



We Have Stories to Tell

Nothing illustrates the impact of a Solar Oven Partners (SOP) mission trip better than stories. Every mission team member comes home with their own collection of stories that describe the remarkable experience of putting a solar oven into the hands of the people we serve.

In March, 10 team members returned home after completing the third mission trip since August to the Dominican Republic. These men and women from the Dakotas, California, Wisconsin and Nova Scotia traveled to four impoverished small towns in the southern region of the country, giving seven solar oven demonstrations in eight days and distributing 90 ovens.

They didn't do it alone. Global Ministries Missionaries Gordy and Ardell Graner and representatives from the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED) church were critical to the success of the trip. There was even some drama involved. A full sea container of more than 5,000 black enamel cooking pots had arrived on time at a port in Santo Domingo, but were held up in customs. "We had to wrestle the government bureaucrats until the final hours of the last day, but the pots were finally liberated from taxes," Ardell says. "We met Rick and the solar oven team at the airport on March 7 with the good news that the pots had been liberated from government captivity the night before and we all rejoiced."

It was a mission trip like no other. But then, each SOP mission trip is unique. The stories are unique as well. So sit back and relax. We have a few stories to tell...

Ruth's Story: an "AhHa" Moment

Ruth Jost Harding, a retired teacher from Wisconsin, is SOP Director Rick Jost's sister. She and her brother, Randy, a retired forester with the United States Forest Service, were first-time SOP mission team members.

"People at the seminars were so eager to participate. There were so many people busy putting ovens together, doing the food prep, going back and forth to put the food in the ovens. The people wanted to see the entire process, and when they got the pots out of the ovens they lined them up on the table and participated in dishing out the food..."

"Everybody was amazed at how good the food was—and such a large variety—macaroni and cheese, breads and cakes, rice
(continued on page 2)



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We Have Stories to Tell (cont.)

and beans. It was all delicious. And then, the people who took the ovens home—it was like they had won the lottery! They were so thrilled at being able to go off with them, knowing they would be able to use



Ruth Jost Harding and Randy Jost get some help putting solar ovens together from some young Dominicans.

it to feed their family. Being part of this mission team was an ‘AhHa’ moment—like a light bulb that turns on in your head when you actually get to see how this works. You hear about it but I don’t think anything can replace actually being there. It was the best experience of my life.”



Brenda’s Story: Delicious Cake
Brenda Hare traveled from Nova Scotia, Canada, for her first mission trip with SOP. Brenda joined her twin sister, SOP Board Member Karen Workman of Bismarck, ND, a veteran of SOP mission trips.

“Our trip to the Dominican Republic was broadening in every way. The most memorable moment for me was walking into Batey 7 to buy coconuts from an ‘old’ couple who were huddled in a dark, dilapidated house with a dirt floor and no light source. The Dominican ladies at the Batey had rejected the coconuts we bought at the market, but were very happy to bake their coconut cake using coconuts supplied in the Batey. The cake was simply delicious!” *(Bateys are Haitian-Dominican communities of impoverished sugar cane workers—often spanning generations—without citizenship in either country.)*



Cakes ready for oven (above);
 Brenda ‘friending’ at Batey 7 (left);
 Coconut cake hot from oven (below).



Jerry’s Story: Why We Do What We Do
Jerry Suko is a retired railroader from Bismarck who has volunteered in the SOP workshops building reflectors at Moffitt, ND, preparing oven components at Volga, SD, and helping with the French bread pans

in Raymond, SD. This was his first SOP mission trip.



Retired railroader and workshop volunteer Jerry Suko experienced the joy of distributing ovens during his first SOP mission trip.

“When we went into Batey 7 the first day everybody swarmed into the area to see us. They came to the cooking area and stared at the ovens. They couldn’t believe we could cook with just the sun, and some of the young people asked where was the gas. They thought we were trying to trick them. When they actually got the food prepared that day—using the sun—the mission team didn’t get any food because there wasn’t any left!

“It’s such a rewarding experience to be there and see the looks on their faces when they take home the ovens—and the hugs you get from the kids. I know now why we do all the work we do back home... why we push so hard in the workshops to prepare the oven components for shipment. It makes everything we do here in the states more meaningful.”

Oven-a-Month Partner: Brookings First

It isn't a surprise that Brookings First United Methodist Church was the first to sign on to the Oven-a-Month Challenge back in 2014. After all, the church has been a supporter of Solar Oven Partners (SOP) since the ministry's inception in 2000. The fact that Brookings, SD, is the official home base of SOP plays an important role in this congregation's passion for the program.

"Our church is very committed to the Solar Oven project," says Brookings First Pastor Wade Miller. "We are a long-standing partner in supporting this ministry."

