



New Ecuador Student Cafe off to a great start

The idea for a coffee house/student centre in Loja, Ecuador, grew out of SIM-er Colin Bakon's work with university students.

Having spent 2 years teaching English at the university and building relationships, Colin was looking for a way to continue ministering to these students off campus.

A couple of years ago Colin visited the El Alfarero coffee house/student centre in Sucre, Bolivia. There he witnessed how God has used the ministry of Graham and Debbie Frith to radically transform the lives of university students. He came back to Loja with a vision.



Bob and Millie Collins joined the Ecuador team to help turn Colin's vision into reality. After months of planning and work, they opened El Sendero (The Path) cafe in November 2005, basing it on the Bolivia model. And God has blessed the ministry tremendously.

In their first 6 months, Bob and Millie have served the average monthly number of people they expected after 1 year! They have had numerous opportunities to share Christ. Most have been initiated by the students themselves, who ask questions about faith, love, marriage, drinking, dating, and other issues young people face.

The vision for the cafe is two-fold: to provide a place for non-believing students to hear about Christ and for Christian students to have a place to be discipled and mentored as they participate in the ministry as volunteers. In fact, the project is aimed at a multitude of needs.

On a practical level, it addresses the needs of a large student population without much support or care by offering counselling, love, friendship, affordable food and drink and a place to hang out. On a spiritual level, it addresses the emptiness felt by the student population by offering the opportunity to be filled with the love of God.

It also provides Christian students with training in friendship evangelism, and helps to foster unity among the churches.

Praise God for the great start that he has given to this ministry! El Sendero is a unique place in Loja. Although the city has a large population of students, there are very few safe places for them to hang out, and even fewer resources for them to be cared for, counselled, and introduced to a living relationship with Christ.

I want to change my life

Bob Collins met Josiah, a young professional, while taking a friend to the hospital for alcohol poisoning. Two days later Josiah walked into the cafe and said, "I want to change my life."

Since then he has come to the cafe two or three times a week to talk to about Christ. Recently he made a decision for Christ and was baptized.



Written by Steve Millard, [SIM-UK](#)