

My Father's House Newsletter



Newsletter No: 003

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And lots more...

At My Father's House we realise that we always have something new to learn, whether it be through the attitude of one of the boys, who suddenly may surprise us with an unexpected reaction, from some new change in the law with regard to children in vulnerable situation, or from a more formal training session. In this edition we have dedicated the third page to an article concerning the new laws that will affect us.

Each month we participate in a workshop for groups that work in Olinda in this area, promoted by the child welfare authorities. Also Siméa and Ian Meldrum took part in a course on "Strategic Planning and the Institutional Mobilization of Resources"

How can we organise My Father's House to work in an ever more professional way. How can we evaluate our work and if necessary build new values and principles?



Our Mission:
To transform at-risk, socially vulnerable children, adolescents and their families through the opportunity of full time education and the practice of the principles of the Christian faith.

My Father's House Today

1

PREVENTION
UNIT
JARDIM
BRASIL V

2

SAFE HOUSE
RIO DOCE
(ON THE COAST)

3

RURAL UNIT
IGARASSÚ
(FARM)



Instituto Água Viva [Farm]

'The Farm' always manages to cause a slight bit of confusion as it currently has no animals or crops! It is actually 32 hectares of forested valley complete with a coconut tree plantation, fruit trees and a small river! The usual comment from our overseas visitors is 'I never realized it was so big!'

Well, the Farm is currently being prepared for some upcoming activities including the boys holiday camp. We're putting PVC on the ceilings of the rooms in an attempt to try and reduce the amount of dirt which is quickly deposited in the rooms thanks to our visiting insect friends. Hopefully this should also protect the rooms a bit from the winter rains.



SAFE HOUSE

Imagine you have a son of 10/11 years old, who suddenly decided that he wants to learn to play the drums! What do you do? Of course you could send him to music school to have lessons, but this won't spare you from his dream of having a drum kit at home resulting in the family having to suffer the consequences! I speak from experience here since in our house we have a drummer and guitarist! Today the time of suffering has past and we can be proud to have two sons involved in the worship group at church.

At My Father's House we managed to receive some funding which is specifically for the formation of a percussion band. Without doubt, rhythm is in the Brazilian blood (you just have to watch the Brazilian football supporters to see that this is the case). In our situation, our main objectives are:

- Rescue the self esteem of the boys which is very low due to not having good opportunities to study and to have formal education

- Teach them how to behave during a public presentation.

And, who knows, wake in some the interest to carry music on further.

The most recent boy at MFH arrived telling us that he was 12 years old and that his Mother has mental problems. After a short while we discovered two important things about him; that he was actually 14 and not 12 and that he couldn't read and write at all not even recognize letters of the alphabet. Self esteem = 0. He believed that he simply just 'didn't have the brain' for these things and that his future would be similar to that of his Mother, if he manages to stay clear of the world of crime that is!



With this small amount of funding the project bought our very first 'alfaiá' (a traditional Brazilian drum)! Imagine our surprise when, before the first lesson, our new boy picked up the instrument and drummed out a show for the others! His face shone while the others looked on in admiration. Now we have someone who believes in themselves just that little bit more, believes that, who knows, other things as well in life are possible.

Is there a price for all this? Of course there is – we need to buy 11 more pieces of percussion (and maybe some ear plugs!).

Volunteer Josélia Maria Lacerda da Silva



That really hurts! Nothing is worse than tooth ache! Especially for kids and teenagers! When this happens at MFH we go straight to Josélia – our dentist who volunteers her services free of charge to all the boys in the project. Dental problems are very common amongst them due to the absence of dental care and treatment in their homes – resulting in serious consequences. We thank Josélia, who is always ready and willing to receive any one of the boys anytime which is necessary.



Protection of the Child and Teenager: From Project to Family reintegration.

No-one doubts that the best for any child is to grow up in a healthy family with caring and loving parents. It is within the family environment that the little child forms their character, values, grows and matures.

It is for this reason that the Statues for the Child and Teenager (ECA) states that the child or teenager has the right to be brought up and educated by their family. Assuring the co-living community of the family and guaranteeing the right to health, leisure, security, culture, sport, education...etc.

Just because of the simple fact that a family is poor, of little resources, is not a just cause for the child or teenager to be taken away from the family, on the contrary, the child/teenager should remain with their parents and perhaps take part in some official support project.

However, it's not always the case that the child/teenager finds a healthy family nucleus that it needs *and has the right to*. The deterioration of the natural family unit, especially when this is exaggerated by the presence of drug use or if the child/teenager is suffering from physical, sexual, or psychological violence, is very serious.

The question is what to do when the family environment, the very thing which is supposed to bring security and education to the child/teenager, becomes the problem?

It becomes necessary to restore the family unit to its original function, re-establishing and preserving the family where possible. The parents should receive, according to their situation, psychological treatment plus treatment for alcohol or chemical dependence in the attempt to restore the family.

In extreme cases the child/teenager should be placed in a substitute family, having considered the relationship and affection between the child/teenager and the substitute family so that other consequences can be avoided.

