



SIFAT JOURNAL

SHARING GOD'S LOVE IN PRACTICAL WAYS

FALL 2024

Celebrating 45 Years: Aggressive Love

Ken Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

Editor's Note: This is an article originally written in 1979, the year SIFAT was founded. We wanted to share it with you again as SIFAT celebrates 45 years of Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways.

At this formative juncture in the creation of SIFAT, an institute for appropriate technology, I would like to introduce the concept of aggressive love and commend it as a part of the policy of the institute.

Historically, it is the usual thing to be provincial and parochial—that is until Caesar comes, Pearl Harbor is bombed or the Third Reich marches. Human nature does not seem to think on a global scale unless for selfish motives. Selfish motives then force the rest of us to think by way of reacting to the negative aggression.

If the positive forces of the globe could think in terms of

“According to Christ, the greatest commandment was to love, love not as a passive happening but as an active doing.”

- Ken Corson

aggressive goodness instead of the raw aggression of selfish interests, misled pilgrimages or “just wars,” if the positive forces were sincerely concerned and involved, the explosive consequences of negative aggression would be less likely to prevail.

The prime teaching of Jesus was to provoke us to an aggressive love. According to Christ, the greatest commandment was to love, love not as a passive happening but as an active doing.

The consequences of this concept of aggressive goodness are earthshaking. The major “evils” of the world are not merely the rampant meanderings of intentional wrong. Injustices of hunger, disease, poverty and ignorance do not exist by design. They are the consequences of our failure to love. It is not aggressive evil, but the failure of aggressive goodness, a failure to love, a failure to see who our neighbor is and what his needs are that perpetually plague our world neighborhood.

Help SIFAT Continue for the Next 45 Years



GivingTuesday 2024 is Dec. 3!

Start making plans to be part of **GivingTuesday 2024 on December 3!** This global day of giving kicks off the holiday season, reminding us to be generous with what we have been given and to bless others. By joining together on GivingTuesday, everyone's gifts create a meaningful impact for nonprofit organizations like SIFAT!

Watch our social media, e-newsletters and website for this year's goal and matching fund, as well as ways to donate. Will you share this opportunity with your friends, family, church and civic groups? Because of your participation, GivingTuesday is SIFAT's largest annual fund raiser and truly keeps our ministry going year after year.

Maybe Next Year ...

Marie Lanier Narváez
Promotions and Marketing Coordinator



(L to R) Huber, Angel, Marie and Peggy enjoyed visiting together in La Paz before the AU EWB team arrived. The time spent together was so beneficial for team building and encouragement for both our USA and Bolivian staff members.

While working for SIFAT, I have had the opportunity to travel on countless trips to Ecuador to help lead mission teams. It is such a special country to me because of the people I have met and how my experiences there have shaped my life — I even met my husband in Quito! But SIFAT's history is rooted in Bolivia, and I have wanted to visit that country, too. Since my first trip to Ecuador in 2007, I have heard, "Maybe next year, you can go to Bolivia." Well, next year finally came!

Last minute plans formed as Tom, Peggy and I finished our work in Ecuador. Instead of returning home, we flew from Quito to La Paz, Bolivia. Although this trip would be short for me, only a few days to shop for The Village Store at SIFAT and to help our SIFAT Bolivia staff prepare for the upcoming team, I was excited, yet unsure what to expect, despite hearing so much about Bolivia and seeing pictures of our projects in Quesimpuco.

After a nine-hour delay on our layover and too long getting visas, it was after 2 a.m. before we were officially in Bolivia. But we were not alone! Benjo, Huber and Angel came to meet us at the airport. I knew Benjo and Angel from their visits to SIFAT in Alabama, but I was finally meeting Huber in person, although I felt like we already knew each other from social media, emails and texts through the years.

Later that afternoon, my exploration of La Paz began with our personal tour guides —Benjo, Huber and Angel. From shopping in the markets to cable car rides to see aerial views of the city, these men shared their country with me. They answered my countless questions and made sure I was comfortable and enjoying myself.

A couple days later as we said good night after eating dinner and buying groceries for the mission team, it struck me that I was experiencing one of the concepts that SIFAT includes in our team leader training manual — the ministry of presence. I was not on a traditional mission trip at the moment. But with this opportunity, I could serve those around me with my presence. I listened to ideas for the future of SIFAT Bolivia that included ways to serve the community and possible ways to raise money. I hope they were encouraged with my interest and support. As I took in this new culture and place, I was learning more about my friends in Bolivia and about the people with whom SIFAT works. By being there in person, my comprehension and perception of the struggles and needs they face grew. I was also deepening relationships with the SIFAT Bolivia staff.



(L to R) Peggy, Benjo and Marie explored the city and reminisced about SIFAT and CENATEC's projects through the years.

Before I knew it, my trip was ending. Our Bolivian friends were not bothered by a late night flight, even when the team would arrive about 24 hours later. At 11 p.m., they arrived to take Peggy and me to the airport. As we waved one last time from the security gate, I reflected on my experiences these past few days. I saw the next generation of SIFAT graduates ready to continue and expand Benjo's life's work. I witnessed Angel and Huber's compassion and respect for Benjo, and I knew that we have competent, resourceful leaders with a passion for their people ready to serve.

I am grateful for the chance to go to LaPaz, and I hope it will not be my only trip to Bolivia. I still want to experience Quesimpuco and to visit my former SIFAT roommates Sara and Eva in Tarija. Maybe next year!

