energy!

One night during devotions with Carrollton FUMC, team members shared about how they had previously been involved with SIFAT. Britt, the team leader, had led mission teams to Ecuador, but he had also brought youth groups to participate in Learn & Serve retreats on our campus in Alabama. Angie served on campus work teams with her college ministry, and she also traveled to Ecuador as part of a study abroad team in 2019. Cole and Caroline attended Worship on the Water whenever they visited their grandparents at Lake Wedowee. As I listened, it was as though our summers at SIFAT were all in one room – international mission teams, Learn & Serve and WOW!

The second team had SIFAT veterans, too. Clear Lake UMC sends a work team to SIFAT each year, and several of this year's team members had been in Alabama in May. When their Ecuador team needed more team members, our SIFAT family answered the call to serve. Former team members from other churches joined Clear Lake's team.

During my time with both teams, I experienced seeing first time team members fall in love with our projects, project leaders and SIFAT training graduates, as well as the country of Ecuador. I hope they will be able to return in the future – I know when they left Quito, they wished they could stay longer! If you have never been on an international SIFAT mission trip, you may not understand the desire to return year after year. On this trip, I saw team members, who usually travel to Ecuador every year, arrive for the first time since the pandemic caused their teams to be postponed in 2020. Their faces lit up, and their hearts were filled by being able to share God's love in practical ways – bending rebar, laying concrete block walls, making VBS crafts and even having an Easter egg hunt in July! They had been waiting to serve others and

reconnect with SIFAT's work in Ecuador.

Although I have lost count of the number of teams I have joined in Ecuador, I still get excited to see an upcoming trip on my calendar. And that isn't because my Ecuadorian husband and I are long distance as we go through the immigration process. It is because I get reenergized and reconnected. I see people from different stages of life getting to know one another on a deeper level. They may attend the same church, but often, their paths have not crossed. Now, they have become like family! I experience friends who cannot

speak the same language becoming reacquainted, showing one another pictures on their phones and finding ways to communicate. I watch a humble church with few resources reach its community to meet needs. I observe how they know the children in their afterschool programs and want to empower them to become church leaders and break the cycle of poverty in their communities.

I could keep writing about fun memories from these trips: playing soccer and parachute games with the VBS kids and donkeys, recounting what we saw from the bus windows as we fought Quito's traffic jams, walking

across a six-lane highway to a field to take pictures in front of a snow-capped volcano or watching kids practice for an upcoming rodeo-type event by lassoing one another from a horse. I could share the serious stories and visits that brought the reality of living in poverty to the forefront of our minds and tears to our eyes. Instead, I want to close with a blessing that was shared during devotions after a long day of service.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,
Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks

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Compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

My prayer today is that The Blessing of the Hands, which is attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila who lived in the 1500s, will impact you like it did me. Take time to reflect on our opportunities both here in the USA and internationally. SIFAT strives to be a bridge between the First and Two-thirds Worlds. How will you join us in our mission of Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways? Will you become an active member in our SIFAT family like the team members I spent time with this July? We have numerous ways to come alongside our staff members, training graduates and supporters. Pray for our projects and programs, and tell your church or civic organization about SIFAT. Schedule a campus tour this fall, or plan a Learn & Serve retreat for any age group. Join (or lead!) an Ecuador mission team in 2024. Whichever way you choose to get involved, I know you will learn more about showing compassion to the world and being the hands and feet of Jesus! Thank you for being part of our SIFAT family.



Support SIFAT When You Shop Online!

Did you know that thousands of retailers donate percentages of purchases to charity? Use Goodshop or iGive, search your favorite store and follow the provided website link to shop for SIFAT. Coupons are linked to help you save.

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

www.igive.com/sifat

Save the Date!



