

Low-power Spanish radio station directed by Higher Power, pastor insists_51704

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By Terri Jo Ryan

Special to the Standard

WACO—By Federal Communications Commission standards, Radio Amistad is a “low-power” station. But ask the pastor of Amistad Baptist Church in Waco what fuels his new venture into ethnic Christian broadcasting, and he'll tell you he is “higher-powered.”

Jesus Garnica, pastor of Amistad since August 1993, was a disc jockey in Edinburg when he had the vision of starting an all-Spanish Christian radio station.

Radio Amistad began broadcasting about three months ago as Waco's only Hispanic Christian station, opening doors for a whole new ministry in Central Texas.

Amistad Church has been saving money more than four years to collect the \$40,000 needed to get on the air, Garnica said.

Radio Amistad is heard on 96.7 FM in a six- to seven-mile radius around the church.

Within a week of signing on and conducting the necessary testing of the new equipment, station KRWA LP began offering Christian programming in Spanish 24 hours a day, “allowing those in the Hispanic community who do not have a regular church home to ... listen to quality Christian programs in Spanish any time that they want and be ministered to around the clock,” Garnica said.

Radio Amistad has a two-studio hub, so shows can be produced while others are airing. Much of the station's operations can be automated so Garnica will not have to be on duty all night. On-air personalities from the church and community will pre-record segments to be played on the overnight shift.

Garnica is offering air time to pastors of other Spanish-speaking evangelical Christian churches in the Waco area. Preachers can do guest sermons and promote their own church-sponsored events and community programs.

He has plans for interview shows with Spanish-speaking experts on health, family counseling and immigration. Spanish-speaking representatives of community groups such as Habitat for Humanity, Caritas and the Heart of Texas Financial Literacy Coalition will be invited to record public service announcements.

English as a Second Language, GED classes or special drives at health clinics will be emphasized in the public service announcements, he said.

“I am interested in people hearing something good,” the pastor said. “I want to put a clean message on the air.”

Garnica sees the need for a Christian station with Spanish programming.

About 40 percent of the students in the Waco Independent School District are Hispanic, he said, and Hispanics are the fastest-growing population in Texas.

Pastors will be invited to pray on the air for the needs of the community, Garnica said. Waco Baptist Association has 20 Hispanic churches, he noted.

Radio Amistad will feature syndicated Bible studies, translations of Billy Graham sermons and contemporary Christian music geared to the Spanish-speaking market.

Texas Baptists help support the ministry through their gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions.

By offering family-friendly fare, the station will be a more positive alternative to the abundance of Spanish music offered that has no spiritual core, he said.

“We want to do as much as we can to help the Hispanic community here grow in the Lord,” Garnica said.

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