

Sister Cindy Sullivan, Vocation of Service

I arrived in Quito Ecuador on June 24, 1974. We received our vaccinations in New Orleans since the Health Department in Miami was shut down. So, all of us spent our last night in the United States at Bourbon Street. We flew to Miami and left at 3:30 am to Quito, Ecuador and to our new adventure. We had a quick layover in Panama to have the plane fumigated. We all had to get off the plane and wait in a small hut until we could board again and continue our journey. We arrived in Quito with the first light in the early morning. We all looked through the window hoping that the wing of the plane wouldn't hit the mountain as we descended.

We were taken to the Savoy Hotel, which was new at that time. Our host families met us on a Sunday morning when we all one by one left the hotel lobby and went with our corresponding family. Most of us didn't speak Spanish, so the adventure began by trying to communicate in a new culture and new language.

We were trained in this old country house that had some small classrooms, all I remember is the strong smell of sour milk, as the rooms had recently been painted with white milk paint.

I was invited to join Peace Corps because I was a dental hygienist and there was hope that a program could be developed in the country. There were 4 of us in the group, two of them returned to the United States even before finishing training.



Sister Cindy Sullivan with shoeshine boy's sisters.

The director of the Health Ministry was on vacation, so our program never got off the ground. I worked in a dental office for a few months, my salary went to the "Centro Del Muchacho Trabajador" (CMT[GPI]) or Working Boy Center translated to English. I provided support in CMT. So, when once again our program wasn't working, I requested a switch to special education.

I started at Centro del Muchacho Trabajador, running a snack bar for kids who worked on the streets polishing shoes, but I was also working in the dental office with Dr. Hernán Prado. Soon, I started a program for the shoeshine boys' sisters, it came to be known as the "Girls Program." Barbara Herrera and Denise Geisenkof also worked at Centro del Muchacho Trabajador. Two Peace Corps Volunteers worked helping with the technical education of the boys, the Volunteer's names were Jaime Camacho and Mike (I don't remember his surname). After that, we started working with the children's parents with developmental sessions.

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The program became the first family development program in Latin America where the focus was on teaching values to the entire family of the working children. From the beginning, and throughout its history, some Peace Corps Volunteers have helped in CMT.

Father John Halligan, and Sister Mary Conway, always welcomed Volunteers and their ideas to help CMT become the successful family movement. I volunteered at the Center for 4 years and a half. George Baldino was the Director of the Peace Corps at that time. I returned to the United States to join Sister Mary Conway's community. After three years of novitiate and taking my first vows I returned to Quito and to CMT until 2017.



Peace Corps support to CMT restarted on the early 70's, when father Padre Halligan and Co-Director, sister Mary Miguel Conway, looked for qualified teachers to start a technical program in the center in La Marin neighborhood.