**GivingTuesday is
Nov. 28, 2023!**

Madison Moves to Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

After completing an internship with Learn & Serve, Madison Gnoose arrived to help us at SIFAT's Central American Training Center in Costa Rica in June as volunteer staff for a year. She is working as assistant program coordinator for children and youth, as well as working with our agriculture research and demonstrations. A native of Mississippi, Madison is a graduate in wildlife management with a strong science background. She is determined to master Spanish, gain valuable experience in tropical agriculture and work in community development with our outreach programs. She is directing the science club to encourage learning and interest in nature and science, as well as facilitating our community library program on Saturdays.



Neighborhood children in the science club were excited to use a microscope for the first time! They were amazed how big the ant pinchers looked. Thanks to our donors for making this possible.

Training Session in Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

We had a two-week training session in September for our SIFAT students from Honduras, Costa Rica, Nigeria and the United States. Topics covered were organic agricultural fertilizers and pesticides, fish pond management principles, alternative animal feeds (raising insects), rural tourism and child nutrition. One of the four-day sessions on organic agriculture was on mountain microbes (MM). This is a technique that is based on gathering old rotting leaves from the forest floor far from pesticides and mixing them with semolina (from rice), molasses or cane syrup, and a little water. After mixing well, this mix must be sealed. First, the air pockets should be pressed out by stomping on the mix in a giant barrel or container. When it is packed well, it should start fermenting. After about three months, it is unsealed and a couple of pounds taken to be mixed with water. Then, it is sprayed on plants and crops, as well as animal areas, where it takes away the smell and keeps flies away.

Apparently, the fungi, bacteria, viruses and protozoa work together beneficially to promote a rich soil life and health. Good soil health is essential for growing healthy plants that are hearty and resistant to pathogens that can thrive when the soil is out of balance. It is especially important to have options now when traditional fertilizers and pesticides have increased so dramatically in price. Much of this research has been done previously in Japan and has more recently caught on in Central America. We have seen it in Honduras, Nicaragua and especially in Costa Rica from the agricultural universities that have an ecological or sustainability department. We have noticed a difference on our crops and gardens since we began using the mountain microbes. It appears not to be very familiar to North Americans, but holds great promise for income limited small farmers, who are seeking more sustainable techniques in the tropics.



The group checks the consistency of the mountain microbes. Robert (left) is an organic agriculture specialist with the Ministry of Agriculture in Costa Rica. He partners with our Central American Training Center.



Students from Honduras and Nigeria learn how to raise black soldier fly larva and crickets for animal feed—pictured at the Insect Museum at the University of Costa Rica



Above: During a training at SIFAT's Central American Training Center in Costa Rica, participants share biochar.

Left: In September, 37 people participated in a two-week training session in practical skills for sustainable living on a family farm in Costa Rica. They learned to make organic fertilizers from crop residues.

Local Pastors Visit SIFAT Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

On September 13th, the district pastors and spouses from the local Assemblies of God churches met at SIFAT's training center in Costa Rica. It was a wonderful time to meet them and to share SIFAT's calling to *Share God's Love in Practical Ways*. We demonstrated appropriate technologies that can be lifesaving and gave them starts for chaya trees—a forgotten plant full of iron and vitamin A that used to sustain the Maya civilization throughout Central America with micronutrients.

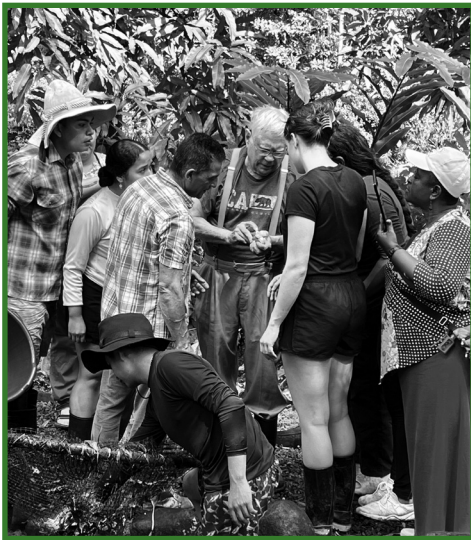
Then Aina, our 2009 SIFAT graduate who is visiting Costa Rica for training, had a chance to share with the group about her missionary journeys to 18 African countries. Since she is also a pastor in their denomination, they were especially eager to hear about the Nigerian church. They were intrigued that she came from so far to learn the organic agriculture and sustainable techniques we are using on the demonstration farm. She assured them that she would be implementing these practices in her ministry when she returns home to Nigeria.



