



# Volunteer! Make a difference

A collection best practices

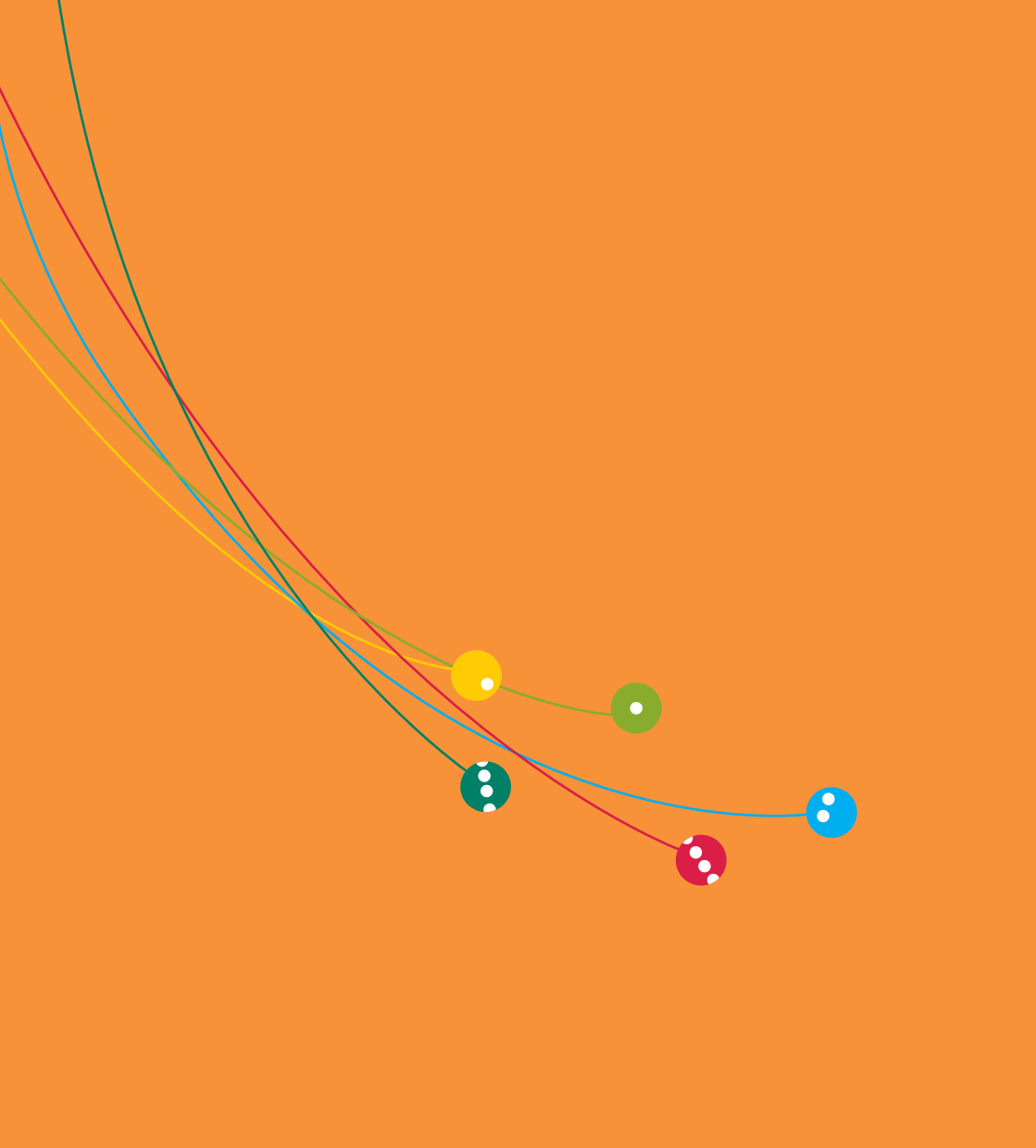


European Year of Volunteering 2011



European Year of  
**Volunteering**

2011



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  
YOUTH AND SPORTS



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

## Dear readers,

*you have opened a publication prepared within the scope of the European Year of Volunteering, declared by the European Commission for 2011. In the Czech Republic, it was coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. I am very happy that we succeeded in engaging a large number of partners, both from the sphere of administration and from NGOs into the realization of the activities of the European Year of Volunteering. We were thus able to support all forms of voluntary activities. A sample of its various forms as well as a presentation of individual volunteers and their experiences is now in your hands. Limited by the space of the publication, we were able to present just a little part of all the contributions, a selection which was not easy to make. Each of them thus represents hundreds or thousands of similar stories taking place in hospitals, at children's playgrounds, at daycare centers, and everywhere where the 'volunteers make a difference'.*



*This is, in fact, the motto of the European Year of Volunteering. This very active concern of people in what is going on around them is an inevitable part of a well functioning civil society. However small the contribution of a single volunteer may appear, once hundreds or thousands volunteers get engaged, the impact of their activity is quite remarkable.*

*During this yearlong campaign supporting volunteering, hundreds of events took place in which thousands people participated. Our aim has been, apart from simply showing the public the merits and desirability of helping others with no claim of reward whatsoever, to show that volunteers are ordinary people who deserve respect for what they do, and that literally anybody can become a volunteer. Then, we focused on things that might not be visible from outside, but are crucial for supporting volunteering, such as the necessary legislation, and especially quality support wherever volunteering is done in an organized way.*

*In the end, I would like to thank those who participated in the realization of the activities of the European Year of Volunteering, and thus contributed to the success of the entire campaign. However, most of my thanks go to the volunteers for what they are doing, and I hope that this publication shall boost the existing growth of the number of active volunteers.*

*I wish you a pleasant and inspiring reading experience.*

Michal Urban

Director of Youth Department in the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports



## Volunteering in health care

Volunteering in health care has been gradually but systematically developing in the Czech Republic since 2000. In these days, many volunteers work not only at inpatient facilities but also do the 'health and social fieldwork', especially by providing assistance to people with various health handicaps. Their work facilitates reintegration to the society and to the routines of everyday life for such people, allowing them to participate in activities which would otherwise be unavailable for them. Thus, volunteers are a natural bridge interconnecting the spheres of health care and social work.

The activities done by volunteers with patients/clients are manifold and comprise creative leisure time activities, activities supporting rehabilitation and self-sufficiency training of patients, or organization and help with culture events held at health care facilities or organized within the scope of NGO activities. Lately, the canine assisted therapy has become popular with patients, paramedical staff and volunteers, too.

In hospitals, volunteering proved as one of the factors that boost the motivation, energizing and mental support of patients through friendly human interactions, facilitates a more efficient time and work management of the paramedical staff and improves the overall atmosphere of the hospital. In the Czech Republic, many Czech government and non-government health-care facilities of all types have experience with volunteer program inclusion. In some cases, the facility cooperates with an NGO, in other cases the entire volunteer program is managed by the facility itself.

The volunteering experience of work with people suffering from long-term, chronic, or terminally ill people, children or adults with a physical, mental or psychological illness, or a sensory handicap brings the volunteers a different view of the meaning and quality of life. Volunteering is also a quick and natural instrument of self-recognition, learning and values scales revision for the volunteer.



## The friend

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*Marek Scholz (24 years), student at Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics. He lives in Neratovice. He is a member of a group of students and employees of the Faculty who organise a physical correspondence seminar for secondary school students. He likes playing tennis and travelling and enjoys literature. He has been visiting the oncology department of the Motol Hospital to play and talk to children every week for several years.*



I went for volunteering in my second year of university studies as a result of some kind of restlessness and searching. Perhaps it was a compensation for the exhaustion brought about by mathematics and physics, too. I have chosen the oncology centre in Motol by chance. It was probably the possibility of face-to-face contact with people and certain pedagogical element of working with children.

I have been coming to the department with older children that are hospitalised at the clinic of children haematology and oncology for three years. I spend around three hours a week with them. After my arrival at the centre, I ask the nurses for brief information about current patients. Then I walk around all the rooms, meet the children, talk to them and suggest playing some kind of a game. After that, we usually play a game, at other times we engage in some art or other creative activities. I also visit those who cannot leave their room individually.

The aim of my efforts is to create mental well-being at least for a short time, to reduce the feeling of isolation, support their self-confidence and bring variety and new ideas into the hospital reality. I suppose there are plenty of scientific studies on the connection between physical and mental condition. However, I cannot attempt to assess the significance of this connection with regards to the degree of the influence of the volunteer.

Most people find the atmosphere at children oncology very depressive. It is true that the family of the child always experience a very difficult situation. Parents are often with their children over the day and it is important to earn their trust (it is the same



with the trust of hospital staff). I talk to parents about lots of different things sometimes and I also find this very important and refreshing for them. As a volunteer, I get a chance to share the good with the children and their parents – I am never short of smiles and laughs in the hospital. I remember one situation that I found quite absurd at that time: Two 11-year-old children were passionately and vividly arguing whether the tongue tumour is worse than the brain or knee tumour. I think this shows that the children perceive their disease differently from the adults – they live more for the moment.

It is very joyful to see the children show some kind of interest, when sparks appear in their eye. It is enjoyable to play games and have fun. Nothing compares to the moment when a child informs you that they are finishing their therapy. It was a great reward for me to go out for an assembly in Austria with cured children and horse about with them in Water Park realising that I had only met these children in hospital.

The bad moments also stand out. It is very sad to see a child being sick, vomiting and being in pain. It is sad to see the deterioration of a child's condition after the beginning of chemotherapy. It is said that the success of the therapy in children is around 80 %. However, it sometimes happens that the child that I know well dies. As a volunteer I have to be aware of this eventuality and be prepared for it. Also, I do not make much effort to find out how the children that I stopped seeing at the clinic are doing; this way I keep some hope that everything went well.

Why try volunteering? It is an opportunity for remarkable relaxation, self-realisation, having new experiences, meeting people with the same view of the world. I get a chance to see the relationship from a different perspective – the unbelievable strength of the relationship between the child and parent surprises me. I hope my volunteering activity makes somebody happy. At the same time, I consider volunteering to be one of my needs. At this time I say I visit Motol as a bar - I meet my friends that I care about. I think I learned something new about work and communication with children. I like what my colleague said about his motivation very much: *"I started to visit Motol so that I didn't have to be sick of myself."*

My dream or plan for the future is to summon the courage to keep my own direction, to learn to distinguish the important things from marginal, the profound from the superficial, the good from the bad. Not to get ground up by the machine. Everybody has the power to shape and influence people and things around themselves. This power can be bigger than we might often think.



# Volunteering in hospitals programme

This programme aims to bring more human contact into hospitals, to support patients' wellbeing and their attitude to active participation in their own recovery. The volunteer, who is a person coming from "the outside world of the healthy", can help the patient overcome hard times in hospital and contribute to a better process and effect of treatment. The main principle is to create a functioning system of volunteer help that does not interfere with the healing process and the day-to-day running of the hospital, but is helping professional staff in every possible way.

The programme is carried out by independent **Volunteering centre of the Motol hospital** that works under the unit of head nurse. This makes it possible for the whole programme to be incorporated into the structure of the hospital. In March 2003, **Hestia – National volunteering centre** became an external partner of the Motol hospital for the volunteering programme. This organization gained their accreditation from the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic for the volunteering programme called Volunteering in Hospitals. The programme is funded by grant programmes of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic and the University hospital in Motol. Step by step, the volunteering movement is spreading to other healthcare facilities in our republic, e.g. to the Thomayer hospital in Prague with the volunteering centre Lékořice.

Volunteering provides one-time events, such as exhibitions and other cultural happenings for children and their parents, but especially regular and periodic activities, e.g. special programmes of interest at the child departments, assistance with activities supporting the patient's self-sufficiency training, one-to-one work with the patient in the role of a companion, helping out with the activities in Special schools at University hospital Motol, etc.

