DREAMROOT BRAZIL EXCHANGE CAMP IMPACT REPORT - OCTOBER 2026

DREAMROOT
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

More Than a Trip: The Power of Showing Up, Year After Year

Seven camps. Fifty-six people hosted. More than a decade of relationships taking root. And one unforgettable reminder of what can happen when we keep showing up.



7	56	85	10+	6	2
weeklong camps since 2015	people hosted since 2015	students training together in 2026 camp	years of work in Brazil	academies on one mat	belt promotions

We just wrapped up our seventh weeklong Brazil Exchange Camp, with **seven participants** joining us this year. Since our **first camp in 2015,** we've **welcomed fifty-six people** to experience Brazil alongside us. Several have come back two, three, and even six times, while many return to bring their spouses and children.

We have been doing this work in Brazil for **more than 10 years**, three of them before DreamRoot became official. What feels different now is that we get to **see the fruit of seeds planted long ago**. Some growth only comes with time: persistence, consistency, and walking with people for the long haul, not the short term. This year we watched what was poured out years ago get **multiplied and carried forward by others**.



WHY WE DO THIS

A bigger table

These camps exist to **build bridges between nations** and communities. Around that table, people **expand their world** through new friends, new flavors, and new perspectives. Nothing replaces that kind of experience.

It enriches the people who travel here and the Brazilians who welcome them, in equal measure. What we see every year is the light and **joy of being seen**, being known, and finding true **friendship**.

> **"We share a table, and then we keep adding seats to it."**

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

In seven days we...

01 Trained jiu-jitsu together with locals from across two states in Brazil

02 Visited three academies and social projects, including the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center

03 Celebrated two major belt promotions

04 Spent a day at the beach

05 Walked the streets of Olinda, a UNESCO World Heritage site

06 Explored Recife Antigo, home to what Forbes has called one of the most beautiful streets in the world

07 Ate at authentic all-you-can-eat Brazilian churrasarias, of course

08 Relaxed poolside at a beautiful green compound

09 Had breakfast while monkeys joined us in the treetops





But the highlight, hands down, for every single participant was the people. The connections made within the group and with our Brazilian friends. So much joy, so many laughs.

Every time the week ends and we drop the group at the airport, that day gets a little quieter. There's an energy and adventure that trip participants bring. We love hosting!

SIX ACADEMIES · TWO COUNTRIES · ONE MAT

Building it together, then standing in it

This year over **eighty-five people across six academies** came together to train, several times over: two academies from the United States and four from Brazil, spread across two states in each country.

That includes Lou and Kathryn Armezzani of Armezzani Jiu Jitsu in Pennsylvania, who've been partners and friends for decades. When we set out to turn a dilapidated warehouse into the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center, Lou and Kathryn were part of **building it from thousands of miles away**. Professor Lou and his students hosted jiu-jitsu fundraiser workshops, and the money they raised went into the renovation. They donated the uniforms the kids would train in. For years they followed every step through our updates and photos, **helping build a place they had never seen**.

This year **they finally walked through its doors**. They stood on the mats their workshops helped pay for and watched kids train in the uniforms they sent. It was a hugely emotional moment for all of us. The idea, the photos, and the pictures in our minds had become something they could touch.



It was no longer "over there." It was here, and it was theirs too.

TWO MILESTONES

Two major belt promotions took place during camp



BLACK BELT

Kathryn Armezzani

Kathryn received her black belt from her husband and professor, Lou Armezzani. It was a complete surprise to her. Several teenage girls were at the ceremony, and afterward they told us it was the **first time they had ever seen a female black belt.** Their joy, inspiration, and admiration were plain to see. It gave them hope and strengthened them.



BROWN BELT

Gabriel

Gabriel was promoted to brown belt by Professor Tony, surrounded by his friends, family, and students. Gabriel leads the Candeias training program. You may remember Gabriel from his recent visit to Team Passos in the U.S. to keep learning and growing in his mat leadership, his calling, and his **dream of being a BJJ professor**.

Moments like this show the power of role models and of opening up space and opportunity.

We cannot become what we have not seen. We cannot go where we haven't imagined. Vision comes first.

Every one of these partnerships rests on relationships built over many years, even decades, across the U.S. and Brazil. These are **long-standing friendships forged by doing life** together. Those bonds make the week stronger and more meaningful, and new friendships form inside them.

That kind of connection can't be manufactured or faked. For our Brazil Camp, **this is the real Northeast Brazil, not a tourist show** put on for visitors. It is our joy to bring you into life as it's lived here. You don't come as a visitor. You **come as a collaborator, a partner, and a friend.**



FULL CIRCLE

Davi, Ingrid, and Andreilson

Davi and Ingrid, who lead the DreamRoot Sertão Training Center in the neighboring state of Alagoas, came into town to join us for Brazil Camp. They first attended in 2022. That week was **the first time either of them had ever seen the ocean.**

2022

Davi and Ingrid see the ocean for the first time at Brazil Camp. Davi asks Tony how he can repay him.

2023

Andreilson leaves his community for the first time, for a jiu-jitsu competition with Davi and Ingrid.

2026

Davi returns speaking conversational English, and they bring Andreilson to see the ocean for the first time.

Before they left in 2022, Davi asked Tony, **"How can I repay you?"** Tony gave him two things to do. First, do everything you can to pay it forward, and do the same for others. Second, learn English, so next time you can talk with the Americans yourself, and because English will likely open more doors for you and your family's future.



Davi took both to heart.

Coming back

This year Davi and Ingrid rode the bus from the neighboring state of Alagoas to Recife to join camp again. And **Davi now speaks real, conversational English**. He has worked at it faithfully since his first Brazil Camp four years ago. It is so inspiring, and it obliterates any excuse we might make for ourselves.

