

District Spotlight

A river mobilizes consciences & unites Rotarians

3H Project brings unprecedented sum to project of ecological recuperation in Rio Grande do Sul

Over the next three years, the people of three cities in Rio Grande do Sul – Alvorada, Cachoeirinha, and Gravataí – will be invited to give their attention to a river. This is because the Aguapé (Water Hyacinth) Project expects to invest more than U\$500,000 in actions of education, tree planting, cleanup mobilization, and environmental patrolling in the Gravataí River basin that involves these three cities.

“The Gravataí River was named as one of the most polluted rivers in all of Brazil according to a national study; however, a commission of Rotarians has for some years now been studying the viability of this project and seeking its approval with the Rotary Foundation,” says project coordinator Luiz Gonçalves Borba, member of Cachoeirinha RC, District 4670.

As a result of these efforts, 600,000 people, 2,000 workers, and nature itself, will be directly benefited by the Aguapé Project. The Project was inaugurated on June 27 at the Rio Grande Rice Institute, in Cachoeirinha, with more than 120 people present, including local governmental authorities and leaders of local NGOs. Ten trees were planted on the occasion, symbolizing the spirit of this Rotarian developmental project: environmental consciousness-raising.

The unprecedented sum of more than U\$500,000 comes primarily from a 3H (Health, Hunger and Humanity) Grant from the Rotary Foundation, and involves a partnership between local Rotary District 4670 and District 1110 from England, specifically the Portsmouth & Southsea RC. Throughout the initiative, besides the RCs of Alvorada, Cachoeirinha, and Gravataí, four RCs from Porto Alegre will also be involved: Lindóia Passo D’Areia, Sarandi, São João, and Anchieta.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Led by EGD 2008-09 Eliseu Gonçalves da Silva, a commission of Rotarians began to think about an ambitious project to recover the local environment. The idea, born from within the Cachoeirinha RC, soon captivated RCs from Alvorada and Gravataí as well. The Aguapé Project has three principal objectives:



Planting seedlings: Rotarians with governors Elisha Conçalves 2008-09 and Paul Meinhardt 2009-10 and the project coordinator Rotarian Luiz Borba.



Visiting the river Gravataí: District 1110 Rotarians England with local Rotarians including Luiz Borba

- Reforestation of the river and its tributaries, with the recovery of the riparian vegetation along the riverbanks, in an area equivalent to 50 hectares involving the three cities of Alvorada, Cachoeirinha, and Gravataí.

- Increase of environmental patrolling and policing in the region.

Seven annual river cleanup mobilizations.

According to EGD Eliseu, the final investment sum could be even greater than initially forecasted, because numerous partners have affiliated themselves with the Project since its launch. Currently more than 20 NGOs and various branches of municipal and state government have aligned themselves with this cause to save the Gravataí River.

Thanks to journalist Roselaine Vinciprova for her contributions to this article.