

Historical Timeline



1964 Fr. John Halligan, SJ conducted a study of shoeshine boys working on the streets in Quito, Ecuador. Based on his finding, he developed a plan and opened the Working Boys' Center in the attic of the 400 year old Jesuit Church of La Compañía. The program began with a meal program, basic educational classes and medical and dental care for roughly 250 boys.

1967 Sr. Mary Miguel Conway, BVM arrived in Quito, Ecuador to work at the Working Boys' Center. Sister Miguel, better known as Madre Miguel, began implementation of many of the key social programs that continue today.

1968 In August 1968, the Working Boys' Center school was recognized and officially approved by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. The first graduating class of sixth graders had two members.

1971 Construction of the Working Boys' Center's first home began in Plaza San Martin in the heart of Quito, the capital of Ecuador. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the 28th Superior General of the Jesuits, visited the Working Boys' Center and gave his blessings on the work of Padre and Madre.

1973 The Center relocates to its new home in the Marin. Now called Center #1, the building became home to the Center's first technical school. Classes offered were carpentry, auto-mechanics, bench work, welding, and industrial mechanics. Princess Ann of England, together with her new husband, Mark Phillips, visited the Working Boys' Center. Fr. John Halligan, better known as Padre Juan, was named Honorary Citizen of Quito.

1974 Family members become an official part of the programs offered and the name was expanded to the Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families.

1976 The ten core values program is implemented as the base for transforming the lives of the Center members. The values program promotes developing and strengthening

moral values in ten important areas of life: loyalty, personal formation, family, religion, education, economy, work, recreation, health and housing.

1977 United States First Lady Rosalyn Carter visits the Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families.

1978 Sr. Cindy Sullivan, a Peace Corps volunteer at the Center, becomes the first member from the Center to enter the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) order. Sr. Cindy, better known as Madre Cindy, continues as a Director at the Center still today. The first day care program began at the Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families with over 50 children in daily attendance.

1979 After 25 years of missionary work, Padre Juan and Madre Miguel were awarded the Xavier Medal by the New York Province of the Society of Jesus for their outstanding dedication to missions.

1981 A significantly larger Center #2 was opened in Cotocollao to serve families living in the north of Quito. Programs are now offered in two locations. The Center receives the “Knight” award and the Sebastián de Benalcázar medallion for the Center's flag from the Municipality of Quito.

1983 The Center's Adult Education Program was approved by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. The program focuses on core subject mastery like reading, writing and arithmetic but what makes it unique is the life skills training it offers.

1984 The first technical short course for adults began with the instruction of carpentry as the Center celebrates its 30th year of missionary service to Quito's poor families.

1986 Though volunteers have always served at the Center, the official volunteer corps began with four volunteers in 1986.

1987 Ecuador's National Congress publically acknowledges the work of the Center with the poorest families throughout the capital city of Quito.

1989 Padre Juan is awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Marquette University. Madre Miguel is receives the Church and Service Award in the grade of Superior by the Ecuadorian National Episcopal Conference. The Pichincha Federation of Catholic Education Schools bestows a diploma upon the Center for its 25th anniversary.

1990 As part of his Kellogg Fellowship project, Carlos Gomez, Center Director and original member, creates the Center's Minga program which brings Center members together to help voluntarily build homes for fellow families.

1994 With a generous gift from Erica and Harry John, the long-time dream of a volunteer house and business center was made a reality. Through a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, a small business loan program began to help graduates start their own businesses. Almost 150 graduates received loans. The Center commemorates 40 years of transforming poor families to prosperity through hard work and perseverance.

1997 For the first time of many, the Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families technical school was declared the best technical school in Ecuador from among 700 contenders. The Center would win the award again in 2005 and 2007.

1998 With a grant from the Italian government, the Working Boys' Center began the health promoters program with 20 mothers graduating from its first class.

1999 A medallion to the Center's flag is awarded by the Metropolitan Council of Quito in commemoration of the 35th anniversary.

2000 United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, visited the Center and was photographed around the world dancing with a two-year-old Center member.

2003 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) acknowledges the outstanding work of the Center in educating low income adolescents.

2004 With the remodeling and reopening of the Gota de Leche (Milk Drop) building donated by Peter and Maruja Maynard, the Center #1 grammar school relocates to its new home. The Center continues the Milk Drop program which provides free medical care and milk supplements to undernourished children in Quito. The Quito Metropolitan District Council awards the Center of Institutional Medallion of Honor.

2004 With an Ecuadorian grant, construction was completed on the roof of Center #2 in Cotocollao to build much-needed technical school classrooms. The new space allowed the former classrooms to be used for adult education, health, music and religion classes in the grammar school.

2006 Saskia Alguinga became the Center's first Ecuadorian to take vows with the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary order. Saskia joins Madre Miguel and Madre Cindy as a member of the BVM order. Padre Juan receives the Great Collar award from the Metropolitan Council of Quito.

2007 The independent impact study is published on the Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families. The findings showed that over 6,000 families or 30,000 individuals have left poverty behind forever as a result of its exhaustive programs.

2008 The Center hosted an international forum on working children with participation of speakers from Italy, Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador. Padre Juan is awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Fairfield University and the World Citizen Award from the Cotopaxi Academy.

2009 Padre Juan received the Medal of Honor for best educational model, at all levels, for working children by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. He is called out “as an example for future generations of dedication to the noble cause of educating and forming youth in the values of the Gospel.”

2010 Padre Juan received the Opus Prize, an annual faith-based humanitarian award which recognizes unsung heroes who, guided by faith and an entrepreneurial spirit, are conquering the world's most persistent social problems. In addition, he celebrated his 80th birthday with 400+ of his beloved supporters in Milwaukee, WI. The Center breaks into the world of social media by starting a Facebook Page and a monthly e-newsletter to communicate with its supporters online.

2011 Padre Juan and Madre Miguel start a new Alumni Association for Center graduates. Padre Juan is inducted into the Fordham Prep Hall of Honor. The Center creates a Twitter account and an Instagram account to share tidbits with their online followers.

2012 Madre Miguel is awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Marquette University while also celebrating her 45th year as co-director at the Center.

2013 Through the work of loyal Center benefactors, a new 40-person bus is purchased which will be used to transport member families and volunteers to and from the three Center locations. The Association for the Defense of Workers recognizes the Center for “its vigorous and tenacious educational activities in Quito and the province of Pichincha.” Padre Juan is awarded the Medal of Merit by the Parish of Guangopolo for his work and dedication to the parish.

2014 The Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families celebrates its 50th anniversary. Hundreds of former volunteers and dedicated donors gather together to commemorate this magnificent milestone.