



AECS (Association of Community Health Educators) headquarters & PT clinic in Jacarepaguá, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Facebook: AECS Canal do Anil Instagram: ongaecs@ March 17, 2024

This section of the newsletter is written by Isabel Maria Fernandes da Silva, Administrator-Coord.

Pedagogical:

About to complete 28 years of Foundation, there is much to CELEBRATE! AECS is considered a reference in SOCIAL work, being recognized by private institutions and by municipal and state public authorities. Over the years, it has been possible to perceive the transformations in the lives of many people, their families and the population, in general, of the Canal do Anil community. Developing social PROJECTS in communities with varied needs is not an easy MISSION, but it is certainly very gratifying to realize how much the work developed TRANSFORMED people's lives. There are many achievements during all these years, but also many challenges. We are currently facing a challenge that we have never experienced, urban violence. This violence experienced day by day by the population worries us and more than concern, it leads us to reflect on how harsh the reality of the people who live in the FAVELAS (shanty towns) is. For years we were proud to say how peaceful our community was. Today we no longer have that tranquility of the past. From this experience, doubts arise! How to go about daily life in the face of violence? How to keep hope for better days? Even in the face of doubts, the ONLY certainty we have is to never give up. For this reason, our motto is.....insist, persist, never give up!

As a reference in social work, we continue our journey seeking to offer the best to the participants in our Projects, which are aimed at all age groups. Even in the face of fear due to violence, we believe that keeping the NGO's doors open to the community is a way to provide moments of joy, strengthen confidence in better days, and keep the flame of HOPE ALIVE.



Children's Ballet, 7-12 years



Theatre class for teens

Through the activities developed in the Workshops of Dance, Theater, Music, Environmental Education, and Reading, we realized how necessary they are, because through them we can show children, adolescents, young people and adults that there is a good side of life. Every report we hear from a child, a teenager that these activities changed their life and the way they see it, fills us with pride and reaffirms the certainty that we are doing the right thing. We also believe that offering activities for young people, adults and seniors is

essential. Our emphasis is directed to the whole family, because all the members are equally important. Due to the importance of everyone, we continue our quest to always offer the best that is possible for us. One of the PROJECTS that seeks to offer this best is PHYSIOTHERAPY. The service offered is extremely important for people in need of this service, since the supply in the public sector cannot cope with the number of demands.



Climate Change Environment Class



Reading in the Gus de Souza Library

Activities focused on the areas of Education and Health are also important, because they offer young people and adults important training as well professional training. Through the activities that prepare students for public and private universities, we are very proud to say that many have achieved the long-awaited chance to study. In the same way, many of the people who have gone through the training courses for Health Educators and Caregivers work in public health units and private units. One of the legacies of AECS is the support offered to other Social Projects developed in partnership. We are an institution that has always sought and still seeks the best ALWAYS! We dream together, that's why we conquer!



Vocational Training Courses' graduations

AECS Board of directors:

President-Jacqueline Siqueira; Vice-President- Kelly Cristina de Araújo; First Treasurer- Maria do Espirito & Santo Galdino; Second Treasurer-Elisabeth Silva Araújo; First Secretary-Dilva Paiva da Silva; Second Secretary-Maria Calé de Lima; Fiscal Council-Cleia Soeiro, Marinalva Silva dos Santos, Vanessa Arêde

Business Women's Collective (CME) Activities Developed 2021 to 2023

The project began its activities in July 2021 in Jardim Barro Branco – Duque de Caxias neighborhood in partnership with AECS (Association of Community Health Educators).

Since then, it is possible to see how much this work makes a difference in the lives of the residents of the neighborhood. In two and a half years, the project has offered a variety of courses: Baking (pastries, party

candies, snacks), Basic Electrician, Health Educator Agents, Dance (Ballet); and activities with Reading, storytelling in the Library, distribution of basic food baskets with healthy fruits and vegetables, oral health action, and fundraising skills (raffles, bingo, feijoadas, bazaar). We are fully aware that we cannot stand idly by in the face of social injustices.