Mission Accomplished in Machachi

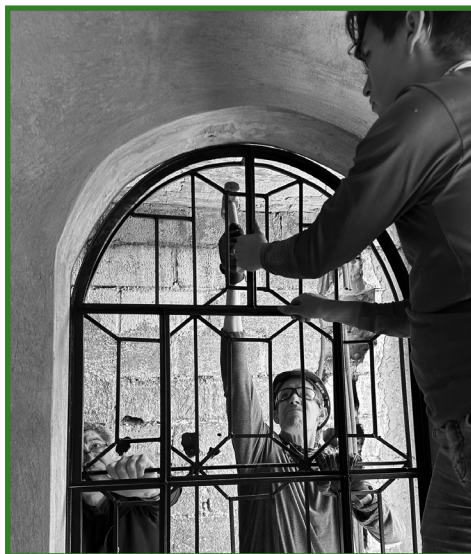
Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator

Mission Accomplished! After two years, the addition to the Asamblea de Dios church in Machachi was finished in July by a SIFAT mission team from Clear Lake UMC in Houston. SIFAT is still in the rebuilding stage with our international mission teams after the pandemic and recent UMC disaffiliation. However, by combining many of those wanting to serve from several different churches to make blended, cohesive teams, we seemed to have had exactly the numbers needed to complete the project on time.

Church services have now started in the expanded sanctuary in Machachi. Pastor Vicente and his wife, Carmita, have introduced so many in this growing community to the love of Christ through their ministry. They know the needs in Machachi and work tirelessly with the ladies of the church to make sure these desperately poor families know they are seen and that someone is there to help and to listen to their fears.

Our teams visited many of these families in their homes and saw firsthand how hard they are trying to provide a better life for their children in conditions some would consider hopeless. Knowing they have that unconditional love of the Lord and the compassion and care of a church family has given them the courage and determination to continue trying, since they know they are not alone.

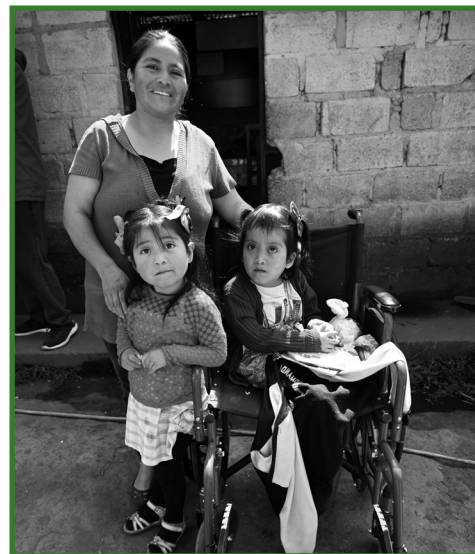
It is exciting to see how active the youth ministry is. With a team from Mt. Bethel Church in Marietta, Ga., we took part in an evangelism event in the center of town. The enthusiasm of youth leaders Carlos, Bryan and Marjorie is contagious. Drawn by the music and the message, several young people came



(L to R) Pastor Rafael, team member Michael Pubentz and Machachi volunteer Bryan reinstall a window on the sanctuary addition.

forward to learn more. Pastors from Mt. Bethel prayed with them, answered their questions about salvation, hugged and warmly welcomed them to be a part of the church. So many of these lost youth need only this invitation to begin to turn their lives around. The youth leaders are there to disciple these new believers and get them plugged into the active youth group!

It is always bittersweet to leave when a project has been completed. You cannot work together with these warm and caring people in Ecuador without feeling like you are part of their family. SIFAT has been working with Pastor Rafael and his wife, Anita, for 15 years. Machachi, and now Cutulagua, are outreach ministries from their church in Villaflora. There are more than 700 children from six outreach churches in the Compassion program under the umbrella of the Villaflora church. We know Pastor Rafael and Anita. We love them, and we trust them to know how best to meet the needs of the community in each new project where SIFAT teams serve.



Maria and two of her children invited team members into their home in Cutulagua. Learn more about Maria's testimony on page 16.

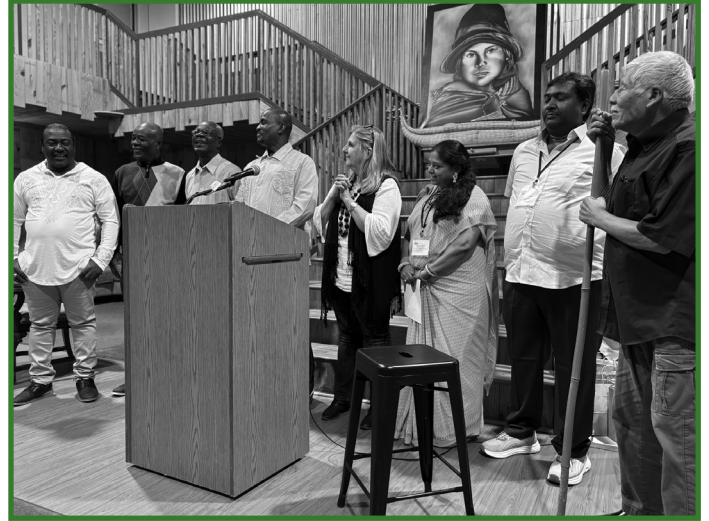
It will be the same in Cutulagua, where a team from Auburn University's McWhorter School of Building Science will begin construction in October on a new church. This facility will have classrooms, a kitchen, dining room and a small clinic for 160 at-risk children, who are currently waiting to start the Compassion International after-school program. As in all new projects, we need many teams to complete construction in two years. We will also need team members to work with children in VBS and medical teams to provide care for the people who have not had access to medical attention since COVID. SIFAT needs you!