Organizations such as My Father's House, who receive and protect children and teenagers, should always be seen as temporary. They should serve as a support in the serious cases until the situation returns to normal and reintegration into the family is possible. It's due to this that the ECA states that the institutionalized placement of a child/teenager should be for no longer than two years. The best for the child/teenager, as the law understands it, is to be with their original family or, when this is not possible, to be in a substitute family.

Children/teenagers being brought up in centers, without the family environment, need to be avoided. Only in very exceptional cases, with exclusive attention on the benefit of the minor, should they stay for a prolonged period of time within these institutions.

The child/teenager should be forwarded onto an institutional shelter program, solely for their protection and well being, which should act as 'pass through' until they can be relocated into a family.

The law demands that institutions work in these ways: I. Preservation of the family unit and promotion of family reintegration; II. Integration in substitute families when resources of maintaining the natural family unit are extinguished; III. Consultation in small groups; IV. Development of co-educating activities; V. Not separating brothers or sisters; VI. Avoid transferring the child/teenager to another project; VII. Participate in the local community; VIII. Gradual preparation to leave the institution; IX. Participation in the education process of the community.

In this context, the challenge of My Father's House is to *educate, care for, and reintegrate*.

The project should *educate*, promoting formal education through the local school and complementing this with other artistic, cultural and religious activities. It should *care for* providing food, shelter, and psychological, spiritual and emotional support. Finally it should *reintegrate*, this final challenge should be taken as understanding two aspects. My Father's House should reintegrate the child/teenager into a family of social harmony, with ethical principles and also enabling their return, if possible, to their natural family or helping in the search of a substitute family.

Of the three (big) challenges the most difficult is perhaps reintegrating the child/teenager into their families due to the complete collapse of the natural family unit or due to the difficulty of finding families willing to adopt boys.

The fight for re-establishing the family and of the parents is the main aim for the work done by the CCAF (The Christian Centre of Family Support), one of the parts of My Father's House Project. It's not easy to break the cycle of poverty stained with the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol.

The other difficult part of this is that the majority of families looking to adopt a child look for a white girl or a new born. It's a real challenge to find substitute families for the children/teenagers of My Father's House: mainly black boys and teenagers.



The team from Child Welfare meeting at My Father's House

CCAF - THE CHRISTIAN CENTER FOR FAMILY HELP

The construction work on the new classroom block has been slower than we hoped at the start (something which is always the case in these situations), but we are nearly completed and we hope that the first classrooms will be ready to be inaugurated for the start of the second semester.

:Editors:

This newsletter was edited by John Meldrum (Project Director and Member of the Executive Committee) along with other members of the com-mittee. Any suggestions for the newsletter or to be added to the distribution list, please get in touch:

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Volunteers

Six students from Jesmond Parish Church in Newcastle England arrived in mid June to spend three weeks with us. My Father's House Project has strong relations with the UK and has already received many overseas teams and groups over the years. Organizing, preparing and leading these teams is a lot of hard work but it's worth it! This team were based within the project and carried out a lot of well prepared and interesting activities, sports and games for the boys in the project. They also spent some time with our partner; the Anglican Church of Living Waters where they painted the church's



walls and also helped a family from the community to reform their small house. The team also made the most of the school holidays and took the boys to the Living Water's Institute (The Farm) to run a camp. The camp was great fun, lots of



activities, devotionals and games – some of them in the jungle! The team was a great help to the boys in the project, but also the actual team members were impacted and challenged by our work. They'll be missed!

Our Team !

The organization is composed of a board of directors and other sub-groups:
Board of Directors
Members: Ian Meldrum (President), Teresa Janssem (Vice-President), Kléber Amorim, John Meldrum, Ângela Arcoverde, and Helena Sampaio
Council Members Jandean Vieira Elise Correia and Renata Sampaio
Executive Committee Members: Siméa Meldrum, Andrew Roberts, João Bento and John Meldrum
Council (CCAF)
Members: Sérgio Lyra, Daniel Lyra, Siméa Meldrum and Ian Meldrum

Within the Safe House:
Jeferson Almeida (Coordinator and Project 'Dad')
Educators: Raimundo Firmino, Gabriel.
Psychologist: Débora do Nascimento
Volunteers: Rita Canuto (Teacher), Risoneide (Accountant), João Lessa Neto (Juridicial Assistance), Paula (IT Teacher) e Lêda (Cook)
CCAF:
Currently we count on the help and support of 16 volunteers amongst educators, teachers, cooks, nutritionist, psychologist, nurse etc... Some of these volunteers receive some financial help since they are full time volunteers

How can I help?

There are many ways that you, or your company, can become partners with „My Father's House" Project, be it a volunteer, distributor of this newsletter, financial or food donors, etc...

We would have great pleasure in welcoming you to any of our units, do get in touch!

For tax efficient giving via our UK Charity „Service of Hope" please get in touch with Roger Atkinson:

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Thanks for all your support*