

YWAM WOODCREST DTS

COMMUNICATIONS CAMPUS - UNIVERSITY OF THE NATIONS

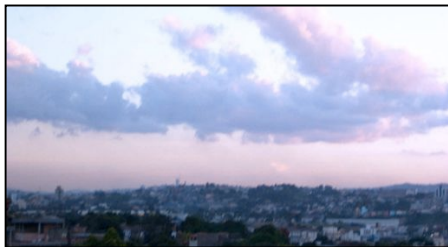


Week 1: Belo Horizonte

We Made It!

Ok, no surprise there. But it wasn't easy. Quezia and Daniel flew in two weeks ago to prepare the outreach and

follow up on contacts. The students arrived after a long flight, bus ride and several boring waits. I arrived on the Brazilian airline, Varig. We're all tired. But all the bags arrived and everyone is here together in Belo Horizonte (beautiful horizon). We'll have the next three days to rest up.
-Jeff



Refuge House



We passed through the gate into "Casa Refugio"-in english, Refuge House. For fourteen years this YWAM center has cared for HIV infected orphans here in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. A boy bounded up to me carrying a toy ukelele.

"Hey, I'm Robson (said in Portuguese)" he smiles and offers his hand.

Outside everything was normal. I shook his hand like I would anyone. But my hand seemed to tingle when I grasped his. I'd prepared myself not to react differently just because the kids have HIV. I know it can't be spread through a touch like that. Still, the sensation didn't stop. Perhaps it was normal

anxiety. *Did I have a cut on my hand? Did he?*

Pushing away those thoughts I smiled and introduced myself. He offered his toy and I played a few chords as best I could.

Flavia, one of the YWAM workers, began a tour of Casa Refugio. "These are photos of all the children who have been with us here," Quezia translated for Flavia.

My eyes scanned the smiling faces in photos cut in the shape of a hearts.

"Some are still with us. Some are adopted. Others have died from the HIV related diseases." Flavia hugged and kissed one of the children as she led the tour downstairs.



After the tour Robson caught up with our group. "You draw right?" I asked in Portuguese.

"Sim" he nodded with a smile.

"Could you show me some?"

Robson waived to me to follow him to his room. Brightly painted walls with the childrens' names designed over the beds spoke of the love shown to them here. He opened a spiral notebook with countless drawings of superheroes and cartoon characters. *These are good.*

"Here I'll make one for you," Robson offered. As he drew I noticed more than half-a-dozen scars across his bronze face. *I can't even imagine what all he's been through.* In two minutes he'd made an incredible drawing—better than I could do in two hours.

Under normal circumstances he would grow up to be a great artist. I'm sure he'd be thankful just to grow up. But here he has a refuge—a home full of joyful children and the golden-hearted people caring for them. How perfect it would be, if not for the silent reality of their disease.

We will continue working here two more weeks before continuing to the other three cities: Mutum, Cristais & Rio De Janeiro. Flavia (and Robson) said we would even be able to work on the cartoon project "The King's Son" with them. It is a beautiful fulfillment of our prayers for Brazil. And we've just begun. -Jeff

Casa Refugio

With his piercing eyes, cloudy and listless, Mateos says much about his life. He can't be more than 2 years old but he is one sick kid. Like the other kids at Casa Refugio (House of Refuge) Mateos is HIV+. He can't be very healthy, but when I picked him up and let him hit a small bear hanging from the ceiling, his face brightens and he sounds of joy and laughter. When I place him down on the floor again to go and finish helping prepare lunch, his eyes fill with tears and he clings to my legs.



To look into the eyes of these children, often born with a set timeline for life, will break your heart. They are so small and so innocent but they pay the price for the sins of their fathers and mothers. Most will never reach adulthood and will be in need of constant, very expensive drug "cocktails" to fight a disease that kills their ability to be well. It takes away their right to be healthy, to pursue life without limits, because they were born with the same limit as us all, mortality, only theirs is marked by a ruthless disease that will pollute them to death.

