



SEPTEMBER 2024 EDITION

OGI: One Great Idea

Ideas that Matter from the YMCA World Urban Network (WUN)

Every YMCA has them - ideas that matter. Practical and innovative ways in which YMCAs are making a difference in the lives of a young person, a community, a country. **One Great Idea** is an initiative from the YMCA World Urban Network (WUN) designed to reveal great ideas with WUN members, who in turn are invited to share them widely within their networks. Our objective is simple: shine a light on solutions that work.

This month, we are pleased to spotlight Marisia Donatelli, a WUN legend who will soon be retiring from the YMCA.



What is your current position?

General Secretary/CEO of the YMCA of São Paulo, Brazil, a position I have held for the past 25 years

YMCA History?

Since 1961, and with many roles and experiences, working for São Paulo Y has been my first (and last) job

Your post-secondary education?

I graduated in Economic Studies and from the YMCA Brazil Executive Directors Preparatory Institute

How many people are served by your Y?

5,525 children, youth, and seniors through 19 YMCA Social Centers

Who is your role model:

My father

ONE GREAT IDEA – September 2024

YMCA of São Paulo, Brazil

1. What is your idea?

Brincando de Casinha – Observatório das Relações Familiares (“Playing House - Observatory for Family Relationships”) seeks to offer a safe space where children can express freely their imagination and strengthen their family’s relationship.

2. What opportunity or problem does your idea address?

The problem this idea addresses is different types of family conflicts and social division issues: domestic violence, sexual harassment, alcohol abuse, racial violence, social invisibility (mainly in housekeeper positions in Brazil), and gender violence.

3. Why was this idea important to your Y?

This project is important because it helps to identify domestic violence. With that, we can help children and also we can call on local authorities to intervene when necessary (Guardian Council of the State of São Paulo, the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship). This initiative deals with the social vulnerability of people, families, and communities; this project is part of YMCA São Paulo's motto: *to strengthen people, family, and communities*.

This project is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) #5 Gender Equality (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and #10 Reduced Inequalities (Reduce inequality within and among countries).

4. How did you get started?

The Social YMCA São Paulo, Leide das Neves – Jabaquara, created a space for kids to build their own house while playing and interacting with other kids. With that, the staff started observing adverse behavior (nervousness/violence) in some of the kids, often reflecting on what was happening in their lives at home.

In 2007, throughout YMCA Brazil, the Social YMCA São Paulo branch was appointed by the YMCA São Paulo Social Center Development Department to improve this project together with Reprasis (Rede de Práticas Sociais – Social Practices Network) from Argentina, which had a methodology the YMCA could replicate.

Who would be your dream companion over lunch?

My family, my friends, and co-workers. If I could have someone famous it would be Abel Ferreira (Head Coach) and Leila Pereira (President) of the Palmeiras Soccer Club

What is your idea of a perfect day?

Having new experiences and always learning with my family and the YMCA

What is the trait you most dislike in others?

Vanity and arrogance

What do you consider to be your best qualities?

I am a fair person – I like to trust people

What is your greatest success?

Beyond the YMCA, I have positively influenced many people during my life

What are you currently reading?

Filho do Hamas (Son of Hamas) by Mosab Hassan Yousef and Ron Brackin

What is your personal motto?

Live your life to make things better through Faith in God

Well Worth Reading

This article is from **Tim Arnold**, a featured presenter at the upcoming WUN conference in Bogota, Colombia. It focuses on why teams resist change...even when they agree with it:

<https://leadersforleaders.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4e507d4c6871e5085ace8870d&id=1c1e8f41a4&e=64aed3c38e>

5. How does the idea work?

To promote a safe space for children to express inner wishes, frustrations, and conflicts through play. Through this approach, the YMCA is able to influence improved social living among children, embracing racial and gender diversity. Through professional learning, we can share knowledge so families can improve their abilities and competencies to identify conflicts and articulate actions.

6. Where does funding come from?

The cost to maintain the project is R\$10.000,00 (USD\$5,000) monthly. Today, the funding comes from the Abrinq Foundation and Public Calls for Children's Development, of which YMCA São Paulo was a beneficiary (January 2024 to December 2025).

7. How did you get buy-in on the idea?

The professional team attends monthly meetings to discuss the cases and make decisions, mediated by a professional with vast experience. There are also two-year meetings with all Social YMCAs and partners to share evaluations, outcomes, and lived experiences.

8. What have you learned from the process thus far?

We learned the importance of systematizing the outcomes, which has informed our understanding of this program and its evolution. This program's positive impact reinforces the role of YMCA professionals and their significant impact on kids and families.

9. Anything else you would like to share?

Our dream is to fully implement this program in 14 of our YMCA branches, put this methodology into practice, correct what is needed, and share it with other organizations, Institutions, or YMCA movements.

10. Where can YMCA colleagues get more information?

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SAVE THE DATES

Please plan to join your global YMCA colleagues at these upcoming WUN gatherings:

WUN 2025 Conference in Osaka, Japan

Sunday, June 29 – Friday, July 4, 2025

Conference details will be circulated in early 2025

WUN 2026 Conference in Toronto, Canada

Thursday, July 16 – Sunday, July 18, 2026

A 2-day mini-WUN conference proceeding the 2026 World Council