

2nd Writing Contest on Environment & Peace

Theme: *Environment, Peace and the new Corona Virus: what has that got to do with me?*

Servas Brazil and **Servas Portugal** joined the organizing team of the Second Writing Contest. This initiative of the Environment & Peace Project is linked to the *How Responsible is Your Organization* (CERO) programme, developed by the Research Group on Careers and Skills Development Laboratory (LCDC) of the Federal University of the São Francisco Valley (Univasf), in Brazil, in partnership with the Public Prosecutor Office of Bahia State and the University of Bahia State (Uneb).

It all started some years ago, when Alvány Santiago, member of Servas Brazil, a university professor in Univasf and environmental researcher, took over a “fazenda”(farm) from her parents, where she was born. There, she found the degradation of the land, since, trees were cut and the water was polluted. Alvány initiated then a project with family, childhood friends, locals, as well as with Servas visitors, planting trees, preserving the “mata atlântica” (Atlantic forest), recovering the water sources, building a sustainable water management...and bringing back the birds. The visitors that came to this “fazenda” connected in such a way that they decided to create a group called “Santiago EcoAmigos”. After some time, Alvány launched the idea of involving students in her environmental voluntary work and contacted local schools, the Education Federal Department and other entities.

In 2019 the First Writing Contest was created, involving a population of two-thousand students, from basic to high schools. The outcome was so positive, both for the students community as for the local society, families and teachers that now in 2020 the second edition was launched on June during the week of World Environmental Day (June 5th). The Contest will last until November 20th (Black awareness day), when the winning contestants will receive their prizes.

- The theme of 2020 Writing Contest is: “ Environment, Peace and the new corona virus: what has that got to do with me?”

The Contest aims to increase ecological awareness and contemplation of nature, emphasizing the importance of peace and environmental preservation for improving quality of life and protecting health in these times of pandemic. This is on the basis of principles promoting peace and tolerance with a supra-party,



supra-religious character, always seeking to join forces, build partnerships and develop as human beings in harmony with the environment.

Another aim is to stimulate reading, text production and draw attention to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, specifically SDGs 04, 05, 13, 15, 16 and 17, dealing with health, education with quality, gender equality, water and forest life, climate change, peace and justice.

This Contest is for students enrolled in Elementary School II (6th to 9th grade) and in High School (1st to 3rd year) in public and private schools in 29 municipalities in the State of Bahia, Brazil.

Students enroll through digital platforms, and send in their works, from mid-August to mid-October. During this period they are also asked to plant trees and attend a number of online workshops on peace, sustainability, environment, writing, and other subjects. One of these online workshops will be held by Alvany Santiago and Carla Kristensen on September 21, International Peace Day, on how Servas advocates for peace and understanding. Another workshop on creative writing will be held by Prof Claudia Lima and Cristina

Benedita.

Servas Brazil (Tere de Paula, Alvany Santiago, Neuma Dantas, and others) and **Servas Portugal** (Cristina Benedita, Isabel Chaves and Carla Kristensen) take an active role in the organizing committee, attending preparation meetings, evaluating the essays and donating some of the prizes to the winning students (tablets or bicycles).

As this is a project that relates deeply to the values of Servas, **we would like to invite other Servas groups or countries to help us gather a significant number of prizes to those children.** It can be tablets, bicycles, books, games. All contributions would be much appreciated.

You can contact Alvany Santiago (alvanysantiago@gmail.com) or Carla Kristensen (crsckris@gmail.com) for more details.

by: Carla Kristensen (SI Vice President and Board member of Servas Portugal) and Alvany Santiago (Servas Brazil Bahia State Regional coordinator and co-creator of Santiago EcoAmig@s)

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