One little boy, they only child there that is not HIV+ was brought and left at Refugio by his mother as a baby. She believed he would have HIV because she did, but he was spared. He lives in the home because he has nowhere to go because his father will not release custody so maybe someone will adopt him. He is a joyful child who led us down a hallway to his room. He then took our hands, one at a time, and lead us to a "seat" in his room, very proud to show us his home.

While my work at Refugio on this first day was simple: prepare lunch, wash dishes, clean floors, and fold and sort clothes, but I will never forget the laughter enjoyed by everyone including me as we attempted to communicate, the

simple joy of Mateos' playing with the bear and the boy who took me to see his home which he is exceedingly proud of. The simple joy and the laughter and love of hope make a place that might be depressing because of the disease that these children fight each day and show me how God's love is sufficient, always, in every circumstance. -MaryGrace

Busy In Brazil:

- spending time with the children
- web planning for Casa Refugio*
- cooking
- raking the yard
- cleaning bathrooms
- mounds of laundry
- continued work on "The King's Son" cartoon
- translating the Safety Guidelines document
- translating the Casa Refugio Manual
- mopping the floors

*Casa Refugio: a shelter for kids with HIV/AIDS

Week 2: Belo Horizonte

Precious Laughter

The highlight of the last week was a birthday party (with Brazillian BBQ) they had for Robson and Caique (pronounced Kaheekkee). As the preparations for the party were going on, Quezia and I took a quick break in the dining area on the second floor. We stood at the window looking over the playground where a few kids remained. The ones there at the time were those too sick to go to school.

Mateos is one, who was kept in the hospital for a very long time while his mother battled and succumbed to AIDS (by law children cannot be placed in a home or adopted until the parent has passed away). The overwhelmed hospitals have no staff to spend time with children there with their parents. He was kept alive, but not spoken to, held or taught at all. He cannot walk or speak normally. The YWAM staff here told me that he's doing immensely better here at Casa Refugio than when he arrived from the hospital—gaining weight, understanding language, crawling and attempting to walk. He laughed as he tossed away a balloon for Quezia to catch—just like my son did when he was around a year old. Mateos is nearly four. Laughter is precious from all children—but especially children like this.

"Are you ok?" Quezia asked me as I looked out from the window.

"Yeah, it just hits you sometimes... they are all going to die too soon." I held onto the window frame.

"I know."

A gate slammed and in rushed the children from school. One boy raced down the driveway into the playground on his big

wheel tricycle. He turned sharply—just missing the chairs.

As I descended the stairs into the playground Robson ran in from school.

"Oi!" he greeted me and then asked Webio, the director of Casa Refugio, if he could help with the preparations for the party (his party).

The party began with the Brazillian music playing, the children dancing and enjoying the BBQ, sodas and cake. They also prayed for special birthday blessings for Robson and Caique. The staff here make each of the children's birthdays a wonderful celebration. It is important because it refutes the world's attitude that these children are worthless.

Near the end of the evening Quezia and I went over to wish Robson a happy birthday before we had to leave.

"Happy birthday! I wanted to give you this—it's a shell necklace I got in Hawaii."

"No! I can't take it." Robson smiled and politely refused.

"But I want you to have this. Come here." Quezia kneeled and placed it around his neck.

"Oh, thank you Tia (auntie)! Thank you very much!"



He hugged Quezia tightly and me as well. Perhaps he was just trying to be polite by not accepting the gift at first. But many of these children struggle with feelings of rejection, fear and other emotions that make it hard to receive love or hope.

The director had told Quezia and I about how he had to warn one of the past volunteers not to give false hope to one of the children. The child had taken the volunteer's loving care to mean that they would be adopted.

We took this to heart and were impartially showing love to all the kids. Still, I don't know how I will be able to say good-bye to any of them.

As we began to head home, I noticed Robson showing his necklace to Flavia, one of the YWAM staff at Casa Refugio.

Had we been too partial? Or was it an appropriate gift well received? My doubts lingered... till I heard his laugh.

