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DECEMBER 9

Overcoming culture of illiteracy, 10-year-old wins bronze for poem INMED, GE team up to advance education in Brazil

Francisco Morato, Brazil December 9, 2008 – Although many students his age in this small city outside São Paulo quit school without being able to adequately read or write, 10-year-old Natanael da Silva Santos chose to write poetry rather than follow many of his peers' footsteps.

Recently, he and his fourth-grade teacher, Luciana Alves dos Reis Silva, a participant in INMED Brasil's Ready to Teach, Ready to Learn program, were recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Education at the Portuguese Language Olympics for his poem, Tracing the Path of Memories.

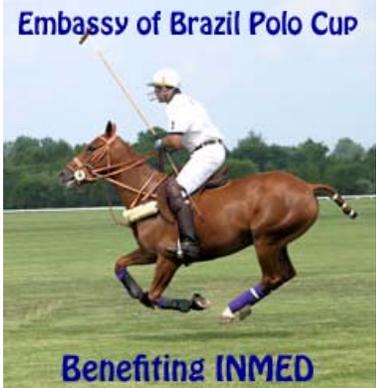
Natanael de Silva Santos "We are very proud of Natanael and Luciana for their accomplishment, especially given the history of low literacy throughout Francisco Morato," said INMED Partnerships for Children President and CEO Linda Pfeiffer. "His teachers have done a remarkable job to begin changing the culture to one that embraces reading and writing for an entire generation and for generations to come."

Ready to Teach, Ready to Learn was developed in partnership with the GE Foundation and launched by INMED Brasil in 2005 in Francisco Morato and São Paulo as a school excellence initiative that combines teacher training, development of instructional modules, and improved school management.

"It is only fitting that, through the voice of one of its students, Ready to Teach, Ready to Learn has been recognized for its impact on education in São Paulo," said Bob Corcoran, president of the GE Foundation. "The GE Foundation is delighted to work with INMED as it enables students around the world to learn and grow with their communities to sustain positive change."

The program was needed to address what INMED Brasil Executive Director Joyce Capelli said was a shortage of teachers with little or no formal training in the two cities, leading to a high rate of illiteracy among children.

"Too many students are unable to read or write adequately by the time they reach the fourth grade," Capelli said. "Since many students leave school after the fifth grade because it is the last year of



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compulsory education, they are unprepared to achieve long-term success.”

INMED Brasil is the regional program initiative for INMED Partnerships for Children, an international children's welfare organization working in more than 100 countries to ensure children's health, education and safety from prenatal care and infancy through adolescence and to inspire communities to invest in positive, sustainable change for today's generation of children and those to come.

Today, the RTRL program reaches 17,000 students by working with 750 teachers in more than 50 schools, Capelli said. Although it is too early to report data on the program's effectiveness without multiple year comparisons, teachers are reporting improvements, she added.

Natanael's poem traces his affection for his growing but little known hometown and his own growth's attachment to the community and its people.

“As I grow I trace the path of memories, of this beloved town, that holds many stories, traditions, culture and life,” wrote the fourth-grader, whose favorite poet is Manuel Bandeira. Going to São Paulo to receive the award was an adventure, his first outside his hometown.

Advanir Aparecida Ferreira da Paixao Bonifacio, vice-principal of Natanael's school who participates in the Ready to Teach, Ready to Learn program, said the school is proud of the student-teacher accomplishment.

“We were very happy, fulfilled,” she said. “It is very good to see our work bearing fruits.”

About INMED Partnerships for Children - Since 1986, INMED Partnerships for Children (www.inmed.org), an international non-profit humanitarian development organization, has worked in more than 100 countries to fulfill a wide range of health, nutrition, education, violence prevention and community development projects that create a continuum of care for children from the prenatal period through adulthood by empowering families and communities to support the development of healthy, educated children for increased opportunities for the future.

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