



## Solar Oven Partners Mission—July 2016

**By Ardell and Gordon Graner, Global Ministries Missionaries, The United Methodist Church**  
*Editor's note: The ministry of Solar Oven Partners UMC (SOP) has been told through the words of mission team members, in print and electronic newsletters, on the SOP website, and Facebook. Now it's also told through postings of Global Ministries missionaries Ardell and Gordon Graner, who, with the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED) church, are partnering with SOP to bring the blessings of solar cooking to the people of the Dominican Republic. Following is the account of SOP's July United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) trip as reported in the Graner Family blog.*

**O**ur Executive Secretary (Bishop) Miguel Angel Cancú sent the latest solar oven mission to three new sites on the north coast of the island: Sosua, Gaspar Hernandez, and Sabaneta de Yasica. We are always surprised by what we discover:

In Sosua we visited a community called Villa Liberación, a housing project built by the government to house a large group of people who previously lived in shantytowns located along the Sosua River. Poor people often build their shacks right up to the river's edge because no one else will. The risk of flooding is 100% whenever there is a tropical storm, or even a day of extra heavy rainfall. So the government relocated about 3,000 of these persons at high risk to the Villa Liberación housing project. The apartments are overcrowded, unemployment is high and water is scarce. Their lives are saved from flooding, but new miseries attend them.

We did a solar oven demonstration at Villa Liberación and it felt good to be with this community. It is a group of people who need

a break in life. The solar ovens can be part of an ongoing ministry of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ: the Kingdom of God is here and is coming. Our hope is to continue to share this message in word and deed.



Ardell Graner sharing the message with the women at Villa Liberación.

Gaspar Hernandez received us with open arms. The weather gave us some trouble in bringing a rain storm after we had started cooking. But after a half hour the sun shone again and we were able to continue to cook

*(continued on page 2)*



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- UMCOR Advance #418812...Online Giving Link <https://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Donate/Donation-Form?type=1002&project=418812>

\*Check out web site: [solarovenpartnersumc.org](http://solarovenpartnersumc.org)

\*Find/Like us on Facebook: **Solar Oven Partners**

# SOP Mission—July 2016 (cont.)

most of the food. Even though the demonstration was dampened by rain, Pastor Viloría and his wife Rosa could see the potential of the solar ovens and are enthusiastic to continue this ministry in their area. They too have a ‘river’s edge population’ with whom they would like to share this blessing.

Sabaneta de Yasica: here the sun was in full power with no clouds and we cooked chicken and beef, baked bread and cakes, made pizza, prepared vegetables and had a feast together for two days. The local church folks in attendance were more than excited; they were inspired. One woman declared she was “in love” with this new way of cooking. Another man stated with religious fervor that this new technology for him and his community was equal to that of the moon landing. And yet another

woman was caught up in the excitement of the moment. After the food had been removed from a very hot oven she asked how you turn it off.

*Gordon Graner (below center) checks out the food with newly trained solar cooks. A beautiful yard (at right) offered by a church neighbor is the perfect cooking site!*



The solar oven team makes this possible and we are grateful to each one who left home and hearth to respond to God’s call: Rick and Lorna Jost, Naomi Hatfield, Charles

Schnabel, Melinda Williams, the Rev. Phil Lint, Krista Honomichl, Makenzie Huber, and Brianna Whitaker.

*Follow the Graner’s work in the DR, including their first ‘solo’ solar oven demonstration in August led by the IED’s SOP project leadership team, at <https://granerfamily.org/2016/08/27/the-trainees-test-their-wings/>*

## Scholarship Encourages Youth Involvement

Two recent high school graduates found themselves in the Dominican Republic this past July as part of the SOP UMVIM team, due in large part to a scholarship in memory of a former SOP and mission enthusiast.

Krista Honomichl, Volga, SD, and Brianna Whitaker, Brookings, SD, experienced the joy of sharing solar cooking due to the youth/young adult mission trip scholarships in memory of Pastor Bob Neff. Bob and his wife, Bonnie, were frequent volunteers at SOP’s Volga workshop and also members of a UMVIM team to Haiti.

“I’m probably not going to be going on another Solar Oven Partners mission trip without Bob,” says Bonnie, “But if I could use the money I’d spend on a mission trip to help someone else, preferably a youth, to go and get interested in

missions, then I know Bob would approve.”



*Krista (left) and Brianna (center) working alongside a Dominican woman on the solar oven baking crew.*

SOP Director Rick Jost says the scholarship opens the door wide for participation of youth on SOP UMVIM teams. “Our volunteers are typically recruited, and the trip organized, in six to 12 weeks, which

doesn’t allow nearly enough time to save or fund raise the cost of the mission trip,” says Rick. “These two annual scholarships provide the kind of opportunity that the serious young missionary might otherwise have to pass up.”



*Bonnie and Pastor Bob Neff serving on the March 2012 Solar Oven Partners UMVIM team.*

For more information on the Neff Scholarship, express interest by writing to [rjost@brookings.net](mailto:rjost@brookings.net)

# Solar Oven Story Reaches Wide Audience

Through the engaging words, beautiful photographs and time lapse video of a South Dakota State University junior journalism major, a new audience is being exposed to the work of Solar Oven Partners UMC.