A contractual relationship between two subjects, open communication and mutual trust and support of the programme are some of the necessary conditions of a well-functioning model of cooperation between a hospital and non-profit NGO. The clear distribution of competencies and duties between the hospital and the non-profit organisation is necessary here, too.





## The Dog Therapist

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*Eliška Kněžková (64) was born in the town of Nový Jičín, but, since her childhood, has been living in the town of Fulnek. She received a degree in social work, she spent her leisure time as a youth leader to summer camps, she took care of people from her neighbourhood, and was generally interested in various ways of helping others. In 2005, she suffered from a serious illness and now is on an invalidity pension. She plays the guitar and owns a dog called Nero, with whom she works as a dog therapist.*



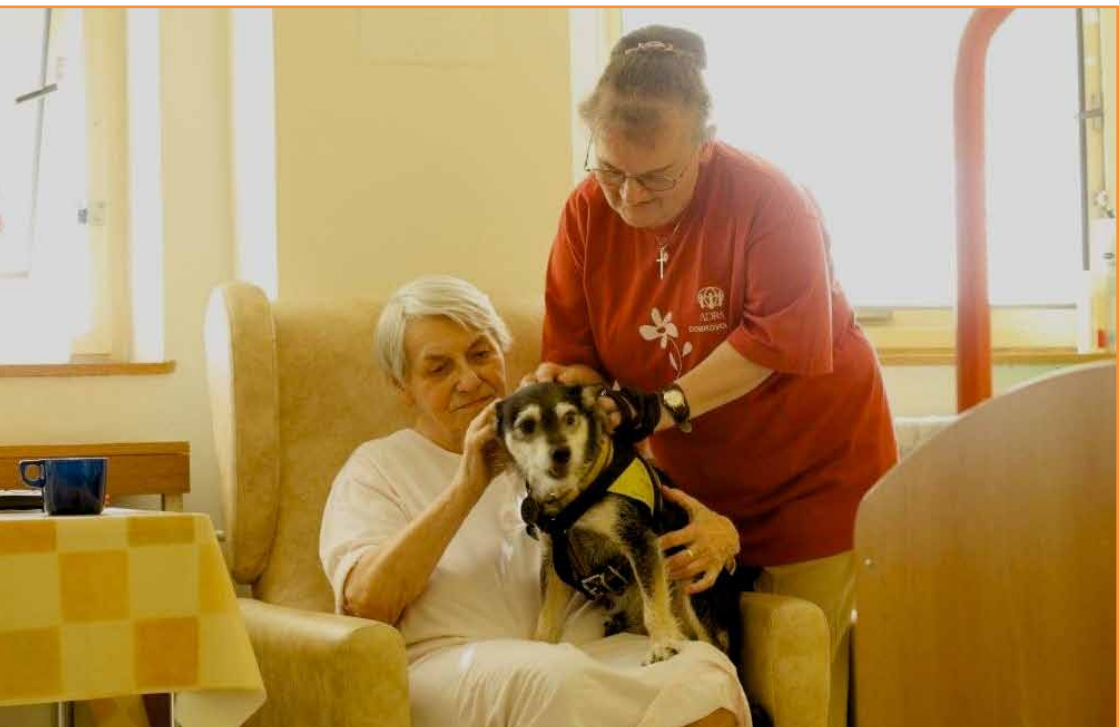
Eliška has now been a volunteer at the follow-up care unit of the Bílovec town hospital for four years. She had been brought to this work by a series of events in her life, which made her realize that giving others a piece of herself without expecting any reward is what she had been looking for for years. A big impulse for Eliška was when her mother had fallen ill and consequently went to a senior home in the town of Odry, where she shared a room with ten other people. Thanks to her regular visits there, Eliška almost became an integral part of the lives of the residents of the room for whom she cared whenever they needed help of any kind.

With her first dog Harry, she started trying to do canine assisted therapy with mentally handicapped people in 2001. In order to be able to do the responsible work, Harry had to go through a therapy-dog training and tests. Doing this work made Eliška realize how just a little while can help people smile, relax, open to the world. However, in 2005, Eliška fell seriously ill and had to undergo demanding surgeries and a subsequent chemotherapy. At the same time, somebody tried to poison her second dog, Nero. This entire life situation would have been unbearable for her, had two of her close friends not help her. She realized that a sincerely meant help is necessary for every human. She really appreciated that she had somebody to share her suffering with, that there was somebody to hold her hand and encourage her.

All these experiences brought Eliška to the decision to become a volunteer at the Volunteer Center of ADRA in the city of Ostrava in 2007. Although on a disability pension, she has decided to use her time very effectively and spend it actively, and she started to attend the hospital in Bílovec. At first, she was very worried whether she would be able to manage everything as it only had been a year since her major surgery. But she felt she needed to pass on what she had received from other people. After the training she was sure she would be able to use everything she had learned during her life: playing the guitar, her experience of a logopedic assistant, or the option of coming to the patients with her dog Nero.

Whenever Eliška comes to the hospital, she asks the nurse who to visit, who has just come to the unit, etc. Sometimes, she just comes with a guitar and sings in the rooms. There are several people she visits regularly but this changes from time to time as people return home. Other times, she practices logopedics with the patients, they talk and play games. Eliška tries to help by all possible means. The dog therapy is very popular. Eliška attends the hospital with her cross-breed Nero who is now nine years old. Nero is very intelligent, he has got the nature of a Husky, the hair, whiskers and sensitive nose of Schnauzers and the temperament of a Spitz. It is a very lively and tough dog, but when he enters the hospital, he almost becomes a plush toy. Nero likes spending time with patients as he can well feel that he is being welcome and useful.

Volunteering has been a source of new experiences and realizations for Eliška. She has got the chance to meet people she would not meet otherwise and to build great relationships with them. Eliška recommends becoming a volunteer to everybody around her. Still, some people do not understand that it is possible to do such things for free. However, Eliška knows that one receives much more in return: the energy she invests returns back to her, multiplied many times. Her position is that everybody who is willing and has the goodwill can be of help. 'You don't have to have any special talent, be extraordinarily active or gifted, the crucial thing is a heart wanting to come closer to others.'



Eliška often thinks of how lucky she has been and how glad she is for being with people to whom, as she can feel, her visits are more than just a shallow talk. But how does she cope with so much pain she sees around herself? This is Eliška's recipe: *'I always keep in mind that there is a certain chance to do something for the people, but my help ends with my limits. I cannot change their life, stop their illness. I only can help to brighten their hard times by my presence, my fellowship. So that our moments together became unforgettable'*.

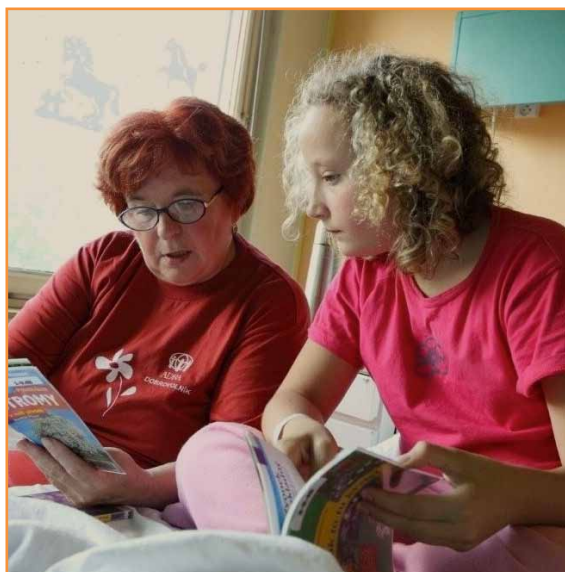
# The Volunteer Centre ADRA Ostrava in hospitals

Under the auspices of the **Volunteer Centre ADRA in Ostrava**, trained volunteers attend various hospital units. For patients it means moments with people who do not ask them about their pain or research their illness, but come to make the time they have to spend in hospital more pleasant. They play games, read, do crafts or cross-words. Even a simple walk along the hospital corridor or garden may be a pleasurable moment for a long-term inpatient. The patients benefit from the visits of volunteers in socially, however the visits are also an important part of the therapy and support the patients' recovery as well.

A volunteer candidate first passes the initial interview and then goes through a five-hour **training at the volunteer centre**. The opportunity to talk is given also to the representatives of the organization where the future volunteers are going to work. After finishing the training successfully, the volunteer meets a contact person of the respective facility, the necessary paperwork is done, and then, **the first visit** to a patient can take place.

One of the options of volunteering in hospitals is the **canine assisted therapy**, which is a recognized therapy method. The volunteer visits patients with a specially trained dog. The visits of a therapy dog are an important social element, allowing the patient to pet the dog and smile at it, and communicate non-verbally, however it is also a method of renewing the sensitivity of the sensory nerve endings. People thus have an opportunity to meet a living creature, feel its warmth and its hair, or 'talk' with it.

Volunteering in hospitals is gradually becoming an integral part of the treatment there, as we are gradually beginning to perceive people as complex psycho-somatic units whose psychology and physical health are interconnected. Volunteers, by their effort, contribute to improve the psychic condition of patients, assisting thus in their recovery.





## Volunteering in social services

Social services consist of a wide range of activities united by a simply defined goal of social inclusion or prevention of social exclusion. Volunteers contribute by their life experience and by improving the services with their individual approach, including their capability of creating friendly relationships.

They, for example, work in senior homes or hospices as personal assistants, they are understanding companions, they read books to the clients, play games with them or assist in organizing social events. In so-called 'K-centres' that provide services to drug users and their families and friends, they work in the contact rooms, assist in food aid, hygiene products, or leaflet distribution. In asylum homes for women and mothers with children they provide regular leisure time activities and school preparation help for the children, and education programs for the mothers on such issues as health/hygiene, pedagogy, or environment. In low-threshold centres, they assist the workers in their club activities with children and youth – including preparation for school.

Many NGOs are gradually becoming a partner for the state in this sphere, and lately, they have been participating even in discussing changes in the social policy, especially in terms of the social services provided. Among them, there are for example Charita (*Charity*), ADRA, or Diakonie (*Diaconia*). Volunteering in social services usually requires professional management, as the volunteers work in the sphere of psycho-social services for which a competent approach is necessary. It is also necessary to prepare the receiving organizations including training their own coordinators of volunteers. Especially in this concern, the newly emerging volunteer centres play an inevitable role as the providers of methodology resources, training and supervision programs, and as the promoters of volunteering in the broadest sense throughout the society.



## The Firefly

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*Klára Šmídová (21) studies special pedagogy at the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University in Prague. She earns by babysitting. Whenever possible, she goes for a hike – on her own or with friends. She likes singing, swimming in lakes, she loves Dances of Universal Peace and everything from drawing to knitting.*





Klára currently studies special pedagogy at a university. She came to the Volunteer Centre Okamžik (Wink) three years ago, as a high school student who just turned eighteen, becoming the youngest of its volunteers. She differed from her peers only by having a clear and surprisingly mature idea of her volunteering service, of whom and how she wanted to help. Klára has been working with Jiří, an almost seventy-year-old blind man for almost three years. They go for walks, Klára sometimes helps him with some housework, or they go shopping together. Despite the large age-gap, they have found common topics and they understand each other well. Thanks to Klára's help, Jiří could also return to his greatest hobby – cooking, which he was not able to do himself, having lost his sight. Klára says about it:

I actually wanted to work in an infant orphan unit, but I was not able to work it into my daily schedule, so I looked for an orphanage. However, I got no offers. I was seventeen, and I had the idea of righteous living, a kind of peace and love.