The pastors and some spouses of the Assemblies of God visit SIFAT for their biannual district meeting. SIFAT graduate Aina from Nigeria shared with women at the conference.

Volunteer Teaches Aquaculture

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director



Bill Trimble shows fisheries workshop participants how to determine gender of tilapia to separate the males for better growth in the harvest.

Bill Trimble has volunteered with SIFAT throughout the years with overviews of fish culture and tours of the Auburn Fisheries Field Station (where he worked) to our international practicum students in Alabama. He brings a strong background of more than 40 years of experience in aquaculture and mariculture in university and business contexts. He managed some of the largest aquaculture operations in the world in Auburn, Panama and Louisiana.

Now, he is volunteering with us in Costa Rica to help improve our family-size tilapia ponds and teach classes on pond management and small-scale tilapia raising. Bill showed us how to make fish cages for our ponds and how to reduce our feed costs. He brought a curated library of fish culture and butterfly farming books for our community library.

Additionally, he is performing a feasibility study on butterfly farming as an income generator for SIFAT, as well as a source of local employment through a cooperative model. Bill has endeared himself to our Costa Rican staff and neighbors with his winsome personality and by sharing his Cajun cooking skills. We are blessed to have him with us at our Central American Training Center!

Make a Donation in Honor/Memory of Someone Special

Not sure what to get for Christmas or an upcoming special event? Are you looking for a gift with meaning and longevity? Include a note with the name and mailing address of the honoree, and we will send an acknowledgement card.

For more information, contact accounting@sifat.org.

GivingTuesday 2023



Nov. 28, 2023

Watch our social media, website and monthly emails for updates on our goal, matching fund and ways to participate.



We welcome five new interns, who are natural resource majors at the National Agriculture University of Honduras, to SIFAT. They will be with us for three months through Thanksgiving, working on agricultural demonstration projects at our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica. They will also be taking training classes in community development and appropriate technologies for basic human needs, so that they can become SIFAT graduates.

Honduran Interns Impact Our Community

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Xiomara and Miriam came to SIFAT in Costa Rica from June through August to do an internship focusing on evaluating and working to improve sustainable agricultural practices with five of our local farm families and to set up some demonstration projects on campus.

They were an amazing duo—so committed to making a difference! They spent countless hours working with our neighbors—each of them female heads of households with limited income—to help improve their farms with emphasis on sustainability and maximizing natural resource use. During the hot days of outdoor farm work, these interns endeared themselves to each of these women's hearts. They became friends and had many cups of coffee and tamales during breaks that were mixed with laughter and occasional tears as they shared life stories. At the end of the three months, Xiomara and Miriam invited the families to come for a training at SIFAT to see additional demonstration models of drip

irrigation, bio-char and vertical gardening examples. This was a time for each of the families to get to know one another and to learn from each other about what they had done with their family farm for improvement. It was a wonderful day together of sharing and learning.



Miriam, Mrs. Lidia, Xiomara and Madison visit together. Honduran interns Miriam and Xiomara helped local women improve their family farm plots.

They came with their families to a farewell party for Xiomara and Miriam, where the women stood up and gave moving speeches of how not only had these young ladies taught them skills, but, even more, they had gained two true friends that they would forever have in their hearts.

It made us so happy to see how these interns have reached out as SIFAT extension workers to our neighbors and their felt needs! We are also thankful to our long-term faculty and administration partners at the National Agriculture University of Honduras, who are SIFAT graduates that have worked with us to design projects for

their students to implement at SIFAT Costa Rica to help develop our demonstration center.

