

‘Festival of Joy’ Brings Life-Changing Message to Costa Rica

In Costa Rica’s mountainous coffee country, Christians recently joined forces to offer their neighbors free health care and entertainment, along with a life-changing message.

The citywide outreach created a model of cooperation that could bless the community for a long time to come.

They called the festival “Republic of Joy,” and organizers shared plenty of joy with the people of Turrialba.

“The goal is to preach the gospel, to let them know about Jesus,” evangelist J.A. Perez told CBN News. “So the social side ... is a way of getting to people. We bless them. We love them. We show them the love of Christ through what we do for them. The whole idea is preaching the Gospel to them. It’s about Jesus.”

“First we give something to the community,” Bernice Ortega, with the JA Perez Evangelistic Association, explained. “We believe people don’t have to listen if you don’t give them something in exchange or if they don’t see the love of God through you.”

More than 20 Christian churches and ministries provided volunteers and services. They joined a full team of evangelists whose impact was felt throughout the city.

“You know, it’s very important that we have quite a few evangelists because they have complementary gifts,” Jim Williams, with Next Generation Alliance, told CBN News. “What one does the other doesn’t. And as they come together in this role we can reach the entire city.”

“We can go to schools,” he continued. “We can go to prisons; we can go into the churches; we can go into the parks. Some people have the gift of personal evangelism, others have it in mass. You put that all together and you have a powerful force.”

Turrialba’s youth turned out for skateboarding and BMX bike riding exhibitions.

“The job of this ministry is to catch the attention of the youth who are in the streets and enjoy sports, skates, skate boarding and BMX,” Andres Pujol, with Mobile Skate Park, said.

The public events drew entire families whose children danced to the “Poem of Salvation” song, along with Gizmo, the robot from CBN’s Superbook cartoon series.

And church volunteers were there when people responded to the invitation to follow Christ, an opportunity given during each of the festival’s many events.

“This is not the work of one man. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in collaboration with all the evangelists,” Perez said.

Turrialba’s churches expect that work to bear fruit for years to come.