-Jeff

Insert article by MG on Joao Pedro & Follow Up

Week 3: Belo Horizonte

He Walked

Yesterday I saw little Matheus walk for the first time. I mentioned in an earlier message how he is four years old—but he's far behind in development after being held in the hospital during his mother's long losing battle with AIDS. He'd been left alone in his hospital bed so long, he couldn't walk or speak. So you can imagine why I was scrambling to try to capture the moment on film as Matheus took his first unaided steps. Sometimes "the lame walk" without God bending the laws of His creation. Instead, it was the result of the faithful care and encouragement he has received since arriving here at Casa Refugio (the YWAM shelter for kids with HIV/AIDS).



I also told you about Robson, the "chief illustrator" for the cartoon we've been working on with the children (he finished the last of the 40 drawings today!). When he arrived here he was already drawing—but the images were of battles and gore. One of the young women told me how he gave her drawings with super heroes cutting each other to shreds—but the notes below always read, "love, Robson." How different that is from his new drawings of the King (representing God the Father) and his son (Jesus) in the cartoon. Again, this transformation didn't happen instantly. The love he's receiving here is changing him into an amazing young man of God. It began long before we arrived.

Many would call this another wonderful "everyday miracle." But I believe this is what God intends to be "normal." It's not normal for our sins (or other's sins against us) to go untreated. Like Matheus, may we be rescued from the sick beds that entrap us. May we stand to walk closely with the Lord.

-Jeff

Week 4: Belo Horizonte

Open Wide

Hurting children. Diseased foreigners. Grinding poverty... change the channel.

I might have done that if I'd only seen them on some cable-tv charity appeal. I'm glad I didn't.

In the last few messages I wrote about how I met Robson, Matheus, Amilton, Alessandra and the others at Casa Refugio, a YWAM run shelter for children with HIV/AIDS here in Brazil. Even after all the 17 missions trips and

countless faces of need, I realize that I can't just walk away from here. I can't turn it off.

A woman was walking toward church. Helen had read on our web site about one of the children here, Joao Pedro, and the surgery he needs. She somehow sensed God asking "Why don't you do something?" She didn't even know how much it would all cost. But her heart opened to God... and to a child a world away. On Monday we'll take them the money she sent to cover the operation.

Our hearts can be jaded by repeatedly choosing to avoid pain. But it's not right to hold the world an arm's length away. If we open our hearts to God, we open our hearts to the people of the world. Jesus says, "Because you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." (Mt. 23)

Open wide!

-Jeff

Week 5: Cristais

On To Cristais

We drove 4 hours from Belo Horizonte to Cristais. Here we're working with a couple who are pastoring a small church in this tiny Brazillian town (9,000 pop.).

Rubens and Carla (and Lanna & Leticia their daughters) have opened their home to our team. Carla told us how they've been "blessed by our 'servant hearts'" in our work here. We've been preaching & teaching at several services at the church. On Saturday I'll be preaching at a youth service in a nearby city and showing a video I've been working on.

Today Philipp (from Switzerland) preached (I believe for the first time) at the church. It was great to hear him describe how God has been changing him and his family through this DTS (Discipleship Training School). And as a result of his message he was invited to share his testimony at a local Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. The meeting was a real success with positive responses as well.

-Jeff

Week 6: Cristais

Death Contract

Drums echo through the streets as the congada worshipers summon spirits. Brilliant moonlight casts shadows as we approach the church. Believers are gathering and the music soon drowns out the rhythms in the night.

Cristais, Brazil, is roughly the size of my little home-town, Lindale. It has a beautiful "facade"—homey cottages, warm hospitality and green hillsides covered in rows of coffee plants. But behind that lies occultic practices, depression and one of the highest per/capita suicide rates in Brazil.

Rubens and Carla, the local pastoring couple and longtime friends of Quezia's family, invited us here for two weeks of outreach with our DTS team from YWAM Woodcrest.

The people's smiling eyes met me as I open my Bible and read:

"Your covenant with death will be annulled;
your agreement with the grave will not stand." (Is. 28:18a)

"I believe Cristais has a covenant with death. But you here and we who join with you are called to break this contract through Jesus."

By the end of the service the majority of the audience asked for prayer to help them overcome this influence of depression and death in their lives.