Ecuador is a beautiful place to serve, and there is something for all ages. The needs are great, but the rewards of working alongside these wonderful people are even greater. Please consider joining or leading a team to Ecuador in 2025. Contact Peggy or Marie at internationalteams@sifat.org. I can promise it will be a life changing experience you will not forget.

May Field Study Recap

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

This year, we had a great May Field Study at our Alabama campus with 21 participants at our Alabama campus from eight countries in Africa (3), Asia (2), Latin America (6) and the Caribbean (4) and the U.S. (6). They were a diverse group, yet each contributed in unique ways to learning and teaching new skills while sharing life experiences with one another. Everyone at SIFAT is a teacher and a learner. New friendships were forged, and networks expanded. Our U.S. partners, as always, provided excellent training. It was also special to have Benjo Paredes from Bolivia, Byron Morales from Honduras and Wendy Matute, professor in the National Agricultural University of Honduras, join us as international instructors. Bob Wilson volunteered his time to photograph the May Field Study. He returned for two weeks to work with Benjo for an upcoming project.



SIFAT alumni from Haiti, India and Bolivia attended the May Field Study graduation. It was a joy to introduce them to the current class of graduates as we are working to unite our graduates into a global network.

Glimpses: A SIFAT Podcast

You do not want to miss out on *Glimpses: A SIFAT Podcast*, hosted by Josiah Corson. Catch up on the past two seasons while you wait for the release of season three later this fall. Watch our social media and e-newsletters for more information. The podcast is available on most podcast apps. Learn more or listen online on our website at www.sifat.org/about/our-podcast.

Glimpses includes interviews with SIFAT alumni, testimonies from staff members, conversations with friends of SIFAT and stories from SIFAT co-founder Sarah Corson's personal experiences in missions.



Stay Connected with SIFAT

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 or Learn & Serve's Instagram @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 for your info desk? Let us know how many you need.

Volunteers and Interns Make a Difference

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Madison Gnoose from Mississippi ended her one-year volunteer commitment in Costa Rica in June. It was amazing to watch her grow in cross-cultural understanding and in language competency. She put her science skills to work with agricultural projects and by leading the children's science club. She had the opportunity to put her excellent teaching skills into use during community workshops and training programs with children. She started a garden club to help the neighborhood women begin to garden and to feed their family more nutritious meals. Madison's heart for missions was especially evident by all the home visits she made and cups of coffee she drank with the neighborhood women. They all came out in force for her going away party. We miss her support, but are thankful for what she did by investing her time in the lives of the children and neighbors here in Costa Rica, as well as by helping to develop agriculture projects.

Our two new professional volunteers have come from Honduras to work for three months. Miriam Calix previously did her thesis with us on techniques to mitigate the effects of climate change on family farms. She graduated from the National Agricultural University of Honduras (UNA) as an engineer in natural resource management. Emily Mata

graduated as an agronomist from the same university. They are both very hard workers and are committed to giving their best to SIFAT. In January, we expect four to six new interns. The interns are vital components of our sustainable farm with their labor, skills and knowledge. We could not hire laborers to do such a great job as our interns do, because our interns do not see SIFAT work as a job, but rather as a chance to invest their lives in helping others. They are passionate about helping small family farms in Central America succeed. They are eager to make our model farm work as a living demonstration of how others can do it on their small acreages. They assist in our community workshops, conference presentations and practical sessions. We also invest in them as they return to work in developing communities in Honduras by facilitating their leadership skills, training them in SIFAT development principles and additional practical skills. Many have shared that their spiritual lives have grown, as well, while living with the SIFAT community.

Martha Nijssen of Connecticut, who was in our first SIFAT graduating class of 1982, participated in our June International Training in Costa Rica. She stayed for a month to volunteer as an English teacher and to help in the garden. We appreciated her time and dedication, as she showed her love for Christ and for the people she served.



Miriam and Emily, graduates of UNA in Honduras, are agricultural interns that are helping make our model farm productive and sustainable.



Martha learns to cook prestiños from Ismael, Don Jose's son and SIFAT volunteer. Ismael is a wonderful baker and cook.

A Difficult Decision Shapes a Success

Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

I just finished reading Pastor Obi's final report from his most recent project funded through SIFAT's Graduates' Projects Committee (GPC). This report shows a well-done project. I am so happy that SIFAT can help Pastor Obi. He is a dedicated Christian, and I will never forget when he attended the Practicum years ago at SIFAT.

This may be a long story, but I feel I must share it with you. While I sit here writing, I remember Pastor Obi and the last day he was with us in Alabama. I cannot keep the tears from my eyes, but they are tears of joy because of what God has done in Pastor Obi's life, spiritually and physically. It is based on a very hard decision he had to make, and thank God, he chose right!

After graduation, Pastor Obi asked to come to our house for advice before returning home. He was very worried. The next day, he poured out his heart to us, telling us that he was one of the leading pastors in his indigenous denomination. After years of struggling as a junior pastor with barely enough to take care of his family, he had reached a leadership role in the church, which allowed him to provide his children with nutrition and education. He said his denomination thought the only work for God is preaching and getting souls saved for heaven. Now, he had learned from SIFAT training and believed what we said — that meeting people's physical needs is also part of the Gospel. But, he thought his church leaders would not accept this idea. Pastor Obi worried that if he went back to preach and implemented the things he had learned, he would be fired and his ordination to pastor churches taken away.

