

**Camping since four years old;  
New Latin American director for Christian Camping International brings years of involvement**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg  
LAM News Service

**San Jose, Costa Rica** (LAMNS)—Missionary Robert Bruneau's camping ministry started when he was four years old.

"I grew up in a small town in Panama and we had the Baptist camp 45 minutes from that village," Robert reports. "So I went to that camp since I was four years old."

Today, Robert, who was born in Colombia but raised in Panama, is the newly-appointed Director of Christian Camping International/Latin America. In that capacity, he is responsible for providing training, coordination and development of Christian camping programs throughout the Spanish-speaking Latin countries.

Robert attended the Baptist camp at Santa Clara, Panama with his father who was a Baptist pastor. "Later, I worked for the camp for almost six years in the volunteer program," he says. "Then the national denomination chose me to be the coordinator of volunteer programs in 1990, and then in 1993 they called me to be the Director of the camp. So, I served the camp in different steps, as a camper, as a volunteer, as a leader and then as the camp director."

Having moved from the Panamanian campground to an executive position in Costa Rica, Robert, who is a missionary with the Latin America Mission, says that he misses the camp setting. "But, I know what the camp directors in Latin America feel when they are in the mountains or in front of the beach alone." He explains. "I know what it's like when they want to impact the camper's life and they don't know how to do it."

To help out, CCI/LA plans two major events each year. "We have an annual institute to train instructors," Robert says. "We met together last year in Guatemala with 24 leaders from all around Latin America and trained for 20 days. We teach directors how to train counselors."

The other event is a summit of national CCI boards every two to three years. "We train them how to be a board and how to develop a team," Robert explains. "We help them with marketing and how to train their own leaders."

Robert took over the leadership of the regional CCI group in January of 2002. He succeeded LAM missionary Bob Sabeau who formed and headed the group for 30 years.

"Robert brings a background of being a camper before the age of 8, a conversion at that age of 8 and a call to missions at age 12," Bob says. He has an exposure to CCI Latin America back as far as 1987 and was trained in CCI Latin America."

Under the CCI structure, seven countries in the region have their own organization to encourage Christian camping in their own area. “Camping is strong in Costa Rica,” reports Esther Mora, CCI’s administrator. “The camps are very busy, serving all of the churches.”

Mora worked at LAM’s Camp Roblealto for sixteen years before assuming her responsibilities with the regional office. “It’s not just an office job,” she says. “It is a ministry with a vision for the future. It’s helping others.”

In addition to the conferences, CCI provides printed material including two magazines that offer resources to churches and camp leaders.

“In *Ideas Unlimited* we teach our leaders how to do different things such as promoting a camp, leading night games and so forth,” Robert explains. “*Campfire* is our bulletin where we inform all of the leaders about what is going on in different camps in different countries.”

*Campfire* is made available to member camps throughout Latin America while *Ideas Unlimited* can be purchased from the CCI/LA office in Costa Rica. The organization is exploring ways to sell their materials through Christian bookstores says Nina Perez de Bruneau, Robert’s wife who does marketing for the organization.

CCI/LA also offers courses throughout the region. Several of them deal with training counselors, focusing on building relationships, providing tools and operating camps. Others deal with developing Bible studies for the camp setting and programming a camp.

CCI’s staff says that the goal of Christian camping is to bring young people to the Lord and help them to find God’s purpose for their lives.

“In my case, I was invited to go to Camp Roblealto when I was twelve years old,” remembers Mora. “I went and I made a commitment to the Lord. Later I wanted to work in the area of children so I went and worked at the camp for free. Finally, (LAM missionary) Pete Nelson invited me to work in the office. I began and now it has been sixteen years and I’m still working in camping. It’s an example of evangelization.”

“Evangelist Luis Palau came to Christ at age ten in a camp in Argentina,” Bob Sabean explains. “Camps historically have been places of decision making, conversion and vocation.”

“When properly used, they are places of impact,” he adds. “Today in the United States, camps report thousands and thousands of decisions made for conversion and vocation. A study made in the (missionary) Language School in Costa Rica found that 48% of new missionaries had made vocation decisions at a camp.”

Robert has dreams for how CCI/LA can help develop the camping movement in Latin America. “I want to meet all of the camp directors in Latin America,” he says. “I know

what they feel and I know what they need. I think that we can give more attention to their spiritual needs. We can let them know that they are not alone that we have a body of Christ behind them that can help.”

To help out, Robert wants to develop training in administration that will help leaders to manage their facilities and program efficiently. “We hope to have a camp director’s congress in 2004 to help with that.”

Robert also wants to improve CCI/LA’s web site in order to provide more information and serve as a point of contact between camp directors. “It’s expensive to make a long distance phone call or to hold regular meetings,” he says. “We want to open a chat room on our web page so we can have regular meetings and conversations with experts on a topic of interest.”

As with most developing ministries, CCI/LA needs resources and people to help out. “We would welcome a missionary who can help us in fundraising,” Robert says. “We need to be trained and then train others in fund raising processes and strategy.”

Robert says that his ministry could also use a missionary marketing expert.

“CCI is a Christ-centered association with a biblical structure and a vision to supply the needs of church and camping leaders,” he affirms. “We want to be known by what we are doing and what we will do in the future.”

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:

Latin America Mission [www.lam.org](http://www.lam.org)

Christian Camping International <http://cci.gospelcom.net/ccihome/>

Christian Camping International/Latin America <http://www.ccial.org/>

**New Latin American director for Christian Camping International brings years of involvement,** *LAM News Service*, Aug 2, 2002