SIFAT Summer Sundays on the Lake

Marie Lanier Narváez
Promotions and Marketing Coordinator

For 15 weeks each summer, SIFAT sponsors Worship on the Water (WOW), a casual, nondenominational worship service with guest speakers and musicians. SIFAT is a community development training organization that takes mission teams to work with our graduates internationally and has campus programming that brings the realities of living in developing countries to life. So, why do we sponsor WOW on Lake Wedowee?

Each week, our staff gets to meet and interact with residents and vacationers in the small town that supported the Corsons and SIFAT all those years ago. We are able to share our ministry and opportunities to get involved with people, and hopefully their home churches, who may not have otherwise heard about us. And like our training graduates, we are sharing God's love in practical ways for our community.

Missing Money?

Marie Lanier Narváez
Promotions and Marketing Coordinator

As fall approaches, an important holiday is coming up for SIFAT. It's GivingTuesday! This year marks the 10th anniversary of SIFAT participating in this annual day of giving, and it kicks off our yearend giving campaign. For SIFAT, this "holiday" is an integral part of our fundraising; it provides needed finances for our budget and creates funding for the new year.

We promote a matching fund that is created by a generous group of donors that will double your donation on Nov. 28. However, did you know many companies also offer **corporate matching funds**? According to GivingTuesday.org, it is estimated that \$4-7 billion dollars goes unclaimed by employees! A statistic on doublethedonation.com says only 7% of employees at companies with matching gift funds take advantage of this opportunity.

Will you ask your employer if there is a matching fund available? We have donors who regularly have their donations doubled, or even tripled, by their companies. SIFAT staff will be glad to send any needed paperwork to you. Email Diana Cline, accounting@sifat.org for more information or help getting your company involved.



For WOW to be successful, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes. From scheduling dynamic speakers and talented musicians to hanging signs in businesses around town, WOW is more than early Sunday mornings, setting up chairs and greeting everyone. But it is worth it!

We have built a WOW community. We pray for one another during sicknesses, celebrate victories together and worship alongside well-behaved dogs. Grandparents bring their grandchildren, and people who do not regularly attend church sometimes end up on a boat ride to WOW. Although we cannot know the lasting impacts of WOW, we hear stories about how much it means to their families to have church at the lake. And sometimes like we were told last month, a sermon years ago made a life-changing difference to someone needing to hear that specific message.

When our season comes to a close, we always get asked to continue for just a few more weeks. We miss the camaraderie and unique outdoor worship experience, but we know we will be back next summer. Maybe you will join us on the lake. Come by boat, come by car, come as you are!

Thank you to everyone who makes it possible to host WOW each week. It is a community event, and we appreciate your support!



Catching Up with Agape

Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator

God is good all the time, 'cause that's His nature, WOW! As I read William's recent report on the status of Agape today, I could not hear anything except the voices of those precious kids when they repeated this refrain many times every day. For all of us who were lucky enough to serve on SIFAT teams building Agape Christian School and Orphanage in Mukono, Uganda, this became our mantra, also.

SIFAT graduate William Nsubuga had the vision of creating a shelter for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. William was a refugee from Rwanda and had residency in the USA. He had built a life here and did not have to return to Africa. But, he knew how hopeless life was for those children, and after attending SIFAT training, made the decision to give up his safe existence here and go to Uganda to give love, a family and an education for as many street children as he could. The need was so great that they outgrew the tiny building in Lugazi, so William found land in Mukono to expand. After presenting a plan to support the orphanage with a Christian boarding school, SIFAT brought mission teams to work for four years building a beautiful campus with classrooms, dormitories and a chapel. Our team members fell in love with the children! Most of our sponsors for the orphans came from those teams.

