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Solar Oven Partners UMC

Dakotas Conference Mission Newsletter for SOP UMC

The Oven that God Built

Are you old enough to remember the nursery rhyme *This is the House that Jack Built*? It's called a cumulative or chain tale, with each line repeating and building as the tale progresses. As Solar Oven Partners (SOP) Director Rick Jost returned from the December mission trip to the Dominican Republic, the progression of events in this new SOP venture had him putting new words to the old tale.

This is the oven that God built.

*This is the sun
That heated the oven that God built.*

*This is the food
That cooked in the sun
That heated the oven that God built.*



The seven-member SOP mission team worked with those in the Dominican Republic to share the good news of solar ovens. From left to right, standing: Harris Bailey, Wahpeton UMC; Loma Jost, Brookings UMC; Barbara Krumm, Eureka UMC; Gordon Graner, Global Ministries (GM) Missionary; Meri Martin, Washburn UMC; David Stearns, Hartford UMC; the Rev. Erasme; Beth Swanson, Bismarck McCabe UMC; Ardell Graner, GM Missionary; seated l to r: Mario and SOP Director Rick Jost.

*This is the woman
That prepared the food
That cooked in the sun
That heated the oven that God built...*

"All the indicators of SOP's new venture in the Dominican Republic point to this being Spirit-led," explained Rick. "During the December mission trip we saw the fruits from our August exploratory trip, and this trip was another strategic step in building a new partnership for SOP." Each step, he stressed, has been built on the step before, and it all began with the oven that God built through the continual support of the ministry's many partners.

During the December 1-10, 2015 mission trip, the seven-member mission team built solar ovens and conducted training sessions at five sites in the Dominican Republic. Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED) churches serve as an essential component to the SOP partnership in this Caribbean country, and the team's training and assembly sites included

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*Check out web site: solarovenpartnersumc.org
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The Oven that God Built (cont.)

IED churches in Samaná, Barahona, Baní, San Rafael and Villa Duarte (Santo Domingo).

A tale of excitement

The solar oven training and distribution in San Rafael was a prime example of the “cumulative tale” of the program in the Dominican. The Rev. Cristina Martinez attended one of the solar oven demonstrations during the August exploratory trip, and took an oven back to her San Rafael church. Her excitement about the solar oven ministry has spilled over to the people in her church and community. Of the ovens distributed at five sites in December, the greatest number went out at San Rafael.



The Rev. Cristina Martinez (second from left) was all smiles when the SOP mission team came to her church at San Rafael, Dominican Republic. Her enthusiasm spread to people in her church and community.

“The San Rafael Church is located in a heavily populated urban barrio,” explained Gordon Graner, Global Ministries’ missionary in the Dominican Republic who, with his wife and fellow missionary Ardell, is helping to facilitate the IED and SOP partnership. “About 60 people came to check out the solar ovens and it was a delight to see so many people of all ages so enthusiastic to learn, cook, and enjoy a solar oven picnic.”

That contagious enthusiasm is a critical factor in building a successful solar oven ministry. “The more that the local churches get opportunities to cook with solar energy, the more the excitement grows,” explained Gordon. “After receiving two SOP mission teams in 2015, the church grape vine is beginning to carry the news of this new ministry.”

Gordon and Ardell, along with the Rev. Maria Bock, director of the IED Social Action Committee, were also invited in January to demonstrate solar oven cooking for the National Assembly of the IED. Equivalent to a United Methodist Annual Conference, the National Assembly includes all IED pastors and lay delegates.

“Our Bishop Cancú invited us to demonstrate solar cooking in order to give the solar oven ministry maximum exposure to the national church,” explained Gordon. “It was an excellent time to give the Dominican Evangelical Church leaders a close look at solar oven cooking and a taste of ‘comida del sol’—food from the sun.”



The Rev. Maria Bock and a Dominican woman check on rice cooked in a newly assembled solar oven during the December SOP mission trip.

Solar Oven Partner mission teams are already scheduled to travel to the Dominican Republic March 7-18 and again in July. The March team is complete, said Rick, but those interested in joining the July team—or teams in the future—can contact him at rjost@brookings.net, or call 605-692-3391. Whether you join a team, pray for this ministry, or give with your dollars or time, remember that you’re continuing the cumulative tale of the oven that God built!

Want to Know More?

If you'd like a first-hand account of the exciting SOP ministry developing in the Dominican Republic, we'd love to come speak to your church or organization. We have members of our mission teams ready to share their stories. Contact Rick Jost at rjost@brookings.net, or call 605-692-3391, to make arrangements.

A Tale of Three Women

Until the day of the pre-mission trip orientation meeting, Beth Swanson, Meri Martin and Barbara Krumm had never met. These women shared some things in common, though. All three North Dakotans were inspired to sign up for the December 2015 Solar Oven Partners United

Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) trip. Their catalyst: people who had a passion for SOP.

A member of Bismarck’s McCabe United Methodist Church, Beth explained she’s part of a prayer group with SOP board member and enthusiast Karen Workman. “We

hear a lot about solar ovens from Karen,” Beth explained. “She told me last fall, ‘Beth, there’s a trip to the Dominican Republic. What do you say?’ And I said YES!”

Meri, a member of Washburn UMC, heard Karen’s SOP presentation at a

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A Tale of Three Women (cont.)

