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## MISSION

To help children and young people, throughout the world, develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.

## Brazilian city offers Zippy's Friends to all children

**T**he Brazilian city of Sorocaba has become the first place in the world to run Zippy's Friends in all of its elementary schools.

Zippy's Friends is a school-based programme that helps six and seven year old children to develop coping skills. Sorocaba's Mayor Vitor Lippi set education and health as the priorities for his term of office, and recognised that Zippy's Friends brought these two strands together.

Brazilian coordinator Tania Paris said: 'He understood the impact of the programme very quickly and liked it very much, and so from then on everything was fine.'

The result is that all of Sorocaba's 74 public elementary schools have joined the programme. A total of 281 teachers were trained in the first year, and 10,050 children took part. The first year ends this month, but classes will resume next March.

'It wouldn't have happened without the support of the Mayor and officials in the Secretaria da Educaçao,' said Tania. 'Promoting the programme to all schools at the same time was very ambitious, particularly as it was our first year in Sorocaba. It needed a lot of confidence, and without the Mayor's backing it would have been impossible.'

Amigos do Zippy is also running in other parts of Brazil, with 15,776 children enrolled nationwide, but Sorocaba has become the programme's shop window. This growing city, 100 kilometres west of São Paulo, has even begun to give presentations about the programme to other cities. One smaller city, São Luiz do Paraitinga, has already followed Sorocaba's example, and at least one other is expected to do so next year.



Tania and her husband Robert manage Amigos do Zippy nationwide, helped by four people in Sorocaba, and training and supporting almost 300 teachers in the city was a huge challenge for this small team. Fourteen training courses were organised within a month, and each teacher has been

*“This is our dream, that people will be more emotionally healthy and able to support each other.”*

Tania Paris  
Amigos do Zippy coordinator, Brazil

able to attend four support meetings during the course of the programme.

One of the modules in Zippy's Friends helps children to cope with change and loss, and this includes talking about death. Teachers in many countries have been concerned about this, worrying that it might be upsetting for young children, and Brazil was no exception. So Tania organised two talks by an eminent academic from the University of São Paulo, to explain that it is helpful to young children to be able to talk and ask questions about death. More than 300 teachers filled Sorocaba's city theatre for each talk, at which Mayor Lippi also spoke about the importance of understanding feelings.

With so many children taking part in Amigos do Zippy, the programme is becoming known beyond the classroom. Two participating schools recently took part in a parade through the city, with children wearing Amigos do Zippy t-shirts and carrying balloons.



Zippy is a stick insect and most teachers make a model of him, to catch the children's attention. Many schools in Sorocaba also keep Zippy diaries. Children take it in turns to take Zippy home after school and keep a diary of what he does and where he goes. Apart from being fun for the children, this also helps to introduce the programme to parents and families.

'In big schools, you can have seven classes, so that means seven Zippys going home every evening, and seven groups of children saying 'goodbye, Zippy,' and 'we love you,' and then waiting for him the next morning!' said Tania.

What will be the impact of running Amigos do Zippy in every elementary school in the city?



Robert and Tania Paris

Mayor Lippi believes that children will grow up to become more responsible and happier citizens. Tania says: 'I think the main impact will be seen years from now, when we will have a whole new generation that has gone through the programme. This is really why we decided to embrace Zippy's Friends in Brazil. This is our dream, that people will be more emotionally healthy and able to support each other.'

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