

# Stove Builders of Guatemala Newsletter

Fall 2020

**Question: Why didn't I get a Spring newsletter in 2020**

**Answer: We did not send one!**

In an effort to contain the Covid-19 outbreak, the government of Guatemala closed its borders in March of this year. This forced several Stove Builders of Guatemala (SBG) work teams to cancel.

The next thing the government did was to impose curfews, stop travel between departments (states) by private transportation, halted all public transportation, and limited the hours and days of operation of food markets as well as a lock down of all nonessential businesses and travel, this included the building of stoves by SBG since the stove builders had to shelter-at-home.

As the pandemic continued month after month, the people of Guatemala have felt many hardships. Masons (such as our stove builders) have been especially hard hit as the construction industry came to a standstill. Some past work team members gave money to our stove builders to help them through this hard time.



Guatemalan woman, wearing her mask, picks up her bag of food at the local Methodist Church.

The SBG Advisory Board does not feel it would be safe to return in 2020. We are constantly monitoring the situation and are hoping that teams can resume in 2021. All teams going into Guatemala with SBG must first register with Bonnie Laycock ([sblaycock18@gmail.com](mailto:sblaycock18@gmail.com)). Please feel free to check with Bonnie periodically for updated information.

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## Exciting News from the First United Methodist Church in Richardson, Texas

Despite the many challenges related to the Covid-19 virus, Vacation Bible Camp was held in July as planned. The Stove Builders of Guatemala was selected as the mission project to be supported during the VBC and they are excited to announce that \$2,900 was raised. Below you will see a photo of Rev. Joy Anderson standing outside the church, showing the model stove and explaining about the importance of the project to families as they drove-through to pick-up their Bible Camp materials. The second picture is one child giving her donation. Approximately 300 children attended the VBS.

Families were encouraged to view the [stovebuildersofguatemala.com](http://stovebuildersofguatemala.com) web site to learn more about the project. The church is proud to announce that 29 stoves would be built as a result of the camp. Families cook on an open fire on the dirt floor so the cook is breathing harmful smoke, long skirts catch on fire, and children get burns from playing near the fire. SBG stoves will be built by young men in the villages who have been trained to build the stove that will vent the smoke from the kitchen hut. All the materials to construct the stove are purchased in Guatemala, thus helping the local economy. Less wood is burned in this stove helping with problems of de-forestation. The young man who builds the stove receives a living-wage, thus helping support families.



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## Reflections from a First-Time SBG Work Team Member

As is often the case when we undertake mission work, we discover the people we start out to help end up ministering to us. I met families with beautiful smiles on their faces who welcomed us into their humble homes. They worked hard alongside us--even the children --carrying heavy loads, sifting sand, and digging dirt. They showed us genuine hospitality. The children especially captivated my heart. They laughed and giggled as they the blew the soap bubbles we provided.



I saw the beautiful woven fabric that many of the families created on their home looms, but learned later that they generally receive very little money for their hours of labor. Each day was a new family and new experiences. I was amazed watching Diego cut through a tin roof with just a knife and a hammer or carry the heavy stove pipe onto a roof and gently lower it down. We heard stories of similar feats done by all the stove builders as the week progressed.

The best reward at the end of each day was seeing the happy faces of the family members around their new stove. I thought about each family on Christmas Eve, about a month after we had returned from Guatemala, and knew they would be starting to use their new stoves. I hoped their stoves would make their lives a bit easier and healthier and would give them the transforming connection I still feel as I reflect on this trip. Hardly a day goes by that I don't think about the beautiful people and land of Guatemala, the new friends I made among team members, most of whom I didn't know before the trip, and the wonderful stove builders who continue to build even when teams are not there to help.

Article by Jamie Bird, member of FUMC, Conway, Arkansas who was part of a November team led by St. Paul UMC in Omaha, Nebraska

### HOW CAN I HELP?

With the country starting to open up and the stove builders being able to go back to work, the best way for us to help right now is to make sure the stove builders have money to start building stoves. If you would like to help our stove builders and their families as they recover from the pandemic, donations can be made through the Advance. <https://advance.umcmision.org/p-515-stove-builders->



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## Local People Helping the Hungry



Miguel Tzul, our SBG contact who lives in Pana on Lake Atitlan, has started a soup kitchen. Once a week Miguel, his wife, and one of his daughters prepares enough soup to feed 25 needy families in their neighborhood.

Lulu Mroczka, our United Methodist missionary and the Volunteer-in-Mission coordinator, living in the Chichicastenango area, has been purchasing food in bulk and making up

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