



God’s Light Shines in the Dominican Republic

by Connie M. Smith

The solar oven miracle was demonstrated beautifully during Solar Oven Partners’ (SOP) recent exploratory mission trip to the Dominican Republic (DR). As women and men gathered in curiosity around a solar oven, mission team member Lorna Jost gingerly opened the oven to uncover one of the three black pans. Suddenly, a collective “Ah” was heard—followed by laughter and the look of amazement.



What they discovered was beautifully cooked rice. As they chattered in Spanish, a translator explained that one skeptical woman in the group felt the mission team must have put

rice that had already been cooked into the ovens—she couldn’t believe the solar oven could work that well. But another woman insisted, “No, I put the uncooked rice in the oven myself!”

It was that type of excitement that greeted the seven-member United Methodist Volunteers-in-Mission (UMVIM) team as they traveled to three different locations in

the Caribbean nation. Invited by Global Ministries (GM) missionaries Gordon and Ardell Graner, who are serving in the Dominican Republic, and the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED) church, the team demonstrated the assembly of solar ovens, provided basics on oven use and benefits, and then cooked Dominican foods with the help of those attending the seminars.

“The teaching seminars were so interactive,” said Gordon. “The Dominicans jumped right in and were enthusiastic to be able to participate in the assembly and cooking. It quickly bridged the gap between us and them. In addition, the Dominicans could see and appreciate the structure of the solar ovens and begin to take ownership.”

(Continued on page 2)



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God's Light Shines in the Dominican Republic (cont.)

Word of the people's excitement traveled quickly to the Rev. Miguel Cancú, the executive secretary (bishop) of the IED. In the final meeting with Bishop Cancú and the Rev. Maria Bock, head of Social Action for the IED, the Bishop said the SOP mission team created quite a stir. With Gordon translating, Bishop Cancú said, "You can see through your own experience the excitement your seminars have caused. The grapevine has been busy. I've been getting lots of phone calls already, and the executive committee of our church approves of the SOP program. Now we need ovens!"

Volga workshop while the Graners were back in the states connecting with their Covenant Churches.

Gordon said he was impressed with the oven and the ministry, and when SOP announced a time-out in Haiti due to complications with accountability, it was mutually agreed that the time was right to explore the possibilities in the DR. With the blessing of Bishop Cancú and other IED leaders, and facilitation by the Graners, Solar Oven Partners shipped 20 ovens into the country earlier this summer, with the mission team following in August to give demonstrations to pastors and church leaders in Barahona, Samaná and Baní.

"There are so many Dominicans who do not receive a living wage and live on the edge of being hungry," said the long-time missionary. "Any money they can save by using solar energy—which is free to all—instead of paying for fuel is more significant than I had imagined."

He estimates that at least half of the members of the Dominican Evangelical Church are in this economic group. In addition, he explained, there are workers in communities called Bateys—traditionally connected to sugar cane fields and often including Haitians—that are living in

Dominicans Respond to Solar Oven Seminars



Lucy Sanchez works on the solar oven reflector with the pastor of her church during an assembly demonstration in Baní. Lucy says she only cooks food once a day in order to save money on gas, a common cooking fuel in the Dominican Republic. It costs more than \$10 to fill her small cylinder—and so she only buys a small amount at a time. "The majority of people in our church are from a low economic level... We don't have a lot of resources but we're trying to provide a good life for our children and to take good care of our parents. Everything about this solar oven project is positive!"

"grinding poverty." "For people like these," Gordon said, "a solar oven could be a life saver. I would estimate that half of the population of the DR would benefit from a solar oven."

The Graners, along with Bishop Cancú and the Rev. Bock, said they see great promise in a partnership with SOP in the Dominican Republic. SOP Director Rick Jost agreed. "Our entire team was very encouraged

(continued on page 3)



An August mission trip to the Dominican Republic produced successful solar oven demonstrations and an enthusiastic response. L to R - Lorna Jost, Bill Smith, Rick Jost, Connie Smith, the Rev. Maria Bock, Bishop Miguel Cancú, Cathy Hoss, Gloria and Ron Borgman, and GM Missionaries Gordy and Ardell Graner.

Showing promise for those in poverty

The Graners, who are North Dakota natives, visited with SOP Director Rick Jost months ago about the SOP program. This happened during a tour of SOP's

\$5000 Matching Gift Opportunity

As you can see, it's an exciting time for Solar Oven Partners! We are stretching towards new horizons and embracing the opportunity to serve alongside new brothers and sisters in Christ sharing God's free gift of solar energy!

