



Center for the Integral Development of Women (CADI)

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CADI: Center for the Support of Integral Development

“I’ve been coming to CADI since it started, when there was no building and the meetings and clinics were held in the house of one of the neighbors, Don Catalino, who vacated one of his rooms for us,” says Marisa Ortiz, a mother who brings her daughter to the center. “I’m so grateful for all of this. Thanks to them I have a roof over my head and good education for my daughter.”

CADI (Centro de Apoyo al Desarrollo Integral, or Center for the Integral Development of Women), has been running since 1992 in the Casavalle district of Montevideo, capital of Uruguay. It started out as a pre-school, and now offers education and training for the whole family, with practical classes for local women and children, to help development at grass-roots level and improve the quality of life for vulnerable children and families.

CADI focuses on offering women the opportunity to develop humanly, culturally, professionally and socially, from early childhood through to the third age. CADI stresses all-round development, from academic subjects to values training, with full-time primary and secondary education.

It is promoted by ACT (Cultural and Technical Association), a not-for-profit civil organization founded in 1965. CADI takes its inspiration from the teaching and example of St Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, who preached about living Christianity to the full, resulting necessarily in deep awareness of the needs of others in society. Accordingly CADI aims to offer all-round education to each student, so that in St Josemaria’s words, “it strives for excellence, and gives a complete education — which includes Christian ideals — at the same time respecting personal freedom and earnestly furthering social justice” (Conversations, 81).

In a deprived district of Montevideo, CADI is opening up new horizons to the locals.

Beginnings

In 1989 some inhabitants of Casavalle, on the outskirts of Montevideo, went to a public office to appeal for help. They met someone who listened to them and gave them the contact details of the Cultural and Technical Association (ACT). This is an organization that promotes the setting up of schools and training centers for young people and organizes aid distribution for the poorest.

After studying the development needs and possibilities of the district ACT drew up a project and presented it to various public and private organizations to raise funds.

Meanwhile some professional people and students from the university hall of residence Del Mar, an educational establishment run by faithful of Opus Dei, began working in the Casavalle district. Months went by, and the necessary infrastructure was still not in place. In 1992, with financing from the European Community and Manos Unidas (Hands united), they acquired a building to use for the work with local people.

Parents learn from their children

At half past eight in the morning in CADI fifty children are waiting impatiently for the real hard work in store for them today. They are the main beneficiaries of one of the services offered by CADI: a pre-school for three- to five-year-olds.

“We want to give the kids a cheerful, loving atmosphere, and train them up in human virtues at the same time – generosity, truthfulness, tidiness, sharing – plus basic good manners, so they learn to keep themselves clean, sit down at table for their meals, and wash their hands,” says Rosario Rondan, head of the pre-school.

Marisa Ortiz adds, “The most important part is the pre-school and school support, i.e. educating my daughter. Joanna has changed a lot since she began here, in her behavior and habits. She has learned to read and to brush her teeth. The teachers are behind each of the children and they talk to us about their progress.”

The teachers spend eight hours a day with the children, giving them their lunch and tea as well.

Nora Olaso, CADI’s fund-raiser and administrator, tells of a little event that reflects

what happens here. “A little girl who was in my office said a prayer aloud. I told her it was a lovely little prayer and asked if her mom had taught it to her. To my surprise she answered, “No – I taught it to her!”

Workshops: creating good work habits

CADI now has several different educational programs running, so that young and not so young women can not only train for a job but learn to give their lives a new meaning. They discover the importance of caring for the details, and offering a well-finished-off product at a reasonable price, they understand the importance of method and cleanliness – in short, they learn the human and supernatural transcendence of working conscientiously.

In pursuit of its goal to help the local women into education, work and society, CADI reaches around 500 families through its programs. Appropriate psycho-motor stimulation for babies, aimed at expectant and new mothers; early years education, for 2- and 3-year-olds; a schoolgirls’ club, with educational activities, play, and whole-family projects; a youth center, offering all-round developmental training for 12- to 14-year-olds at secondary schools or training colleges; a work-training polytechnic offering qualifications for 15- to 18-year-olds; and a grandmothers’ club, which helps to explore and activate the role of grandmothers in the family and the wider community.

Testimonies

“CADI is an oasis,” says Eddy Facelli, a local woman. “We find all the answers we need there. We grow as people, as families, and learn to be more supportive to others and better Christians.” Eddy’s eldest son, now 17, was one of the first pupils of CADI’s early-learning program back in 1993. Her teenage daughter Stella is in Year 3 at secondary school and goes to CADI’s youth center, having worked her way through the pre-school and the schoolgirls’ club. The youngest, 5-year-old Damian, spent two years in CADI’s pre-school and this year will enter a local primary school. Eddy and her husband Eduardo are expecting a new baby, who Eddy says “will start off with the psycho-motor stimulation, which my other kids didn’t get.”

“When Evelyn started at CADI she was a very timid little girl. She was scared of other children, scared of the teachers, the games, and especially scared of being parted from her mom, even for just a couple of hours. But as the months went by, with the help of the psychologist and the teacher, she overcame all those fears noticeably. She began to join in with a group of other small children and make

friends, and she got close to the teachers, especially Silvia and Ana, who showed her such loving care that we are forever grateful, without forgetting the patience shown by Rosario and all that human group that makes up CADI,” says Claudia, mother of two-year-old Evelyn.

“We get high-quality material and classes, and that means we can compete on the same level as others who can afford the best.” Lourdes Da Costa, first year student.

“I just love CADI, the people and the place, the values they teach. I know that in CADI they think about each of us individually, they think about our future, so I really feel happy and comfortable to be one of the students.” Jessica Froste, second-year student.

“I’ve been coming to CADI since I was three – my whole life. My parents like me to come here and I like it too. In CADI they support us in our studies, if we have a family problem they help us with that too, and what we want to be when we grow up.” Caren, 16, youth center.

Activities with parents

CADI’s philosophy is to link up with the families of those who come to the center, by organizing activities for parents that aim to coordinate the training the children and young people are offered there, with the upbringing they receive in the home.

Early years education is especially important in this regard. The Parents and Children program offers workshops to help parents understand their children’s developmental needs from 0 to 5 years. Before enrolling on the program parents are interviewed personally to help them identify their needs and opportunities as their children’s first educators.

Training trainers (Polytechnic)

CADI aims to teach and inform parents on subjects linked to their children’s education, so that they can value and accompany each child in his or her all-round development. From the start of CADI’s activities, many parents have participated enthusiastically and persistently. Regular interactive workshops help them to build up their family on a well-thought out basis of solid principles, which are complemented by the training and education offered in CADI.

When you teach people, teach them well!

On one of his pastoral visits to Uruguay, Bishop Javier Echevarria, the prelate of Opus Dei, went to see CADI, now a flourishing apostolic enterprise. Julia Gonzalez, an 87-year-old living locally, met Bishop Echevarria. She told him, “We have received so much in terms of teaching and learning, but best of all is the love and patience they have shown us. We are so grateful for the love they give us!”

Bishop Echevarria, surrounded by local families and teachers at CADI, recalled that when St Josemaria first started Opus Dei, he often went to the poorest districts like that one, “to give everything he had and help the people there, even though he was sometimes repaid by having stones thrown at him. In spite of that, he kept on.” Bishop Echevarria added, “Cooperate with them here, because they will teach you everything they know so that your children will be good Christians. Try to stay with Jesus, who loves each of you very much, including when you are suffering want. St Josemaria Escriva also suffered great poverty, that’s why he had so much experience in helping people in need. He loves you a lot, and watches over you from heaven.” And, turning to the teachers, he stressed: “When you teach people, teach them well!”