

**Latin America Mission provides grants to Children-at-Risk projects:
Program involves physical, social and spiritual care**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Eleazar lived on the streets of Mexico City for eight years. That type of life means existing from hand-to-mouth, sleeping in the rain and cold, begging to meet basic needs, most likely addicted to drugs or other criminal activity. For many such children, the end is a life in jail or death.

For Eleazar, however, the outcome was quite different. Through the ministry of the Latin America Mission partner organization LAMPAS, Eleazar accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior and eventually attended Bible school for three years. Now he is reaching other children as a missionary with LAMPAS.

Eleazar's situation on the streets was typical of nearly one thousand children who will be helped by three grants from the Miami-based Latin America Mission.

"Children-at-risk are children living on the street, living in the sewers, just trying to exist from day to day," says Chuck Morton, VP for Administration and Development with LAM. "They also include children from broken homes and single moms who do not understand parenting methods." Morton is a native of Pasadena, California who lived for extended periods in San Diego as well as Houston, Texas and New Orleans, Louisiana before joining LAM next year.

Children in three projects operated by LAM missionaries will benefit from the grants. The Agencies receiving financial assistance are the Association of Evangelical Christian Pastors and Churches in Bogota, Colombia where LAM missionary Stephen Armet serves, the Robleato Child Care Center in San Jose, Costa Rica, and LAMPAS, the Mexican street children's ministry where LAM missionary Sharleen Turner offers assistance. .

The Robleato day care centers, consisting of three separate facilities, in Costa Rica serve up to 650 children a day, most of them from single-parent families who would have to leave the children on their own if they did not attend the center.

The LAM grants will assist the agency's three centers in ministering to children in a variety of ways, Morton says. "We know they have physical needs, we know they have emotional needs and we take care of these needs, but we also are aware that they have an overarching spiritual need of knowing Jesus Christ as their personal savior. Along with everything we present the gospel."

Interested people can sponsor individual children at the Robleato centers, receiving a photo and periodic updates on the children's progress. Those who are interested may contact the LAM office in Miami at 1-800-275-8410.

Morton says that in the Colombian project, which is located in a sprawling slum on the outskirts of the capital, Bogota, the funds will take children off of the street, putting them into classes and groups that will help them improve their education

LAMPAS, (Spanish for lamps) ministers to hundreds of children in Mexico City, providing meals, medical care and counseling to children on the streets. While the organization carries out its services under expressways, on street corners and in underground sewers, the Center hopes eventually to develop a drop-in center to serve as a halfway point between ministry on the streets and its Bible Institute.

LAM hopes to make additional grants in the future to agencies working with at risk children. "We can continue to help them out as funds are donated and designated for 'Children at Risk'," Morton says.

In addition to supplying financial assistance, LAM is seeking missionary candidates to work with at-risk children throughout Latin America. "Robleato in Costa Rica needs a nurse full-time to take care of the kid's health," Morton notes. Workers for the other projects are also needed.

"It is exciting to be in a project that is hands on and where one can see results immediately," Morton says. "We can help the children not only in the physical sense but help them eternally with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

The Latin America Mission is an international fellowship of men and women who, motivated by love for the Lord Jesus and in obedience to His commands, have joined together to encourage and assist the Latin church in world evangelization. The mission currently has approximately 240 missionaries in 13 countries. The U.S. headquarters can be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami Springs, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 305-884-8400. The mission's web site may be found at www.lam.org.

Latin America Mission provides grants to Children-at-Risk projects, *LAM News Service*, May 24, 1999