In Inter-America, youth leaders remember Eliezer Melendez

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Youth Ministries directors from throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America honored Eliezer Meléndez, an influential Inter-American Adventist youth leader, during a memorial service held today at the Inter-American Division (IAD) main office. Meléndez passed away Jan. 17, 2012.

Church leaders and staff joined Meléndez's widow Gloria, daughter Silvia, his granddaughter and other family members to reflect on his life and the legacy he left to more than one million youth in Inter-America today.

Pastor Jonatan Tejel, associate youth ministries director for the Adventist World Church, spoke to the family members on behalf of the world church of the promise found in Romans 8.

"These are verses that fit well with the profile of Eliezer Meléndez," said Tejel of the committed service Meléndez shared with the church.

Pastor Benjamin Carballo, youth ministries director for the church in Inter-America, reminisced about the influence Meléndez had in his life as a youngster and of the last conversation they had together at the office five months ago.

"He [Meléndez] was asking for the new youth ministries manual so he could take it with him to Virginia so he could be prepared in case they asked him to give a seminar," said Carballo. "He told me, take courage in your job and proceeded to remind me that he enjoyed the recent IAD camporee and how he was preparing for the camporee in heaven."

Pastor Hiram Ruiz, youth pastor for the Montemorelos University Church where Meléndez established what is now the largest Pathfinder club in the IAD, said Meléndez touched his life.

"At 10 years old I was drawn by the stories and the songs of this great leader," said Ruiz. "He was our pastor and inspiration and taught us to love this uniform and what it means to wear it. He taught us to be a youth leader in season and out of season, with or without recognition, with or without a salary, being a youth leader is a vocation not a nomination, he taught us to dream and grow in youth leadership."

Mrs. Meléndez spoke of the dedication and love her husband had for the church and its young people. She encouraged the youth ministry leaders in the IAD to "continue in the fight to lead young people into the Kingdom. Continue spreading the message of salvation and service."

Youth ministries directors representing the 21 church unions in Inter-America, said the Aim, Motto, AY Pledge, the Pathfinder Pledge and Law in unison in honor of Eliezer Meléndez.

A youth ministries director at the Inter-American Division (IAD) headquarter office in Miami, Florida, from 1998-2001, Pastor Eliezer Meléndez oversaw thousands of youth leaders, master guides and pathfinders in the territory throughout his life.
A native of Puerto Rico, Pastor Meléndez served as a teacher, youth pastor, dean, district pastor, youth director, education director and health director from the 1950s to the 1990s in Puerto Rico and Mexico, before retiring with 47 years of service.

To view a photo gallery of the memorial service, click here

Gloria Meléndez, widow of Eliezer Meléndez speaks to church leaders and staff at the IAD on her husband's dedicated service and love for the church and its young people during the special memorial service held in Miami, Florida.