

BOLETIM Amigos

do BHZ

Oct | 2015

A short
story
about
us.

Be a
Volunteer!

WE TALKED TO THE FOUNDER OF THE PROJECT: WILLIAM SOUSA

EDUCATION, CULTURE, EXCHANGE, VOLUNTEER, CAPOEIRA ANGOLA, CONNECTION, BELO HORIZONTE, MANCHESTER, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, CULTURE, EXCHANGE, VOLUNTEER, CAPOEIRA ANGOLA, CONNECTION, BELO HORIZONTE, MANCHESTER, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, CULTURE, EXCHANGE, VOLUNTEER, CAPOEIRA ANGOLA, CONNECTION, BEL

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ABOUT US

A SHORT STORY ABOUT US

In 2016, the Associação Cultural de Capoeira Angola - BHZ Connection (ACCA-BHZ) will be ten years old. During this time, we have contributed to the economic growth of socially vulnerable communities, as well as the preservation of the tradition of Capoeira Angola in Brazil. In order to do this, ACCA-BHZ develops diverse social projects, that depend on Brazilian and foreign volunteers in the neighbourhood of Alto Vera Cruz, located in Belo Horizonte – Minas Gerais. Daily educational, cultural and sports activities are held, in support of children and adolescents (6 to 16 years) finding their identity, in spite of their situation.

When creating ACCA-BHZ, William Sousa, educator, musician and capoeirista, also conceived the BHZ CONNECTION project in order to stimulate international exposure and increase the possibilities for personal growth of its beneficiaries. The project focuses on teaching languages to improve the appreciation of local culture, strengthen families and communities and improve multicultural awareness. Recreational activities, chats and training are part of the lessons, which are held by volunteers, namely from foreign universities in England, France, Spain and elsewhere. In fact, volunteering is enabled through formal partnerships between the project and foreign universities. In addition, the creation of a permanent capoeira group (adults and children) in Manchester, England, provides opportunities for cultural exchange between students, foreign teachers and children and adolescents from countries outside Brazil.

Besides the BHZ CONNECTION, our audience has other design options, which quite creatively promote knowledge. Those Who participates in the program that includes language learning, computer science, reading, music, football, drama, history and capoeira. We also host a schedule of activities activities, such as summer camp, children's birthday celebrations, June Festival, Christmas celebration, tours, excursions and participation in activities of the Cultural Centre and the Social Assistance Reference Centre (CRAS).

Each year, the ACCA-BHZ CONNECTION services about 300 children and adolescents from neighbourhoods of Alto Vera Cruz, Granja de Freitas and Taquaril among other communities. Many people come to ACCA-BHZ on their own initiative. But we also have an audience from referrals made by CRAS, the Guardian Council, the health centre and schools located in the region.

Thus, we believe that education is a tool to transform the world, and we strive to make this change. And so we move people. The first step was to create the Association. The second has been the ceaseless task of finding partners who also believe in this ideal and want to contribute to the development of our projects. Therefore we call on all those who wish to act in a practical way in promoting social justice and equal opportunities. Join us!



WILLIAM SOUSA: A STORY WITHOUT BORDERS

BHZ CONNECTION FOUNDER

“I UNDERSTAND THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A PERSON TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER PROJECT IS THEIR COMMITMENT. WITH THIS , EVERYTHING IS MUCH EASIER!”

Talking about William Sousa without mentioning the Capoeira Angola is like trying to explain the history of Brazil without referring to Africans and indigenous peoples. This art, which incorporates elements of fight, play, dance, music and philosophy transformed the life of William's proposal. It was energy and inspiration for creating their projects, the largest of the Cultural Association of Capoeira Angola (ACCA-BHZ CONNECTION). So that people can find out more and more on the ACCA-BHZ CONNECTION, we decided to start the "Interview" section with the creator of the work: William Sousa. Below, he tells more about his career, projects developed in the Association and also explains how people can participate.

Can you describe the moment ACCA was created?

It was special! It represented a the next step following the work I had been doing in Manchester (England) since 2003. At the time, we already informally promoted cultural exchanges with friends who visited Brazil as volunteers at CIAME FLAMENGO* in Belo Horizonte. I was the coordinator of the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Pelourinho (GCAP) till 2005. I left GCAP to set up ACCA because I wanted my work to have more focus on social issues, especially in vulnerable communities, a cause I have always been committed to. I believe that capoeira is an art capable of transforming the lives of people. I then returned to Brazil and further develop the scope of the project based on non-formal education. So, after living away for 15 years, between the Netherlands, France and England, I returned to Belo Horizonte where in December 2010, I set up the headquarters of ACCA-BHZ.

