



THE LEAST OF THESE
MINISTRIES
MATTHEW 25:40

Sharing **HOPE**
amidst poverty.

August 2020

Joining the Family

JUST OVER ONE YEAR AGO, Soenny received an invitation that changed her life.

Soenny and her family live in Batey 2, one of the communities served by The Least of These Ministries. There, she and her husband, Carlos, are raising their son and her three young nieces.

In June of 2019, a group led by local pastors in the batey and our Outreach Director, Wilton Gomez, held an event in Batey 2 to promote a return to the value of the family. The event, which was covered in our August 2019 newsletter, was intended to encourage community members to solve local issues by first strengthening their own families through a relationship with Jesus.

As Wilton and Pastor Estela walked through the community with a crowd of children, they approached a home where loud bachata music was playing. They stopped to ask the resident of the home, Soenny, to lower the volume of the music during the event which was to be held in the nearby ball field. Wilton then invited Soenny to come to the event, and the group continued walking to the field.

Recounting the day recently, Wilton said, “All the community was giving attention to the activity, but on that day, Jesus touched the life of a woman.” Wilton continued, “A few days later, a woman talked to Pastor Estela and expressed how Jesus spoke to her during the activity, and she accepted Jesus that day. The name of that woman is Soenny.”

Since that day, Soenny has been a faithful member of Pastor Estela’s church, Casa de Gracia. She has been active in the women’s group of the church and says that Jesus has been changing her life in a special way. Soenny told Wilton, “After you came, I became a Christian, I converted, and I am following the steps to the Lord.”

[Continued inside]



Soenny with her son and three nieces.

Remembering Steve Hull

This is the fourth in a series of reflections on our founder, Steve Hull, who passed away on November 18, 2019.*

THE MEMORY OF STEVE HULL which stands out most vividly in my mind occurred on my first mission trip to the D.R. Sitting very uncomfortably with Steve in the bed of a beat up old pickup truck, making our way painstakingly, and ever so slowly up the bumpy, deeply rutted, sometimes treacherous road to the top of the mountain where we were to spend the night, there were kids of all ages along the road cheering, dancing, reaching in to touch Steve, some of them occasionally climbing into the truck to hug him. And I remember that huge smile on his face, as he set aside his liter bottle of Coke to pull yet another child onto the truck. Steve was in his element here. This was where he wanted to be. This was where he belonged. He virtually glowed.

Yes, he virtually glowed. And why not? God had told Steve to feed His hungry people in the Dominican, and Steve did not hesitate to answer God's call; to do exactly what God had called him to do. And those kids loved Steve for that. And oh my, how he loved them back.

Most of you have probably heard the story. But it bears re-telling. As Steve recounted it to me, he had helped to build a church while on a mission trip to the D.R. in 1996, and on the plane flight back to the U.S., Steve was feeling pretty proud of himself for all he had just accomplished. On that flight Steve was watching a movie when the audio portion of the movie went dead for Steve. And Steve heard someone say, "I have hungry people in the D.R. What are you going to do about it?" Steve looked to see who was saying this, and he heard that same voice say again, "I have hungry people in the D.R. What are you going to do about it?" As he looked around, it became apparent to Steve that the voice was not coming from anyone on the plane. Suddenly Steve was no longer feeling quite so proud of himself. When Steve got home he gathered his three brothers around him and told them of his plan to feed the starving people in the D.R. bateys once a week with 1/2 cup of uncooked rice and one full cup of uncooked beans. One of the brothers asked, "Steve, how do you expect to administer this plan from nearly fifteen hundred miles away? Whereupon Steve replied, "God told me Franklin would do it." Of course the brother's next question was, "Who is Franklin?" And Steve replied, "I don't know. But God told me Franklin would do it." About three weeks later Steve was back in the D.R. where he met with a pastor there and described to the pastor his plan to feed the hungry people in the bateys. During the course of the conversation, Steve asked the pastor if there was perhaps a Franklin in his congregation. The pastor responded that indeed there was a young man named Franklin in his congregation, but seriously doubted that this young fellow could be of any help toward implementing Steve's plan, as Franklin had only one arm and one eye. For 15 years that Franklin was the administrator for The Least of These Ministries.

Steve had heard God's call. And Steve obeyed God's call.

It was my pleasure, my honor, my privilege and my good fortune to serve for many years with Steve on the Board of The Least of These Ministries. Always Steve put his highest priority on feeding the hungry, both physically and spiritually.



Steve (right), Mel (back), and Andy Hood enjoy some laughter on the mountain with Vicente and other local friends.

I was on several mission trips with Steve, the first of those to Jamaica in 1993 with our then 15 year old son, Josh. Ann (Steve's wife) was along on that trip to Jamaica. As the week went on, and as I saw Steve and Ann interact, it became apparent to me just how much they leaned on one another. And then, as the years went on, during my time serving with Steve on the Board of The Least of These, that support which Steve and Ann had for one another and their mutual love for the people in the D.R. was ever so obvious.