I then registered at the volunteer web, a little aimlessly. I thought “I'm not good at looking for a placement, I'll let others find me.” The people from Okamžik (Wink) contacted me and I decided to give it a try. When I was told and (I hope) I learned a little how to assist a person with a severe defect of the sight I started looking forward to working with somebody young, with whom I'd start a long-term work, someone to go swimming or jogging with, or fix something around the apartment, but most importantly, somebody with whom we could understand each other. Well, and there it is! We can understand each other, although my original expectations were different: I and Jiří, a blind seventy-year-old man whom the local greengrocer considers my grandpa, and, in fact, the two of us feel it similarly. The age-gap does not matter if you come across a person who is interested in the world, has peace with him or herself and is open to other people.

And what do we do together? We usually spend our time by taking a walk, doing the shopping on the way, and when we come home, I help a little with the cleaning or I mend some clothes. Then, we prepare something tasty, but mostly we just keep chatting. For three years, we haven't run out of topics. We usually talk over tea, holding hands. Just simple delights. It's true that we might have trained a little more skills necessary for keeping the household, but, as Jiří says:



‘Come on, sit down and we’ll have a tea,’ and we both know that this is what we like. But we both keep learning all the time. Since our very first meeting. Then, when guiding him home from our first meeting, I pushed Jiří into the door of a subway train that was already closing and it almost squeezed him. Now I know it is better to wait for the next carriage. It ended well, Jiří trusted me again and since then, we have travelled to a concert or exhibition several times.

To be honest, it has not always been pleasure for us. In fact, I did not want to go anywhere in the beginning – at the end of a long winter, when it was dark and cold outside. But that was when we were looking for things we could understand about and I only came once in two weeks. I also did not like that I had to repeat what I had said sometimes, that I just had to speak a little more clearly. Now, I eventually don’t ‘swallow words’ so much. It was not easy from the other side, either. Many a time, I forgot to close a door which was usually closed, put a thing on a wrong place, or overlooked a sprig of a tree in the head-level and caused a needless dismay. But it has been said many times that there is no growth without overcoming obstacles.



Every evening, Jiří gives me a drop-call, just to let me know he thinks of me. Then I know everything is all right. Our friendship has grown really nice! My involvement is not just doing some work for somebody once a week, it’s mutual. There’s a relationship, running hidden in our lives. Whether I once have a people-assisting profession or not, I won’t be afraid to offer others my help, just because I’ve learned that by giving, I’m gaining as well.

*Klára embodies the idea of a human, but competent, volunteer that is necessary in social services. Last year her volunteering involvement was acknowledged by a commemorative letter awarded to her by Okamžik association, and Klára was nominated for the Křesadlo price. In the times when we speak of inter-generation conflicts and alienation, of atomization of the society and a crisis of solidarity, her example is extremely important for others.*

# OKAMŽIK (WINK) – an association supporting (not just) the blind

The mission of the civic association Okamžik is to support the fullness and independence of the life of visually challenged people and to interconnect it with the world of the non-handicapped by means of social services, volunteer, educative, and culture activities – one-time guides and long-term cooperation.

**One-time guiding** is based on continuous everyday provision of volunteer guides upon the clients' requests. The most frequent guidance jobs are to assist on the way to the doctor's, to offices, to do the shopping, to visit a friend, to acquire various services, etc. The volunteers do not work with a single client but provide guidance according to their possibilities (time and location). Prior to each guiding job, the Volunteer Centre worker discusses its route, duration and purpose with the client, as well as other information to be able to inform the volunteer of specific circumstances of the job. The services provided are 95% successful.

## **The long-term cooperation program**

is based upon a relatively regular cooperation of a blind client/volunteer pair, where the volunteer provides support and visual control to the client during various activities, such as leisure time activities, studies and activities connected with the client's job, or care of the family, visual help with doing everyday routines, reading, sport, culture, everyday errands, etc.

The volunteer may help several clients simultaneously. The frequency of the meetings of the pairs varies according to the needs of the client and the possibilities of the volunteer, in the average it is two to three hours two to four times a month.

Thanks to the volunteers of Okamžik, many blind people can see through other people's eyes.





## The Assistant

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*Silvie Juřicová (37) works in the social sphere with mentally handicapped people. She likes when people around her laugh, and for laughter, especially children's laughter, she would do anything. Her favourite way of relaxation is cycling, mountain hiking, or swimming. She likes to go through her photos and remember various events and experiences. She likes learning new things, which then help her not only in her work, but also in volunteering, which she has been doing since 2005.*

My name is Silvie, and I would like to introduce myself a little unconventionally. I will try to find a word that somehow characterizes my volunteering for every letter of my name.

**Smile** – Joy brought to me by every moment that I spend with my clients. I already smile when I'm coming as I'm looking forward to how they are going to make me laugh again this time. When I'm leaving for home several hours later, all the experiences is on my mind, so it's not possible to leave without a smile on my face. And I really don't care that the people around think I'm insane. I remember, how a blind boy, Jiří, dreamt of the two of us flying in the space in red space suits, or how Ondra, a volunteer and a joker by nature, spread the news that it was my birthday, and when asked, he said that I was fifty. And all the residents then congratulated me to my fiftieth birthday, and they still think I'm fifty.

**Ideal relaxation** – I always find a mental relaxation from all my troubles among the clients. My problems stay outside, we have much more important things to think about, such as whether they are going to be good tractor drivers or whether I'm going to be their bride and marry them on a public bus.

**Love** – I try to give it out by handfuls, but I'm always getting back much more.

**Veritable faith** – I believe that visiting clients has its sense; I believe that the entire idea of volunteering has a point. I keep believing even when I can't actually see any result or progress, because I believe that even my presence makes them happy.

**Ideal** – In the residential home, I become an ideal being, my clients see me wonderful, kind, capable of dancing, drawing, playing table tennis, singing – simply a miraculous fairy. And I really feel that way at the moment.

**Energy** – Whenever I come, I can feel a great boost of energy, which is clean and unspoiled by selfishness. Each time, I get my batteries charged for a long time to come.

The beginning of my volunteering carrier was quite interesting: five years ago, my friend registered me, without my knowledge, for a volunteer training organized by the volunteer centre ADRA in Frýdek - Místek. I was angry with her a little bit, but then I thought I could try it. I started attending to an orphanage, and even though I had spent a number of great days full of fun and joy, I also realized how complicated the relations are among children who were not with their families. I experienced the joy of healing as well as the pain of unhandled crises, when the kids fought for my attention in a very hurtful way. I remember a very beautiful Roma girl who would not let anybody touch her. For a long time, we sought the way to each other, but I remember how she rested on my knees for the first time and let me caress her hair. It

was a great demonstration of trust. Then, I fell ill, and when I returned several weeks later she had been relocated to an educational institution, from which she ran away. I have never heard of her ever since, but even four years later, I still keep thinking of her. This also can be one of the faces of volunteering, it does not only give, it may take from you sometimes, too.



After three years of attending to the orphanage I completed a course on social care. When I started looking for a job in this field, I got an offer to work with mentally handicapped people. I was a little afraid of the environment, because I had never met these people. Therefore, I accepted the offer to come to know them as a volunteer. Then, it only took me some ten seconds to realize that I did not have to be afraid of these people. Soon, they won my favour by their unaffectedness and warm interest. Even now, they still do not forget to ask how I am, to ask me when I'm going to come again, and to wish me a good day or weekend. They're my angels.

Eventually, volunteering even helped me in looking for a job – now, I have been working as a field worker of independent accommodation support – I help people with a light mental handicap integrate to the society and I try to teach them as much independence as possible. I assist them in communicating with offices, doctors, in claiming warranties, filling in forms, but I also help them to fix the toilette, other times we cook together. I feel most rewarded when they are encouraged to try to solve problems themselves.

I would like to tell those who are considering participating in some volunteering program that until I tried volunteering, I had not known that volunteering was that something that was missing in my life. So, if somebody's got the feeling that they're missing something in their life, it may well be volunteering. Try to give others some of your time and smile even though you know it's for free.



## ADRA in facilities for mentally handicapped

The **volunteer program in facilities for mentally handicapped** is usually done in the form of attending clients (a single one or a group). Simply said, the sense of this kind of volunteering is **in personal meetings of people**. Volunteers talk with clients, sing, draw, go for walks or go to the gym with them. They do not replace the staff, but supplement the routine with activities exceeding the scope of the regular care for the client. The most important thing is, that volunteers bring features of normal life into the 'isolated' world of a social facility.

In **Domov Anenská** client home, which Silvie attends, the use a pattern in which an NGO (ADRA) sends volunteers to a receiving government funded regional organization (Náš svět). Their cooperation starts by negotiations between the managements of the sending and the receiving organizations. The key decision of this phase is when the receiving organization appoints the contact person and provides the conditions for his/her work.

In the second phase, a common **training** is organized. The representatives of the volunteer centre present the elementary principles of the volunteer program, the rights and responsibilities of the volunteers, etc., while the representatives of the receiving organization explain the social and health characteristics of the recipients of the voluntary help.

In the third phase, the applicants for volunteering are invited to **selecting interviews**. Again, the selecting committee is staffed by representatives of both organizations. The aim is that both organizations accepted the volunteers as theirs. During the interview, the contact person arranges the first visit in the facility and all contacts are exchanged.

At that point, the volunteer program has been started, and the volunteer centre keeps providing support to the contact person and the volunteer.

**ADRA Frýdek-Místek**, which is the implementer of the program in this case, is a part of a large international charity organization, based in the environment of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, that has many congregations also in our country. In the Moravian – Silesian Region, the Volunteer Centre of ADRA has been operating since 2004. Within the time of its existence it has sent about a thousand volunteers to health or social care facilities.







## Volunteering in culture

Although the saying of all Czechs being musicians is no longer true (and who knows whether it ever was), tens of thousands of volunteers engage in the sphere of culture. They often do not consider themselves volunteers – but all those who are members of non-professional artistic groups and associations and organize culture and social events in their neighbourhood, those who work for the revitalization of local culture monuments as well as those who keep the chronicles and traditions of their towns – these are volunteers in culture.

Since the end of the 18th century, engagement in voluntary associations and amateur activities falls among organized community culture activity in certain fields, such as amateur theatre playing. In these days, they mostly take the legal form of NGOs. Many of them exceed the boundaries of their region – for example *Volné sdružení východočeských divadelníků*, *Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatikou*, *Asociace ne-profesionálních komorních a symfonických těles*, *Sdružení dechových orchestrů České republiky*, *Svaz českých fotografů*, *Unie českých pěveckých sborů* or *Folklorní sdružení ČR*.<sup>1</sup>

In the field of heritage conservation there are many associations and societies working for preservation and reconstruction of historical buildings. Their activities are often linked to a specific castle, chateau, church or museum. Typical examples may be e.g. *Spolek pro záchranu Krašova*, *Nadační fond na opravu Kosteleckého kostela in Haná region*, *Sdružení pro záchranu a využití historických objektů Castellum*, *Linhartova nadace Praha*, *Občanské sdružení Vaňkovka in Brno*, or *Centrum CESTA in Tábor*.<sup>2</sup>

Another level is linking culture activities with the development of the civil society: *Unijazz* organizes culture events interconnecting culture with humanitarian activities, *The Boskovice Festival* is a four-day festival of theatres, movie projections, exhibitions, etc., focused on preserving and reconstruction of the Jewish neighbourhood in Boskovice.

1 The Free Association of East Bohemian Theater People, The Association for Creative Drama, The Association of Non Professional Chamber and Symphonic Orchestras, The Association of Brass Orchestras of the Czech Republic, The Czech Photographers Union, The Union of Czech Choirs, The Czech Folklore Association.

