

ACHIEVEMENTS 2012

Looking back on 2012, we're satisfied with a job well done and the many innovative models and practices that we can share. We also have a few new ideas for 2013.

Our success depends on the effort of many individuals but, more particularly, on the willingness of teams to adopt unconventional approaches to problem solving, playing to the strengths of the various team members.

The highlights....

1. New methods of fundraising to expand our activity with children with disabilities and to work more effectively with street children and their families:

- Two successful charity bazaars drawing on the creativity and resourcefulness of our employees, associates and client groups (eg foster parents) and demonstrating the generosity of the community;
- Our participation in the Uzana eco-festival where we manned a stall selling crafts and eco-products, hosted events for children and provided lectures and demonstrations in "learning from experience" for teachers and youth workers;
- Cooperation with the city's school of fashion and design that provides us with a unique product - our eco bag - that represents the organization and its principles;
- We developed and promoted a commercial programme featuring 7 training modules or "master classes" that are already gaining momentum with growing interest among professionals in the sphere of social services;
- We continued our tradition of running bazaars in the run-up to Christmas and around the spring Baba Marta festival and expanded our product range.



Charity bazaar



Uzana Festival





Baba Marta, 2013

2. We used funds from a variety of sources to improve the lives of the eight disabled youngsters who live in the Pink House, our small group home:

- Some of their disability allowances have been used for a therapeutic carpet, a specialised garden swing and a camera.

3. We received many donations in kind from the local community and, especially student groups and youth clubs.

4. Our work in family planning is heavily relied upon by the Child Protection Department and we are pleased to report a 30% increase in the number of Roma women adopting contraception over the previous year.

5. The prevention of abandonment of infants and young children gained in scope and impetus with the signing of a multi-agency agreement in April that regulates cooperation among Equilibrium, the regional hospital and the social assistance directorate at regional level. Equilibrium's social workers have expanded their responsibility at the maternity hospital and can now intervene in the event of premature birth. Previously, these children would have been automatically transferred to the baby home to gain weight which prevented early intervention targeted towards the risk of neglect or abandonment. This expansion of the target group we work with at the maternity unit enables us to better protect children who, in the past, could have entered the institutional care system.

6. Working with colleagues from the Child Protection Department and with the support of Regional Directorate of Social Assistance and Ruse Municipality, we made a significant step in the expansion and improvement of foster care and, especially in creating options for disabled children. Two abandoned babies were placed directly from the maternity ward into foster families and were later adopted.



Additionally, our professional foster parents proved to have come a long way agreeing to care for children with disabilities or chronic illnesses or showing willingness to keep siblings together despite the disability of one of the pair. We now have two certified trainers of foster families and adoptive parents under the PRIDE programme and have signed a partnership agreement with Ruse Municipality to take part in the project "I have a family too" and to work with their team that is based in the complex.



PRIDE training

7. The Police Department in Ruse acknowledged the expertise of our psychologists who have provided their services to the police for a fee which is a good incentive for the development of the team.

8. The Early Intervention Programme with its family-oriented approach has proved its sustainability and credibility in supporting families of children with disabilities or chronic illness. One of our experts was invited to write an article that was published in the specialized journal "Pediatrics". Key team members participated in national and international forums related to the problems of families with children with disabilities and their specific needs. Additionally, they were congratulated for their professionalism by the Karin Dom Foundation, the country's centre of excellence in disability care.

9. We invited FICE - Bulgaria to provide an objective evaluation of the work performed at the complex during 2011 and received a highly encouraging assessment. Also, the Know How Centre on Alternative Care for Children has referred to the closure of the baby home in Teteven as a model of best practice.

10. The year brought invitations to assist with the development or modification of national and local policies related to childcare and participation in working groups for legislative change. EQ's section on a national NGO portal won a prize as the most visited website and our experts play key roles in the closure of 9 institutions in the country.



11. Our international profile delivers numerous invitations to participate in international events. David Bisset's consultancy role with the government of Flanders continued and we hosted a visit by Ghent University to learn from our experience in dealing with the problems of mothers at risk. We were visited by the Deputy Prime Minister of Transnistria with a Moldovan delegation and the French cultural attaché in Romania.



Visitors from Ghent

12. The team participated in numerous training sessions to improve their skills and keep up to date with developments in childcare. These included a three-day intensive course in social work 'Better social assessments in support of safe family life for children' provided by British experts who presented the most recent trends in social work with children and families in the UK as well as a course for the management team and training of trainers provided by FICE Bulgaria.

13. We developed and successfully applied a new way of working with schools in Ruse that involved a new method for the training of young leaders called "Blagotvoret's Hrabur" (Bold Volunteering) with the main focus of youth entrepreneurship and community involvement with emphasis on designing and running philanthropic campaigns and projects. This involved over 40 students and, as a result of training extended over two months, the young participants designed and delivered events for the benefit of the young clients of the social services complex - a wonderfully inventive festival dedicated to European Day, an Easter festival and the coordination of the Christmas gift-box campaign. In addition some of the volunteers won a project supported financially by the American Council and provided treats and gifts for the Christmas party at the complex.



Christmas box campaign



14. There were also three events under the banner of the "Music Academy". There is a detailed account of this initiative in the EQ Publications section on the website.



Music Academy 3

15. Publications included methodological material on organizational risk assessment, a film 'To be a Parent' and material about our work with schools uploaded on a special educational site under the Ministry of Education programme "School without Violence" in which we took part on the invitation of the Regional Education Inspectorate.

16. As members in two regional commissions we continued to improve our working relationship with the Ruse Regional Administration on issues related to childcare and family support.



Announcing 2012 Highlights