CME logo



Oral hygiene



Health Educators courses



We took on this initiative as our MISSION, because we believe that together we can contribute to changing the reality experienced by so many people in need of a better quality of life. Our commitment to this cause is fundamental to change and transforms the reality experienced by many poor people in need of initiatives like this. Gratitude is the word that defines all our feelings for those who contribute to a better world for ALL! Insist, persist, never give up!

This section of the newsletter is written by Rev. Barb de Souza, AECS Founder:

Dear Faithful Partners,

We recognize that it has been a year since the last newsletter, and we apologize but you will soon understand. After the death of my beloved husband and mission partner in September of 2019, though grieving left me lost, I had promised Gus I would take his ashes back to his home state of Minas Gerais, Brasil and prepared to do so but our beloved dog Pretinha was also mourning and I could not leave her. A year later at the age of 20 our beloved Pretinha left to join Gus, and I prepared to leave and then came the pandemic, and so it wasn't until December 31st of 2021 at age 90, that I was able to return to Brasil.

I was shocked at the enormous growth of the population and many changes but all that I wrote about in the last newsletter. After 3 months, I knew that this was the place I wanted to be at this time in my life for there was still much to do to try to make sure our NGO could become financially independent, so I came back to the States and with the approval of the First Congregational Church of River Falls, WI, Rev Chris Myers and Rev Franz Rigert, NW Wisconsin Association, I became a volunteer Health Education Missionary and could then get my Permanent Residency renewed.

I moved into the low income homes that were built after the floods of 1996 where so much of the Favela (shanty town) where Gus and I worked had been destroyed. I began a health class with one of my ex students now a nurse and participated in the life and projects of our NGO as you read of in the last Newsletter. I also participated in some of the programs of the Clinic which has my name. But I soon realized what an important place our NGO had in the life of this community AND at that moment I was age 91--what would happen to the donations so necessary for this NGO to continue its work, when I pass on???

The NGO had to find a way to become financially independent of the donations from the churches in the USA which had made the NGO's work possible. So Isabel and I wrote a newsletter of all our activities and health work we had accomplished and asked for donations. We sent our funding request to other Brazilian organizations and the many well-to-do students of English I had over the years. We added pictures and testimonies and proudly sent it off! But all that we received were donations from 2 families with whom I was, and still am, very close. They are monthly but we don't know for how long.

So what to do? Then I remembered my friend Rubem Cesar who worked with me in ISER (Institute for The Study Of Religion), when I too was a participant. He founded an Organization called Viva Rio, “**Long Live Rio**”, involved in social work for the benefit of the working classes. This Organization has been very successful in getting funds. So whoopee, I thought, here’s our chance to get some money! But it turned out to be far better than that! They proposed using our building to open a popular priced medical specialities clinic with Cardiology, dermatology etc. These treatments in the inadequate public health system are extremely confusing and difficult. Thus these popular clinics at low prices are becoming very important! They would use our building and pay the upkeep of the building in exchange for the money earned from the popular clinic consultations. They would pay a minimal amount of rent for the building, and as they earned more money, we would also. But their main interest was their connection to the city health system from whom they would receive their money. We could keep our programs in special places in our large building, BUT their interest, we soon learned, was to take advantage of our well known and excellent physical therapy program--the only one in this large area of the city!!! This plan sounded good and offered a chance at financial independence or at least enough for our current projects and hopefully some new ones too. This was 6 months ago; there have been all sorts of problems and no equality in the decision for our NGO. They have stalled our physical therapy program at only one therapist with a waiting list of 91 patients! I walk the streets of the shanty town and listen to the older folk who so need this PT program who are on this waiting list and not familiar with modern technology for contact. But we only have the one physical therapist until Viva Rio can hire more. At the moment AECS, with the population, are waiting on the bureaucracy so typical of Brasil, plus our income is very low because of the building of a Community Center in the poor rural area of Caxias. We are struggling for we used many more funds than ever before for the building of this Community Center, and because of the extreme violence in our community and surrounding areas due to a war which came upon us a year ago. This war is among illegal groups trying to take over large areas in this part of Rio - groups that are violent and cruel, wanting at all costs to control the area, threatening lives if the protection money they demand is not given, and now you can understand why our daily lives have changed! Our evening and night time programs are on hold, as well as our Matriarch’s day group, for fear of stray bullets, etc.