2 The Association for Saving Krašov Castle, Kostelec Church Reconstruction Foundation in Haná region, The Association for Salvation and Utilization of Historical Objects 'Castellum', Linhart Foundation in Prague, The Voluntary Association 'Vaňkovka in Brno, CESTA center in the city of Tábor



## The Librarian

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*Michaela Staňková (28) studied Information studies and librarianship at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University and works at the Research Library in the city of Liberec, however she comes from near Jablonec nad Nisou city. Her favourite hobbies are travelling, scouting, hiking in Jizerské hory mountains, singing in a choir, and – surprisingly – reading. She has been a volunteer of Liberecká občanská společnost (The Civil Society of Liberec) since 2010.*



At the very beginning, there was an NGO in Liberec – LOS (Liberecká občanská společnost – The Civil Society of Liberec). It was not my first experience with volunteering – since 1990, I have been a member of the Association of Scouts and Guides of the Czech Republic, where I have been working as a girl scout leader for 12 years. Volunteering at LOS was, however, a totally different experience.

LOS initiated and became the main coordinator of a project called Books21. It was based upon a mutual exchange of experience and methodology in inter-cultural education among people working in libraries or non-profit organizations. It was funded from the European Program for Continuous Education Grundtvig, and several European countries participated in it. The representatives of LOS invited the Research Library in Liberec to participate in the project as a partner organization. They needed one worker as a representative of the library in meetings and for other organizing purposes. The most important criterion was a good knowledge of English and a certain level of flexibility. This was how I got involved in the project and in volunteering. I hadn't heard of the organization until its representatives contacted the library and offered us the co-operation in the project. During the project, I came to know its members and made friends with them. Eventually, I started volunteering for the organization.

As the end of the project was approaching, the member states started organizing Living Libraries. I found the opportunity to listen to the discussions of Living Libraries in partner organizations particularly useful – hearing of the mistakes and misunderstandings, but also the successes and improvements helped us to organize our own Living Library better.



After months of preparations, we organized a Living Library of stereotypes and prejudices, where the living books were represented by members of minorities or groups that are often the target of discrimination or social exclusion. Among our living books thus there were a homosexual, a black man, a Roma woman, a Jewish woman, or a girl suffering from manic-depressive disorder.

I was 'confidentially' expecting a baby during the course of the event, so my husband was not really excited that I was going to spend such an exhausting day. The day

of the Living Library presentation was very busy, which I like to remember – the atmosphere among all participants was very friendly and I could see that everybody was doing their best. After preparing the room, the tables and chairs, and the refreshments in the morning, the event started by the official welcome. Right after that, it was the time for the visit of the first classes of high school students that were invited as a ‘warm-up’.

The event was participated in by volunteers of LOS and the employees of the library. Everybody had a role to fulfil, specified beforehand. My part was simple – as a so-called ‘sitting librarian’, I was ready at the counter, welcoming the visitors. I explained them the rules and presented the ‘books’. At the end of each session, we offered the readers a simple questionnaire intended as a feedback for the organizers. Interested readers kept coming for the entire day, we, librarians were constantly busy, we hardly managed to take turns in having lunch. People came either out of curiosity, or because they had already got some information about the Living Library. I kept explaining the method of the Living Library, or presented the ‘books’, informed when a particular ‘book’ would be available, repeated the ‘rules’ and directed the readers to their tables. All the visitors were very curious and many people felt the need to have a talk as they were leaving, to share their experience from the interview. Most of the people were excited about the event.

Although I talked with the ‘living books’ and knew them, I did not have the opportunity to ‘borrow and read’ them for a longer time and to learn their story. The only ‘book’ I knew and with whom I stayed in a closer contact was a Polish girl living in the Czech Republic. Her story impressed me exactly the way we hoped it would impress the Living Library readers – it destroyed my stereotype of Poles. What is more important for me, I could participate in and be a part of an event of unique atmosphere, which – I hope – helped open many people’s eyes.



# The Living Library in Liberec

The LOS association decided to organize a **Living Library of Stereotypes and Prejudices in Liberec** in cooperation with the **Research Library in Liberec**. The principle is the same as with a regular library – the reader comes and within the specified period of time he or she can borrow a ‘book’. The main difference is only in the fact that the ‘books’ in the Living Library are real people, and the readers thus enter a personal dialogue with the ‘book’. A common member of the community in Liberec



has often far too many prejudices, and it was interesting to offer them meeting their ‘prejudice’ face to face. Judging a group or a minority as a whole is easy, but a personal dialogue with a member of such group can change a lot. That was also the aim of the event which was to take place in the library of Liberec as one of the outputs of the European **Grundtvig** project Books21 (where 21 represents the century).

The planning, preparation and evaluation of the event took about three months. In the beginning, it was necessary to make the overall decisions, such as what the focus of the Living Library would be, the selection and number of the ‘books’, the spaces to be used, and the level of cooperation of the Research Library and LOS. The selection of the ‘books’ and communicating with them took most of the time in the beginning.

The event itself took place one Monday in March between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. in the premises of the Research Library in Liberec, it was open to the public and was free. There were eleven ‘**living books**’, with whom the readers could talk for 30 minutes, or ‘extend’ their ‘borrowing time’ or ‘book’ them in advance. The following ‘living books’ were available for ‘borrowing’: A Roma, A Jew, A Gay, A Priest, A Russian, A Pole Living in the Czech Republic, A Black, A Social Worker Working With Drug Addicts, A German Living in Prague, A Sudetan German, A Manic-Depressive Girl.

The Living Library raised a reasonable public interest, 124 ‘borrowings’ took place within 7 hours. Apart from awakening interest in complex topics of human prejudices and increasing the awareness of minorities, good contacts between LOS and the Research Library were established.



## The Lord of the castle

*Bedřich Loos (46 years), castellan, owner and volunteer in one person, a proud father of his son Ondřej. Even though he is originally a technician, he has tried lots of other jobs and earned a lot of experience that he has already been using in preservation, recovery and utilisation of the Hartenberg castle for 13 years. He devotes his free time to reading, exploring and nature.*



The Hartenberg castle is one of the oldest monuments in the Czech landscape. Latest surveys revealed it was built in the first half of the 13th century. Bedřich Loos is definitely one of the most extraordinary people at the castle. Being very modest, he never shows off his prestigious prize for the Volunteer of the Year (Křesadlo 2010) which he received for his long-lasting activities at Hartenberg. Lord of the Hartenberg castle achieved a great deal for the preservation of this historical and almost vanished castle with the help of volunteers from all around the world. When it comes to that, he always says that each one of the dozens of volunteers who have worked at the castle for the past 11 years deserves this extraordinary prize.

How did it all begin? Bedřich Loos found an announcement that the castle is for sale in the late 1990's. He went to see the site and was absolutely fascinated by the ruins of the castle. The castle had a troubled history. After being left to decay after the Second World War, it was set on fire by State security of the communist regime in the 50s after which it was set on fire a few more times and finally became a ruin. In spite of all this, Bedřich Loos decided to save this castle. The beginnings were not easy. After the multiple fires and destruction of the walls it was more likely that the monument would perish. It was necessary to dispose of tons of debris and Hartenberg soon used up the owner's financial resources. Even local people were finding it hard to put up with the new state of the matter as they used to visit castle from time to time and take away the rocks as building material. The Hartenberg castle has required a lot of Bedřich Loos' time and money since then. It has become a place where international workshops take place. Volunteers, mostly students, from countries all around the world like Brazil, Turkey and China have helped to preserve the monument for many years.



This was preceded by the founding of the Hartenberg civic association involving people who joined in the activities aimed at preserving the cultural and natural heritage, especially the so called Hartenberg domain and its surroundings. The goal of this association is to develop the civic association, to spread the ideas of volunteering, to capture the cultural life and fulfilment, to promote and popularise other community services. This way, people from the association, led by Bedřich Loos, could apply for regional and governmental subsidies and could start cooperating with the association INEX SDA to organise international workcamps.



Irena Pajerová, one of the attendants and organisers of international camps, describes her first meeting with Bedřich Loos:

*My first impression of Bedřich Loos was unforgettable. He walked in wearing a dirty shirt, old trousers and necessary cap straight from the castle where they are carrying out continuous reconstructions. I was made to feel at home. At one moment I thought I saw my father, who has just returned from his work. However, it was Bedřich, an eternal optimist and an attentive host who took care of us, explained everything and maintained his orientation for all the time in the middle of the chaos that takes place on the castle. He brought us his positive attitude to life and amazed us with his magic power to make decisions all by himself as a way of determining his own direction. “Where are we going to sleep?” I asked him looking at the rough building just two days before the arrival of new participants. He answered me with a smile on his face: “We will finish the building, don’t you believe me?” When the participants were moving into their temporary home, windows decorated with flower pots had a shiny new look. Since then I have never doubted anything he said. He made us all believe doing great things was possible. He was shining while talking about his plans: “We will have a roof in the autumn and the first room finished in the spring.” We took a look at the ruins of the castle and piles of debris, some of us maybe with a little doubt, but I knew already.*



# Saving the medieval castle

**The Hartenberg castle** in West Bohemia that rises at the steep hill over the river Svatava close to its junction with the river Ohře is one of many monuments in our country that need proper care. Its existence proves not only the development of the region, it is also a witness of the international relations of its epoch.

**The Hartenberg civic association** was created to save this castle. Its goal is to develop the civic association, to spread the ideas of volunteering, to capture the cultural life and to fulfil, promote and popularise other community services, too. The reconstruction of the castle and the settlement around, together with environmental projects require plenty of time and many volunteering hands willing to participate in the preservation of the ruined monument. Therefore, people from the Hartenberg association engage with many individuals and institutions. One of them is NGO INEX – the association of volunteer activities. In cooperation with this association, **international volunteering work camps** have been taking place at Hartenberg for over 11 years. Volunteers from all around the world arrive to help to preserve and reconstruct this valuable castle monument. In five to eight turns every year, volunteer groups of around 15 people spend two weeks together. The greatest part of their workload is focused on helping to preserve the castle and the surrounding park, which is also uncultivated. Participants of the project can try several manually challenging activities. Apart from reconstruction activities, they have the opportunity to work with children and provide the activities for children's day at the castle. That day they exchange picks and shovels for musical instruments, masks and toys.

This is not the only project that regularly takes place at the Hartenberg castle. **Envirocamps** focused on nature, **ARTcamp**, bringing in amateur artists from all around the world, rehabilitative and educational events take place here, too. Today, different parts of the castle are used for many interesting cultural events. Favourite events include the **Hartenberg haunting**, **Castleplaying**, **St. Nicholas ride**. The atmosphere at the castle, together with the enthusiasm of all volunteers bring in thousands of visitors every year.





## Volunteering in sports

Almost everybody has a notion of what ‘sports’ are. When experts were trying to specify it a little more exactly, they came up with the definition of *‘all physical activities which, done either occasionally or in an organized way, seek to express or improve the physical condition and mental contentment, create social relationships or achieve results in competitions of all levels.’*

In our country, sports were built upon voluntary work from the very beginning. On the elementary level, where sports are mostly recreational and social – not performance oriented – activities, this is true even at the beginning of the third millennium. A typical feature of volunteering in sports is a lifelong connection with one sports club. The volunteer usually works where he or she does his/her sporting activities.

There are about 200,000 volunteers in sports in the Czech Republic, whose activities create the background for organized sports all over the Czech Republic. These may be either highly expert jobs (coaches, instructors) requiring a certain education, or quite common activities (organizing, transportation, maintenance, etc.). Without the contribution of these volunteers, sports would be much less accessible. The estimated value of their work exceeds the amount of the government subsidy to sports.

The activities of volunteers in sports are the ground for the work of more than ten thousand sports associations and clubs which represents 25 thousand sports units of almost two million members. In our country, there are several umbrella organizations in this sphere, the largest of which is **Český svaz tělesné výchovy (Czech Sports Association)** of more than 1,500,000 members, of which some 160,000 voluntarily organize sporting activities. Others are mainly **Česká obec sokolská (Czech Sokol Organization)** (190 thousand members), **Česká asociace Sport pro všechny (Czech Association Sports for All)** (260 thousand members), **Sdružení sportovních svazů ČR (The Association of Sport Federations of The Czech Republic)** (275 thousand members), or **Orel (Eagle)** (17 thousand members).