In William's recent report on the state of the school and orphanage, the children are thriving. The school is expanding in all areas, including academics, sports and spiritual formation. Land has been added, and Agape has a farm to grow vegetables and fruit to help feed the children. Cows and chickens were brought in to provide milk and eggs to add more protein to their diet.

Academically, the school is excelling. All the senior students qualified for higher institutions either by grades or on merit. How gratifying it is to see the number of our original orphans, who came to Agape as very young children, that have graduated from universities or trade schools and are

prepared for a life outside of Agape. Several have decided to come back to the only home they have known. These are now teachers, the campus nurse and school business administrator.

William has tightened Agape's relationship with the local village, and the kids not only help with town cleanup, but also teach classes based on skills he learned at SIFAT. Classes are held to demonstrate good agricultural skills and to help stop the spread of communicable diseases by stressing the importance of hand washing. They also invite the town teens to use our soccer field, a sure way to involve the young people of Mukono.

The thing William is most excited about, however, is that Agape continues "to lift the banner for Jesus!" One hundred twenty (120) students have accepted Jesus and been baptized.

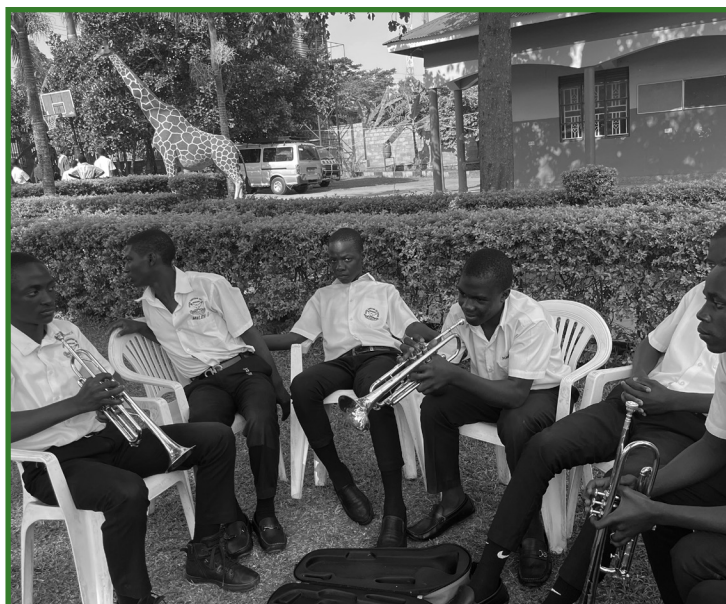
Twenty-five of those were Muslim students boarding at the school. This is what we are called to do, but it has consequences as their families often disconnect from these kids and refuse to pay their tuition when they become Christians. William asks for prayers for these young people.

We were always concerned that all focus was on academics and not enough fun for these active youth, but it seems that sports have been introduced to the campus. The girl's soccer team and Agape's cricket team made it to national level this year! They also have volleyball, basketball, table tennis, chess and beanbag competitions.

This is a praise report for a dream that often seemed too ambitious. But, Agape still has many needs. Parents are often too poor to provide all the tuition requirements, mosquito nets are needed to prevent malaria outbreaks, sports equipment and uniforms are lacking, food prices have increased alarmingly and the children desperately need dental care. SIFAT has donors who love what Agape is doing in Uganda to help these children, but it is not enough. If you want to help William continue his vision, please send donations designated ACA. Your donation will make a real difference in the lives of these children who have found a future through Agape Total Childcare Center. God is so good all the time, WOW!



Agape Total Childcare Center in Mukono, Uganda, continues to provide a loving home and quality education, improving the future lives of these students.



Introducing a New Generation to SIFAT

Matthew Ivey
Student Minister, Brandon (Miss.) FUMC

I first came to SIFAT around 2004 as a middle school student and fell in love. I attended multiple retreats as a student, and I even helped serve on support staff for summer camp when I was older. If you would have told that 15-year-old kid that he would end up in ministry and serve as a student pastor, he would have laughed at you! Here we are years later, and I have had the opportunity to take my students on a trip to SIFAT!

