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Solar Oven Partners UMC

Dakotas Conference Mission Newsletter for SOP UMC

Solar Ovens on the Rosebud

When Solar Oven Partners (SOP) Director Marj Evans-de-Carpio and Tree of Life* Executive Director Linda Garriott talked about their respective ministries, both could see potential, but neither could have imagined the synergy that God had in store.

The igniting spark to send forth Lakota volunteers in mission from the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota to the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona moved both women from seeing the potential to actually formulating action plans.

Because the Tree of Life ministry in Mission, SD, hosts Volunteer-in-Mission teams from across the U.S., Linda was ecstatic about the opportunity for members of the Lakota community to experience how serving as a Volunteer-in-Mission can have a life-changing Christian impact on one's life.

The new partnership was forged when Linda invited Marj to conduct a solar oven seminar of building ovens, cooking and distributing ovens on the Rosebud Reservation in preparation for the trip to the Navajo Reservation. The result—in a period of two days 13 ovens were distributed to families on the Rosebud Reservation.

Linda saw this distribution of ovens as an opportunity. She requested the assistance of Boys with Braids, an organization on the Rosebud Reservation that serves teen boys. The distribution served as a leadership development experience for the boys, a service project for their community, and introduced potential volunteers-in-mission to the SOP ministry.

**Tree of Life is a nonprofit ministry of the United Methodist Church, raising cultural awareness, helping the vulnerable, and facilitating cooperation among service agencies and organizations.*



On the Rosebud Reservation in June, adults and a group of teens called Boys with Braids were very curious about whether these black boxes with shiny reflectors would really cook and bake. Seventeen participated in the class and SOP distributed 11 ovens.

Who would have guessed solar ovens could generate a buzz on a South Dakota reservation? Linda reports that since the cooking seminar, Tree of Life has been using their solar oven to cook for the soup kitchen. People also see possibilities of summer cooking outdoors to keep from heating up the many mobile homes that have no air-

(Cont. pg. 2)

 **The Advance**
Advancing hope in Christ's name

DONATE an OVEN for \$150

- Dakotas Advance #637...Checks to: Solar Ovens / PO Box 460 / Mitchell, SD 57301-0460
- UMCOR Advance #418812...Online Giving Link <https://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Donate/Donation-Form?type=1002&project=418812>

*Check out web site: solarovenpartnersumc.org
*Find/Like us on Facebook: **Solar Oven Partners UMC**

Rosebud (cont.)

conditioning.

Linda says many reservation homes shut off electricity in the summer months and cook with wood or camp fires to save money. "What if they could use solar cooking in the summer to provide hot meals, baking, etc. and not deplete winter wood resources?" she asks. "Using solar cooking might be an important step toward food sovereignty."

After juggling dates and weather, this September Linda and college student Cleo Whiteface traveled with Marj and Marj's husband Lalo to share solar oven building and cooking seminars with the people of the Navajo Nation in Arizona. It was the second year SOP has partnered with Faith Works, an ecumenical organization that connects church groups with mission opportunities in Arizona and beyond.

"Marj gave us a gift of showing us how to build ovens," says Linda. "Our going to Navajo country with her was part of paying it forward. Marj was willing to share with us, and it was only right that we would go to 'our relatives' in Navajo Country to share with them."

Pray for Teams...

Sierra Leone—Nov. 26-Dec. 9, 2018

Travelling volunteers will work with local church members to teach solar cooking and distribute ovens in this West African nation.

Dominican Republic—Jan. 7-16, 2019

SOP will be conducting three two-day solar cooking seminars and oven distributions alongside our Dominican Republic counterparts.

...Or Serve!

Dominican Republic—March 1-10, 2019

Team spaces are still available for the March journey to the Dominican Republic. For more information go to

www.solarovenpartnersumc.org and scroll down the Home page for an events calendar, or contact SOP Director Marj Evans-de-Carpio at 605-692-3391, sopdir@swiftel.net.

Grandmothers, Aprons and Kneel Down Bread

Editor's note: Cleo Whiteface is a Rosebud Lakota who traveled with the Solar Oven Partners Volunteer-in-Mission team to the Navajo Reservation this summer. Cleo is a Sinte Gleska University student majoring in construction and building trades.

What made you decide to go to Arizona with Marj Evans-de-Carpio of Solar Ovens and Linda Garriott, Director of Tree of Life?

I'm usually such a shy person and when I'm around new people, I go totally silent. I did realize that I needed to get out of my comfort bubble. [On the way to Arizona] Marj and Lalo and Linda were always asking me questions and telling me new stuff that I didn't know. By the time we got there I was really excited to meet more new people.

Marj described your making beautiful relationships with the elders. How did this work?

I was raised by my grandma and her two sisters so I met other elders and got the chance to make that kind of bond with them, too. The importance of having a

grandma or a grandpa, or even just knowing them, is the best medicine. I was taught to respect them in every single way because that's where we come from. When I was little, I used to watch my grandmas cook. So being around those ladies really brought back memories of

when I was little—the way they brought me into their circle was really heart-warming, and that's the way it is here at home.

You were able to represent the Rosebud Lakota to your "relatives" in Navajo Country.

I had got the chance to represent my tribe, to introduce myself in the right way to Navajo elders. To me that is the greatest honor. The last day was the hardest because I didn't want to leave them. It brought me to tears, but I know I will go back and see them again. They are people that I hold close to my heart.

Would you encourage other young people to go on a Solar Oven Partner trip?