## The Trainer

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*Jarda Vokáč (72) is a locksmith and worked for 45 years as the leader of a locksmith team at ZPA Čakovice factory producing power plants that were exported all over the world. When he retired, he became one of the representatives of the Prague district of Dolní Chabry, where he and his family have been living for long years. He still works as a trainer and a top representative of the sports association in his neighbourhood.*



Jarda (a friendly nickname for Jaroslav) Vokáč is one of the most active and reliable voluntary trainers and officials who have grown and worked in the association. Even now, when he is 72, he is still an active trainer and official, although he is trying to pass some of his responsibilities to younger members. He zealously works in the newly established Senior Committee and does not neglect any activities that are newly organized for this part of population.

Even as a sixteen-year-old (since 1955), he worked as a volunteer in Tatraň Prosek club in the 9th district of Prague. He started working as an assistant trainer of elementary school pupils and simultaneously went through his first course, qualifying as a class III. trainer. In 1959, he became a class II. trainer and soon he was entrusted the function of the leader of the sports association Tatraň Prosek. Thus, his lifelong career of a volunteer in sports started. Even during his service in the army, he did not lose contact with sports and the work of a trainer.

After his army service, he was active also as a trainer of adults and became a representative of the 9th Prague district. Then, it was just a matter of time for the collectives of the volunteers of Prague and the national body of trainers to notice such a skilful and dedicated man. He became one of its youngest officials.

He kept doing this work for his entire life. For long years he has been leading the Prague body of trainers of adult men. He has always cooperated also with schools and teachers, together they prepared many events for school children and the local citizens.

The foundation of the work of a qualified volunteer in sports is a regular training activity. And Jarda has never been able to imagine his life without his regular exercise hours in the gym, or outside, four days a week.



Since 1955, he participated in the preparation of Czechoslovak 'Spartakiads'. First as an athlete, later as a trainer and a voluntary organizer. During the time, he was entrusted various types of tasks and he was one of those without whom it would not be possible to organize such events. After the change of the regime, he kept his devotion to mass performances which have a long and remarkable tradition in our country (next year it is going to be 150 years). He participated in the performances of the Czech Association Sports for All for the restored Sokol rallies and the World Gymnastradas, in which our representation in 'gymnastics for everybody' can participate again since 1991. He contributed in the success of our performances from Amsterdam through Berlin, Göteborg, Lisbon, and Dornbirn to this year's 14th WG 2011 in Lausanne, where our group of 902 active participants was one of the largest.

Jarda Vokáč was awarded our highest sports honour, the Golden Medal of Doctor Miroslav Tyrš.

However, the best reward for a volunteer is the passion of children and adults for exercise, sports, fair play, and everything that sports may give to those who actively do them. The reward is in knowing that one does something important not just for him or herself, but especially for others.

Now, after 56 years of active work, he has the right to look back, as he dedicated his entire life to this work. He has never regretted the time and effort invested into it. In fact, the investment into sports returned to him when he had to undergo a spine surgery, and the team of trainers and trainees as well as his regular activities helped him to return to the normal life. Without this background, it might not have been possible. So he feels rewarded enough and he tirelessly goes on, disregarding his age.

He also shares his experience with younger and new trainers as an instructor and there is quite a lot of newly trained ones who will perhaps have the opportunity to continue in what he acquired from his own teachers and more experienced colleagues and what he now passes on as a relays baton. This, also, is the meaning of the lifelong work of trainers and officials in sports.



# Czech Association Sports for All

The activities of **Czech Association Sports for All (CASfA)** foster the efforts to offer sports to the broadest public. It continues in the heritage of Doctor Miroslav Tyrš and his followers. It builds on the experience of physicians, sports pedagogues and other professionals who have understood the importance of exercise, wholesome diet and overall appropriate regime for human health. In this context, it sees the importance of sports for everybody, as a prevention and alternative to drug addictions, asocial behaviour, and other negative phenomena.

What does the phrase 'sports for all' mean? Staying within the limits of human capabilities, valuing health more than winning in competitions. The goal of CASfA is to maintain a good physical condition of its members and to provide a recreation from their everyday stress. Therefore, the exercise must be adequately strenuous.

Czech Association Sports for All offers all its members and all interested public a variety of effective sporting activities: general gymnastics, recreational sports, aerobic, rhythmic gymnastics, yoga, corrective exercise, outdoor exercise and hikes, sport dancing, stepping, exercise for preschool children and children with parents, traditional Chinese exercise, arm wrestling, and also some other activities whose appropriateness is now being verified.

One of CASfA's remarkable activities is the **Senior Program** for people over 60, both members and non-members of the association. It was founded with the aim to improve the wholesome regime of seniors. Apart from regular exercise sessions, seniors can take part in relaxation, regeneration and, physiotherapy programs aiming to improve their health condition and to extend their active life. CASfA also organizes sporting/recreational holiday hikes for seniors: Seniors in the Mountains, Seniors and Grandchildren, etc. As a part of the project, the association also does its own trainer-education activities. Under the supervision of the Senior Committee and of many trainers, this program has been successfully running since 2005.





## The Organizer

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*Petra Večerníková (22) lives in Chrastava, and is now in the fourth year of the Faculty of Economics at the Technical University of Liberec. She loves Finland, is an active football player, a little bit of a Facebook addict... As she says herself: a classic blend that, with some little variations, we can meet everywhere these days.*





Words like ‘volunteer’ said nothing to me several years ago. Now, I have been working as a volunteer at sports events for several years. How did I get involved? I have always been interested in sports. One day, then, I and my friend got in a team of volunteers for the 2009 FIS Nordic World Ski Championships that took place in Liberec. We did not have any idea of what we were going to do. But there was the chance that we might see our favourite athletes face to face for free. I remember the first volunteer training for the WC 2009, it took place in 2006, and that moment was the beginning of my story as a volunteer...

I have taken part in many events during the six years, but I will focus on three of them – the 2008 World Floorball Championships, the 2009 FIS Nordic World Ski Championships, and the EYOWF 2011.

Although I have participated in two world championships they were very different. The World Floorball Championships took place in Prague and Ostrava, the organization committee consisted of a great group of people, and their attitude towards



volunteers was more personal and friendly compared to the ski championships. I and my friend helped in the Press Department, our work was not difficult, and so we could enjoy the atmosphere of the matches to the fullness. And the chance to go to the field right after the end of the final match and congratulate the fresh champions, that was an experience that nobody can take from me.

Two months later, i. e. already in 2009, the mentioned championships in Liberec took place. I participated in it as an ‘attaché’, i. e. I accompanied the teams. I took care of the Finnish and Estonian ski-jumping teams and my task was to assist in get-

ting the teams everything they needed. You go through everything with the teams, good or bad. Although 'my' teams didn't have much of a good luck, I will remember the time very long. I made many new friends, be it the athletes, coaches, or other volunteers. I did not have to compete, and I still got to wear the medal that the Finns won in one competition.

The last event I participated in as a volunteer was the EYOWF – the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival that took place in February this year (2011). To be honest, it was the first event before which I did not really feel myself. Maybe it was the stress of the exam term at school or the fact that my friend with whom I had always enjoyed volunteering together did not take part in it. And to top it all up, just three days before the event I caught some virus. Now, a month after the festival, I think have to thank God that I got well so quickly. The week in Liberec became another unforgettable moment of my life thanks to my 'boss' Peter, his deputy Sari, and in fact all the team. My task was to take care of the entire Finnish delegation (together with another volunteer), which was 79 people. The result of their stay was, that I have got the invitation to be the assistant of the team also for the following year, at the 1st World Youth Olympic Games in Innsbruck. And you don't decline such an offer, do you?

Yes, and my beloved football! I have applied as a volunteer to the European Football Championship, taking place in Poland and Ukraine in 2012, so perhaps they may select me, too.

In the end, I would like to say what volunteering is giving me. Of course it is nice that you get to see some events for free, get some souvenirs, meet great people, get fabulous memories, a great deal of experience, and the nice feeling of having helped. But now I can tell everybody that I have been to several world cups and two world championships and, maybe, I can get to the Olympics one day, who knows. And all that despite the fact that I am no top athlete!



# The European Youth Olympic Winter Festival

The European Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF) is a prime event for young athletes between 14 and 18 years of age. It is the most important junior sports event in Europe, and to junior athletes, it is the same what the Olympics are to adults.

This event is organized as an initiative of the **European Olympic Committees** (EOC). In 2011, the region of Liberec was entrusted the organization of the winter youth festival. It was participated in by 158 athletes from 44 who contested in eight traditional disciplines – in Alpine disciplines, XC skiing, biathlon, figure skating, ice hockey, Nordic combined, ski jumping and snowboarding. The program of the EYOWF offered 28 disciplines and the young athletes contested for the total of 216 medals.

The supporting educative program for schools presented children the **fundamental Olympic ideas**: fair play, tolerance, solidarity, mutual understanding and friendship. Children and youth were also motivated to get involved in physical activities, sports, and reasonable leisure time spending. Festivals of this kind are also an opportunity to improve the conditions for talented local young athletes and also to use and improve the infrastructure of the stadiums.

In the organization of the festival, there participated five hundred volunteers above 16 years of age who remarkably contributed to the success of the festival. Selecting the volunteers started back in 2009, and since then, they had also contributed to other sports events. They were divided into eighteen cooperating spheres during the EYOWF.

The chairman of the British Olympic Association, Lord Colin Moynihan said on behalf of the Czech volunteers that he would welcome such hard-working volunteers for the 2012 summer Olympics in London.

Such recognition, of course, not only acknowledges the good work of volunteers themselves, but also the systematic and professional approach of the organization committee to them.



## Volunteering with children and youth

In this sphere, the domain of volunteers is in the NGOs working with children and youth. Their unique contribution is especially in providing a long term background of strong interpersonal ties to children and youth. Many of them then maintain the relationships for their entire lives. Thus, in many organizations this is not just 'leisure time spending' but also long-term formation of the entire being within a child or adolescent.

Belonging to a good club is more than some five, eight, or twelve years spent among great friends. For many, it may be a lifelong orientation based upon a firm and well reflected value foundation, and skills and knowledge which may be a priceless aid in orienting in the complex world of today. One of the crucial findings that young people make in such groups is that the most precious things in the life of a human cannot be bought with money, and that 'free' does not mean 'worthless'.

**Traditional children and youth organizations** – i.e. Scouts, Young Tourists, Young Pioneers, Woodcrafters, Campers, Woodsmen, or Young Fire-fighters or YMCA...

These organizations are typically generally focused, and their key activities are various types of games, camping and outdoor activities. Their regular activities comprise weekly meetings, monthly expeditions and camps during spring and summer holidays.

**The 'new wave' organizations** – founded after 1990 (the regime change).

These organizations typically focus on modern technology as their priority. Similarly, they promote modern trends in education – experiential education is a standard. Frequently members and non-members mingle – the majority of their activities are 'open to the public'.



## The Girl Scout

*Encountering Hana, you would hardly guess she is 23 – this slim, pigtailed student of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hradec Králové looks rather like a high school sophomore. She doesn't feel urged to put on make-up, quite the opposite – she is not afraid of mucking out stalls and currying horses, to run about the forest with her dog – she is definitely not a fair-weather girl. However, you may also catch her conducting a chamber singing choir, she greatly accompanies a children's choir on piano, and when she's in a good mood, she can also throw in some cello playing. Her greatest hobby is, nevertheless, the work for the Scout troop and centre of Loštice – she devotes most of her leisure time to it.*

How have I become a Scout? The beginning was nothing glorious: I became a Brownie when I was in the first grade mostly because of my friends. Everybody was in the group (some stayed, some not), so I was there, too. Although my parents and brothers directed me there, the main reason was that almost every child of our school went through Scout. Back then, it was like a mania.