He was greatly troubled. "I am ready to sacrifice for Christ myself," Pastor Obi said, "because I now believe that SIFAT's way is the will of God." He broke down and wept. "But I don't want to sacrifice my children. We will be evicted from the parsonage and be homeless. My children will have to leave

school and be undernourished, as I have no other job or way to support them."

We could not advise him anything new. He was convinced that God's will was to preach the integrated Gospel to body, mind and soul. But to do so was risking everything for him and for his family. "What can I do?" he pleaded with us for an answer to save him from that destiny. We could not give him his answer. We told him we understood. All we could do was to pray for him to let God lead him.

We had a time of prayer. Real prayer the African way. They pour their hearts out to God, and we joined him as he wept and prayed for God not to send him back to preach the integrated Gospel. When we finished, he got up off his knees with tears in his eyes and said, "Yes, I know what I have to do. I have to be faithful to God's message. He has given me this

light, and I have to take it to my church leaders, although I feel they will not accept it, but even if we die, I have to be faithful."

How we hurt for Pastor Obi, but we could not tell him what to do. Only God could. He would have to make the decision. All we could do was to pray for him. He made the decision on his knees in our living room and went home to face it. As he left, he told us about going to one of these villages before he came to SIFAT. It was far out and was very impoverished. Many were sick from drinking polluted water. He said as

he went into the village, he saw they were just finishing a funeral, burying a child that had died.

The grieving father looked up at Pastor Obi as he arrived and said, "Man of God! You come again bringing us the message of God's love for us. Where is your God? If He loves us, why do our children keep dying? Man of God, can you give us no hope?!" Pastor Obi said he had felt desperate for the man, but had no answer for him.

Now, he has an answer for that father, but if Pastor Obi takes it back to the village, he may lose his job and any way to keep his own children alive. But, he made the decision that



Pastor Obi (center) celebrates bringing clean water to a remote community! During training at SIFAT, he learned about the integrated Gospel to meet physical and spiritual needs, which led him to face a difficult decision for his future ministry efforts.

Successful Ministry

afternoon at our house.

“Yes! I am going back with hope for that village. I will teach them the spiritual things they need to know about God, and I will find a way to help them survive physically, even if my church throws me out.”

A month after he returned home, Pastor Obi wrote us from an internet café. He had called the church leaders together, and he told them what he had learned at SIFAT and that he had made a decision to follow that light God had given him in his ministry. The leading pastors were stunned. They thought that was dealing with worldly things, but they said let us pray about this. And, they did! They came back with the answer. “Brother Obi, we have heard you, and we believe you are right. We have only been preaching part of God’s message.” They asked him to lead and teach all the pastors the things he had learned at SIFAT.

After his willingness to sacrifice everything for God, it makes me so happy that SIFAT did not send Pastor Obi home empty handed.

I thank God for the GPC and how they have guided our graduates and raised funds for community projects, including Pastor Obi’s water boreholes. Pastor Obi can successfully preach the integrated Gospel to those suffering villages. When Pastor Obi gets water for them, it is not only physical water. It is the water of life, too, that Jesus gives. Pastor Obi really integrates the whole Gospel. He is Sharing God’s Love in Practical Ways!



Our Graduates’ Projects Committee receives applications from people who have completed SIFAT’s training courses and need financial aid or “seed money” to implement projects in their communities. Since 2017, Pastor Obi has successfully led five projects in his home country!

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.

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, corsont@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 in Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

SIFAT held an international training event at our Central American Training Center on June 12-23. Costa Ricans are accustomed to seeing Americans, but very few have ever met an African. The presence of Rhoda and Angie from Nigeria really brought SIFAT a lot of attention. So did having Jhony and Prasuna from India. The Hondurans were less exotic, but also promoted international exchange and learning. Having 12 internationals here for training opened institutional doors for SIFAT. The Ministry of Agriculture provided its best trainers for a special training on organic agriculture. The Costa Rican Office of Development also paid for a catered lunch for both participants and invited guests. It was great public relations with tours.

The mayor's office of Ciudad Quesada (regional center) hosted our group in their inner sanctuary, where they pass legislation, to share how they began to address unemployment among community women of limited education. They had previously engaged the business community in a three-month mandatory training in artisanal product development (foods, soaps, handicrafts, art, jewelry) and marketing for the women. Now was the culmination where the municipality set up a fair in the central park to promote these new entrepreneurs and their products. This last day, the vice mayor led our group to the municipal ribbon cutting of the women's entrepreneurial initiative. They dressed us all in Costa Rican attire, brought the music out and showed the internationals traditional Costa Rican dance. The media was there and spotlighted our international guests to witness the momentous occasion. Economic development government staff and university economic experts also came. We were able to meet and interact with new segments of the Costa Rican society. The best part was visiting the community women's booths to see their creative products and how they were so proud now, full of new self-esteem. It was very inspiring for our SIFAT students to get ideas.

Building on our earlier meetings in San Jose with the President's Office of Women's Affairs, we arranged a conference for them to meet our SIFAT international women and hear them speak about issues of poverty, child marriage, unemployment, illiteracy, domestic violence and disempowerment in Nigeria, India and among the indigenous in Honduras. It was an opportunity to make the connection that *injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere*. We proposed a future international conference, hoping to encourage travel funding for future SIFAT students through international funding that Women's Affairs receives.

