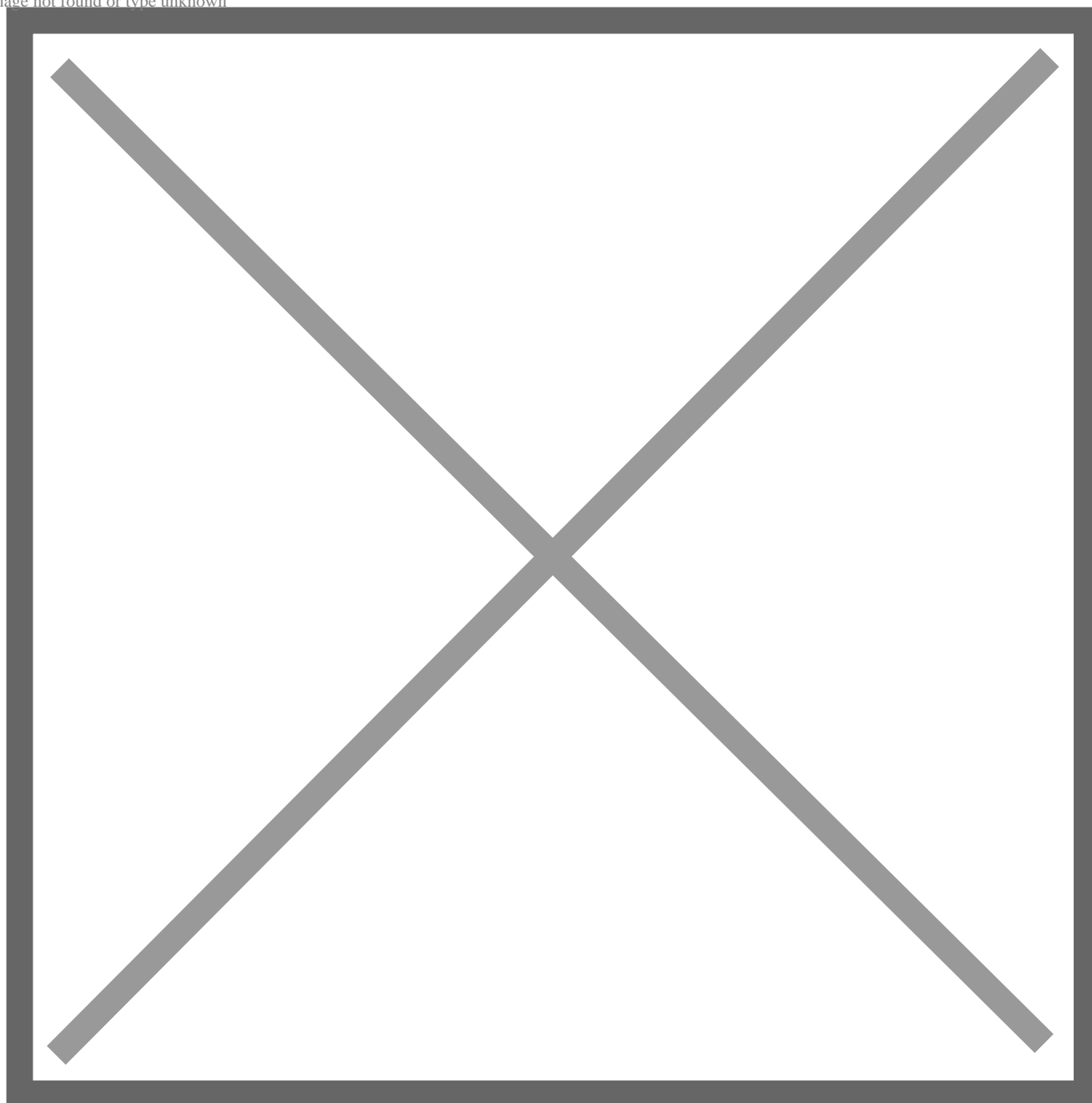


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West Elementary Adventist Academy

MIRIAM HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ

Miriam Hernández Pérez, Ed.D. (Universidad Interamericana, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico) retired as director of education for the Puerto Rican Union Conference in 2015. She also served as university education department director, university graduate programs director, university professor, and elementary school teacher. She is married to Pastor Germán Cortés and has three sons.

West Elementary Adventist Academy (Academia Primaria Adventista del Oeste) serves students from the towns of Moca, Añasco, Rincón, Aguada, Mayagüez, Hormigueros, Cabo Rojo, Las Marías, Maricao, and San Germán in the

West Puerto Rico Conference. Its school board is composed of pastors and representatives from all the churches in the aforementioned areas, the school administration, the superintendent of Adventist schools, and the president of the West Puerto Rico Conference. The school has nine dedicated and committed teachers. It achieved its highest enrollment between 1999 and 2000 with 447 students.¹

Developments that Led to the Establishment of the Academy

The beginning of the Adventist educational work in western Puerto Rico begins at the Mayagüez First Seventh-day Adventist church, which was one of the first churches to in the region to establish a church school. Lina Strikes, based in the city of Mayagüez, decided to enroll three of her children in the small church school. One of the girls, Brunilda, liked the songs she learned in school and asked her mother to take her to the Sabbath school to learn other songs.²

West Elementary Adventist Academy opened in the facilities of the Mayagüez First Adventist church, located on Santiago Rivera Palmer Street, in the autumn of 1944 with the purpose of offering a Christian education to the children of the church.

