

**A focus on Bible study and evangelism;  
Latin American Christian camping reaches out**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg  
LAM News Service

Tegucigalpa, Honduras (LAMNS)—  
Christian camping in Central America is  
alive and well and bringing people to  
know the Lord.

Just ask Lisa Anderson Umaña. For nearly  
20 years, Lisa has been working with  
churches throughout the region to develop  
material, train leaders and develop Christ-  
centered camping programs.

“Lisa is the person who brought Christian  
camping to El Salvador,” remembers Dr.  
Mario Palencia, a Baptist layman who has  
served as the president of Christian  
Camping International-Latin America .



In fact, during her two decades of service,  
Lisa has lived in Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras, helping churches and the  
regional umbrella organization to improve the quality of camping programs and upgrade  
campgrounds.

“We don’t have a lot of the fancy equipment such as mountain bikes and skis like they do in  
North America,” she explains. “As a result we find that the personnel are more challenged to do  
things in new ways. We have to work with much more creativity.”

Even without modern amenities, Lisa, a missionary with the Latin America Mission, is proud of  
churches and camps in the region, which, she says, often do a much better job of preparing their  
counselors than do their North American counterparts.

“We delve into the leader’s life more so that they get their four relationships in order—God,  
themselves, others and creation,” she says. “Therefore, the quality of the camper’s experience is  
much less entertaining (than in the United States) and much more focused on deepening their four  
relationships.”

Camp leaders who have been trained by CCI place a stronger emphasis on getting to know God’s  
creation, and, they spend a significant amount of time in Bible study.

“We dedicate an hour to an hour and a half studying the Bible,” Lisa says. “We have an emphasis  
on study, an hour of quiet time before they go to breakfast. Then, they have Bible study  
encounters where the campers are given a passage and reflect on it for twenty minutes, write  
notes in the margins, then as a group, led by a previously trained counselor, discuss what was  
God’s meaning. In the evening, they come back together to review the passage, asking ‘what is  
God saying to me and what my plan of action is to apply it.’”

Lisa says that the strong study approach has revolutionized many camping programs. “The leader’s own personal study habits are challenged in terms of taking stuff out of context, grabbing a verse here and there.”

Not that campers don’t have fun. CCI promotes purposeful recreation, cooperative games and the use of ropes and obstacle courses, in addition to activities where campers explore and enjoy God’s creation. Some of Lisa’s publications have been guidebooks to wholesome games and recreational activities for campers. “I’ve made a collection of games for groups, activities, hikes and so forth. There are eighteen different categories of activities,” Lisa says. “By next year we will have them all translated, illustrated and published for camp and church leaders.”

Most of the Christian camps in Latin America are owned and operated by individual churches that rent them to groups on weekends or for weeklong events. “We try to train the church how to use the camping experience for evangelism,” Lisa adds. “A new idea we are promoting is for the churches to work with the campers for a month or more before the event, choosing core leaders who are called “camper evangelists, who will in turn evangelize their peers.”

Explaining that follow-up with campers is often difficult, Lisa explains that the idea of using camper evangelists would facilitate follow-up. Campers would be selected by their willingness to invite non-believers to share the experience with them. “They’d invite friends, relatives, neighbors to attend the camps,” she says. “The camper-evangelists would be trained on how to do friendship evangelism, how to share the Lord at a peer level and how to follow up on their friends.”

“You have a counselor, but you also have a peer who the non-Christian is looking at,” she affirms. “Ninety percent of the kids become a Christian. The follow-up is integrated into the program because he is this kid’s neighbor, his cousin, his friend. He immediately gets plugged back into the local church.”

While she has been immersed in Christian camping for nearly 20 years, Lisa did not originally plan on life as a missionary in camping. “I grew up wanting to be a gym teacher, so majored in health and physical education and sports medicine at Penn State University,” she remembers.



The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, native went on a short-term trip to Ecuador during her sophomore year in college and later attended the Urbana missions conference after asking herself whether she saw teaching as a life-time career. “We had a Bible study at Urbana where we studied the passage ‘what does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?’ I remember sitting there thinking, ‘yes, Lord, I could gain all of the gold medals I wanted but it would profit me nothing.’”

In addition to her writing and training role with CCI-Latin America, Lisa, the mother of two young children, is also helping the Evangelical and Reformed church in Honduras develop the Fountain of Life camp near San Pedro Sula. “That involvement has been like a breath of

fresh air for me,” she affirms. “Having worked for so many years in training, it is good to get my hands back into the real work of camp building.”

To encourage the work of Christian camping in Latin America, Lisa is looking for those who would want to come alongside.

“One of our biggest needs is for a Director of Publications for CCI-Latin America,” she says. “It would need to be a person with camping experience who can help with writing brochures, books, publicity, marketing and getting resources out.” Lisa says that a potential missionary candidate for this position can apply through the Latin America Mission.

“We also need work teams for the Fountain of Life camp,” she adds. “We can use them any time of the year and any size group.”

Lisa says that work groups experience four distinctives: the experience of living with a Honduran host family, the spiritual discipline of serving others through hard work, the satisfaction of helping to energize Honduran Christians with whom they will work together at camp, and the education of an orientation to this Central American country.

Finally, Lisa is looking for those who would help to finance the building of eight cabins and other facilities. Each cabin costs around \$40,000.

Working with CCI, helping to develop a camp and raising two young children stretches Lisa. “I have learned that God will still use me to make a difference in whatever sphere he has put me. I’ve said to the Lord that I am His in whatever season I’m in,” she says.

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](mailto: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.

Related web sites:

CCI Latin America: <http://www.ccial.org/>

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*LAM News Service, Jan 30, 2002*