The world has changed since my days as a student, yet SIFAT is still as relevant, if not more than it ever has been. As I mentor and walk alongside the next generation, I see the need for these firsthand experiences. The Lord used our Learn & Serve Summer Experience in incredible ways. Students that did not know each other are now friends. Students that have been afraid to get involved are now 100% bought in to our student ministry. Through the Global Village Experience, I watched students that complain about silly “First World problems” seriously take a look at their lives and begin to understand how blessed we are.

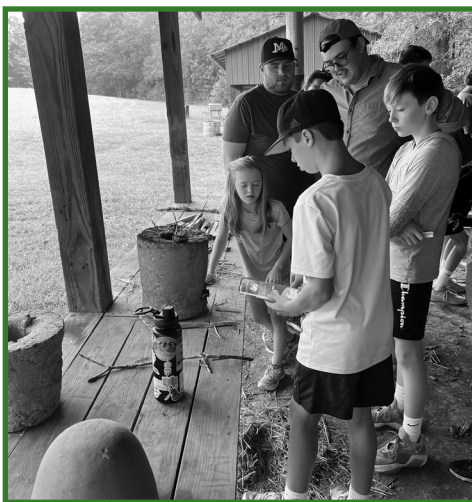
One student, who is just 13 years old, had had his fill of the Global Village as we prepared ourselves for bed. He was tired

and hungry, plus he had not slept outside before. He was all but ready to scream. As we talked and discussed the situation—and how much they had done in the village—he started to calm down. We were able to work through the tired, anxious and overwhelmed feelings to truly appreciate what had happened. It was a breakthrough moment for him, and I will

never forget it. I am proud to say that the next day, he was eating crickets! This young man who would not touch the black beans and other foods in the village had overcome those feelings and stepped out of his comfort zone to try eating insects when we were being taught about alternative protein sources that can be used to fight hunger and malnutrition.

I love SIFAT! We can talk and preach about comfort zones and stepping out of those. However, my dear friends and family at SIFAT do it in a practical and meaningful way. I have a small group of brave students that trusted me on this journey that are now advocating for SIFAT and planning our next trip to Alabama. Thank you to the incredible

staff at SIFAT. Brandon FUMC loves you, and we cannot wait until we can be together again!



Matthew came to Learn & Serve as a middle school student, volunteered in college and now is bringing his youth to SIFAT!

Schedule your upcoming L&S retreat today!
sifat.org/learn-serve | learnandserve@sifat.org

Butterflies for Self-Sustainability

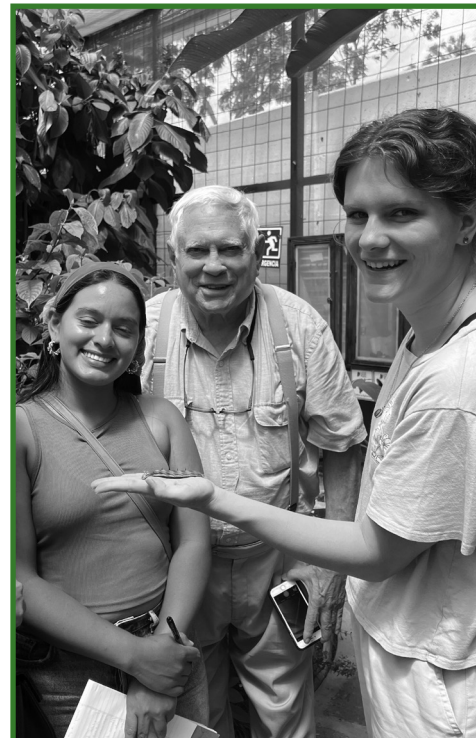
Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Costa Rica is the world's top exporter of butterflies. They are used in museums, laboratories and for craft and electronic use. It is an industry that relies on the production of the pupa by mostly rural families, making a unique small business opportunity with relatively little investment of infrastructure. Worldwide demand has increased and has exceeded the supply.