* CIAME-FLAMENGO is an integrated center which offers diversified activities and recreation to children and adolescents, in Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais, Brazil).

Along with ACCA, BHZ CONNECTION was also born. How does this project work?

The BHZ Connection is as follows. In daily experiences we try to offer the student a different form of interaction for learning. For three hours per shift, we try to get the student to learn different languages in a more natural way. We use music, games, drama and capoeira itself to create situations for learning, so such activities might all take place in English or Spanish! We apply a teaching methodology based on play activities. The language teacher volunteer must be foreign. This helps the student to learn more about cultural diversity in the world. We guide teachers to discuss their country, food, history and aspects of everyday life in general.

Likewise, the drama teacher must collaborate with the language teacher to ensure continuity across the subjects for the students. This allows for the activities to remain connected and in line with the ACCA-BHZ ethos.

All projects in ACCA-BHZ are carried out by volunteers. How does someone go about becoming a volunteer?

To be a volunteer at ACCA-BHZ, you need to be over 18 years of age. Brazilian nationals should get in touch and arrange for an interview. Non-Brazilians should visit the following webpage (www.acca-bhz.org.br/volunteer/) and check out the volunteer recruitment process. Foreign volunteers are also interviewed as part of the recruitment process. During the interviews, some of the topics of discussion include how long the candidate plans to volunteer, who appointed him and what are the expectations. The process is not time consuming and activities are adapted to the volunteers' skills. I feel the most important thing is that any prospective volunteers show commitment to the project. With this, everything is much easier!

Can a company or individual be a partner of ACCA-BHZ?

Certainly! From time to time we receive donations from individuals and through our fundraising events.

We encourage anyone who wants to collaborate with us or support our work to make a donation through our website (www.acca-bhz.org.br/donate/). Companies can transfer funds through the Municipal Fund for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (FMDCA BH) and benefit from tax breaks. This mechanism is established in the art.260 of the ECA and has the sole and express purpose of transferring resources to specific projects.

ACCA-BHZ is developing new projects such as the Tourism BHZ CONNECTION. Tell us about this.

This project is still being set up and aims to encourage tourism and cultural exchange in Minas Gerais. We will offer tourism activities combined with history lessons in English, Spanish and Portuguese. This will serve as a source of income for ACCA-BHZ, ensuring our sustainability.

How do you see the Association ten years from now?

I hope that the Association will be structured to serve more children and young people, as well as their families. The aim is also to increase partnerships with other institutions committed to a similar cause.

What message would you leave with people who want to work towards transforming harsh social realities?

Join us and contribute to the future of these children and young people! If we can improve their education, we improve the quality of labour opportunities available to them, thereby improving the socio-economic situation for vulnerable persons.



ACCA-BHZ: A CONNECTION IN WHICH THE WHOLE WORLD WINS

Recognizing one's talents is as important as learning to walk and allows one to lead a productive, purposeful and happy life. Education has been considered by many the best tool to stimulate this personal discovery and confidence. Apart from educating, the teacher's role is also to mentor students in identifying what they are good at. This is how the team works at ACCA-BHZ. "The twinkle in the eyes of each participant is what makes our projects move forward. As long as the twinkles are there, nothing stops here," says the founder of ACCA-BHZ, William Sousa. The way in which activities are carried out facilitates the recognition of the characteristics of each student. Students also feel safe to pursue their dreams.



"I loved William's idea to capture the kids' attention and imagination with music, dance, capoeira, languages and computer science," said the social worker, Elaine Domingues de Oliveira. Eliane takes care of the administration of ACCA-BHZ and creates a roster of activities for families to experience.

She believes that introducing different languages and cultures to children and adolescents provides a journey that would often seem unthinkable. While broadening their horizons, "It shows them that there is a world out there where they can dream and which they can learn so much about. It's fantastic!" she says.



João Batista Moreira,
ACCA-BH's pedagogue

The pedagogy specialist at ACCA, João Batista Moreira, active for over 25 years in NGOs in Alto Vera Cruz, clearly saw the need for the project. "In my experience children and adolescents need to open their minds to new horizons, in addition to their surroundings: home, school, community," he said. For João stimulating these students was important to develop their skills.

