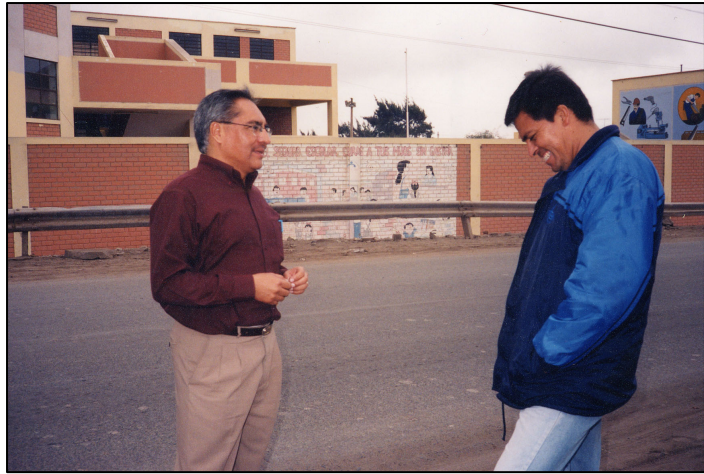


Peruvian center works to rehabilitate children on the street

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Lima, Peru (LAMNS)—For many people, migrating to the United States or Canada is a long-held dream. They work for years to obtain the necessary visas and financing. And, many don't turn down the opportunity when it arrives.

But, Peruvians Pablo and Bertha Lavado did just that because they sensed that the Lord had something else in mind for their lives.



“I was in business, but was praying that the Lord would guide us to work in his church,” explained Pablo, a missionary with the Latin America Mission. “After a while, God showed me the way to work with children in the streets of Lima through Scripture Union.”

“I talked with Paul Clark (the Director of Scripture Union’s work in Peru) and I saw the needs of the children’s center,” Pablo said. “I prayed with my wife about whether I should accept an invitation to work here and asked the Lord’s protection for our family. We began our work here in 1993.”

Pablo said that at first he wasn't certain whether it was the right move. “I had not studied for this, and it was frustrating. After one year, in 1994, I was able to confirm the Lord’s call to this work.”

But, the real test for Pablo came in 1995 when the Canadian government offered the Lavados a residency visa to live in Canada.

He decided to stay, and has seen the ministry with street children grow and prosper.

“We are working with abandoned children in Lima, Iquitos and other parts of Peru,” Pablo said. “We work through the shelter in the center of Lima, a camp and home to the south, and facilities in other cities.”

“There are 2,500 children living in the streets of Lima,” Pablo said. “There is no serious program of the state to rehabilitate these children. They just want to get rid of them with no problems.”

Pablo explained that many children are on the streets not only because of poverty, but because of mistreatment, abuse and violence. “We have a second generation of children in the streets now. Sadly, a high percentage of them are going to die in the streets or end up in jail.”

Pablo said that to reach these children, they must create trust and friendship.

“The second step is to encourage change in their lives,” he explained. “When they have trust, then they can change.”

Today, several dozen boys live in Scripture Union’s mid-town center, just a block from the luxurious Sheraton Hotel. There, they receive food, shelter and medical care, but more importantly, they experience love and guidance that they need to turn their lives around.

“We help them with their spiritual and educational development as well as work on their attitudes,” Pablo explained.

The boys also learn marketable skills such as baking, driving a taxi or making tee shirts. “We have set up a bakery here at the center that is run by two of our boys,” Pablo said. Proceeds from the sales in the store support the boys but also help to fund the work of Scripture Union.

The mission also owns and operates a fleet of 20 taxis in Lima. Their center also provides parking facilities for workers in nearby buildings. Each of those projects helps to finance the center’s ministries.



“While we need funding from outside of Peru to build buildings and other capital improvements, we could continue to pay for the daily operations out of the income from our various enterprises,” Pablo said.

Pablo has to insure that the centers will be around for many years. “When we have contact with a child, it is a contact for life,” he said. “We are his family.”

“The change in boys do not take place overnight,” Pablo reflected. “It takes years.”

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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