One of our closest friends from the time in Cristais stood and shared how she had attempted suicide before knowing Jesus. Now she was battling those old thoughts again.

"But tonight with Jesus I want to be free of these horrible thoughts!"

We prayed with her and the others. And my toddler son, Daniel, came over and laid his hand on her as if praying. Seeing it, everyone laughed after the last "amen."

The joy of that night echoed all the wonderful times we had while befriending the members of the church and the pastor's family in Cristais.

-Jeff

Week 7: Mutum

Spiritism Center Closed

We parked in the dust in front of the "Centro Espirita Nossa Senhora da Conceicao" (Spiritist Center of Our Madam Conceicao). It is closed and locked. The "Senhora" is no longer allied with the spirits that she once served.

Dona Magdalena, greeted us with a gold-capped smile. "Welcome." As the flies buzzed around the kitchen she told us of her journey to faith in Jesus. Her childhood had been steeped in the spiritist practices of her father.

When she began using the spiritist rituals herself to try to help people they told her, "You are doing a good thing."

"Even though they told me this, I always doubted... I led them on the wrong path. But now I will lead them on the path of righteousness." She went on to list the names of the demons she had made pacts with—a dozen infamous Brazillian spiritism demons.

She told us how two weeks before she was walking when something unseen knocked her down violently. "See? Here are the scars on my hand. It also hurt my legs. I knew it was the enemy [a demon]. So I said, 'I know it's you! I know it's you! I'm going to show you. I'm going to become a believer!'"

Silvia (Quezia's aunt who invited us here) led Dona Magdalena in a prayer where she asked God to break all the pacts she had with the spirits. The senhora's legs trembled and voice faltered, but she would not quit. After the final "amen" her eyes opened in what seemed a new brightness.

"You're famous all around this area," Silvia said to Dona Magdalena. "And when people hear that you've turned to Jesus, many will be saved."

-Jeff

Highlights

It has been a remarkable week here in Mutum, Brazil. Here are the highlights:

Philipp and I preached at the church (many recommitted to Jesus and asked for prayer—including Dona Magdalena).

We have been doing discipleship visits at the homes of 13 new believers in the church.

MaryGrace is leading Bible story times with the children at the church.

Working with Rhema, a local development ministry (they provide clothing, education, adoption services and more), we are helping with their web site, preaching in the schools and sorting the clothes we brought for donation.

The local radio broadcasted a recording of the message I shared at the church.

A local newspaper did a front-page photo and positive mention of YWAM's ministry here in Mutum.

us?" After the time with the staff and vice-principal three prayed to be saved. One said, "This is a beautiful work you are doing here. We need more things like this. Thank you so much. God bless you."

-Jeff

Besides the time at school, we also did:

Web sites for our host church and Project Rhema (a development ministry based in Mutum that provides clothing, education, adoption services and much more)

An original video, "EveryNobody," with local young people providing the acting.

A drama, "Turn Around" with our team and local youth playing different parts.

An inter-denominational youth meeting with youth from the churches in town (where we performed the drama, showed the video and spoke).

Teaching at the church and children's ministry on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights.

And we continued the door to door discipleship visits with the new believers at the church.

Week 8: Mutum

Saved at School

The teacher had warned us of this rebellious class, "Some are involved in drugs. Many come from rough backgrounds. The other students look down on them."

"Hey! How's it going?" I began.

They laughed. Even though it was an English class, they couldn't understand my greeting.

The teacher broke into the introduction to make some guys in the back be quiet.

I continued (with Portuguese translation), "OK. We came from all these different places, Switzerland, Brazil and the US, to share with you the hope we've found in Jesus."

The class' eyes grew curious. As our team shared about our experiences in knowing God, the noise and interruptions subsided.

We projected a video about Jesus and the cross. The blood-drenched torture of Jesus flashed upon the screen. Their eyes were transfixed. Some even wept.

This week alone approximately 600 students in the school heard and saw this message of Jesus. We prayed and answered questions with many of the students.

After doing what would be illegal in my home country (preaching in school), the teachers and staff thanked us again and again.

The administration staff even said, "We want to hear this message and see this video too. Can you please meet with