"Many talented people have left Brazil to try life in other countries. We have had footballers, educators, musicians and many other professionals. William was one example. He returned from England with enough experience and developed this project here in Brazil, with the intention of helping the very community in which it was created," concluded João.

THE STORY DOES NOT STOP THERE ...

Over the last ten years the work of ACCA-BHZ has spoken for itself. Not only in relation to the number of beneficiaries, now close to thousands, but also including the perception of adolescents and other beneficiaries. In their speeches they point to ACCA-BHZ as being largely responsible for their change in behavior. Many have found they thought they had no skills, and now having found confidence in themselves, are not sure which dream to pursue first! They all have the desire to discover the world!



SUELLEN CHRISTINA SILVA

"I had the opportunity to receive a British in our house ."

Luckily, Suellen Christina Silva's friends told her about a great project happening in her own neighborhood, Alto Vera Cruz. Once she joined, life would never be the same again. "Before joining the project I had plenty of time to do something, but did nothing. When I decided to take part, my time was filled with capoeira, music and English classes."

Her knowledge has increased, along with the number of opportunities in her life. Now, at 16 and in her second year of high school, Suellen dreams of many things and is looking to prioritize her wishes.

"I'm at the stage of thinking about what I'm going to study in college. I also have several projects that I would like to accomplish, such as getting to know other countries and learning what the world has to offer. I have dreamed of being a model. I have dreamed of being a singer. I also want to go to college to study tourism."

The young song-loving girl knows one thing for sure. It is no good standing still and waiting, we need to occupy our time for ideas to come to us. For this, she receives so much support. "As a teenager, my mother was like me, in love with the English language. She is the one who encourages me most in this quest. She thinks that learning to speak English fluently can open many doors for me. I completely agree with her!"



BRUNA CAROLINA BRASIL

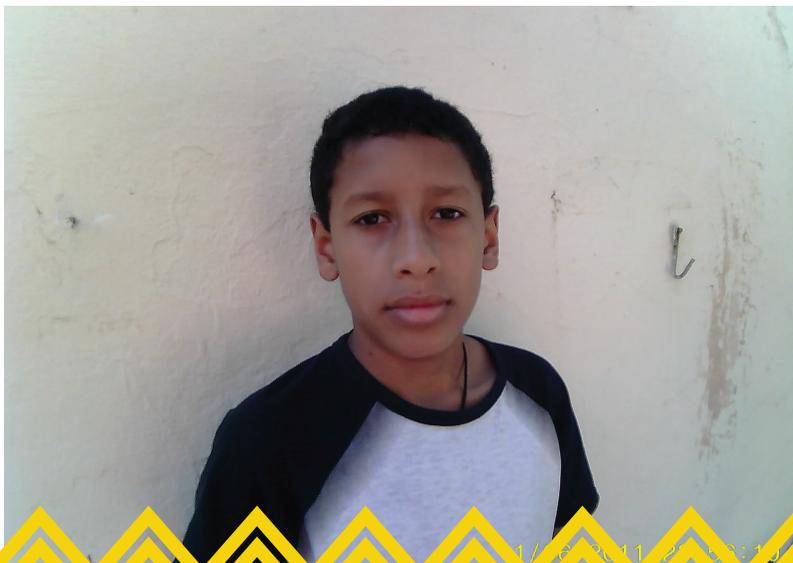
"The activities also helped me improve in school."

As well as Suellen, the end of high school has also brought Bruna Carolina Brazil to a crossroads. She is 18 and, like every teenager her age, can't decide which degree to follow. "Psychology and Biology. I love both of these professions!" Until she decides she is focusing her attention on her studies, part of which is attending activities at ACCA-BHZ, such as practicing English and Spanish. "Regardless of the field, being fluent in other languages can help me expand my horizons."

After joining the project, she has noticed her school performance improve as well as having become a more sociable person. The transformation in Bruna's life did not stop there! "I had the opportunity to host a British person at home. This was a unique experience for me and my family!"