A kind of a trauma for me, though, were the summer camps. During the day, everything was all right, I liked the program, I had a good time. The problem started when I went to bed. I got homesick, I felt anxious and I cried. Back then, I had no idea, that the leaders, who knew about my problem, could have helped me anyhow. I was alone with it, just with my room mate. In fact, we cried together, every evening. But this was not the reason I quit Scout in the sixth grade. I had a lot of activities – horses, singing choirs, music lessons; and scouting was not the thing that fulfilled me then. First, it was because everything came only after the horses for me, second, and that would be the main reason, the friendly atmosphere that used to be among the Scouts somehow disappeared. I don't know how and why, but little groups started forming there, and I did not fit to any of them. So I left the group, and it seemed that my Scout life had ended for good.

A few years later, I was at a high school then, the older leaders started leaving, and there were not enough young people to take over the centre after them. I was asked to help by my friend who was concerned about the situation and wanted to do something about it. As I like working with kids, I went for it and, possibly, started compensating myself what I had missed myself as a kid: That I had spent just a year in the Scout group and had not gone through the entire Scout education. I wanted to make the life of the group as good as possible, so that they wouldn't experience what I had. I wanted them to have lots of great experiences, to stay in Scout and to know why they were in the group and to feel good there.

I started to see myself how demanding the work for the troop and the centre was. I spend a lot of time preparing the meetings and events, but I wouldn't do it if I didn't like it. And especially – I wouldn't be able to manage just on my own. I've got people around, the board of the centre, Rovers, and, to some extent, also the group



leaders, who help. A single person can't do anything, the work is done by a collective of people working on themselves, educating themselves, trying to be as well matched a team as possible.

My own activities are focused on organizing people who are younger than me and participate in the functioning of the groups and the centre, and also on preparing the program, the group meetings, and the motivations and frameworks. All this must be based upon the system of education, upon the 'Path' – a great assistance for both the worker and the child, featuring all the areas that scouting is aimed at developing in children – such as, for example the attitude to the nature or to others.

We organize all-day or two-day expeditions, mostly once a month. On an expedition, there is space also for other activities than at a normal meeting. If necessary, I can prepare a troop meeting on my own, but preparing a larger event requires the cooperation of as many people as possible, so that the tasks might be divided among them. And this is what it is about: to teach the younger ones to participate in the work of the troop and the centre, to help, share, and not to make everything ready for them, to teach them to give, not just to take.

The culmination of the activities is the summer camp. In fact, its preparation starts upon the return from the just finished one. Preparing a camp does not only mean the program, it is the technical background, and logistics – where and when it will take place, bringing the children, transporting the material, so a team of capable and reliable friends is necessary to do the preparation. And the camp itself, it's 24/7. Except for several hours' sleep during the night, and, still, you've got to stay alert anyway; it is a non-stop work.

It is necessary to educate yourself to work in a troop and a centre. I realized that willingness is not enough, I also need knowledge and skills. Junák, the Czech Scout organization, offers a number of courses. I have completed a leadership-certificate exam accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

How do I see it in future? Certainly, I would like to keep leading the troop for some time and at the same time, prepare my successors. One cannot sit on the position of a troop leader till retirement, other people must get the chance to do it, as I have been given mine. Later, I want to participate in the life of the Scout movement in a different way, but that's way ahead. I can feel now myself, that I could use more experience in leading the troop.

I think that at the end, it's important to say who's been the greatest inspiration for me on my present path of scouting. It was my parents, and especially their way of thinking and acting. My mum, who taught at an elementary school for a long time, doing



a lot of voluntary activities at the same time: we often talked about educating children, thought about it together, and asked one another about it. If my mother had sat at home doing nothing for others, I would surely be different now, or it would take a much more difficult and complicated way for me to get to doing the activities I do now. A child will, very probably, follow the path of his or her parents. When I sum it up, my dad influenced me with his craft, I am quite skilled after him, which is good for scouting, and my mum is an example for me with her work for others.

## Junák – The Czech Scout organization

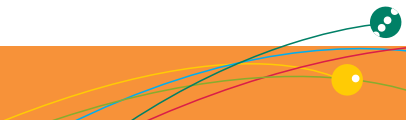
**Scouting** is the world's most widespread educational movement for children and youth. In our country, it has been present since 1911. Half a million people have gone through Scout groups, including a number of prolific personalities of many fields. Today, **Junák – svaz skautů a skautek ČR (the federation of Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Czech Republic)** has about 48,000 members. It is the largest educational organization in the Czech Republic and is a member of international Scout organizations. By its activities and education of young people, it has won an exceptional position and acknowledgement of government institutions, respected organizations, and outstanding personalities. Junák associates its members regardless their nationality, religion, political persuasion, race or other differences. **Scout groups** (circa 2,500) operate in more than a thousand cities and villages all over the country. They associate boys or girls above the age of six in three age categories. The program of the troops is provided for by several thousand voluntary leaders and functionaries. For their purposes, Junák has developed a high-quality educational system built upon seminars, courses and multilateral methodical support. Similarly, and adequately to the age, the educational system of 'Paths' was developed for the Cubs and Brownies (up to the age of 11), Scouts and Girl Scouts (up to the age of 15), a similar program is being prepared also for the Rovers (up to the age of 26). The cornerstone of Scouting is the persuasion that the world may be a better place and that it is up to every single human being to contribute to it somehow. Scouting is a project whose mission is to improve the world through individual people, by helping them to start the path of voluntary concern for their own development, as well as for the development of the people around. The mission of Junák is to assist the development of the personalities of children and youth, their spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, and physical capabilities, so that they were, for their entire life, ready to **serve the Truth and Love**, and thus fulfilled their responsibility to themselves, their neighbours, their country, the nature and the entire community of human beings.



## The Pal

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*Ivo Dostál (30) studied journalism and media studies at the Faculty of Social Science and now works as an internal communication specialist at ING Insurance, he likes board games, cooking, hiking, swimming and roller skating. He comes from Studénka town in North Moravia, since 2001 he has been living in Prague. Since 2003, he has been a volunteer in 5P program. He also works as an instructor at summer camps organized by 5P.*



I heard about 5P from my older schoolmate Bára whom I knew from some journalism lectures. I perceived her as a not very likeable nature-loving 'good soul', and so I looked a little down on the program, too.

In my second year, in 2002, we had to shoot a five-minute MHS report. MHS means that you present a Moving Human Story. That was, where Bára and her client hit the spot for me.

Eventually I had to shoot the report with a different pair, and I realized that the volunteers of 5P are not only zany djembe-banging hippies with khaki backpacks.

Still at the studies, I hyper-actively did three jobs at the same time. Suddenly, I got lots of money. As I (mistakenly!) did not pay the tax, I got bad consciousness in addition to my pay. In fears of once burning in hell for robbing the society, I realized, that there was that meritorious, yet not time consuming volunteering job I had shot the report about.



I had once seen a volunteer in Beverly Hills 90210 from the American association Big Brothers, Big Sisters, whose Czech clone the program 5P is. It was the main character Brandon Walsch. Therefore I decided to be rather the 'cool Brandon' than the 'nature-freaking Bára'.

I saw my first pal Radek (the name has been altered) for the first time at the contracting meeting in the clubroom of 5P. He looked confused, and confused was also his suggestion where to go for the first meeting.

The following week, just after the Christmas 2004, close to Národní třída metro station, a confused mini-human hopped among the junkies, market stalls and a pile of dirty snow.

Radek's pants were wet from the snow on his knees, he threw dirty wet snow balls on me, and kept marching several meters ahead of me... jumping on the sewer covers so that it would make the biggest noise possible and watching for my reactions. My reaction was that everybody was of a some kind... In return, I embarrassed Radek at the following meetings in a game room full of youngsters, I shouted and behaved more than childishly. Let him taste his own medicine...

This way, we educated each other for some three years. Radek taught me tagging, i.e. scribbling on the lampposts with a permanent marker, I taught him that, unlike at McDonald's, in cafés you order at the table and pay when leaving.

A year ago, Radek wrote me via ICQ that he was short of time, he found a student job, and was making money for a motorbike. Not that it would be much different without me, but it's been nice, nevertheless.

I like the entire program 5P that has, for 16 years, been helping children with difficulties in making friends, with problems in the family or hyperactive children. My volunteering work does not take much time. It's possible to do it even when doing a full-time job. This year, I have a new kid (Radek has grown from the program and is now being trained as a car-mechanic.) With my new 'pal', Peter, we go swimming a lot, he taught me some soccer tricks, and, most importantly, I have somebody to try new childish games with. When we fire NERF darts at each other in a department store, which I grew to like a lot, people don't give us those strange looks as they would if I were doing it with a peer colleague from the insurance company where I work. It's fun and perhaps it helps somebody, too.



## Five P

(the Czech words for Help, Friendship, Support, Care and Prevention all begin on P)

**The program of 5 P comes from the USA**, where it has worked for more than 100 years as Big Brothers, Big Sisters. It got into the Czech Republic via HES-TIA civil association in 1996. Gradually, it spread into more than 20 cities all over the Czech Republic, and in 1999 the Association of 5P Program was founded to coordinate the work of the individual centres. The program is intended for **children between 6 and 15 years of age**, it is focused on solving social and communication problems of children, and works upon the principle of a friendship of one child and one adult. The pair, put together by specialists, meets for one afternoon a week for at least ten months. The friends do leisure time activities that they agree upon.

**The service is provided for free to all children** who might benefit from a relationship with an adult person – a volunteer friend – in solving their problems. The children may experience, for example, pedagogical or studying difficulties, family crisis, or live in an incomplete family, they might come from socially disadvantaged groups, their parents may not have enough time for them, they might feel lonely or bored. Some of them might be hyperactive, apathetic or anxious. Some may be bothered ‘only’ by the fact that they have no siblings or have to move often and have not had enough opportunity to make friends with anybody. The clients may also come from foster families or other types of foster care. To enter the program, the free will of all the three parties (the volunteer, the child, and the parents) is crucial. The families of the clients are provided with social counselling or the service of a family psychologist.

**The volunteer is a friend and a guide for the child**, not an authority. The long term relationship of the child and the volunteer should create the space for the development of the child’s social skills, and strengthen their motivation to start natural peer relationships. The child thus has a new ‘person for him/herself’ who has time for them, a person to confide in, to play with, somebody to assist them in developing their skills or acquiring new ones. Thus the children can acquire the healthy self confidence and learn the pro-social patterns of behaviour and reflecting.





## Volunteering in ecology

*‘Waters whisper in the meadows, chattering pine woods grow on the rocks, the blossoms of spring shine in the orchards: isn’t it the heaven on earth?’* The love of our countryside got into our anthem also because it is historically woven into the hearts of our people. Volunteers have been contributing to the care of our nature heritage and environment in the Czech Republic since the 19th century. Nowadays, hundreds of various organizations and associations work in this sphere. Through them, tens of thousands of volunteers care of important wildlife localities and reservations and thus help preserving them for our own and the following generation. They plant trees, help protect or save many species, be it amphibia, birds, or mammals, they create educative nature tracks, work as rangers or promote environmental education among children and youth as well as the broad public.

They contribute remarkably to the improvement of our environment by planting trees, cleaning the countryside, protecting springs, maintaining the educative nature tracks, supporting the organic farming and by numerous other activities. Volunteers devote thousands of hours to the work with children and youth in environmental education – to the preparation and realization of educative programs, camps and other events. Thanks to volunteering, many educative events and campaigns intended for the broad public take place – The Earth Days, Organic Fairs, or courses. Research programs, monitorings, guide services also contribute to nature protection. In short, environmental volunteering represents a lasting benefit in many areas.

Thousands of people of all generations get involved in environmental activities and they participate in a wide variety of environmental events and programs or systematically look after their locality. Thanks to these activities, people grow a close relationship to the place where they live and also create and maintain friendships and promote cooperativeness within the community.