We now have a police station beside our NGO building and the population knows we will not give up, even though for safety as well as financial reasons, we are limited. People, especially older people (my specialty), look to our NGO for help. I am here until we can find a way for our NGO to be financially secure! We are working hard to evaluate and improve our Board of Director’s participation, and that is vitally important. We are so grateful for your financial support for without this we would not have been able to be the organization that this community is so proud of! As I walk the streets and alleys, though I hear complaints, I also hear gratitude and pride. We are in need of help as never before to preserve 28 years of our NGO which you have made possible!

Thank you and God bless you,

Your Partners in Mission

Barb de Souza and the Board of Directors of AECS (Association of Community Health Educators)



Women’s health education meeting



Matriarch group, ages 65-101!



Lessons about diseases



Graduation of Health Educators



Preparation for University Admission



University approved students!



The very rural town of Caxias, where the women were very excited to start the Health Educators class!



The new Community Center will have garden space in front of the kitchen and activity room.

PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR 2024

Faced with the situation of violence experienced by children, adolescents and young people in low-income communities, we believe that developing activities focused on ARTS (dance, music, theater) and EDUCATION (courses, encouragement of reading and university preparations) are fundamental to remove the image that living in the midst of VIOLENCE is normal! Through the projects we have developed over the years, we seek to show that there are paths and opportunities that can change and transform lives. We present as proposals for 2024 the following Projects:

1. PLAYROOM

Work that uses toys and pedagogical materials that help the professional to develop activities in a PLAYFUL way, making it easier for the child to learn, understanding the information that is being transmitted. The idea is to work with themes that can contribute to the construction of a sense of responsibility in the various environments in which the child lives, making him feel that he belongs to that space, family, community, among others. Suitable for audiences between 5 and 10 years old.

2. MUSIC IS A HAPPY PROJECT

Currently we work in the music workshop only with the guitar. This project, for the most part for children and adolescents with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Disorder; Autism, Microcephaly, others.) The proposal is to expand this work, adding wind instruments (flute) as well as percussion instruments (tambourine, maracas). Another proposal for the work is the formation of a musical instrument group suitable for audiences between 7 and 18 years old.

3. DRUGS DO NOT MAKE LIFE HAPPY

An important work that aims to prevent, inform and guide adolescents, young people and adults about the risks that drugs pose to the health and life of those who use them. The approach to this issue is essential to make everyone aware, especially those responsible for the risks that legal and illegal drugs pose. This project will be developed by trained people and professionals, given the complexity of the topics that will be developed. Suitable for teenagers, young people, and adults and their families.

Please contact Sue Christopher, mission partner, below for:

-Address corrections: If your address was incorrect, or if you wish to be removed from this mailing list.

-Email address ADD or CHANGE: To save money on mailing costs and to get the newsletters to you faster, please add your email address to our mailing list. Send email address changes to Sue.

-Donations to the BRAZILIAN FUND for the 3 projects listed above.

Please make checks out to "Brazilian Fund" and send it to Sue's address (as Barb is currently living in Brazil). **NOTE: For individuals needing an official tax deductible receipt**, please make the check out to "First Congregational Church of River Falls" and note "Brazilian Fund" in the memo.

Website: <https://ongaecsrj.wixsite.com/site> The text is in Portuguese, but you can use Google Translate to change it to English. Great pictures!

Barb's book is available on Amazon: **"WHEN SLEEPING WOMEN AWAKE, MOUNTAINS WILL MOVE"** by **Barbara Mosley de Souza**

THANK YOU for all your support of Barb's health ministry in Brazil, and God bless you!

Sue Christopher
W3901 750th Ave
Spring Valley, WI 54767-8910
651-323-7547 call or text
Sue54767@gmail.com

The best way to reach BARB is through WhatsApp or her new email barbgusd@gmail.com or Facebook Messenger. (Barb's USA cell phone is not available while she is in Brazil.)