We also went to the Ministry of Education and had a zoom conference to connect with the Network of Rural Women in Development—locals from dozens of small rural towns all throughout northern Costa Rica. Our SIFAT students were

the invited guests to share experiences with these marginalized rural women. The Costa Ricans were fascinated. In the end, they shared, "Well, we have some things better here—like free healthcare and clean water, but many issues we share in common as women such as domestic violence, poverty, low self-esteem, limited

education, and the need for empowerment... Your stories have encouraged us. We will not forget you and hope to keep in touch. Our prayers go with you back to your countries as you work to improve the lives of women and children..."

We also went to Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (National Technological University) and gave a presentation on SIFAT and the work of each of the students in their countries in basic human needs. We had an auditorium full of students and professors.

Our local neighbors and SIFAT committee members gave a wonderful welcome and send-off to the international SIFAT students. We hosted a cross-cultural night in the SIFAT Community Kitchen, where much of the neighborhood joined us to sample Nigerian, Indian, Honduran and American foods,



During a training in June, SIFAT students attended the opening ceremony for a ribbon cutting at a women's small business fair and dressed in traditional Costa Rican dresses.

(continued on page 5)

Thank You Centerpointe Church Men!



A small, but hardworking team from Centerpointe Church from Palm Bay, Fla., spent Labor Day Weekend at SIFAT in Alabama!



They fixed a broken door, painted the floor and worked on the sound booth in the Quonset Hut, which serves as our worship center for Learn & Serve events.

Support SIFAT While Shopping 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 or www.igive.com/sifat

Costa Rica

(Continued from Page 4)

as well as music and traditional dance. The Costa Ricans also brought their traditional foods to share with their new foreign friends. The internationals captivated our neighborhood kids with their music and stories. On Sunday, they also sang and shared with one of our local churches about Christians living under persecution in Nigeria and India; the church gave a special prayer for each graduate, which was very meaningful.

These visits and sharing have had an impact on our broader community here in Costa Rica, as they do when we visit churches in Alabama. I am convinced of the importance of the training that we offer—the concrete skills in nutrition, gardening, life-improving appropriate technologies. But I am also clear that the human interactions and sharing of faith and life experiences are cornerstones of community development, as well.

Thank You Summer and Fall Mission Teams

June Ecuador Team

Duncan Memorial Methodist Church and Friends
Alexander City, Ala.

July Ecuador Teams

Mt. Bethel Church
Marietta, Ga.

Clear Lake UMC and Friends
Houston, Texas

August Bolivia Team

Auburn University Engineers Without Borders

October Ecuador Team

Auburn University McWhorter School of Building Science

FALL 2024

SIFAT JOURNAL

Demonstration Farm in Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

At our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica, we continue to maintain and develop a demonstration farm. Don Jose, our farm manager, listed 55 different stations that we highlight on tours, including the tree nursery, compost area, animal areas, seedling area and different garden plot areas. Overall, we want to show how a family can live sustainably on a small plot of land, eat healthy fresh food, recycle farm waste back into organic fertilizers, promote plant and tree diversity that sustains a diverse ecosystem, be surrounded by beautiful nature and produce a little extra to sell. It has been a journey of ups and downs. We especially battle against all the fierce jungle ants that can strip our produce overnight and the rain deluges that come with living in a tropical forest area, besides the fungus that comes with all the humidity. But, we are learning new techniques constantly.



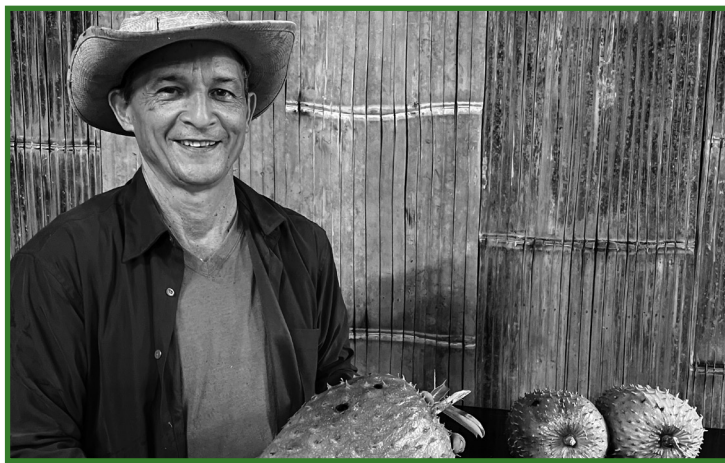
An areal view of SIFAT's one-acre model farm in Costa Rica. The house at the top of the photo is where our interns live.

Our farm animals include three pigs, two sheep, four goats, one cow, one calf, 15 chickens (cage-free layers) and 10 for meat/eggs, plus a dog and a cat. Additionally, we have the following: a resident skunk, tropical long-tailed possum, porcupine, armadillo, sloth mama and baby, noisy monkeys (across the river), large iguana, fleur-de-lances, bright blue snake and other nonpoisonous varieties. There are so many species of birds, such as red macaws, small green parrots and various hummingbirds! They love our fruit; it is a constant race as to who gets them first. We even have several famous species of frogs, including the crystal transparent frog, the tree frog and the blue-jeans frog. These are indicators of a balanced ecosystem and keep our mosquitos mostly in check. Butterflies love our tropical flowers, and the blue morph especially stands out.