The Costa Rican government offers free training for those interested in becoming producers. There are models

for community cooperatives. Bill Trimble has done considerable research for SIFAT on the viability of butterfly farming to generate profit for our training center to become self-sustaining, as well as to establish a replicable model to engage our unemployed neighbors in butterfly farming. We continue to study more about this interesting opportunity unique in the animal kingdom, because their production causes no environmental waste. Two SIFAT graduates started a butterfly project at their prison ministry site in San Jose that we were privileged to visit previously.

Bill Trimble (center) took us to visit Butterfly Kingdom in San Jose, Costa Rica, to learn about the production and exportation of butterfly pupa. Most of the butterfly pupa exported from Costa Rica are produced by small farm families who join in a cooperative and send their pupa together to an exporter.



Learn & Serve on the Road

Marie Lanier Narváez
Promotions & Marketing Coordinator

During 2023, we continued to reconnect with groups who came to SIFAT before the pandemic and reach out to groups who have never participated in our programming. Our staff is always looking for opportunities to spread SIFAT's mission and build relationships through our campus programs. Sometimes, we end up taking Learn & Serve on the road!

In July, Shelby Dickey and Caroline Corson visited Trinity United Methodist Church in Birmingham during VBS. The children were learning about the depth of God's grace and love with an ocean and water theme. This theme created a perfect time to talk about water filters and how we can love others by helping bring them cleaner water. Almost 400 participants learned about the daily issues that people face

worldwide to have access to clean water. The students made their own water filter using a plastic bottle, a coffee filter, rocks and sand. They even tested their filters, which was fun for the kids! This activity helped them understand that cleaning your water is not always an easy process, and by the end, they had a better understanding and appreciation for clean water.

In September, Kaitlyn Glenn joined Shelby for another road trip. This time, they traveled to Community Christian School in Tallahassee, Fla., to lead chapel. CCS brings their leadership program to SIFAT every three years. Shelby and Kaitlyn also taught about edible insects in sixth grade classes studying nutrition. Even though they have not been to our campus yet, they were able to get a SIFAT lesson!

Interested in having L&S visit you? Contact Kaitlyn, glennk@sifat.org.



Reflections on a Summer at SIFAT

Sumia Rasberry

Learn & Serve Summer Counselor

I absolutely loved being a counselor this summer. Not only did I help spread the love of Jesus Christ, but I also got to be a part of something that was bigger than me. I was able to help open people's eyes to how many people in the world struggle with poverty day-in and day-out, not only in other countries but in the United States, too. We were able to conduct conversations on different topics concerning poverty and help spark ideas of ways we can help, whether big or small, that can start at home.

I have always loved to help in anyway I can. What intrigued me about SIFAT is that mission work is done in different countries without changing their culture or way of life. Instead, SIFAT tries to see things from the locals' point of view and to help find ways to sustain and implement new ideas into their way of living. I met some of the most genuine people, who all have the love of God and serving spirits in their hearts.

My time on campus truly allowed me to grow in my faith and walk with God, as well as taught me that it is ok to be uncomfortable, especially in different environments. It truly opened my eyes to how so many people in different countries live and the battles they face. The Global Village was a great way to show a glimpse of the challenges someone from a different country faces. Our programming demonstrated unfair wages, poor water usage and avoidable deaths caused by smoke inhalation.

Love, growth and serving is what I have learned. Though my time as an intern was short, I truly do love everything for which this organization stands, and I cannot wait to come back and serve again.



Sarah Francis

Learn & Serve Summer Counselor

Last year, my youth group participated in Learn & Serve. I got to experience the programming as a camper, and I was excited to get more involved with SIFAT to help further its mission.

My time as a summer intern was great! I was able to slow down and adapt to a different type of internship. I met people who have devoted their lives to missions, reaching others where they are. The close community you create in your short time here is unmatched.

