

## **Voz Cristiana offering distinct programming**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

One of the western hemisphere's newest Christian broadcast services is growing rapidly because what it offers is distinct according to its general manager.

"We don't sound religious, but we have a definite message," explained Juan Mark Gallardo, the General Manager of Miami-based Voz Cristiana, a Christian broadcasting service that provides programming via satellite to stations throughout the Americas and via shortwave.

Voz Cristiana began broadcasting in Spanish in September of 1998 via their shortwave station in Chile. Soon after, they added their first local affiliate, Radio Dynimas in San Juan, Argentina.

Today, the station provides programming to 121 stations throughout Latin America and the United States. Programming is also carried by a station in East Timor through taped recordings. The station's Spanish program reaches an estimated 2.5 million listeners a day.

The station has developed a Portuguese language service directed at Brazil via shortwave and delivered by satellite to three stations in Brazil.

"Some of the stations are secular that look to us for programming," said Bernice Ramirez who is the Program Director for both language services. "One of those is an Argentinean station that likes us because of the neutral tone of our programming."

"We aren't political nor doctrinal, we just want to share the love of Jesus Christ through our different programs," Gallardo said. "Our music is all contemporary Christian."

"Some stations use our service twenty-four hours a day, while others use us to complement their own programs," Gallardo said.

"Voz Cristiana allows us to be on the air 24 hours a day," reported Julie Kurrle, who along with her husband Norberto operates Radio Alternativa in Obligado, Paraguay. "We have two DJs plus Norberto and we can't cover all night. So, we just press the button and they do the work for us."

"When we first went on the air, all we used was programming from Voz Cristiana," said Michael Escalante, the former General Manager of Radio Alegre in Wilmington, North Carolina. "Now the station produces some local programming, but the majority is still from Voz Cristiana."

Escalante said that his station liked the programming because "it is non-threatening, it speaks clearly about the Lord, it is warm and it doesn't knock anybody else."

Voz Cristiana offers its programming to affiliates free of charge, and helps them to obtain the necessary satellite equipment to receive the signal.

Programming, while distinctly Christian, is designed to cross denominational lines. “We make a serious effort not to offend any religious denomination,” explained Ramirez.

Response to the station’s programming has been very positive. “Our most popular programs are Hombres de Valor, (a program for men) and Pildoritas y Reflecciones (a program for women),” said Gallardo.

“We have people, especially youth, writing in all of the time to Voz Cristiana from our area,” said Kurrle. “We receive very positive response from the community, even from non-Christians.”

Kurrle said that non-Christian listeners often respond positively to a nightly call-in program that Voz Cristiana provides to her station.

“We also have a number of micro-programs,” said Ramirez, referring especially to a widely distributed short feature by popular Latin Christian artist Marcos Witt. “We mix them in with the music.”

As Voz Cristiana celebrates its fifth anniversary it is making plans to expand and serve more stations. “We have 130 stations throughout the region waiting to sign up,” Ramirez said. “It’s a matter of raising enough funds to provide them with the equipment so they can use our programming on the air.”

Voz Cristiana is operated by its parent organization, Christian Vision, a British-based Christian organization. The group also operates a shortwave station in Zambia and a large international broadcast facility in Australia.

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