Our garden produces several species of bananas and plantains, corn and red beans, as well as staple tubers, such as yucca/cassava, malanga, tiquisque, nampi and sweet potatoes. Fruits include guanabana/soursop, rambutan/mamon chino, naranjilla, orange colored limes, sweet limes, granadilla, starfruit, cas, papaya, mangos, avocados, water apples (like pears) and coconuts. Vegetables include Brazilian spinach, pumpkin, pumpkin squash, other orange squashes, chayote squash, zucchinis, bell peppers, hot peppers, cherry tomatoes, Chinese cabbage, Bok choy, Swiss chard, lettuce, arugula, katuk, Okinawa spinach and moringa. We even have spices, such as turmeric, chives, oregano, thai basil, basil, culantro, achiote and lemon balm. We also have medicinal plants, including "Hombre Grande" which locals declare cures anything that ails you. (If you survive the bitterness, you rejoice you are still living—my theory!). Finally, we have coffee plants and cacao plants for making chocolate. We use all of these products in our kitchen to cook delicious, healthy meals for our staff and guests.



Guiselle with chinese cabbage



Don Jose with guanabanas

From Bolivia to Alabama to Costa Rica

Tom Corson
Executive Director

One of SIFAT's successful graduates is Angel Roman. Angel's life has not been easy, though. His father died when he was very young, and his stepfather was an abusive man who threw Angel out on the streets around age 5. After years of exploitation in cruel situations, Angel's life turned around when he ended up at SIFAT's children's home in the jungles of Bolivia. There, he was adopted by SIFAT staff member Ivan Roman, who gave him a home and a family. (Listen to Angel's episode on our podcast for his inspiring testimony.)

Today, Angel works with his adopted brother Pedro and half-brother Carmelo, a teacher in Pocoata, to help serve children. Their ministry serves different communities, including Quesimpuco. By networking with several missions to facilitate their work, their impact becomes stronger. Each one focuses on different elements of the people's needs. Angel is the Bolivian coordinator for Covenant Life Ministries, a church based in Alabama, and teaches Bible Schools. Another ministry they work with is Galcom International's radio ministry that provides Christian radio in rural areas. Of course, Angel also works with SIFAT to teach appropriate technologies to produce more food, obtain clean drinking water and meet other basic needs. Using all these ministries in his children's groups, Angel reaches desperately poor children, and adults as well, with the integrated Gospel of Christ. He is a big help to SIFAT with our mission teams by helping install irrigation systems and by serving as a translator, guide and link between the team and the community they are serving.

Angel received a small grant through SIFAT's Graduate Projects' Committee to help bring clean water to the schools where he teaches Bible and appropriate technology classes to the children. The water in this area is polluted, and the water that is trucked in is questionable. SIFAT sent 150 water filters for Angel to take to schools in Pocoata. Each filter will purify a million gallons of water, so they last a long time. He is training 16 classes and two labs, approximately 500 children as well as the teachers, how to properly use and maintain them. He is also teaching about the need for potable water

and how it can prevent them from getting sick.

From time to time, SIFAT asks Angel to come to both our campus in Alabama and our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica to teach during training events. After helping with the Engineers Without Border's team in Bolivia in August, Angel traveled to Alabama, where he worked with Learn & Serve retreat groups and repaired the traditional Bolivian rock walls he previously built in our John Carr Memorial Garden.

In November, he will accompany Benjo Paredes and Huber Ramos to Costa Rica to lead a group of Quechuans and Aymarans, who will represent their tribes from Bolivia. SIFAT is sponsoring a training for indigenous people. Groups are coming from Africa and Asia, as well. Universities and churches have invited them to present a program on their tribes and their different cultures and customs. This event will feature indigenous people of the world who will be both teaching and learning from each other, as well as from SIFAT.

Perhaps SIFAT's greatest treasures are our graduates throughout the world. We are very thankful for the way they take the training they receive at SIFAT and return to their countries to teach their own people. Angel is just one of our excellent graduates who has helped extend SIFAT's ministry to many others. We are thankful for your partnership, Angel!



Angel (center) helped our campus staff with some of our late summer retreats this year. Having Angel on campus to share about his life and ministry in Bolivia is always inspiring to our staff and guests.

Trusting God

Iris Glass
Volunteer

Last year, I found myself at an impasse. I had completed a lot of training and programs to create my best self, my best life. I was finally ready to build my own tiny house. As I was engaged in this process—getting the land, clearing it, starting to build my foundation (figuratively and literally), planting a small garden—I was actually getting ready to have a small homestead, a dream come true.

When I was approached by a neighbor, I openly shared my plans. Although there was no HOA, I learned there were covenants that allowed the neighborhood to determine what I could and could not do on my property. I poured my heart and soul into this project. But in an instant, with a simple letter, it was stolen from me.

I had to trust that God had a better plan for me. I understood the neighbors' not wanting me to build a smaller house where there were more costly homes. But I also understood they lost an important person and a contribution to their community.

During that time, I was cleaning SIFAT co-founder Sarah Corson's home. It took me a while to open up, but when I finally did, she made a phone call. I had volunteered at SIFAT before, and Caroline and Josiah remembered me! They were happy to welcome me on campus as a volunteer and provide housing in exchange for my work on the appropriate technology model straw bale house.

I have spent the last year developing myself and watching the community here grow. I have found part time work with a master electrician, and it all started with a conversation with God the week that I was homeless. I knew I was following the guidance of God by being in Wedowee. I prayed for God to show me the way, and He has been evident to me ever since.

