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LAWRENCE — When Jodi Gentry first heard about Engineers Without Borders, a light bulb went off. It was early in 2007 at a luncheon in Kansas City to celebrate National Engineers Week that featured a presentation from the Kansas City Engineers Without Borders Chapter. Gentry, then a master's student in environmental engineering at the University of Kansas, was surprised to hear that KU did not have its own chapter.

“Engineering was my career choice, but I’d always had a passion for the social sciences, and Engineers Without Borders seemed like a perfect way to merge the two,” Gentry said.



So Gentry, a Topeka native, went to work to start a [campus chapter](#)³. She served as the founding president, and Oswald Chong, associate professor of civil, environmental and architectural engineering at KU, was the group’s first adviser. Gentry served as sanitation project leader for the chapter’s first international project in Bolivia, traveling there six times through all phases of development.

In 2011, Gentry co-founded the [Sunflower State Professional Chapter](#)⁴ and served as president until 2013. She is active in the group’s first international project in eastern Guatemala. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in environmental engineering at KU, with research focused on sanitation and drinking water in developing communities.

For her contributions to Engineers Without Borders, Gentry was recently selected as the winner of the Engineers Without Borders USA 2013 Professional Founder’s Award. It recognizes individual Engineers Without Borders-USA members who exhibit outstanding leadership by fostering responsible leadership with other members, chapters and partnering communities and helping partner communities meet their basic human needs.

“It’s a great honor to win an award like this. I’ve invested a lot time, resources, and energy,” Gentry said. “It’s fantastic to have a small bit of recognition. At the same time, I’ve been fortunate to have fantastic people to work with. They’ve made it easy to achieve the success that we have. It’s a team effort, and I certainly can’t do it alone.”

The KU Engineers Without Borders chapter now has about 50 members. Several members of the group spent their spring break in New Orleans, working with an organization to continue rebuilding the historic Lower Ninth Ward, which was ravaged in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina. This summer, 12

members of the chapter will return to the remote Bolivian village of Azacilo to continue working on composting latrines and will visit a neighboring community, Colani, for the first time to examine the possibility of a starting a composting latrine program there.

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2. codyh@ku.edu
3. <https://sites.google.com/site/ewbkansasu/>
4. <http://www.ewbusa-sunflowerstate.org/>
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