Sioux Falls' native Makenzie Huber, the recipient of a Pulitzer Student Reporting Fellowship grant, was part of the July UVMIM team to the Dominican Republic. Her charge: to report on a topic and region of global importance, with an emphasis on an issue that has gone unreported or under-reported in the mainstream American media. Having heard about the work of SOP at a presentation on campus and through her global studies instructor, Makenzie was poised to accept the invitation from her SDSU Journalism professor to seek the Pulitzer grant and focus on the impact of solar cooking in the Dominican Republic.

Since returning, her resulting articles, photos and video have been published on *takepart.com*, a website that explores pressing challenges including the

environment, social justice, human rights, global health and development, food and education. Her work is also posted on *pulitzercenter.org*.

"I reported on the use of solar ovens in the Dominican Republic... and how it will benefit the people," says



*In addition to journalistic pursuits, there were solar ovens to build...Makenzie forming reflective oven liners.*

Makenzie, who utilized her minors in Spanish and global studies to help collect information. "It was a very rewarding experience," she says. "I would use my limited Spanish to try and talk to these people, creating relationships with them and the team partners." She also relied on

assistance from translators to gather needed information.

Makenzie's articles include powerful stories from women who received solar ovens during earlier mission trips and use them regularly to supplement their gas stoves—reducing their purchase of costly propane. For one woman those dollars are now helping put more food on her family's table. Another woman is using the savings to help her pursue a nursing education.

Makenzie is back on the SDSU campus this fall, but anticipates utilizing her reporting skills to continue making an impact once she graduates. "I either want to report on politics on the state or national level, or go abroad and report on issues like solar ovens," says Makenzie. "I know that telling these types of stories and making a difference is what I want to do."

Find Makenzie's stories on *takepart.com* or *pulitzercenter.org* and type *Makenzie Huber* or *Solar Oven Partners* into the search tool.

## Search for SOP Director Continues

The search for a Solar Oven Partners UMC (SOP) Director to replace retiring Rick Jost continues. Rick will retire in February 2017, and as an SOP supporter and advocate you understand the importance of finding the right person with the necessary skill set, gifts and graces to fill this position.

This vibrant international ministry of the Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church has a 17-year history of placing solar ovens in the hands of the poor, and empowering persons through training in solar cooking and water

pasteurization. The Director provides supervision, instruction, and leadership in all SOP operations, recruits and manages volunteers, leads United Methodist Volunteers In Mission teams overseas, and works to expand and sustain the donor base.

If you know of someone who might possess these attributes, we ask that you point them to the Director's Job Description posted on the SOP website at:

[www.solarovenpartnersumc.org](http://www.solarovenpartnersumc.org)

Questions about the position should be directed to Search Task Force

chair Karen Workman at:  
701-250-9379 or  
[karenworkman@centurylink.net](mailto:karenworkman@centurylink.net)

The deadline to submit resumes is December 1, 2016.

“A career is something you choose; a vocation is something you are called to. A person choosing a career asks, How can I get the best job or win the most elections? A person summoned by a vocation asks, How can my existing abilities be put in service of the greatest common good?”  
—Brooks, David. "Why America's Leadership Fails" *New York Times*, August 23, 2016, page A23 of the New York edition.

**SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS UMC**

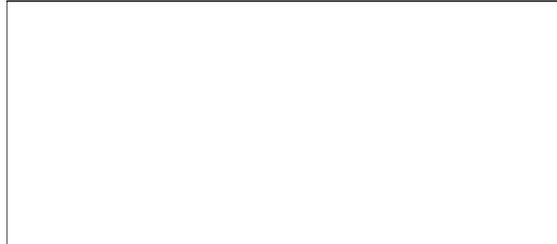
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## In Memory of Larry Burkhead

**By Donna Fisher, Member of SOP's Communication Team and Member of Canyon Lake UMC**

A member of the Solar Oven Partners (SOP) Board of Directors, dedicated advocate, and a two-time United Methodist Volunteer In Mission to Haiti, Larry Burkhead died on August 23, 2016. In addition to his passion for making the program financially sustainable, Larry dreamed of bringing hands-on SOP workshop projects to West River South Dakota.

“If I were to pick out just one example of Larry's leadership within SOP, it would be his gentle urging for our first retreat,” says Director Rick Jost. “The retreat opened doors to a broader, more flexible vision of the program's potential, and provided courage to dig deeper.”

As a community volunteer, Larry was honored for his work supervising teams to build ramps for handicapped persons and his work as a District Governor of Lions International. He was a stalwart in Toastmasters. He served on the Advisory Board of LoveINC Rapid City, chaired the Mission Committee at Canyon Lake United Methodist Church and taught an adult Bible study for many years. Larry founded a work team called Mountain Men for Storm Mountain Camp.

In his three-year battle with mesothelioma, Larry treated his diagnosis the way he faced issues of community and mission

need—problems to be analyzed, faced and fixed. His courageous participation in a series of clinical trials through the National Institutes of Health added data to the pursuit of successful treatment for mesothelioma victims.



*Larry Burkhead teaching Haitian boys how to frame a solar oven in July heat.*