United Methodist Women's meeting. "Karen is so excited about SOP, and she was working on me to go," said Meri. "Being part of a mission team to the Dominican Republic was way out of my comfort zone, but I decided that sometimes you just have to pray to God and go."

Barbara, who lives at Zeeland, ND, crosses into South Dakota to attend Eureka UMC. She took a youth group for a work trip to the solar oven workshop near Moffitt, ND, operated by SOP Board Member Dave Silbernagel and his wife, Renae, and was hooked. "In America it can be too easy to be a Christian," says Barbara. "I really wanted to see what it's like for people to really believe in God and trust in him when life isn't so easy. What would it be like to trust in God for our everyday sun?"

Building relationships is key

The 10-day trip took the women, and their four counterparts, to five training and assembly sites at churches across the country. The experience, say all three, was an awakening.

"It was a wonderful trip but an eye opener," said Beth. "The level of poverty was more than I expected. We take so much for granted, and these people take nothing for granted." Barbara agreed, adding,



L to R: Beth Swanson (white, plastic thumbscrew clenched in her teeth) partners with Barbara Krumm and Meri Martin to assemble solar oven reflectors late one December night at IED's Bani church camp.

"People in our country think having a solar oven is a novelty, but for them it's a necessity. I could see the excitement in their faces."

Meri thought a comment made by Gordon and Ardell Graner, United Methodist missionaries in the

Dominican Republic and facilitators of the SOP program there, was telling. "They told us, you can go on vacation and hear and see a culture, but when you taste the culture—build ovens and cook with them—you really experience their life."

You also build relationships, and that, says Barbara, is the heart of mission. "I sum up my mission trip with these words: I learned more than I taught and received more than I gave," she explained. "God is in the people business, and we need to be too. Solar Oven Partners is not just about cooking with the sun, but creating relationships with God's people. That's what this ministry is really about."

As for Beth, Meri and Barbara, the former strangers are friends. They stay in touch through Facebook and have gotten together for lunch since they've returned home. "This time we were all cleaned up and had our hair fixed!" said Beth, laughing. Added Meri, "I think we'll be friends for a long time."

Generous Giving Warms Hearts

It's the coldest season of the year, but there's an inner glow that happens this time of year. Solar Oven Partners (SOP) is taking stock of financial gifts to its ministry from both the #GivingTuesday online event on December 1 and Alternative Giving during the Advent/Christmas season. Once again, we're counting our blessings.

On the third ever #GivingTuesday event, supporters of SOP donated \$15,769. Global Ministries matched \$6,175, making a grand total of \$21,944. "The \$6,175 in matching

funds alone provides 41 solar ovens for trained Dominican families living in poverty," said SOP Board Member Karen Workman. "It is truly amazing that 539 Advance mission projects worldwide benefited from #GivingTuesday's monetary gifts. I give thanks and celebrate that Solar Oven Partners was one of them."

Reports on Alternative Giving are yet to be finalized, but as of mid-January the figure stood at \$20,756, including gifts from individuals, churches and United Methodist

Women's groups within and outside the Dakotas Conference. "The overwhelming response from donors during November and December warms my heart," said Karen, a member of McCabe UMC in Bismarck. "They understand a solar oven is the gift that keeps on giving, a gift that improves lives."

Karen was especially pleased to see the generous response from local UMW groups in the Dakotas Conference. "We thank these local UMW organizations for their generous support."

SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS UMC

Solar Oven Partners UMC
928 4th Street, Ste 2
Brookings, SD 57006-2172

~ CONTACT US ~

Rick Jost, United Methodist Missionary
E-mail: rjost@brookings.net
Phone/Fax: 605-692-3391
Web: solarovenpartnersumc.org

Connie Smith, Newsletter Editor
Phone: 605-363-5097
E-mail: cmsmith@siouxvalley.net

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Volunteer Déjà Vu at SOP

Sometimes you simply feel like you're reliving a past event—a moment of déjà vu. It happened to two members of a team from McCabe UMC that came to volunteer at SOP's Volga workshop this past January. Although teams from this Bismarck church frequently travel the more than 380 miles to volunteer at the Volga workshop, the volunteers vary each time. This time, however, two of the "McCabers" on the team, Pat Wood and Shelly Rowe, realized that they had served together on the same team on February 17, 2010! That wasn't the only coincidence. During both trips they worked side-by-side tracing patterns on hundreds of sheets of insulation that would be cut for the oven construction. And we have photos to prove it. Six years might bring a few physical

changes to our volunteers, but does nothing to dampen their enthusiasm for this ministry! In fact, this time they encouraged their husbands, Larry Wood and Mike Rowe, to come along.

If you're interested in making lasting memories volunteering to work at SOP's Volga, SD, or

Moffitt, ND, workshops, or joining a team to the Dominican Republic, just let us know. Contact Rick Jost (Volga workshop or mission trip) at 605-692-3391, rjost@brookings.net, or Dave or Renae Silbernagel (Moffitt workshop) at 701-391-9468 or 701-425-1382, silbernagel.dave@yahoo.com.



Pat Wood, right, and Shelly Rowe, both from McCabe UMC in Bismarck, tracing insulation patterns at the Volga workshop in 2010.



Pat and Shelly felt a bit of déjà vu this January in Volga when they again worked side-by-side tracing insulation.