You get to meet so many cool people. You can learn how to cook from the sun—how awesome is that? You're doing things that you thought you would never do—seeing new



Cleo and the grandmothers shared cooking lessons. "I learned to cook peach cobbler, French bread and spaghetti in the solar oven," says Cleo. "I learned how to make kneel down bread. I didn't get to see how they made the blue corn mush, but it was delicious. Linda and I got the secret recipe!" [Kneel Down Bread contains fresh corn mush baked in a corn husk, a staple in Navajo diet and healthier than fry bread. It was made in bulk after the corn harvest and stored over the winter like a hard cracker.]

Cleo Whiteface (cont.)

places and smelling new air and with the right people. Overall, one of the best trips ever!



Cleo Whiteface receives a ceremonial gift from the grandmothers. "The apron—oh man—that is the best gift ever," says Cleo. "[The design] represents a woman's coming of age, and there is corn and a Navajo basket design, all of those things representing their culture."



After Cleo Whiteface attended the Rosebud solar oven seminar, Linda Garriott invited her to represent the Rosebud Lakota community to the Navajo nation as a Volunteer-in-Mission. "In Leupp, AZ, at an elders' program, it made such a difference to have a young person like Cleo," says Linda, Director of Tree of Life Ministry.

Linda describes Cleo's transformation after the solar oven sharing experience: "On the trip to Arizona, she was a closed-up flower, and on the way home she was like a rosebud that had opened."



Tree of Life Director Linda Garriott explains the significance of the uncis, a relationship connection beyond biological grandmothers in many native cultures. "The grandmothers were eager to teach her," Linda says. "They not only 'loved on' her, but they loved her." They gifted Cleo with a handmade apron, a traditional gift given in modern coming-of-age ceremonies in their cultural tradition. "She cried, they cried. It was all very touching and emotional," Linda adds.

Cleo Whiteface is an example of an emerging young leader. Garriott wants to take Cleo and more volunteers from the Rosebud back to Arizona as Solar Oven Partner volunteers. "Absolutely, there will be others," says Linda. "Somebody has to open doors and that's what Cleo did."

This Advent—Give Hope

Solar Oven Partners offers real alternatives to Christmas commercialization.

#Giving Tuesday—November 27

Observed on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, #Giving Tuesday is the day many non-profits focus on connecting generous givers with their passion.

Consider being one of many United Methodists and friends who choose a hope-giving practical mission. Providing solar ovens plus training for families in the Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone and Navajo Nation in Arizona—that's the passion of our partner churches, United Methodist Women's units, and hundreds of individuals around the Dakotas and beyond.

On #Giving Tuesday, make a direct monthly or one-time contribution at <http://www.umcor.org/Search-for-Projects/Projects/418812>. Or send a check to Solar Oven Partners UMC, 910 4th St., Ste G, Brookings, SD 57006-2172.

Hope—A blessed gift to give, and get, this Christmas

Make a choice for light-giving gifts this season. Why not put Solar Oven Partners on our gift suggestions to Santa? Why not give an SOP alternative gift honoring a family member or colleague?

Download your own brochure by going to the About page of www.solarovenpartnersumc.org. This year give a gift—or ask for a gift—that gives HOPE: a Solar Oven!



Cleo Whiteface and Linda Garriott present a traditional Lakota star quilt to Navajo elder Lola Bahe and retiring Faith Works directors Glenn and Jan Allen.

New SOP Workshop Opens



A truck load of foam insulation boards is being stacked in SOP's newest workshop by Phil Lint, Larry Zimmer and Kay Sherriff, all members or friends of Montrose United Methodist Church in Montrose, SD. The foam, used to help insulate Solar Oven Partners' oven boxes, will be cut in the leased workshop which is the former Montrose grocery store. Phil, an SOP Advisory Board member, is managing the workshop, which is located in southeastern South Dakota about 30 miles west of Sioux Falls. If you are interested in placing your name or group on a volunteer list for the workshop contact Phil at 605-491-2324 or Kay at 605-201-6294.

SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS UMC

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Spreading the SOP Message—*By Marj Evans-de-Carpio, SOP Director*

Seeing that many churches in southern Michigan give to Solar Oven Partners, I decided to add church visits this summer to an already-planned trip to southern Wisconsin for the Jurisdictional Mission Round-Up. A generous grant from South Dakota's Redfield and Frankfort United Methodist churches made the tag-on trip possible.

This trip provided an opportunity to deepen awareness of SOP's ministry with already supportive partners, and to reach new potential supporters, including introducing the SOP ministry to a pastor acquaintance now serving in Michigan. That church now plans to dedicate a Thanksgiving offering to SOP and to get involved through service.

Another visit developed out of a relationship built earlier in the summer. While distributing ovens on the Rosebud Reservation I met another Volunteer-in-Mission team from Barrington, IL. They were intrigued with the oven ministry, wanting to know more. I stopped to visit them on the way to Michigan. They now see themselves combining a trip to Rosebud with volunteer service at one of our workshops.

In another exciting development, I discovered a new

church start, The Church of the African Diaspora. Considering our new relationship with the Sierra Leone Annual Conference, I am very interested in involving Africans now living in the U.S. who may want to give back to their homeland. I cold-called the church planters, and not only were they willing to meet, but after I showed them the oven and explained the ministry, they were so excited that they called two other pastors of African congregations in other Michigan cities. I added visits to those churches on my way home.

Having lived the realities of smoke inhalation from cooking fires, the expense of cooking fuel and environmental harms of deforestation, the African pastors were very enthusiastic about SOP's ministry. One pastor, who spent years in an African refugee camp, talked about the danger to women leaving the camp to fetch firewood, as enemy soldiers lay in wait to assault them. There are so many more ways that God can use this ministry to bless people around the world if we are ready to go where God may lead us!

Thank you to Frankfort and Redfield UMCs for understanding the importance of this tour and financially supporting this outreach.