

TO SAVE BLUE LAKE

How active are young people in your community? How aware are people about environmental protection where you live? Do you find it important to preserve natural resources in the area where you live? We are seriously aware of these questions, so we created a program to save our most beautiful treasure. Take a look at what we have done.

In the neighborhood of Umbará in Paraná, Brazil, there was a beautiful, clean, and very well-known lake called Blue Lake. It was a popular spot, and all kinds of recreation went on there. Then the life began to disappear from the lake. The beautiful landscapes were no longer beautiful—everything was dark and polluted with untreated sewage discharged into it from nearby and newly built houses. Soon there was no life in the lake at all. We decided it was time to make Blue Lake beautiful again.

Blue Lake is a very special place for the people of Umbará; it has been a source of inspiration and energy for many families throughout the years, a popular natural area and important in terms of the resources it has provided the local people.

Our group is made up of young people from a school called Colegio Estadual Padre Morelli; the lake is close to our school. We are interested and involved in environmental issues and started this important project a few years ago.

Given the importance of this lake to the community, we decided to start with an awareness campaign using brochures, newsletters, and leaflets asking people to help us. We knew we had to mobilize the entire community if we were going to be successful.



Paraná is near Sao Paulo in the coastal mountains of southern Brazil. Blue Lake is a popular recreation area in the Umbará neighborhood. Fouled in recent decades with sewage and pollution, students decided it was time to act.

Let's save Blue Lake!

The theme of our publicity campaign was *Let's save Blue Lake!* We made our message known at church services and meetings and asked priests to promote our idea in their sermons, which they did in several local churches. We also persuaded reporters to publish articles in neighborhood, local, and school newspapers. Finally, we collected signatures in support of our proposal, and these were handed to the mayor.

The results were good. Next, we organized workshops and environmental awareness courses, and devised strategies to teach people how to keep the lake clean in the long term. We wanted the whole community to join in the cleaning efforts, and it was surprising to see how many people—from the youngest to the oldest—joined in. Our success, thanks to that widespread support, led to Blue Lake being declared a municipal park.

We want to tell you that this project started off with an idea in the classroom, and all we asked for was the help of our teachers and parents to get it going. It is not hard to do so long as you work as a team. We did not need much in the way of resources because a lot of the material was either given to the school or we collected it.

You can do the same. If there is an endangered zone in your community, organize a brigade in your class, ask for the support, and get the help of your friends and families.

Contact information

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ACTION PLAN TO SAVE BLUE LAKE

Time Frame: one year

- Assess the physical area by creating a map of Blue Lake and exploring soil, air, and water quality.
- Photograph the lake before action and during the recovery process, as well as the neighborhood and residents.
- Create brochures, newsletters, and general information regarding the importance of recovering Blue Lake.
- Interview residents, government officials, and community activists to get support; organize people to help recover the area and schedule the agenda of work.
- Recovery period (one year).
- Write letters to community leaders and decision makers on the progress of the lake.
- Photograph the lake after recovery.