

Retirement is not in God's vocabulary
Couple plans further missionary service in Costa Rica

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

LAM News Service

Miami, FL (LAMNS)—“Retirement is a word not found in the vocabulary of God,” says Cheryl Garzelli. “As long as God gives us breath, we hope to find some way to serve Him.” Cheryl and her husband Brent are Missionary Appointees with the Latin America Mission. As soon as they finish raising support they will be heading for missionary service in Costa Rica.

The Garzellis, who are in their late 40's, are part of a growing movement in American evangelical life known as “finishers”—those who decide to finish their careers by giving themselves to missionary service later in life.

“Every Christian is called to missions whether to the neighbor next door or to the man who has never heard of Jesus Christ in the Amazon rainforest,” Brent reflects. “But, there is something unique about foreign missions that tests both the depth of character and faith in a person.”

Brent and Cheryl know that testing in that they have struggled with God's call to service for many years. Six years ago the couple attended missionary language school in Costa Rica and then served with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for two years in Venezuela. “I was the pastor to the pastors of a dozen Baptist congregations in a valley south of Caracas,” Brad explains.

Both have experienced frequent relocations and other overseas connections in their life. Cheryl's father served in the military and she lived in Germany for two years as a child. Brent served as an Air Force Chaplain, a position that took the couple to Alabama and Panama. The couple considers Waynesville, Missouri as their hometown.

Now they look forward to working at the LAM-related Roblealto Child Care Association near San Jose where Brent will be working in promoting the institute and Cheryl will use her art skills to teach the children.

But first they must raise support for their missionary work. LAM is an eighty-year old faith mission with missionaries in many Latin American countries plus Spain. Each missionary must raise promises of sufficient contributions to cover their salary and support needs while on the field. The Garzellis hope to be able to leave for Costa Rica within a year.

The couple is looking forward to their missionary service. “Costa Rica is where children suffer from cholera, typhoid fever and amoebic dysentery,” explains Brent. “Poverty breeds child abuse and neglect and the children sniff industrial glue until they suffer brain damage.” The Roblealto centers work with such children, taking them off the streets, giving them a place to live and teaching them about Jesus Christ.

While going to the mission field involves selling possessions and leaving friends, the Garzellis say they are ready for the task. “The high price paid gives the foreign missionary a great deal of personal fulfillment and inner joy,” Brent explains.

The 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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