History of the Academy

For several years the academy remained in the Mayagüez First Adventist church. In August 1963, it moved to a new building on the grounds of Antillean College, very close to an old bakery. This move was the result of the efforts of the president of the West Puerto Rico Conference, Fred Hernández, who faithfully supported Christian education and under whose presidency the building was constructed.

In 1968, the decision was made to divide the Puerto Rico territory into two local fields, east and west.³ By 1975, the school had been moved to the Algarrobo neighborhood where classes were held in a building on land adjacent to the West Puerto Rico Conference.⁴ In May 1978, the Antillean Union board voted to approve the West Puerto Rico Conference's request for Antillean College to transfer Antillean College Academy to the West Puerto Rico Conference, effective July 1, 1978.⁵

The school received its first accreditation by the Adventist Accrediting Agency in 1983.⁶ In addition to denominational accreditation, the school receives accreditations from other agencies such as the Puerto Rico Board of Education and the Puerto Rico Educational Institutions Accreditation Commission. In 1985, the school's secondary level moved to the facilities located in the Algarrobo neighborhood, where it is currently located.⁷ The school operated both elementary and secondary levels in 1998-1999.⁸

Historical Role of the Academy in the Community and in the Church

Many of West Elementary Adventist Academy's graduates have become distinguished professionals, including Dr. Daniel Carcorse, surgeon; Jorge Carcorse, mechanical engineer; and Ivette Rivera, NASA engineer.⁹

The school's choir was organized in 1991 when music teacher Aaron Leito joined the teaching staff. The choir has performed in the Governor's Palace, the theaters of fine arts of several cities, and in different churches of Puerto Rico. It has also toured the island nation of Curaçao as part of their evangelistic outreach. The choir's repertoire includes both Christian and folk music. The majority of its members are not Adventists and participation in the choir has been a means of drawing these students closer to God. The young people who are part of the choir dedicate their vocal talent to praising the Lord. In 2001 they recorded a CD entitled *Freedom*.

Academy Mission

The mission of West Adventist Academy is "to transmit to the school community the transforming love of Christ, thus achieving an integral development of the student as advised by the Word of God to obtain success as a useful servant of our society." Its vision is to "develop and strengthen in our students a character that reflects the love of God, of others as well; for this life and eternal life."¹⁰

One of the biggest challenges in fulfilling the mission is to ensure that there are more Adventist students and to raise awareness among parents about the importance of giving their children a Christian education. Greater integration of parents, pastors, and church members is needed to the promote education that prepares children for eternity.

List of Principals

Juan Pérez (1944); no information exists for years 1945-1962; Humberto Hernández (1963-1968); Josué Mercado (1968-1969); Gladys Nigaglioni (1969-1972); Francisca Martínez (1973-1975); no information exists for years (1975-1977); Brunilda Quiñonez (1978-1980); Consuelo Feliciano (1981-1984); Carmen Núñez (1985-1993); Consuelo Feliciano (1994-2010); Sylvia Nanette Rivera (2010-2012); Diana Santiago (2012-2017); Awilda Charneco (2017-)

Academy address: Barrio Algarrobo, Sector Cuba #1060, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00682

SOURCES

Antillian Union Conference board minutes. 1978. 78. 1978-1996 book of records. Secretariat archives. Rio Piedras, PR.

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Hernández, Miriam. *Reseña Histórica de la Obra Adventista en Puerto Rico*. Canovanas, PR: CG Printing, 2015.

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NOTES

1. Consuelo Feliciano, superintendent of West Puerto Rico Adventist academies, interview by Miriam Hernández, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, November 2019.?
2. Francisco J. Vega, *Avance Adventista en Puerto Rico* (Mayagüez, PR: Antillean College Press, 2000), 119.?
3. Victor Valles, "Pequeños comienzos, grandes resultados," *Revista Pastor* 360, March 2019.?
4. Miriam Hernández, *Reseña Histórica de la Obra Adventista en Puerto Rico* (Canovanas, PR: CG Printing, 2015), 33-39.?
5. Antillian Union Conference board, 1978, 78, 1978-1996 book of records, secretariat archives.?
6. María Cosme, librarian at West Elementary Adventist Academy, interview by Miriam Hernández, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, November 2019.?
7. Consuelo Feliciano, superintendent of West Puerto Rico Adventist academies, interview by Miriam Hernández, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, November 2019.?
8. María Cosme, librarian at West Elementary Adventist Academy, interview by Miriam Hernández, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, November 2019.?
9. Consuelo Feliciano, superintendent of West Puerto Rico Adventist academies, interview by Miriam Hernández, Mayagüez, PR, October 2019.?
10. Education committee, *Student Handbook*, Puerto Rican Union of Seventh-day Adventists, August 2007, 5.?

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