

Prison program in Santa Clarita goes global

Malachi Dad's launches in prison internationally, helping inmates and families.

By Martha Garcia
Signal Staff Writer

Mike Broyles began volunteering with the Malachi Dad's program in 2009. He took a model designed and successful in "America's bloodiest prison," and brought it to Pitchess Detention Center and later to all L.A. County prisons.

Since volunteering with Grace Baptist Church at Pitchess and other jails in L.A., he's renewed his efforts to help every man incarcerated to become a better father and reconnect with his family.

Now as the Executive Director of Awana Lifeline Ministries, the program that spearheads the effort, Broyles has taken the Malachi Dad's program internationally. Malachi Dad's helps incarcerated men in Costa Rica, Kenya, Burundi, Dominican Republic and now Cuba.

"Cuba hasn't had a lot of religious freedom historically," explained Broyles. "Because of negotiations with President Obama the country is beginning to open up to more religious freedoms, especially related to prisons."

In March, Broyles held the first Malachi Dad's training program in Cuba, readying chaplains who serve in Cuba to teach incarcerated men the program, which has successfully reduced violence and recidivism, the rate inmates are repeatedly incarcerated, across the U.S. and internationally. Awana hopes to officially roll out the program into Cuba's 170 prisons by November.

The 12 week program, which has a male and female curriculum, focuses on Biblical principles to help inmates come to God, reconnect with their families, and learn to lead a life focusing on moral and ethical principles.

"We want to teach them how to reconnect with their children, begin to seek healing and bring hope to the children," said Broyles. "We don't want the children to

follow the mothers or father's lifestyle and incarceration. We want them to be a family again, even if the parent is in long term incarceration."

Reincarceration rates drop

The program was rolled out in the Dominican Republic five years ago with the help of Project Mañana, a non-profit in the country that helps with other social projects. Malachi Dad's is in 8 of the 32 jails in the country, with plans to expand to two prisons each year.

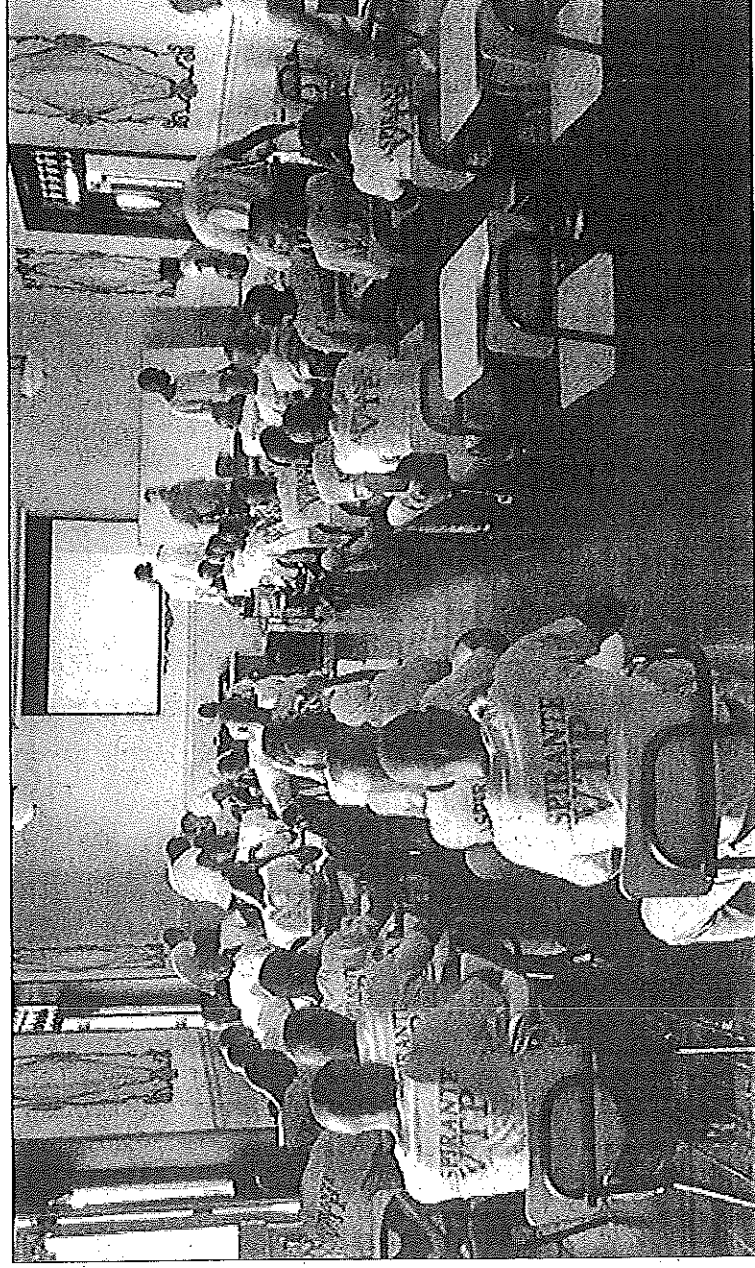
Malachi Dad's, in partnership with Project Mañana's curriculum Authentic Manhood, helped reshape one of the most violent prisons in the country. Najayo, the Dominican Republic equivalent of a federal prison laden with drugs, violence chaos.