## The Environmentalist

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*Pavel Mašín (29) studied a technology college, is a post graduation student, and works for a company eliminating old environmental burdens. He lives in the outskirts of Prague, likes taking walking or cycling hikes into the country, in winter he does cross-country skiing hikes.*

*Participating in Hnutí Duha movement also helps him to meet new people and make new friends.*



Since my childhood, I have hated to see the environment being damaged, rivers and air polluted by toxins. Moreover, I liked chemistry, so I went to a chemistry oriented secondary school, my major was environment monitoring. Later, I attended the Institute of Chemical Technology, and majored in Environment Protection Technologies, to be able to analyse toxins and help in designing technologies limiting further environment pollution. Presently, I am working on my dissertation that deals with thermal desorption of contaminated solids. The issues of relieving old environmental burdens are also my job at the company I work for.

I got to Duha through a leaflet placed in a tram, offering participation in tree planting that was a part of the event Weeks for Forests organized by Duha. Duha annually organizes several week-long work stays in the forest for the public. During the stays, people help to restore healthy vegetation in the mountains of Šumava, Beskydy, Jeseníky, Jizerské hory or elsewhere, the events take place between May and September. It spoke to me, as I thought a week spent by volunteering would be a great opportunity to help the environment and, at the same time, come to know peo-



ple of similar persuasion. So, in 2009, I participated in the Week for Forests, focused on revitalizing of peat bogs in Kvilda locality of Šumava mountains. Such a working holiday helps you ‘connect business with pleasure’: you help the forest, clean your head and lungs, and meet interesting people as well as learn something new about the life of the forest and landscape. The issue of forest protection inspired me not only because I could see the results of my voluntary work, but also because I got in touch with other volunteers who want to spend their leisure time meaningfully. I had the opportunity to meet the workers of Duha and learn more of their activities aimed at the healthy life of the forests but also of other aspects of environment protection and wholesome life style.

The issues of forests have always been closest to my nature and therefore I got engaged in other activities that give me the chance to help the forests. In summer, I spent a week at an information stand at the Vltava river spring in Šumava, where



I explained the tourists the importance of the natural development of the forest and elicited their positions on forest management. Of course, I took part in the Week for Forests also the following year, and I also went to Šumava in winter to participate in so-called Lynx Watches. Although the big predatory mammals are protected in the Czech Republic, the situation is far from ideal. Poachers do not respect

laws. The illegal lynx hunting spread so much in the end of the 1990s that the lynx population started to drop dramatically. Out of the fourteen animals equipped by a radio transmitter by the Šumava national reserve management, eight were most probably shot, according to Duha. The number of illegal animal killings in the Czech Republic has been estimated to some 500 animals during the last two decades. Presently, the situation is stabilized. Spreading the leaflets informing that lynxes and wolves were protected animals also played its role (poachers, of course know it well, but the fact that there is some control could divert them from poaching). Although irrelevant at the first sight, this activity helps a lot

# The Projects of Duha movement

To keep Czech forests healthy, the air clean and the environment better for everybody, that is the aim of **Duha movement**, towards which it works in cooperation with a number of volunteers that are not indifferent to the environment.

A popular voluntary activity focused especially on protection and restoration of forest ecosystems and the culture value of the landscape are **The Weeks for Forests and Landscape**. Through its work and education camps (the participants work for five days and one day is reserved for an all-day excursion) Duha involves the broad public between 17 and 38 years of age into forest and landscape revitalization. It also provides people with information on the issues of biodiversity and the species structure of the forest. The project has been running since 1998, and since then, 1036 volunteers participated in it. They have, for example, planted 210 000 trees, blocked 225 draining channels, seeded 5 hectares of meadows and protected 500 trees against animals chewing their bark off. Recently, the volunteers have worked mostly in the localities of Šumava, Jizerské hory, Moravský kras and Jeseníky.

As a part of another Duha project, volunteers have been protecting large predator mammals in Šumava and Beskydy for twelve years. During the time, they have documented over five hundreds encounters. The main aim of the project **Wolf and Lynx Watches** is to restrict the illegal wolf, lynx and bear hunting and to research their actual presence in two of the most important localities, Beskydy and Šumava. After their training, the volunteers come for several-day-long winter monitorings. They take all-day trips to monitor the movement of large predator mammals. They mostly watch for so-called habitat signs (tracks, dropping, hair), document them (plaster casts, photographs, etc.), and then they evaluate them with experienced volunteers or experts. They also document illegal baits and report them to relevant authorities. They also help distributing information materials on large predator mammals to chalets, and communicate with tourists interested in the issue. Thus, they eradicate superstitions and misinformation of large predators.





## The Ranger

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*Vojtěch Novotný (65) lives in the town of Uničov. He worked for his entire life as an electrician in the machine works of Uničov, he retired in 2005. His hobbies are wildlife, especially mycology, gardening, reading and cycling hikes. Lately, he became interested in freely growing orchids. For over twenty years, he has been working as a volunteer ranger in the protected area of Litovelské Pomoraví.*

As a boy, I used to live in a village and we were amidst the nature practically all the time. I used to go mushroom hunting with my father and I got interested in it so much that mycology became my hobby and, up to now, it still is. In Uničov, where we moved, there worked Mr. Kupka, a mycologist, a great expert in mushrooms, with whom we later started a mycology club. Mr. Kupka was interested not just in mushrooms but in the nature as a whole. Thus I started cooperating with the national nature protection authorities and, upon their request, I started monitoring the occurrence of mushrooms and also of rare plant and animal species. When the protected area of Litovelské Pomoraví was about to be declared, (1990) I first became a so-called environment conservator and soon one of the first volunteer rangers. As I had quite a lot of experience in nature protection, I even did not have to take any exams.



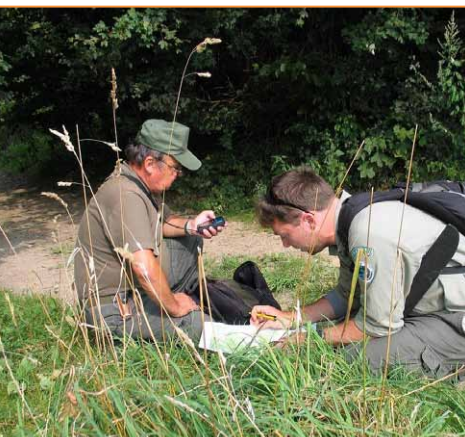
It was a time when the interest in becoming a ranger was immense. Almost 60 people applied, but the initial enthusiasm faded away, and the membership stabilized on some ten to fifteen members. Those were the ones that were really interested in working as rangers. Upon the instruction of the management, we did various mappings of plant habitats. We also had to mark the small-area parks, we held discussions at elementary and high schools, and worked as guides. Six years ago, I also applied as a ranger in the protected area in Jeseníky, so presently I combine my patrols on the Jeseníky route of Šerák, Keprník, Vozka, Vřesová studánka with my service in Litovelské Pomoraví. In Jeseníky, the environment is totally different. The difference is mostly in the fact that cars can't get there, and those who climb to the ridge on foot respect the nature. Litovelské Pomoraví is in a flat area of cultivated land. People take it here just as some forest they live by, they do not understand the value

of the landscape of Litovelské Pomoraví and often behave accordingly.

The service of a ranger is quite time consuming, although I have already retired. I see the part of a ranger rather in education. For the entire time I have worked as a ranger, I have never fined anybody. A regular person who comes mushrooming to the forest in an old Škoda car would pay the fine, as he or she respects the authorities. A business person in a car worth several hundred thousand dollars, would argue and bargain with the ranger, threaten with a lawsuit and finally would not pay the fine anyway.

I have to say, that the attitude of many people to nature and the rangers is getting worse and worse. They don't look for the nature's good, but for their own: they want to go mushroom hunting and drive right into the woods, or drive just next to the river and cast the fishing line from the driver's seat – and we are the ones who prevent them from doing so. Such visitors just preach democracy and human rights but understand nothing. I have even been threatened and I have to say that not just I, but even my family have been under pressure. I think that what we are missing is systematic education, organized and supported from the highest posts. The laws of nature yield too much to the laws of business.

Still, I like volunteering a lot, so I do not regret the huge amount of time and money the service to the nature has cost me so far. Despite all the troubles and not very optimistic environmental situation, the work of a ranger gave me lots of positive things: I have seen wildlife areas I would never have seen otherwise, I have met numbers of great people who were glad to hear my explanation. I like when people ask me what plants grow here and what interesting things they might get to see here. The same applies to Jeseníky. There, I, as a ranger, even had the chance to walk places the regular visitors have no chance of getting to. I met fellow rangers, people who really care for the environment.



It wouldn't be possible without the support of my family, especially my wife, who walks the area of the Morava river with me. Rides, to say – I usually cycle in Pomoraví.

And if I were to say what would have to change so that the situation around nature protection got better? I'll say it simply: respecting and enforcing the law. The Environmental Act is not really taken seriously. Everybody likes nature but very few really want to protect it.

# Volunteer rangers

Presently, the **volunteer rangers** play a little marginalized, yet quite important role in nature protection. They do their work in their free time with no claim of reward. It is the rangers who know their area best and often they are the only people who can provide assistance to those in need of it.

The organization of voluntary rangers has been established according to article 81 of the Act on the Nature and Landscape Protection No 114/1992 of the Statute Roll. The visitor can recognize the ranger on duty by the service badge with the national emblem and the ranger ID stating their district, which is usually some protected area.

Both professional and volunteer rangers can associate in the **Association of Protected Area Rangers**. Its aim is to increase the expertise and professional level of its members. Since 1997, the Association has been organizing regular meetings of the rangers, focused on exchange of the guarding, information and guiding experience. The Association offers its members also trainings, expert excursions and internships.

A volunteer ranger should be a person whom the visitors meet on a mountain track and who can provide them with information on local wildlife, spots of interest or services (the closest restaurants, bicycle service, where and when the buses go), suggests tourist routes, who informs them of allowed and restricted activities, offers the service of a guide or an information leaflet. Rather than trespass fine tickets, the ranger should carry a first aid kit, map and a cell phone with the Mountain Rescue number in the backpack. The visitors usually do not know that the volunteer rangers do also such things as monitoring and mapping plant and animal species habitats, installation and repairs of the equipment of protected areas and cleaning the thrash.



When rangers learn that the environmental regulations were breached, they have to intervene within the scope of their authority and impose a **corrective or repressive steps** (Trespassing in a protected area can be settled by a reproach but also by imposing a fine.) Then, they really become the 'extended arm of law'. It is necessary to point out that even a volunteer ranger is a public officer, which means a higher authority as well as higher responsibility.





## International volunteering and development assistance

Unlike the majority of other volunteering areas, this sphere is, rather than by its focus, primarily characterized by its special 'added value': For this type of volunteering, it is important that it is connected with international cooperation and intercultural education. Therefore, these activities cannot be unambiguously separated from the other categories, as working with handicapped children, helping in ecological revitalization of national parks, a reconstruction of a historical building, or assisting in the organization of an art festival for children from orphanages can take place abroad as well as in the home country.

Nowadays, some 1,100 Czech volunteers go abroad and, in return, some 600 volunteers work in our country every year. The voluntary stays can be classified according to their length. The short-term stays, so-called workcamps, are most popular among young people. They go there especially in summer. It is an interesting combination of travelling, meaningful work, and meeting new people from all over the world. Among the largest organizers of workcamps in the Czech Republic and abroad there are *INEX – Association for Voluntary Activities*, or *Duha – Association of Children and Youth for Leisure Time, Nature and Fun*.

The midterm and long-term stays generally range from two months to one year (in some cases even longer). It is a more continuous type of cooperation with the local community on solving a certain problem. A specific type of long-term volunteering is the European Voluntary Service, which is focusing on young Europeans under the age of 30 and helps creating the culture awareness of the current generation. In the Czech Republic, over 90 organizations participate in the European Voluntary Service.