Steve was a visionary in so many ways. The very notion of feeding people some 1500 miles away from where we lived would intimidate most people. Not Steve. For many years we stored the beans and rice in a garage at Franklin's house. And we made do with that

arrangement. But Steve looked beyond that. As the price of rice and beans purchased in Barahona continued to rise, Steve established an alliance with another feeding ministry, Feed My Starving Children. This organization offers a fortified rice product with the only charge being the cost to ship that product from the U.S. to the D.R. Problem was, we had to have a much larger facility than Franklin's garage to store the containers in which the product was shipped. Steve's solution: we would build a warehouse! Oh sure, just like that. Build a warehouse. Some said we would never be able to undertake an effort of that magnitude. But Steve said all we needed was land and money. Of course, we had neither. Undaunted, Steve set about raising money and investigating possible sites for construction. We raised the money, bought the land and built the warehouse. And Steve did not seem at all surprised that this could be accomplished. He had the attitude that if God wants it, it would be done.

I have so many fond memories of Steve. I remember the mission trips he organized, and all of the many details he attended to as he coordinated those trips. There were construction materials to be purchased, sometimes approvals of batey leaders to be obtained before we could embark on a particular project, preliminary meetings of the mission team members to lay the groundwork for what was to be accomplished, assembling the various articles of clothing and books to be taken along and distributed to the folks in the D.R., procuring of airline tickets, coordinating our room and board arrangements. Steve did all of this with a smile, and he was never paid a penny.

I recall how very natural it seemed to be to Steve to repair our vehicles and the fork lift. He could fix anything. Steve was a real Renaissance man.

I remember the fights Steve used to have with the computer. Occasionally he would ask me to come over to his office to assist him with a computer issue. Talk about the blind leading the blind.

But as I alluded to earlier in this tribute, what I remember most about Steve is his love for the people he served in the Dominican. In Steve's obituary it was noted that "his real passion was the ministry he founded in 1996, The Least of These." I believe that **passion** derived from **Steve's compassion** for God's people, the people in the D.R. whom God called Steve to serve.

The world could use a few more Steve Hulls.

—Respectfully, Mel Arbaugh

Mel's tribute has been edited for printing. Read the full tribute on our website: leastofthesemin.org

**In the July newsletter, we incorrectly stated that Lynn Fraley's tribute was the fourth in this series. Lynn's was actually the third. Our apologies if we had you thinking you missed one!*

Six months after the event, Soenny's husband also accepted Jesus. He is a police officer and spends a lot of time away from the community for his job. However, he tries to be active in a church in the area where he is stationed.

The four children have also become active in the church, participating in bible school, and singing for the church.

When Wilton recently visited Soenny, she told him, "Now more than ever we need to get close to God, because we are seeing that the end is near. I thank you, and we are hoping in God that you return, we are waiting with open arms. Thank you." We thank God for the work He is doing in this family! Please pray that Soenny and her family will continue to grow in their faith, and that through their changed lives, others will come to know Jesus.

**“Now more than ever
we need to get
close to God....
I thank you.”**

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

—Habakkuk 3:18 (NI V)

Ministry Faces Increased Costs Resulting From Pandemic

Like many other nonprofit organizations—as well as individuals and families—our ministry is experiencing an increase in costs, specifically related to the food distribution program. As previously reported, food shipments from Feed My Starving Children have been temporarily suspended. Our supply of that food has now been depleted, so we must purchase food for all 14 bateys locally. Ricardo is doing an excellent job negotiating prices, but the cost is still considerably higher. Exacerbating the situation is an increased number of families needing support during this time.

It is our goal to continue to serve these families without having to reduce the amount of food we provide. Will you help us in that goal by sending a gift for the Rice & Beans Fund? *We thank God for how you support this work!*

Tributes

Gifts given in Memory of:

David “Beau” Beaubien by Linda Woolf

Steve Bergmann by Michelle Dahl

Ronald Lee Dahl by Michelle Dahl

Inger Simmons by Idalia Craig

If you would like to honor or remember a friend or loved one through a donation to The Least of These Ministries, simply provide the information on the enclosed form, or send a note with your gift.

IMPORTANT STUFF!

Opportunities to support or get involved with our work in the Dominican Republic. Be sure to put these dates on your calendar!

Check our website for more information.

September 25 Golf Tournament

November 1 ‘Sharing Hope’
Annual Banquet

January 16-23, 2021 Mission Team
to Barahona

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

8th Annual Golf Tournament

Friday, September 25

We need sponsors
& players for this
important event!

Visit our
website or call us
for all the details!



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