New beginnings are so very exciting! New beginnings also mean tremendous time and energy to get them underway. Now more than ever, it is important to keep and maintain the new SOP

Associate Director full-time position that was established in 2014. This position is not supported monetarily by the UMC Dakotas Annual Conference, but is totally reliant on the generous support of individuals like you who have been vital contributors to our mission project. We are asking for your help once again to support this position.

And here's how you can double the value of your contribution! A very generous donor has offered to

match \$5000 in gifts towards the Associate Director account! This is an incredible opportunity! Your gift will go twice as far! Please consider supporting this campaign to ensure that SOP has the necessary staff to facilitate our mission's success. And don't miss out on the chance to have your generosity matched dollar for dollar! **THANK YOU!**

PS: Checks to: Solar Oven Partners #670
Mail to: Dakotas Conference Treasurer
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God's Light Shines in the Dominican Republic (cont.)

by the reception Solar Oven Partners received and the interest and involvement by the IED church," said Jost. He also expressed appreciation for Gordon and Ardell and their investment of time and energy to facilitate the mission trip.

For all of the positives, Jost said, it's imperative that adequate



Mission team member Ron Borgman (left) and GM Missionary Gordon Graner present an oven to representatives from an IED church following a solar oven seminar in Bani, an hour's drive west of Santo Domingo. Ovens will be used to help spread the message of the benefits of solar cooking to people living in poverty.

time and due diligence be given in following the lead of the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana church to define and organize a cooperative plan before solar cooking training can begin in earnest in the Dominican Republic. Once the IED has finalized a request for solar ovens based on their program design, and the SOP Advisory Board approves, SOP will begin sending supplies followed by a mission team from the Dakotas.

In the meantime, the Rev. Bock captured the essence of Solar Oven Partners' mission objective in summarizing the SOP experience. "I see this as a way to take the love of Christ to people of poverty—through the social action of the oven," said Bock. And, in the final meeting on August 11 at the IED headquarters in Santo Domingo, shortly before the SOP mission team left the Dominican Republic, Bishop Cancú reiterated what supporters of SOP have always known: "The sun has no owner. It's a gift from God for all people."

Dominicans Respond to Solar Oven Seminars



Leticio is part of an English-speaking community of Dominicans in the Samaná area, descendants of free American slaves from Philadelphia who were invited to come live in the Dominican Republic in the 1800s. She brought a recipe for a coconut raisin cake to the solar cooking seminar. She also brought a recipe and ingredients for an English bread from a friend who was unable to attend—and was curious about how it would turn out in a solar oven. When mission team members brought the cake and bread to this veteran cook she was ecstatic. "Who, wow!" she said, laughing. "It is very brown, very nice!"

SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS

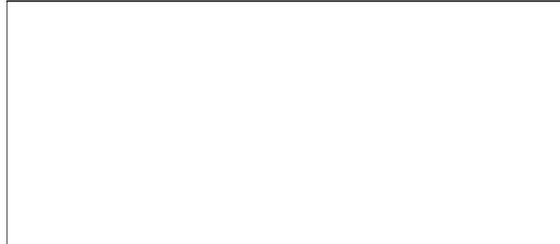
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ND Churches help out at Silbernagel Garden

Once again, Dave and Renae Silbernagel of Moffit, ND are growing a fantastic garden and donating the profits from sales to Solar Oven Partners.

“We’ve dug approximately 1400 pounds of potatoes and we’re only half done. The cukes have been really prolific, the tomatoes are ripening and we are going to have a tremendous squash and pumpkin harvest,” said Dave this past week.

Produce from the garden is sold at the local Farmers Market in Linton; at area churches like Legacy and McCabe UMCs in Bismarck; Faith Lutheran in Bismarck; Minot and Mandon UMCs, and even a Mexican Market in Bismarck!

“We’ve really appreciated the volunteer teams that have helped us plant and maintain the garden,” reports Renae. There have been teams from Legacy and McCabe



UMCs; Mandan, Minot and Faith Lutheran in Bismarck who helped plant. Teams of youth and adults that have helped with the weeding and harvesting have come from UM churches in Moffit, Minot, and Mandan; Legacy and McCabe

UMC in Bismarck; and Mohall/Sherwood/Bowbells UMCs of the Souris Valley Parish. “We can’t thank these churches enough for not only helping us with the garden, but selling the produce for us, as well,” said Renae.

The Silbernagels are willing to put together special orders for folks, like pickling-sized cucumbers and tomatoes for canning. If you or someone you know is looking for healthy locally-grown garden produce, give them call at 701-425-1670; Dave’s cell: 701-425-1382 or Renae’s cell: 701-391-9468.

A hearty “*Thank you!*” to Dave and Renae and the ND Churches from Solar Oven Partners!