The way to cultivate myself with this community is similar to the way that I cultivate a plant. I had prepared the soil

already, but it was time to start planting seeds and harvesting some of the fruits. I have grown so close to Sarah. We have built an amazing garden at her home. I have found a closer relationship to God than I ever imagined possible. I am overwhelmed often with gratitude. There is a knowing in my heart that God loves me. I have been flooded with images of me from traumatizing times in my past. The message is that God never left me. All this time that I have been handling my healing alone, just waiting to be prepared enough to handle the glory of God, He has been beside me.



God works through the people here at SIFAT in wonderful ways. I look around me, and I see Him, hear Him and feel Him. It is in the eyes of individuals who are here, who are so obviously the hands of God. I could never come close to being able to express the level of gratitude and the positive impact that being at SIFAT has had on me, so I will spend the rest of my life being in service to God, continuing to follow His guidance and doing the absolute best that I can to use these skills that I have developed for good, because it is

what God has given me that has always been greater than my deepest desires.

Since being at SIFAT, I have learned to raise chickens and rabbits. I have learned hundreds of plants; I have watched hundreds of birds. I have seen the grace of God, His peace, love and generosity, pull people from the deepest darkest parts of life. It is my goal in life to continue to unite in the unconditional love that is God.

Like so many others, SIFAT has saved me. By creating community and offering love to those who never even imagined it existed or that they could deserve such a gift, SIFAT inspires so many who may not have had a shot at a decent life, and it is obvious to me that I am in the right place at the right time doing God's work, being involved in a community and offering progress in a process, as opposed to perpetually feigned perfection. In my humble opinion, that is a more inviting offer to the majority.

Buy a Brick in Sarah's Garden

Honor friends or family in a special way: buy a commemorative brick in Sarah's Garden! For details or to place an order, visit the Sarah's Garden tab under Get Involved on www.sifat.org. Questions? Email info@sifat.org.

Being a Servant

Madison Gnoose
Intern

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions, fame, status, or whatever is valued more than the Lord].”

Matthew 6:24

Serving Jesus is not always comfortable. He says things often that make us want to throw the Bible across the room and pretend we never read it. But is being comfortable really better than being like Him?

This August marks two years of being with SIFAT. The word “servant” is in the name, so it forces me to really consider what it means to be one. Who am I serving, actually? With whom? For what? Am I part time or full time? Clock in, I’m a servant of Jesus. Clock out, I am a servant of myself, of money, possessions and status. And then there are days when I am clocked in, yet I am still a servant of myself.

I thank God for His grace and wonder that He can love us, let alone stand us. But then again, He loves us because He loves, not because we are particularly lovely.

Being a servant of Jesus means really serving Jesus. And when do we serve Him? When He is hungry and we give Him something to eat. When He is thirsty and we give Him something to drink. When He is a stranger and we invite



Madison interned with SIFAT in the USA and Costa Rica. She is now on staff in Alabama and can be found working in the garden most days!

Him in. When He needs clothes and we clothe Him. When He is sick and we look after Him. When He is in prison and we come to visit Him.

And when do we do any of that? When we do them for any of the least of His brothers and sisters, we do them for Him.

These sheep who do His will are the righteous who have eternal life. Am I a sheep or a goat? Am I a servant of Jesus or of mammon?



Josiah Corson speaks at WOW, sharing some of the teachings from this summer’s Learn & Serve Blessed Are ... theme.

Worship on the Water Summer 2024

This year, we felt loved by Lake Wedowee. When we made the announcement that WOW would be postponed, offers flooded in to help bring it back, and messages shared how important this worship service is for our local community. We were surprised when the new owners of Allen’s Lakeside Marina told us that they had never had so many people contact them when purchasing a business — all because our neighbors wanted them to know how important it was to keep WOW going! Thankfully, it worked out for SIFAT to lead four services before summer finished with record numbers of attendees for Sundays in August. We are already looking forward to a full season next summer. Come by boat, come by car, come as you are!

Campus Staff Travels to Costa Rica

Madison Goose
Intern

My year of volunteering at SIFAT's Central American Training Center in Costa Rica came to an end in June, yet as I look back, I am thankful for all I have learned and for everyone who has been my friend and family while alone abroad. I never expected to be taken in as a daughter by the campus administrators, nor as a granddaughter by some of the neighborhood women, nor as a friend by the students. My heart warms with gratitude for countless hours drinking coffee with the staff and neighbors, as well as everyone's kindness as they taught me things from Spanish to milking goats to weeding with machetes. I am so glad I could be a part of the early days of this new campus, and I thank everyone supporting it as a center for agricultural and community

development.

In late July, the Galilee campus staff and I celebrated the end of Learn & Serve's Summer Experience by serving and connecting in Costa Rica. We were glad to paint and play games with the neighborhood kids, spruce up the training classrooms, work in the guanabana (soursop) orchard and, of course, see the creatures of the jungle. What's most valuable, however, is that now the campus staffs for both campuses have met one another. The better we know each other across campuses, the stronger we become in the international SIFAT family. There is now more opportunity for dreaming and working together for the Lord. We all happily anticipate more trips and connections to come!

I encourage anyone who wants a real experience amongst the heart of rural

Costa Rica to not just visit, but to stay and volunteer at SIFAT's campus. To be a fly on the wall during local and international training is to witness the spark of a turning point for many rural communities, whose local leaders gather to broaden their perspectives, compassion, and skill sets. To read a book or play a game with the kids is to sit with Jesus himself and to show a child that one more person is rooting for them. To work in the garden is humbling and has helped me better understand Jesus' teachings, as well as put good food on our plates.

