

**Prevention and curing:
Missionary reaches out with holistic health care**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

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San Jose, Costa Rica (LAMNS)—Helping to cure people of their illness is very gratifying, but perhaps not the most important form of health care that a missionary can give.

Witness what LAM missionary Lillian Solt experienced several years ago.



“I was working in a little community and had a two year old baby brought in suffering from second degree dehydration,” Lillian remembers. “I decided not to start her on an IV, so I gave the mother a printed handout about how to mix up a rehydration solution.”

Lillian thought it was clear. “It involved one liter of water, five tablespoons of sugar and a teaspoon of salt,” she says. “I thought it was easy.”

The mother returned at 2 a.m. with the baby comatose in her arms. Lillian said asked the mother why she hadn’t done as instructed. “I’ve been doing everything like you said, I have been giving her water every five minutes.”

Lillian pushed her—“tell me how you mixed it.”

“I did it like you said on the paper,” the woman said. “I put in a liter of water, five tablespoons of salt and a teaspoon of sugar.”

Lillian said that the incident was a turning point in her ministry. “This baby and more would continue to die because I didn’t have enough time to show her how to make the solution,” Lillian laments. “This same woman had lost five other babies to dehydration.”

Out of that incident, Lillian formed CEDCAS, the Spanish initials for Health Training Center, where prevention is the first priority. “We work in prevention, community development, public health and water systems, working with the community to train health promoters,” Lillian explains.

Today, Lillian combines preventative and curative aspects of ministry with evangelism in a three-story health center that is under construction in the San Jose suburb of Los Lagos. “We have grown from two doctors to 14 specialties, four dentists, maxi facial surgeons and others,” she explains. “We have every specialty except cardiology.”

One special area for Lillian is maxi facial surgery that can change a person’s life—even if they can’t pay the full amount. “We did surgery on a gal that had a hare lip. It would have cost \$1,500, but she didn’t have it,” Lillian says. “Her payment was one stalk of bananas per month for a year. She has now paid her bill.”

But, the effort was worth it to Lillian in ways other than financial. “This girl has blossomed,” Lillian says. “She had a photo taken for her ID card, and when she got it she said to her father, ‘look, I’m beautiful!’ She has a person inside of her able to come out.”



The CEDCAS clinic is nestled in the middle of a sprawling neighborhood, immediately accessible to the area’s residents. Inside the new building will be a myriad of facilities from optical and dental clinics to surgery suites, recovery rooms and a counseling center.

In addition to the new clinic, Lillian continues to work with pastors and clinics

throughout Costa Rica, helping with rural bakeries, water projects and development plans.

“We started a cow project 20 years ago in the southern part of the country,” Lillian remembers. “With a cow, a woman can have enough milk to feed her children and is able to sell or barter the rest for other needs.”

The cows also play a part in evangelism. “When a cow is given, it is given in God’s name, not in the name of the church that donated it,” Lillian explains. “As far as the local people know, the cows do not come from the United States. God provided it and it is given through the evangelical church.”

Lillian relates the story of one farmer who would not receive a cow when it was offered. “His wife told him, ‘we will take the cow because it’s from God and we have been praying that God would help us.’”

“The family came to Jesus after two years,” she said.

Operating a clinic and other development programs involve many resources and people. Lillian is still looking for funds to help finish the construction project. “We also need people to come as missionaries to help us with general maintenance,” she says. “We need a technician who could fix all of our medical equipment and people in general construction.”

Doctors and nurses cannot obtain permission to practice in Costa Rica.

“I probably won’t see all of the results that I have struggled for all of these years,” Lillian says. Nevertheless, she is moving forward to reach people for Christ through health care.

Latin America Mission works in partnership with churches and Christian agencies throughout Latin America and supports missionaries and projects in many Latin countries as well as in Spain. LAM is seeking to place new missionaries throughout the region. The U.S. headquarters can be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 1-800-275-8410. The mission’s web site may be found at <http://www.lam.org>. LAM’s Canadian office is at 3075 Ridgeway Drive, Unit 14, Mississauga, ON L5L 5M6.

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