

NEWS NOTES

THE YEAR OF THE ADVENTIST TEACHER IN SANTA CATARINA, BRAZIL

By Anisio R. Chagas

The Year of the Adventist Teacher has been highlighted by many events in the Santa Catarina Conference in Brazil. Among these are the dedication of the gymnasium, chapel, laboratory, and library at the D. Pedro II Adventist School, on September 1, 1989.

On Sabbath, September 2, the gym was packed. Teachers, parents, constituents, and civil and ecclesiastical authorities were present for that special occasion. Luiz Henrique da Silveira, federal congressman and former governmental minister of science and technology, offered high commendations of the Adventist educational work in Brazil.

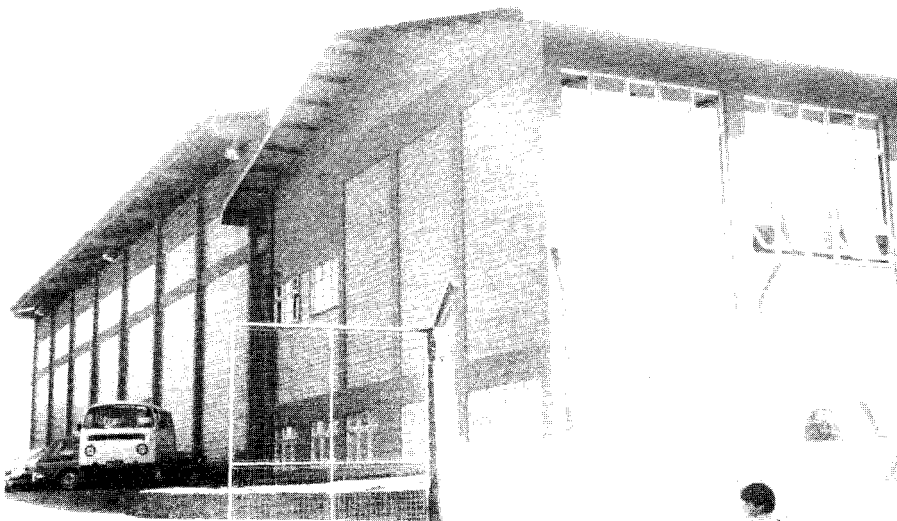
Victor Griffiths, associate director of the General Conference Education Department, preached on Sabbath morning. The teachers were awarded trophies and citations of honor in appreciation for their contribution to Christian education.

There are 22 elementary schools in Santa Catarina with an enrollment of 3,000 students. About 160 teachers and other employees participate in the enterprise of SDA education in this area. Despite the financial crisis caused by the increasing inflation rate, education has continued to flourish. Jose Paulo Martini, education director for the Santa Catarina Conference, an enthusiastic young leader, has given outstanding leadership. Much school construction and remodeling are taking place in the local field. The teachers are enthusiastic and highly motivated.

Nevil Gorski, education director of the South American Division, with the union directors of education, came to Joinville for the dedication. The event was covered by radio and television networks. On Sabbath afternoon the Reencontro Quartet presented *The Prodigal Son* cantata.

The Adventist schools in Santa Catarina perform an excellent evangelistic work among non-Adventist parents who have chosen Adventist schools when enrolling their children. Many of these parents have become friends of the Adventist message.

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Front view of new gymnasium at the D. Pedro Adventist School in Joinville, Santa Catarina, Brazil.



Congressman Luis Henrique da Silveira, former governmental minister of science and technology, addressed the crowd at the inauguration.



Santa Catarina SDA teachers were honored at the dedication.

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Denomination Launches Major Effort to Attain Excellence in Schools

In a bold move to increase the excellence of its kindergarden through university school system, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has embarked on Project Affirmation, a three-year effort to turn the members' grassroots vision into educational change.

"Adventists have always been committed to education," says Dr. Tom Smith, project coordinator. "We want to make sure that they have good reason to stay committed to *Adventist* education."

Project Affirmation aims to address the serious realities facing Adventist education today. Among these are declining enrollments, increasing costs, competition from non-Adventist schools, and what appears to be a significant erosion of moral values and faith commitment in students, parents, and society. Through its work, the denomination's North American boards of education, K-12 and higher education, hope to set in motion a process of planned change in the schools that will continue into the 21st century.

Four task forces are currently assigned to work on key areas of concern:

- Academic quality and valued educators. Erma Lee, associate director of education for the North Pacific

Union, is chairman. Vice chairman is Larry Geraty, president of Atlantic Union College.

- Values, faith, and commitment. Bailey Gillespie, professor of theology and Christian personality at Loma
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Church Undertakes Landmark Study on Youth Faith Development

In the largest study of its kind ever done among the youth of any denomination in North America, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is asking its adolescents what leads them to accept or reject religious faith.

Because young people are being studied in context, it will be possible to identify what it is in the family, church, and school that encourages faith, according to V. Bailey Gillespie, chairman of the project team.

The survey was designed to encompass nearly 20,000 persons—students in grades 6-12 and their parents, pastors, teachers, and principals who were surveyed in late September and early October. The sample included approximately 20 percent of all Adventist junior high and high school students in North America.

Each participant was asked to respond to 300 to 400 questions during the 90-minute survey. This will give researchers literally millions of data

bits for analysis.

Known as Valuegenesis, the survey is a key part of Project Affirmation, the denomination's three-year effort to move its 78,000-student school system in North America toward greater excellence.

Valuegenesis probes eight key areas in its search for the roots of faith:

- Matters of faith, such as faith orientation, religious background, and religious behavior

- Church involvement, attitudes, and commitments

- Adventist practice and standards—how they are viewed, taught, and enforced

- School characteristics, climate, and programs

- Family communication, religious practices, and parenting dynamics

- What people feel needs to be done to strengthen the Adventist educational system

- What people want to see in young people—achievement, prosocial behavior, moral decisions, church commitment, life-style choices.

Using the survey findings, members of the Project Affirmation task force on values, faith, and commitment will develop materials and programs aimed at:

- renewing interest in the faith development of Adventist adolescents

- making schools and church groups more effective in nurturing faith

- helping parents communicate faith, values, and life-style more productively

- increasing youth commitment to the church and its mission.

"Youth ministries has too often been created in a vacuum of information—a shot in the dark," says Gillespie. "This survey will 'turn on the lights.'"

The Valuegenesis Survey was designed and conducted with the aid of the Search Institute, based in Minneapolis. Search has previously conducted many projects dealing with faith development in a number of denominational contexts.

Peter L. Benson, president of Search, is primary investigator in the Valuegenesis Survey. V. Bailey Gillespie, of Loma Linda University, and Steven Case, minister of youth at the Carmichael, California SDA church, are coinvestigators.—North American Division News Release, October 6, 1989. □



At a Dallas meeting early in 1989, representatives (seated) from North American unions and conferences receive facilitator training to enable them to assist in Project Affirmation. Standing, left to right: Tom Smith, Project Affirmation coordinator; Merton Strommen and Shelby Andress, SEARCH Institute consultants for Project Affirmation.