To volunteer at any SIFAT campus is to be immersed in a hope-driven community, determined to be part of making a positive difference in our lives and the lives of others, for the glory of God. Reach out to us for more information on how you can serve!

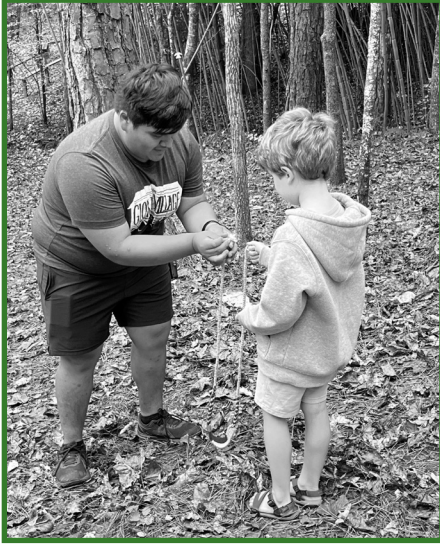


Make a Donation in Honor/Memory of Someone Special

Not sure what to get for a birthday 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.

Searching for Campus Interns!



Do you know a college-age person or recent graduate who is interested in missions and learning more about Christian community development? Tell them about SIFAT's internship program! Interns are vital for our campus programming, and our staff is ready to mentor and train the next group of interns. We are accepting applications now for Fall 2024 and Spring 2025!

Interns live on SIFAT's campus in Alabama while receiving training in community development, poverty alleviation, appropriate technology and missions. Interns also help with campus programming and upkeep. Internships are three to nine months long.

For more information or to apply, email Kaitlyn (glennk@sifat.org) or visit www.sifat.org/learn-serve and choose "staff & internships" on the left menu.

A Love Letter to SIFAT

Kinsey Holton
Learn & Serve Summer Intern

I found out about the opportunity to be a summer intern from a local library ad. (I am a senior at Central High School of Clay County, which is close to SIFAT.) I had been looking and praying for a good summer job, something that I would enjoy doing. From what I knew about SIFAT, and my expectations of what it would be like, I was excited to spend a summer growing my relationship with God, working with youth and getting a better view of how people are living around the world. While I knew that SIFAT provided the opportunity to learn about poverty, I was not expecting how this programming would emotionally impact me.

During training week, I fell in love with the campus and felt at peace. Something I always remember and appreciate were the beautiful walks to work every morning, going through the Global Village and sitting by the creek. When I went to the Village for the first time, I felt like I was truly walking in different countries and getting a genuine experience of being in a foreign place.

This summer was also one of the first times I would be staying away from home for longer than a few days without my family and with people I had never met. I knew that being the youngest intern meant I would be rooming with someone older than me. As we got to know each other, I could not have been blessed with a better roommate. Now, Sarah Francis is a sister and lifelong friend! Having her this summer helped me to take everything in, and I appreciated having someone beside me while going through all of these eye-opening experiences.

The first week with Learn & Serve participants was also my first time experiencing the programming. Out of all of the moments that impacted me, the majority of them I experienced while taking the role of a beggar in the slum experience. I knew this was a meaningful moment for the groups, too, and I wanted to do my best to portray my character, but also take in the experience with them. I am so grateful I was given this opportunity to fall in love with SIFAT this summer!



Kinsey (center) helped lead our Learn & Serve Summer Experience and continues to help at SIFAT, since she lives nearby.



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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

Home visits are a special time for our mission teams in Ecuador. We see Jesus working in the lives of our brothers and sisters. In July, a team visited Maria, who is part of the church in Cutuglagua. She and her husband live in a simple block building with nine children. Her husband picks up work when he can, maybe once or twice a week, but it is nothing he can count on. The only work Maria can find is washing laundry.

Maria was pleased to have us visit and immediately began telling us what God has done in her life. Her daughter Nohemí (6) was born with severe health issues. The doctors did not think she would survive the first night. Little Nohemí lived, but had to spend weeks in the hospital. This blessing also came with a struggle for Maria, who was torn between taking care of her other children or Nohemí, who now needed her full attention. Maria was desperate to care for everyone, but was thinking the world might be better if she and Nohemí were not a burden. As she considered suicide, she prayed to God to send help saying, "God, I need to know you love me."

Shortly after this prayer, a lady from the local church visited Maria, giving her encouragement and hope,

and said that her children could be part of the church's Compassion International program for "at risk" children. This would keep them in school and give them support with after-school tutoring and spiritual formation. What a difference this program makes in the lives of children! They now have an opportunity of Life, having been taken out of the poverty and hopelessness of the streets. It is making a tremendous difference in Maria's family.

SIFAT graduates in Ecuador have become partners with Compassion. Our mission teams build the facilities for the churches. With a facility, Compassion will provide the resources for a life-changing children's program. Our medical teams check the children to prevent deeper health problems. Teams provide VBS activities. Without help, these churches could not operate after-school programs. SIFAT could not help without people like you and our teams, who give of their time, talent and treasure. Together, we are creating a future for the youth of Ecuador. We welcome YOU as an individual, a team or an organization to join us in this mission to be a presence for Jesus with the children in Ecuador who are born into the poverty of these slums. Your participation makes a difference in the lives of desperately poor people, like Maria's family.