Support has come in a number of ways, says Lorna Jost, a member of Brookings First Missions Committee and coordinator of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission for the North Central Jurisdiction (UMVIM-NCJ). UMVIM-NCJ and Solar Oven Partners are two of the UMC's 800 Advance Specials—those projects that are part of the UMC's designated giving arm—and both are based in Brookings.

"At many churches, the Christmas Eve offering has been designated for the operating budget," explains Lorna. "Brookings First always gives that offering to missions, and

throughout the years Solar Oven Partners has often been a recipient." This year the offering was divided between SOP and the Harvest Table, a feeding ministry in Brookings. In the past, Brookings First has also supported SOP with proceeds from its fruit slush stand at the very popular Brookings Summer Arts Festival in July.



Pastors Theta and Wade Miller at Brookings First United Methodist Church.

Creating a festive solar oven
The church lifted SOP in a new way this past Advent and Christmas season. "We traditionally have people bring Poinsettias in honor or memory of loved ones," says Pastor Wade. This year, he says, people could still order Poinsettias, but Brookings First also used the solar ovens as part of its Christmas decorations and as a way to promote giving a solar oven as an alternative gift. Poinsettias, he says, were nestled around a solar oven; in the Community Life Center the solar

oven's reflector was covered with bright Christmas lights. "It provided a little Christmas cheer while promoting the ministry of SOP," explains Pastor Wade. "If someone wanted to give a gift that continues to give and change lives, they could give an oven in memory or in honor of someone."

With its proximity to SOP's Volga workshop, numerous Brookings First residents have traveled the few miles to volunteer their time in preparing oven components for shipping. And during the most recent SOP mission trip in March to the Dominican Republic, David and Mary McCaa became the newest Brookings First members to join an SOP mission team. Three more church members will be joining Rick and Lorna Jost on the July 4 SOP team: Charlie Schnabel, Krista Honomichl and Brianna Whitaker.

"Missions has long been an important part of this church and its history," says Pastor Wade. "My hope is that we will not only continue to support this ministry financially, but also increase the number of people that are able to go on mission experiences—whether that's close at hand at the SOP workshop or on a mission team."

Story of SOP Opens New Chapter

The search for a new SOP Director is underway. "Telling Our Story" is the theme of this issue of Solar Oven Partners UMC. The story of Solar Oven Partners has been told by our many volunteers, friends and supporters for over 16 years under the guidance of Rick Jost, SOP's

missionary and director. And, you know, stories tend to have chapters, moving the narrative forward.

As dear friends of SOP, many of you have been a partner with this ministry through these chapters in prayer, financial and volunteer support. For example, SOP turned

the page to a new part of the story in the summer of 2015 when we took our ministry of cooking with the sun into the Dominican Republic after 15 years in Haiti. You have generously moved forward with us, continuing to lift SOP in so many ways. And now we're ready to turn another page. *(continued on page 4)*

SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS UMC

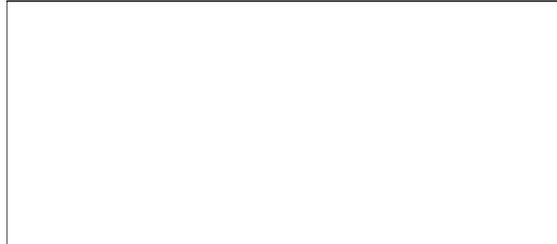
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Story of SOP Opens New Chapter (cont.)

At the end of February 2017, and 17 years on an amazing journey with you, Rick has decided to step back from SOP—at least from the director position. While he intends to remain active in the workshop activities, and continue to make occasional mission trips, he and Lorna, who is also retiring from her job as coordinator of the North Central Jurisdiction UMVIM program, want to be able to devote more time to their family and other personal interests. Rick also wants to step back now so that a new director can be chosen, ensuring that the ministry is under capable and caring hands to take it into the next chapter.

The official announcement of Rick's retirement and the opening of the director position is being made at the 2016 Dakotas Annual Conference June 8-11, but we wanted to let our strong partners, like you, know, as well. You've been a vital part of this story and the work we do in the name of Christ.

We also are asking for your assistance. Many of you know some of the gifts and graces needed to be successful in carrying on this ministry of the Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church. You may know of someone who has the necessary qualifications and passion for both the mission program of the United Methodist

Church and this ministry's goal to bring solar cooking to those who need it most. Please invite that man or woman to review the job description posted on our web site at solarovenpartnersumc.org.

Questions about the position should be directed to SOP Board Member Karen Workman at 701-214-2234 or karenworkman@centurylink.net.

We cannot thank enough for your continued support, and we look forward to this new chapter.

The SOP Board of Directors