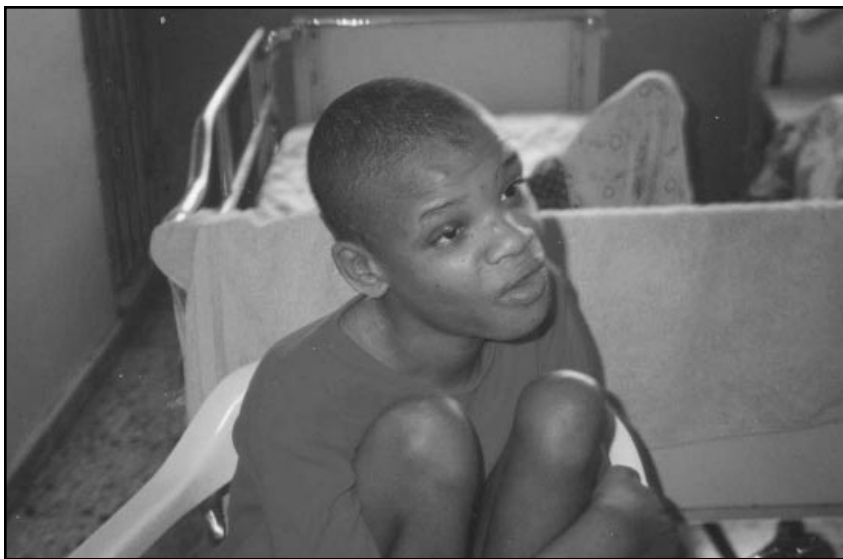


# THE GOOD NEWS in South Florida

## Ministry focuses on children of neighboring island

By Ashley Stevens • The Good News



***LOOK AT THE CAMERA: Before the Valladares began ministering at the Dominican orphanage, many resident children were completely unresponsive to human contact.***

orphanage, some tied up, some in cages – all hidden away from society because of disabilities or other special needs – Valladares knew that the Lord had set it on her heart that this was the place where she would serve. The man who ran the facility hired her to work there the very next day.

### ***The seeds are sown***

Orphanages in the Dominican Republic are often without basic necessities like daily, nutritious meals and educational opportunities. Secular outreaches to orphanages that care for non-disabled children already exist. However, for ChildHelp, the mission is to help kids whose parents were so overwhelmed that they just left their child somewhere. Cerebral Palsy is one of many neurological disorders that hamper these children from developing and communicating in a mainstream environment. Many of these kids were not even made comfortable at the orphanage Valladares visited, she said. When she saw how much they were in need, she knew what she had to do in order to help these children.

During that summer, when she returned home, Valladares spoke to her husband, Frank, who is an attorney in Miami; as a result, they began building a program that has touched many lives. They organize short-term missions trips to the island for those who apply, often buying supplies themselves when donations aren't sufficient for the orphanage's needs. Basic things like food, water, shelter and medical attention have made their tasks difficult, but the Valladares' continue to give these problems to the Lord.

At first, Valladares was in a season of training, she explained. She asked the Lord to "show me the things that hurt you and make you cry." Just as in Psalm 61:1 "Hear my cry, O Lord, attend unto my prayer," He did.

A Christian organization based in Miami, **Project ChildHelp** is a volunteer-powered outreach to the special-needs children of the Dominican Republic. The program began four years ago after a series of problems frustrated elementary-school teacher Lourdes Valladares' attempts to go on a short-term mission trip to her native Cuba. Taking her ruined trip to the Lord, Valladares continued to pray that the Lord would send her exactly where she was to go to serve, she explained. Sure enough, she got a call to go to the Dominican Republic with her 5-year-old daughter. The day she arrived at her destination, she was shown the orphanage that would change her life.

Upon seeing the neglected children in the



***HARD TO HANDLE?:  
Before PCH, some  
orphans, like Erica, left,  
required more supervi-  
sion than the tiny staff  
could manage, and were  
locked up.***

### ***First crops to harvest***

Now, the program has a few years behind it, and the Dominican government has granted the organization five acres of land on which to build a new home to care for the children. Project ChildHelp has ten staff members on the island, and is planning to break ground on the new facility in ten months. Frank Valladares is hard at work with an architect on finalizing blueprints for the project. The Valladares' say that they know the Lord has done everything, and without Him, nothing would be possible.

Her first trip gave Lourdes Valladares the confirmation that she was in the right place. While there, she met a woman who is now affectionately called Sister Tata. Tata confided that she had been praying for a missionary to come and bless them and help the children. She felt that the Lord had heard and that someone was going to come. When she heard about Valladares's visit, Tata knew the missionary she had asked for was Valladares and came right away to take her to the orphanage.

As the Valladares' continue their trips to the Dominican Republic, they have not yet taken their two daughters, two and nine years old to the orphanage. Their nine-year-old has said that she thinks she'll be prepared by next summer to go and help her parents with the ministry, her mother explained.

Lourdes Valladares said she believes that the Lord may soon send her family to live in the Dominican Republic for a longer term, so that Valladares can work for the ministry full-time. "I'm a third-grade teacher, so I will be making the decision between now and August, but I think I know which way the Lord is leading. Especially with the construction and grant," she'll be needed full-time for heavy-duty fundraising and on-site supervision, Valladares explained.

This change in lifestyle would be the culmination of many changes the family have gone through as they continue with the ministry. One important view on life she has learned from the Lord, she said, is that, "The rest of the time we have on this earth should be used to serve."

Noting that the program still has a long way to go does not seem to discourage Valladares, and it is clear that the Lord has changed many lives through just one committed heart.

Want to find out how to go on a trip with Project ChildHelp, or how you can help from home? Visit their Web site at [www.projectchildhelp.org](http://www.projectchildhelp.org), send or call 305-271-0467.

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