Changes also abound in the life of John Paul Nazarito. In his playful way, this 12 year old already wants to conquer the world! He dreams of being a musician, a football player, "a bunch of things". Although he has not yet chosen a profession, John recognizes the importance of participating in ACCA projects. "The project has changed my life. I feel that the English classes allow me to communicate with people from other countries, experience different cultures and see beyond the place I live in. Learning music made me realize that I have several possibilities for growth." Therefore, John cannot sit still! He is continually developing his skills in music classes, capoeira and languages. He has even participated in the SESC orchestra and has performed playing the violin. He said that the support he receives at home encourages him. "I usually supplement my studies with an online application that teaches you how to pronounce words and understand English words. It's a kind of game which I often play with my mother."

Laura Santos, who is John's age, is quick to state: "I really want to graduate in gastronomy." Like her contemporaries, she has lots of other plans. Without blinking she reveals: "I dream of getting to know other places and learning different languages."



The way Laura was received by the Association made her feel more confident. "I was shy. When I arrived at ACCA, I was welcomed by all and found out that I can learn many things. The activities also helped me improve at school." She knows that learning will increase her chances of success in the future. "I will be able to travel abroad and communicate. As well as participate in English classes, I'm working on improving my Spanish."

Suellen, Bruna, John and Laura ... These are just a few of the names that bring the ACCA-BHZ projects to life. There are strong ties between staff and students, which needs to be built upon to maintain the momentum of the project. We encourage interested persons to volunteer so they can have a hand in working to encourage children and adolescents to recognise their talent and skills, such that they may conquer their little corner of the world!

LAURA SANTOS: "THE ACTIVITIES ALSO HELPED ME IMPROVE IN SCHOOL"



**JOÃO PAULO NAZARITO:
"THE BHZ CONNECTION PROJECT
CHANGED MY LIFE!"**

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE VOLUNTEER?

For the British, 21 year old student, Sophie Astles, this is a very simple question to answer. "I give credit to projects such as the ACCA-BHZ that back education. I see the learning of foreign languages, like English, French and Spanish, as very important for children to be able to access the world. Those who can communicate cross-culturally will have more opportunities in the future!"

As an part of her degree in Portuguese at the University of Nottingham, Sophie was obliged to live with people who speak the language. Through her University, she went to Belo Horizonte and worked as a volunteer at the BHZ-CONNECTION project. Her role was to teach English to children and adolescents in the Alto Vera Cruz neighbourhood, an experience which Sophie is very satisfied with. As well as teaching, Sophie learned a lot. "I really enjoyed meeting the kids, learning about their lives and sharing my experience with them. The children and adolescents have lots of personality and are eager to learn."

Throughout her year's stay, she had several pleasant surprises, such as being asked to join a party held by another cultural project in the region called 'Meninas de Sinha'. Her involvement and dedication to the project was noticed. "When walking through the streets, students would stop me and introduce me to their families."



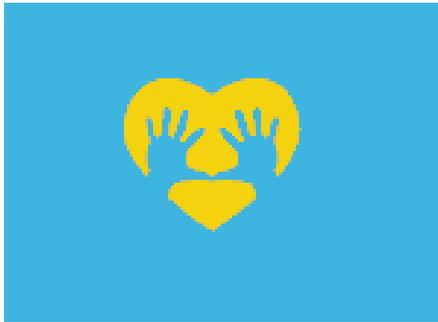
"They are children and adolescents with lot of personality!" - Sophie Astles, volunteer at the BHZ-CONNECTION project.

Like Sophie, there have been other volunteers at ACCA, who left their mark on the project. We aim to have a win-win situation for the beneficiaries, the project and the volunteers! We are a non-profit association and volunteers are essential for the existence and continuity of each project.

Thanks to volunteers, about 300 new children and teenagers each year become involved in culture, art, sport, leisure, human rights, information technology, environmental education, communication and use of media. Both Sophie and ACCA-BHZ hope that these boys and girls conquer the world in their own way.



SHARING AND VALUES



VOLUNTEERS

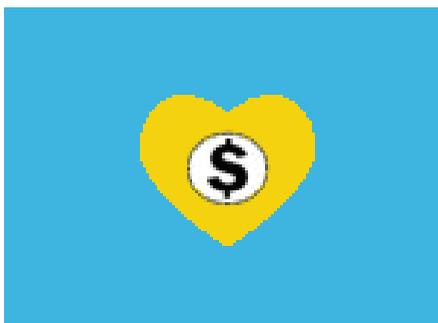
**Interested in making
join our team ?
We hope your contact!**

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PARTNERSHIP





Educação, Cultura
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