

# University of Life

# The Arts:

# Dance, Theater & Music

## Mission

To offer quality exposure to and education in the arts to children living in poverty, provide a safe outlet for dealing with the frustrations of life, create a venue for cultivating creative expression and development, engage the children more actively in their education, and furnish a quality, holistic educational experience.



## Background

Life in the impoverished favela (Brazilian slum) is difficult, stressful and often emotionally and spiritually devastating. Violence is widespread and most children are exposed to some form of abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or substance. Economic opportunities are limited or nonexistent so obtaining even the most basic necessities becomes difficult, if not impossible, and many children are expected to earn income to help their families.

The public school system in Brazil is under-resourced, under-staffed and offers children only 4 hours of education each day. Public schoolteachers are severely underpaid and often unsupported, so they are frequently on strike. Students struggle to simply master the basics, so there is little at school to excite and engage children in their education. Brazilian children drop out at an alarmingly high rate; only 40% of children who enroll will finish elementary school, 9% will finish high school and 6% will go to university. Without education, students are unable to compete for jobs and left stranded in the favelas.

## Our Response

Favela children are in a precarious position, being pulled between their desire to learn and the concrete realities of living in poverty. Therefore, school must be captivating, engaging and have tangible benefits to compete with the very real demands on our students.

The arts enhance creativity, improve academic achievements, are constructive outlets for anger and frustration and effective in therapy. Many students find healing by composing music, choreographing dances and writing and performing plays addressing violence, drug and sexual abuse and other issues they experience daily. We find that requiring the arts in our curriculum at the University of Life engages the students more fully in their education, helps them process negative experiences, keeps them out of trouble and communicates effectively with others in the community.

## The Theater Program

The theater program is a regular part of the school curriculum and an extracurricular activity that involves frequent performances within the school and outreach into the community. Theater develops social skills and improves public speaking, but also allows students to speak out against injustices within the favela and throughout Brazil. The students write and perform dramas about violence, street children, sexual abuse, drugs and alcohol, health and nutrition, and spiritual devastation and restoration.

To learn more about program activities, please contact:

### **The Channel, Inc**

501(c)(3)

PO Box 804

Newport News, VA

23607

Phone: (757) 244-6852

Email: [cbc@thechannel.org](mailto:cbc@thechannel.org)

[www.thechannel.org](http://www.thechannel.org)

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The Channel is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1995. We are a Christian developmental organization with over 25 years of experience working with impoverished children and communities in Brazil.

Our vision is to train and equip the future leaders of Brazil by creating a pathway out of poverty for children through quality education and training. Our project in Fortaleza is CBC (Channel to Brazil for Christ) University of Life and is a non-sectarian institution open to children of any color, race or religion.

The Channel is funded by contributions from individuals and groups who passionately believe that by working together we can improve the lives of children living in poverty, one child at a time.



## The Music Program: Vocal and Instrumental

Music is an integral part Brazilian life and is central to our curriculum at the University of Life. It is used in classroom curriculum and as an extracurricular activity to more effectively teach concepts, give children exposure to counting, rhythm, sounds and instruments and give all students an opportunity to perform. We offer:

- Regular music classes on a rotating schedule
- Private lessons with staff in voice or in the instrument of choice (recorder, guitar, keyboard or percussion)
- Special school-wide performances for holidays
- Opportunities for involvement in weekly chapel performance groups
- Opportunities for outreach performances within the community



## The Dance Program

The dance component of the educational curriculum serves to enhance coordination and balance, promote physical fitness and explore traditional and emerging Brazilian culture. Dance is an extremely important social element in Brazil and is therefore a great teaching tool and interactive way of engaging children.

Univida dance, the extracurricular performance group, is quickly becoming a recognized name in Fortaleza. This group of current and former University of Life students has performed in front of audiences as large as 10,000 people and several of the students received full scholarships to study at a private dance academy. Their dance styles include contemporary, hip-hop and classical. The group traveled to the USA in 2006 and was recently selected to represent the northeast of Brazil in a national competition in Sao Paulo. The group choreographs their own dances and performs in schools, streets, colleges, theatres and churches across Fortaleza and the surrounding region.

## **Future Goals**

- Begin a full-time band program, which requires a full-time instructor and a greater variety of musical instruments and educational material
- Expand the theater program to include more opportunities for outreach performances within Fortaleza and the interior of Brazil
- Complete the Community Life Center and Gymnasium, which will have a fully outfitted stage, and schedule regular student performances
- Attract guest instructors and professionals to give seminars and master classes
- Create a scholarship program for more students to be able to take dance lessons
- Continue to build the reputation of the performance dance group and find more venues for performances

## **How Can I Help?**

These are some concrete ways you can help us build the arts program at the University of Life:

- Donate used musical instruments, sheet music and lesson books
- Travel to Brazil to teach a class on music, dance or theatre
- Bring a group to Brazil to perform at the University of Life
- Donate funds to help outfit the Community Life Center with lights and a sound system
- Donate funds to support the private dance instruction of a University of Life student
- Allow one child to attend the University of Life and experience an education in the arts for \$30 per month