I was intrigued by how SIFAT runs Learn & Serve, compared to other camps. The Summer Experience is focused on showing youth what other people around the world in hard conditions have to go through just to survive. Youth groups are challenged to overcome multiple obstacles, unique to scenarios in developing countries.

Sadly, some youth groups scheduled for this summer canceled, but I took the opportunity to learn about appropriate technology and water purification. I also got to see a lot of hidden places on SIFAT's campus I probably would not have had time to enjoy otherwise. I also became closer with the staff, because I had one-on-one time training with them.

We need college-age interns to be part of Learn & Serve!

Semester or year-long options are available.

Learn more:
sifat.org/learn-serve
learnandserve@sifat.org

Overall, I learned that SIFAT is a unique place with a lot of potential, and somehow, I want to invest more into it. I realized that I can live in a much simpler way than I thought. I also found that people can grow closer together quickly when faced with challenges. I watched it happen week after week. I learned that a simple change in a community could mean life or death. Finally, I learned God is always with me. I know that sounds like a given, but when you are faced with being alone, walking through the urban slums at night with just a flashlight to find your sleeping bag, you experience Him in a new way. (that whole experience was poor planning on my part, but a lesson well learned)

My favorite part of the summer was definitely the people I met. The campus is breathtaking, and my favorite moments included lying in a hammock talking to a friend about their faith walk, while looking up at the stars. Or, maybe it was sharing a lyrics paper with a friend while worshipping in the Q-hut.

Now that summer is over, I am trying to find people with whom I can surround myself to be a good Christ community and influence. People to teach me new ways to experience God and worship. People to sometimes challenge my faith in a good way. I definitely found that at SIFAT.



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**Tom Corson, Executive Director
Marie Lanier Narváez, Editor**

Return Service Requested

SIFAT's VISION: *Bridging the First and Two-thirds Worlds to alleviate spiritual and physical poverty, encouraging people to develop their God-given potential.*

SIFAT's MISSION: *To share God's love through service, education and personal involvement with a needy world.*

FROM THE DESK OF TOM CORSON

Weeks ago, someone asked if SIFAT evangelizes. My first thought took me back to a mission trip with another organization. Nightly, the team would share about “how many people they saved.” They were aggressively knocking on doors and standing on street corners asking, “Where would you go if you died tonight?” Their goal seemed to be self-serving, not creating relationships and discipleship. Then, I thought of our SIFAT graduates asking for help with the physical needs of their congregations.

My parents were missionaries since they married. When I was 10, we moved to Bolivia to plant churches and share the gospel. We learned firsthand what Christ meant when He said love the Lord your God with all your heart, body and soul AND love your neighbor as yourself. People were eager to listen, but were dying from simple things like lack of clean drinking water and malnutrition. Statistics show that more than 12,000 children under the age of 5 die daily because of hunger and related causes. When a local pastor held a funeral for the fourth person from a family that lost a child from easily preventable causes, the father said, “Man of God, speak to God for us and ask him to help us.” At that moment, the pastor told us he had nothing to

offer. This led mom and dad to start SIFAT.

Christ taught us to care for others. SIFAT strives to share God's love in practical ways. There is a saying “people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Building relationships makes someone want to know what you have to say. People need to hear the gospel—a personal gospel from you and me about what God has done for us. We need to preach with compassion for people in need. SIFAT graduate Raphael was visiting and shared about training Nigerian communities in appropriate technologies that save lives. He does not ask if they are Christian or Muslim; he teaches everyone. In their language, culture and customs, he shares about his relationship with Christ. It is not about trying to win an argument; it is about being filled with empathy, compassion and caring about a person as a child of God, who loves them and wants them to believe in Him. SIFAT strives to help you use your talents to further God's Kingdom through our lifestyles and actions, not with a bullhorn on the corner, but alongside our graduates' ministries, sometimes with a shovel or stethoscope in hand. This is how SIFAT is called to evangelize.