"Over the last five years, of the 568 inmates released after their sentence, only two have come back," explained Brian Berman, founder and president of Project Mañana. "The recidivism rate was 85 percent, they would be reincarcerated in their first year. Now it is less than half of one percent."

Berman shared a story of a notorious inmate with gang and drug affiliations incarcerated in Najayo. German De Leon Polanco was the number one drug dealer in Najayo. He was tough as nails and no one messed with him.

Prompted by one of his "drug soldiers" in the illegal network of prison drugs, he began attending Malachi Dad's. After four classes Polanco accepted Christ and immersed himself completely in the program, later reconnecting with his kids and becoming a mentor to other inmates.

"The drugs in the prison dried up, most of his 'soldiers' took the class and over 600 men went through the program," said Berman. "After he was paroled we hired him as a regional supervisor, he now works to mentor teachers and other inmates."



Courtesy photo
Officer trainees at the National Police Academy in the Dominican Republic take the first Malachi Dad's/ Authentic Manhood course before graduating from the academy. After seeing the effectiveness of the program, the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic mandated all police trainees that will work in prison's must take the program.

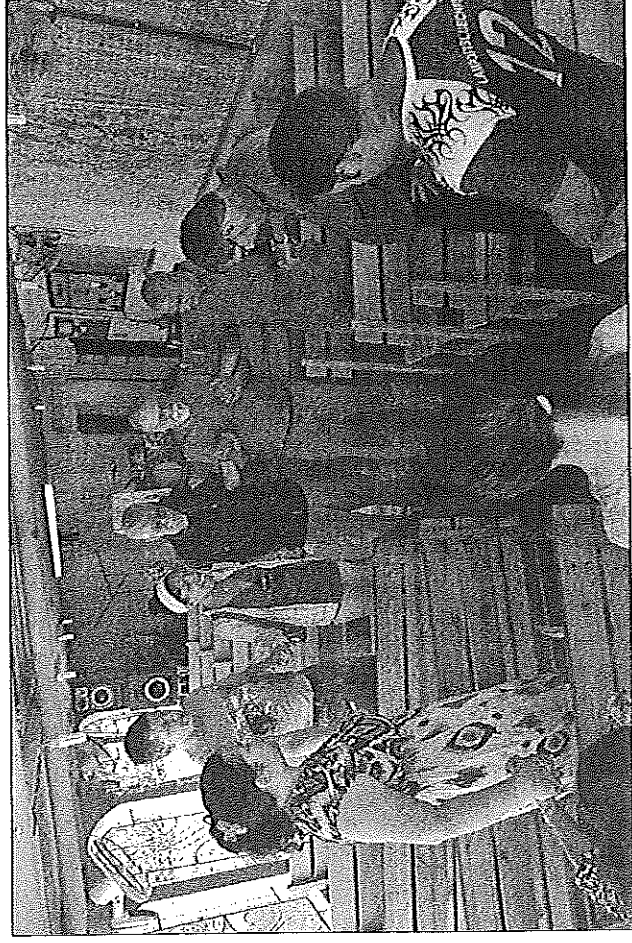
Global impact

Recently, Malachi Dad's and Project Mañana gained government attention. Contacted by the Attorney General, an audit was conducted and the government found the program was so effective it granted access to all the prisons in the country and mandated every new officer must be trained in the Malachi Dad's program before working in a prison. Polanco also helps with the officer training.

"The prisoners in the Dominican Republic found as they got themselves right before the Lord, their own values change their behavior and the violence is greatly minimized," said Daniel Bostrom, International Director of Awana Lifeline Ministries.

Broyles and Bostrom, hope to bring that success to the efforts in Cuba. The program is in the process of having the materials for the class printed in Cuba and a larger training session is scheduled for November.

"There's a great deal of excitement in Cuba and the Chaplain response was



Courtesy photo

Chaplains from the first Malachi Dad's training program in Cuba meet, praying and singing during a recent training session. This is the first training session to prepare chaplains to bring the Bible based Malachi Dad's program to the prisons in Cuba.

overwhelming," explained Bostrom. "The material changed the culture in the Dominican Republic prisons, that is what we want to do in other countries."

Bostrom explained many organizations volunteer internationally in the prisons

with Malachi Dad's. After seeing the success they are inspired to bring the program to prisons in their local areas in the U.S. "What's interesting is this whole movement happened from California," said Berman. "We've had people get involved."