They also paid it forward. **They brought Andreilson**, a boy from their community who has trained jiu-jitsu and taken part in their tutoring and after-school program for over five years.



A FIRST LOOK AT THE SEA

Andreilson's first ocean

Before this week, Andreilson had left his community only once, with Davi and Ingrid for a jiu-jitsu competition with a few other students from the Sertão DreamRoot Training Center in 2023. On that trip he and the other children ate McDonald's, rode an elevator and an escalator, and went to a movie theater, all for the first time. It was an afternoon filled with awe and joy, along with a few nerves at experiencing so many big new things.

The week of this year's Brazil Camp brought more firsts. Andreilson **saw the ocean. He swam in the hotel pool,** a little scared of the water at first, but learning. He ate a chocolate **sundae for dessert** after lunch and training. He rode in the **van with the American crew**. And **he trained jiu jitsu** with all of us, across six academies and two countries.

He was shy and a little intimidated at first, and opened up as the days went on. Through it all you could see him taking everything in, a bit overwhelmed, and full of an unmistakable joy. It was almost too much to watch without tearing up.

Before he went home, we gave him a small DreamRoot bag with a journal, pens, and a few other things. We spoke over his life and encouraged him to write: his thoughts, his perspective, his vision for himself and what he sees in others. Our hope is that he **carries this back to the people around him and expands their world too**, as they embark on bridge-building together.



CULTURAL CONTEXT

What is a quilombola community?

Quilombola communities were founded by people who escaped slavery, and their descendants still live there and keep its traditions. Many have been left out of basic development for generations.

Andreilson's community is in the sertão, the dry backlands of Brazil, in one of the poorest zip codes in the entire country. Many homes there still have no running water.





The 1% who go 500% further

When you come across someone who is **hungry, humble, and capable, you invest in them**, partner with them, and make a way whenever possible. Those who bring **discipline, consistency, perseverance, and vision** to the table build and multiply in astounding ways.

Most people we walk with do amazing things. And sometimes there is **that 1% who take it 500% further** than you could ever imagine. That is Davi and Ingrid at the Sertão DreamRoot Training Center. That is also Jhon and Eneide, the leaders of the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center.

This is just the beginning. At the next Brazil Camp, **they plan to bring more kids** from the Sertão DreamRoot Training Center. And we can't wait to see where Andreilson takes this, for himself and for others.

IN THEIR WORDS

What participants said

"Life changing. The only way to describe the experience."

Lou - Armezzani Jiu Jitsu, Pennsylvania

"The camp is eye opening. New experience. New food. New people. Humbling."

Craig - Team Passos Jiu Jitsu

"One word I would use to describe the camp is hospitality. I met some really amazing people."

Natalie - Team Passos Jiu Jitsu







LOCAL PARTNERS

Senhor Robson, behind the wheel



Senhor Robson has driven our group at every camp for the past five years.

He is a retired military police officer, and when we met him he had a **dream: to become an entrepreneu**r and run his own tourism van business.

Every camp brings him a full week of booked work and a group of travelers to care for. Choosing a local small business owner, and coming back to him year after year, is one of the quiet and direct ways our **camps put resources into the community**. The growth itself is his. Each year he has **reinvested**, trading up to a larger, nicer van. We count it a privilege to be a steady partner while he builds it, and to see the **visible fruit of his hard work** each time we come back.

Robson gives far more than a ride. He brings **reliability, professionalism, consistency, and real care** for every participant, which is why we keep coming back to him. It is the kind of partnership we hope for everywhere we work: both sides adding value, helping each other grow, and bringing others along the way.

THE IMPACT YOU HELP MAKE POSSIBLE

Sometimes the clearest evidence of impact is what keeps happening years later

This year's camp is one story among many. Behind every visit are years of relationship-building, local leadership, consistent investment, and the generosity of people who believe that meaningful change happens when we invest in people for the long term. And the training **centers create critical third spaces** for people to keep showing up and build community, every week of the year.

Every camp creates new connections, but it also strengthens relationships already in motion. It allows people to **see progress that would be difficult to appreciate from a distance.** It gives local leaders the chance to welcome others into their work, share their stories, and build friendships that continue after the visitors return home.

A man keeps studying English because of a conversation in 2022.

Friendships formed years ago grow stronger.

A boy sees the ocean for the first time and begins to imagine a wider world.

Partners stand in the center they helped build years ago.



These are the kinds of moments that remind us why we keep showing up.

All of this was made possible by our generous DreamRoot and Team Passos partners. Thank you. Your generosity makes more than a trip possible. It helps **relationships deepen, local leaders flourish**, and **young people encounter new possibilities**, and it multiplies those opportunities beyond the people who first received them.

You may not have been in Recife this October, but you were part of this story. We hope you can see a little of what we saw, feel a little of the joy we felt, and celebrate the people carrying this work forward. And we hope this is only **one chapter of a much longer story**.

JOIN US

October 2027: there's a seat at the table for you

You don't need to train, or know anything about jiu-jitsu, to come. You can skip the training sessions entirely. Every year at least one participant doesn't train, and neither do I (Amy). This week is so much more than jiu-jitsu, with plenty of sightseeing and food that have nothing to do with the mat.

Bring your group

Do you have a group from your business, organization, or church? We would be overjoyed to **host you on dates that work for you**. We'll curate an unforgettable, life-changing week around your group.

Let us know you're interested

Fill out our interest form and tell us whether you'd like to join in **October 2027**. Or, if you'd prefer a different date, email us at hello@dreamrootinstitute.org.

Open the interest form