

ALL CHANGE!

A process of change began for ARCA in May 2006, when Lynne McLeavy moved on to start *Creative Hands*, a project working with the people living and working on a rubbish dump in Benevides. We were a new and relatively inexperienced 'management' team who had to 'hit the ground running'.

It's been an exciting and challenging 18 months. In material terms, ARCA as a project is 'asset rich' but 'cash poor' and has struggled monthly to make ends meet. At times last year the situation was so bad we were unable to pay our workers their wages on time. God has blessed us with workers who have shown amazing confidence in us and commitment to the project during what must have been very difficult times for them and their families.

In early 2007 we took a realistic look at the project to see where God was leading us. At the same time, a group from Hockliffe Street Baptist Church Leighton Buzzard started a project, 'ARCA 2007', to increase prayer and financial support for ARCA. That project enabled us to appoint a Christian management adviser, Múcio Morais, to facilitate improvements in organisational structure, identify training needs and help with fundraising in Brazil.

In July 2007, having reunited some of our girls with their own families and found substitute families for others, we recognised that further changes were necessary. We closed two of our homes and focussed our resources on working more closely with the families of the children. With the help of UK supporters, we have been able to make the required compensation payment to the workers who have had to leave the project. Many of them still come as volunteers and we have a new and positive relationship with all of them. Through all of the struggles, we have recognised that our workers are our greatest asset; we thank God for each of them.

Our home in Benevides is purpose-built and with space for further development. In January 2008 the teenage girls moved into that home. We hope to sell the two properties in St Isabel to develop the Benevides' site. We would like to build a second home for young girls and a small administration block so that the team is mainly working from one location.



Developments in the last few months mean that we are now able to focus on our core work – to evangelise the children in the homes and on the streets and to work with their families to prepare them for the children's eventual return.

To all who have supported ARCA, we give our heartfelt thanks. Your prayers and financial support are vital as we work through what is still a very challenging time.

In the next 6 to 9 months we plan to fill the 5 spaces currently available in the girls home; to continue the work during the daytime on the streets, recruiting more Christian volunteers from local churches to support us in this ministry; to carry on the regular monthly all-night street vigils working alongside our friends in YWAM Belem and to focus more on working with the families of the children on the streets.

Through all of these challenges, we have been convinced that God has great plans for us. We have spent many hours on our knees in prayer for the needs of the work to be met and he has been faithful. Every expression of support has not only helped us practically, but strengthened our faith and trust in our Sovereign Lord.

A new leaflet giving information about the ARCA project can be obtained from any of the UFM offices. ■

Maureen Sharratt



LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

The demands of working on the streets are constant, the needs huge and the problems endless. Many times we become overwhelmed, weary and discouraged, yet God has constantly reminded me of the example of Jesus in his ministry and how he demonstrated such love tirelessly, sacrificially, unfailingly and unconditionally.

His love for those he ministered to *never* failed and this has been a challenge to me over recent months as I go about my daily life. It is when we practise loving people as Jesus did that we then attract them and gain their trust and confidence; as a result we have opportunities to share the gospel.

Life expectancy on the streets is often short which makes the need more urgent to reach these precious lives.

One such example is Marcelo (18). He'd been on the streets since he was seven. We had known Marcelo for years and he had tried many times, unsuccessfully, to leave the streets. Last September we realised his health was deteriorating rapidly and he was becoming increasingly weaker and losing weight fast. After being admitted to hospital he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, along with many other health issues.

Knowing Marcelo was close to death we eventually were able to make contact with his family who, sadly, didn't come to the hospital to see him. As is the custom here in Brazil, someone had to stay in hospital 24/7 with him and, as his family did not take up the responsibility, it fell to us.

Between us we had to cover these shifts. A very demanding task on both our time and

energy and yet one in which God challenged me to simply love and care for him as Jesus would. It was a situation where I found myself out of my depth with no medical experience and totally stretched, yet I proved God's grace to be sufficient to cope and grew personally so much through all I learnt in this experience.

We spent six weeks in hospital with him and I believe God used this to give us such quality times together. We really got to know him in a way we'd never otherwise have had an opportunity to do so. As a result of these times Marcelo clearly trusted Christ whilst in the hospital. Later he returned to the recuperation centre but, sadly, came off his treatment for the tuberculosis. About a month ago, he died.

A few days before he died he told one of our workers, "I know you all truly loved me." This testimony impacted me greatly, that for this one boy we had made a difference and brought hope to his life. Despite the sadness of losing him, we now know he is free from his suffering and has gone to experience abundant life with Christ.

This is just one of many lives; it impacts us afresh with the urgency of reaching others with the gospel. Who knows when the last time will be with one of these street kids? Who knows if today will be the last opportunity to speak to one of them? We may not be able to make a difference to them all but, as the boy on the beach answered as someone asked him why he was throwing a starfish back into the sea, "Well I made a difference for this one!" ■

Shirley Hough

**Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.....love never fails
(1 Corinthians 13:7)**

