

**Providing a home:
Christians in Costa Rica reach out to troubled teens**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Barva, Costa Rica (LAMNS)—Pablo returns early every time. Sometimes he just hangs around the neighborhood until he is due back, other times he passes the hours in the backyard.

The sixteen-year-old lives at the Genesis Home near Heredia, Costa Rica, but must go to visit his family every other weekend.

That's when things get rough for Pablo and he is anxious to return to the safety and security that he has found at the Christian shelter



His mother is a prostitute in the nearby capital of San José. He and each of his six siblings each have different fathers.

“His mother doesn't want him and used him to help with the financial maintenance,” said Pastor Stanford Reid, a Costa Rican who serves as the president of the Glorious Day Foundation, a Christian, not-for-profit organization that operates the home. “At his mother's house there are two rooms for the seven children. He is glad to be here.”

One of his brothers is also a resident of Genesis Home.

The facility opened in February, 2005 to meet the need of the country's troubled adolescents. Currently housed in a rented home, it is the first step toward establishing a permanent facility that will eventually house both boys and girls as well as provide vocational education to residents and others.

“There are few centers for adolescents in Costa Rica,” explained David Longworth, a missionary with the Latin American Mission-Canada who is working with Costa Rican Christians to establish the facility. “There are a number of homes for children, but most only care for them through age twelve.”

Pablo lived at the nearby Roblealto Bible Home as a child, but had to leave when he turned 13. “He found a difficult situation with his family, and so sought help from the house parents at the Genesis Home,” Longworth said.

Longworth, who was born in Guelph, Ontario, Canada but grew up at the Roblealto home in Costa Rica where his parents served as missionaries, said that Pablo's case is not

unusual among troubled teens. “Many times, when they leave a children’s facility, they go home to a single mother or grandparents and often find a broken marriage.”

The home’s goals include working the child back into their original family, according to Longworth. “But, in many situations, the mother is not in a good position to take the child,” he said.

Often, the teens arrive at Genesis Help exhibiting problems brought on by the lack of parental guidance and addictions in their families.

The house parents work to help troubled youth learn to respond to authority, live under control, and to learn courtesy, respect and love.

“They have to learn simple things such as respecting privacy, knocking before entering someone’s room and how to ask pardon,” Longworth said.

The Foundation plans on expanding their ministry through the purchase of property where they can construct up to twenty houses as well as recreational facilities, administrative offices and a technical school.

“We want to help them to go out ready to face the world,” the missionary said. Classes in the technical school will train the young people in mechanics, woodworking, electronics, home economics, animal sciences, agriculture and other vocational areas.

Purchasing property in the central valley of Costa Rica with good access to the capital city, health care and other resources is expensive. “We want to get between 25 and 50 acres,” Longworth said.

In addition, the foundation is raising money to construct the houses, each of which would house up to six youth. The cost of each home is estimated at \$25,000.

“We are open to any child who needs help,” Reid said. “We want to be able to help them with their development and in their growth with God. We want to assist them in finding God’s purpose for their life.”

The foundation includes the support of many churches from various denominations in Costa Rica.

As the organization moves toward the purchase of property, the construction of houses and the school and the expansion of their program, they will be seeking missionaries who can teach, help with construction, serve as house parents, assist in operating a small farm on the property, provide administration and help with fund raising.

Reid already knows what the organization can do for troubled young people. “Pablo came here troubled and sad in his heart,” he said. “Now he does not live in fear, he is very responsible, he obeys the rules, and he praises God.”

Information on the work of the Glorious Day Foundation may be obtained by writing to longfam5@racsa.co.cr, or by mail to Apartado Postal 254-3011, Barva, Heredia, Costa Rica. Donations, designated for the foundation, may be sent to Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 33152 USA or to LAM-Canada, 3075 Ridgeway Drive, Unit 14, Mississauga, ON L5L 5M6 Canada.

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 mission's web site may be found at <http://www.lam.org>.

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