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Answering God's Call

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Five years later, as principal of Kamagambo Adventist College, George was a delegate to the Toronto General Conference Session in 2000, and was elected to the General Conference Nominating Committee, which Niels-Erik Andreassen, president of Andrews University, chaired. Following the Session, George and his wife visited his younger brother, a student at Andrews, and visited the United States.

His sister-in-law “casually mentioned” the Department of Engineering & Computer Science at Andrews. While visiting the facilities, George met a former student who asked him, “Professor, why don’t you teach here?” George didn’t consider the question at the time; he was concerned with helping Kamagambo grow. Because of his desire to help his college enhance their curriculum and develop an Adventist engineering program, George asked to meet with the president to ask for financial aid. The president was none other than Niels-Erik himself.

George returned to Kenya. At a meeting of the East African Union he was offered the position of associate youth director, which he accepted. That December, a package arrived from Andrews University. “By that time I had completely forgotten about Andrews,” says George. But Andrews had not forgotten about him. He was their first choice for associate professor of engineering, and they wanted him to start in July. Six months was a very short amount of time to move his family of six to the

United States, but with God’s leading they accomplished it.

The Agokis were originally scheduled to fly into the United States on September 12, 2001. “Were it not for the airline having an opening for us to fly into Chicago,” says George, “we probably never would have made it to the States.” The Agokis arrived a week before September 11.

In 2002, the Department of Engineering & Computer Science began “mounting a full-fledged engineering program.” Six years later, they received full accreditation from the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology. Work is underway to get the Computer Science program accredited as well. George continues to hope that an Adventist engineering program will one day be established on the African continent.

Samantha Snively is a student news reporter in the Office of Integrated Marketing & Communication at Andrews University.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. George Agoki works with students to beautify Kamagambo Adventist College campus (1996–2000).
2. George Agoki, deputy vice chancellor, University of Eastern Africa Baraton (UEAB), Kenya; Humberto Rasi, director of education, General Conference; Lyn Behrens, president, Loma Linda University; and Asenath Omwega, professor, Kenyatta University, visit the UEAB Farm in 1994.
3. George Agoki, professor of engineering, Department of Engineering & Computer Science, now teaches at Andrews University.

Answering God’s Call

ESPERANZA ALVAREZ-MUÑIZ, ASSISTANT DEAN OF WOMEN, LAMSON HALL



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Esperanza Alvarez-Muñiz has never been afraid to question God. In everything, she asks for His guidance—and it usually takes the form of a sign or a test. “I’m a very shy person,” she says, “so whenever I felt God wanted me to do something, I would always test Him.” Two years ago, God led her to the position of assistant dean of Lamson Hall—and she began asking God the hard questions.

Esperanza came from a primarily Catholic family in the Dominican Republic, although her mother was an Adventist. Esperanza was born asthmatic, and throughout her teenage years her attacks became chronic. Unable to do the same things her friends were doing because of frequent hospital visits, Esperanza grew miserable. At one point, she felt she would rather die.

One day, when she was 19, Esperanza had an asthma attack so severe she didn't think she would live. Esperanza was able to ask her mother to pray for her. "I didn't hear the prayer," she says, but when her mother finished praying Esperanza was able to breathe with difficulty and waited until an ambulance arrived. When she recovered, she realized that although she wasn't paying attention to God, He was ready to answer her prayer in an instant. Esperanza began going to church because "He had been good with me, and it just went on from there." She was baptized within several weeks.

Esperanza wanted to work with young people. She taught high school and Pathfinders, but she felt God was calling her to do more. While preparing a youth Sabbath school program, she was encouraged to attend a ministerial training seminar led by José Cortez. So she asked God if it was His will, and to provide a ride if that was the case. When she attended the seminar that weekend, a call went out for young people to do the work of preparing the next generation. Esperanza again asked God what His will was. "Okay Lord," she said, "He didn't say 'women.' So if you really want me to go and prepare, he's got to say it—because in my Spanish culture, women are not into ministry that way." And sure enough, José asked for men *and* women. After talking to José, Esperanza decided to come to the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Her family was shocked because she left a good job with good pay to study for the ministry, but they have noticed God has led every one of Esperanza's steps.

While attending the Seminary, Esperanza worked as a student dean at Lamson Hall. When she graduated in 2007, there were no positions available, so she returned to New York City to teach. The next year she was married and received the call to come to Lamson as assistant dean of women.

Two months after her marriage, Esperanza was diagnosed with a tumor that grew rapidly and was determined to be cancerous. "Dreams shattered and I almost lost my faith. You could say it was challenged in a deep way," Esperanza says. Her family had watched God lead throughout her life, but when she received her diagnosis, her fam-



ily had a hard time comprehending why she of all people would get such news. "She's the one who's been doing all the good things—why her?" they asked. "That made some of my family members really mad at God," says Esperanza. Her sister and husband were "numb." She thought, *What do I say to them? There are no words for me to comfort them. Where's my faith? Should I keep my faith, not only after I lose my ability to have kids, but now this?* At times when she could not read the Bible, she asked her sister to read her Psalm 46. "And as she read it to me," says Esperanza, "I was at peace. I said to them, 'You know, I might have to go through a second surgery and chemo, but I know I'll be back. The Lord would not give me something so beautiful to take it away.'"

Esperanza recently got the results of her latest checkup. The tests are clear and she is cancer-free. Her health is still monitored, but "I'm not scared," she says. "I feel that it's not my time. I still have work with the young people."

Her experiences are gradually bringing Esperanza's family to God. She prays for them every day, and one by one they are seeing God in her. Esperanza's father would always wonder why she was spending so much time involved with her church instead of living her life, but she would continually tell him what God had done for her. Before he passed away, she told him what Heaven would be like. She says he "loved the idea that we would be together forever, and with Jesus, someone who had died for him." Esperanza's sister has begun reading the Bible and going to church, and she continues to pray for the rest of her family.

Samantha Snively is a student news writer in the Office of Integrated Marketing & Communication at Andrews University.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. Esperanza Alvarez-Muñiz and her husband Paul celebrate her last day of chemotherapy.
2. Esperanza Alvarez-Muñiz greets some of the young people from her home church.
3. Esperanza Alvarez-Muñiz is warmly greeted by a student at a social event. Alvarez-Muñiz is sponsor of Kappa Phi Gamma, the Andrews University Women's Club.
4. Esperanza Alvarez-Muñiz is delighted to be back at work in Lamson Hall after completing chemotherapy.