## Muzungu

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*Robin Ujfaluši (32) graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University in Prague. In 2005, he worked as a volunteer in Nairobi, and (apart from the Czech Republic) also in Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Turkey. After his return from Kenya, he coordinated the campaign Football for Development, and he presently works as the director of the Association for Voluntary Activities INEX. In 2007, he published a book describing his volunteering experience from Kenya, called 'How They Play Football in Kenya'.*



Robin Ujfaluši, back then a university student, learned of GLEN program by chance. The fact that he was finally selected to the program, however, was no accident at all, as the program is very popular and the applicants are subject to a demanding selection procedure. Anyway, if he had gone past this crossroads, he would now be researching humanities or working at some editor's house.

However, after the summer of 2005 that he spent as a volunteer in Nairobi, his life has taken quite a different course. In the slums of Nairobi, he realized that the local reality is much richer and more colourful than how we perceive it through the media (i.e. forlorn poverty and hopelessness). And thanks to his work for the local NGO MYSA (Mathare Youth Sport Association) he came to a close contact with one of the means of motivating the local youth despite the difficult social situation: football.

*'I had a lot of fun on my volunteer stays and have learned a lot during them. I thought I would just be running around the playground and play football with kids. The NGO I worked for focuses mostly on the leisure time of the kids of the poorest parts of the city – the slums. The emphasis is mostly on football, which is very popular in Kenya. My most impressive experience of the stay is connected with the organization of a two-day tournament for 32 teams. In fact, I actually got to play football only occasionally, on weekends. My main task was to develop fundraising with my colleagues – i.e. how to get money from large and rich companies.'*

MYSA organizes football competitions throughout the year for 25,000 children and in connection with them it develops other publicly beneficial programs – educative, social, or culture ones: it builds a network of publicly accessible libraries in slums, tries to return the 'children of the street' to their original families or runs its own artistic group of traditional Kenyan music and dances.



*‘That Kenyan organization is recognized all over the world. It was even nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. We, the volunteers, tried to convince its workers to use their prestige also to convince the sponsors. And it was not easy. It was easier to talk the rich companies into contributing or giving us some equipment that they did not need any more than to rope the regional coordinators to get involved in fundraising at all. They are used to organizing football matches, planning leisure time for the kids and that’s it. They would not have the time to go and negotiate a help with a playground adaptation or funding the construction of a football club building.’*



The four-month experience from ‘another world’ was too fascinating for Robin to return to the routine of his former life.

Football, as a phenomenon, offers many advantages. Among other things, it is mainly the fact that the ‘hunt for the spherical nonsense’ is popular all over the world and it is a sport which has a great potential of interconnecting people of different culture and social origins. Therefore, Robin decided to present this special, socially beneficial dimension of football in developing countries also to the Czech public. In cooperation with his sending organization, INEX-SDA, and with the financial help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he founded the project Football for Development also in the Czech Republic.

The visibility of the project and the interest of the public and media in development issues is boosted also by the support of numerous well-known culture and sports celebrities, among which we can also find Robin’s cousin, a member of the Czech national football team, Tomáš Ujfaluši. The course of the project is unique mainly thanks to an intense interpersonal interaction and inter-cultural exchange of participants from Kenya and the Czech Republic.

# GLEN and Football for Development

The program of volunteer stays in developing countries **GLEN (Global Education Network of Young Europeans)** is supported from the Program of Development Cooperation of the Czech Republic and belongs among the well established ones. In our country it is organized and mediated by the Association of Voluntary Activities Inex. Within GLEN program, five to seven selected applicants have been sent for a three-month stay to developing countries since 2004. The scope of their work is based upon the actual needs of the local partner organization. Apart from the stay in the developing country itself, the volunteers have to participate in two preparatory and one evaluating seminars attended by volunteers of other ten European countries. After their return, the volunteers get involved in global development education. The result of these initiatives have so far been hundreds of lectures and presentations of their volunteering experiences in developing countries, a number of independent photography exhibitions, two books of reports, and two long-term educative programs – ‘The Stereotypo in Us’ and ‘Football for Development’.

**Football for Development** is a year-round project that has been running since 2006, culminating every June by a three-week campaign in various regions of the Czech Republic with the participation of a coed youth team from Kenya. The program consists of football matches, public culture events, and educative seminars at high schools. An important inter-cultural impact of the project is present through accommodation in Czech host families.

The main aim of the project is increasing the awareness of the Czech public of life in the developing countries through football – an unconventional, but attractive means of interconnecting people.

The program GLEN is a good example of how the volunteering experience may be useful and valuable later in the professional life – numerous former participants of the program now work in the area of international development cooperation and international relations on various positions in NGOs, in the administration, media, or international organizations.



## The European

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*Jitka Marelová (28) lives in Prague. In 2008, she graduated in psychology and special pedagogy from Charles University. She works as a primary prevention and inter-cultural studies instructor at elementary and secondary schools. She writes and does many other creative activities, she draws energy from hikes and practising yoga. She spent the year 2009 as a volunteer in Milan.*



I chose ‘my’ organization in Milan because it organizes activities I wanted to continue in after finishing my university studies. Casa per la pace Milano deals with education for peace – specifically, it focuses on education in resolving conflicts and on inter-cultural education. Thus it reacts to the growing need of influencing the public awareness concerning the issue of immigration, which is becoming a pressing problem not just in Milan, but all over Italy. They do so by means of educative activities focused on all generations.

The organization for example runs an interactive exposition for elementary school pupils, aimed at fighting the prejudices against foreigners and developing tolerance to differences among people. At high schools, they organize workshops developing skills of resolving conflicts in a peaceful way. They organize a long-term course on drama methodology, the ‘forum theatre’, for young professionals in the social sphere and pedagogy. The course was developed by a Brazilian, August Boal, with the aim to activate the audience to adjust their environment to their contentment. To the older generations, they offer various discussions, educational theme evenings, and courses.



Rather than international conflicts, we encounter interpersonal conflicts in our everyday lives. Often, we are influenced by our own, internal, conflicts. It seems logical to claim that somebody incapable of resolving conflicts with his or her colleagues, family, or even with his or her own self, would probably not provide e.g. workshops on conflict resolution for high school students in such quality as somebody of a con-

tented personality. With my colleagues, we therefore met every two weeks at sessions called 'pensatoio' (a place to think), where we discussed and shared our opinions of such phenomena as personal freedom, conflict resolving strategies, power, etc., and thus worked on ourselves in order to be able to give the best performance when working for others.

I participated in the activities of the organization either as an observer or as an assistant of the coordinator of the activities. My main task was participating in organizing two international courses on the application of drama methods in inter-cultural education, which gave me a lot of experience in project organizing and realization. EVS greatly supplements the academic education by including you into the regular life of an organization and thus facilitating practical learning by doing.

Apart from doing these voluntary activities, I have also learned the language and got to know the city itself and many great places in Italy. Thanks to my introspection into the Italian mentality, I could better understand my own, Czech mentality. What makes Italians happier at the first sight may be their ability to enjoy the little everyday delights that they cherish so much. Czechs often emphasize the work too much, and cannot find any rest until it's done perfectly or on time. But any job may always be done a little better, so it would be possible to go on like this forever. Italians know how important it is to take a rest and wouldn't let anybody take their delights, their siestas from them, as they know that life goes first, that they do not live to work.





## Na dlouho mimo (Away for Long)

**Duha – Association of Children and Youth for Leisure Time, Nature and Fun** – works all over the Czech Republic and, apart from other things, it provides the framework for a very interesting program for young people who are not its members. The name of the program is **Trochu jinak (A Little Different Way)**, it supports volunteering and offers opportunities within three projects: Workcampy (Workcamps), Tamjdem (Gothere), and **Na dlouho mimo (Away for Long)**. The last one allows the applicants to participate in a long-term volunteering project abroad such as **European Voluntary Service**. Duha helps the potential volunteer to contact the receiving organizations and once the volunteer is accepted, it helps him or her to arrange all the necessary formalities. The project Na dlouho mimo, as well as many other similar international activities, brings volunteers a new experience, learning of a different country and culture, new friends, self-recognition in a new life-experience, self-confidence, independence and reliability, the capability to resolve conflicts, the knowledge of the language, and better chances in the labour market.

Jitka from our story has used the program Na dlouho mimo and participated through it in the European Voluntary Service. EVS is a part of an EU program ‘**Youth in Action**’ and allows young people to participate in volunteer projects all over the EU and partner countries, individually or in groups. The projects of two to twelve months of duration are focused on various spheres, from sports over the work with children to social ser-



VICES, arts, environment, etc. Anybody between the ages of 18 and 30 with a permanent address in the Czech Republic or a member or partner state to the program is an electable volunteer. The volunteers work for accommodation, food, and allowances. Their projects are complemented with support education during which they have the opportunity to meet other volunteers, especially those from the host country. The aim of the European Voluntary Service is, apart from participating in publicly beneficial projects, especially the development of solidarity and tolerance among young people.



## Volunteering in emergency situations

Floods, hurricanes, fires, and also accidents, rescuing people stuck in car wrecks or in heights. In other parts of the world also earthquakes, humanitarian disasters resulting from military conflicts. Simply – emergency situations and people who need help. Help provided by trained professionals, but also by selfless volunteers.

In the Czech Republic, volunteers presently work on two levels in emergency situations. The first is helping at local emergencies, such as fires, rescues, and accidents where voluntary fire-fighters play an absolutely prime part. Then, there are emergencies exceeding a single locality, in our country those have lately been especially floods. In both cases it proves, that mere enthusiasm and goodwill are not enough – professional management of rescue actions is necessary in order to use the work of volunteers as efficiently as possible. The voluntary help in such cases is, however, crucial. People stricken by flood have great difficulties in bearing the consequences. Especially in the beginning – during the first days after the disaster – the need and request for volunteers is immense. It is not just to help manually in eliminating the impact, but also to help the victims ‘not to feel forsaken’ in their difficult situation.

The national framework for the voluntary work of fire-fighters is provided by Sdružení hasičů Čech, Moravy a Slezska (The Association of Fire-fighters of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) of almost 350,000 members, many of whom are involved in the Czech integrated rescue system. The activities of other volunteers are managed by organizations working throughout the country, such as ADRA, Diakonie ČCE, Charita, ČČK (Czech Red Cross), or Člověk v tísni (People in Need). These organizations usually provide also the background for volunteers, their insurance, or work equipment. Smaller, locally operating organizations often participate, too. The task of these organizations is to coordinate the volunteers so that their help was utilized as efficiently as possible. These activities are not done only in time of an emergency but throughout the year.



## The Fire-fighter

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*Michal Štrosner (32) works as a mason and lives in a North Bohemian village Bulovka. During the week, he goes to constructions, in his leisure time, he is a devoted DIY man – as he says, he knows a little of every craft. He has been a voluntary fire-fighter since his childhood, after the example of his father. He has been awarded a medal ‘For Saving a Life’.*

I was attracted to fire-fighters since I was a little boy. My father was an example for me: He became a fire-fighter back in 1971. I started as a Young Fire-fighter, but became a real fire-fighter in 1999, when the commander of the volunteer fire department (VFD) of Arnoltice Mr. Antonín Skála placed me into the action unit. This Mister Fire-fighter had all the time, until his tragic death in 2008, been not just an example, but also a great friend to me.

The fire department of Arnoltice was dismissed after some time. However, I did not abandon the idea of working as a voluntary fire-fighter even then, and I started looking for people to restore the fire department of Arnoltice – District of Frýdlant. We wanted to continue in the fire fighting tradition founded by our ancestors in 1899. In the spirit of the slogan To praise God and to help the neighbour we wanted to fix what other destroyed – that's how it is.

On June, 5th, 2009, I summoned the first general meeting of the VFD, where I was elected the commander. This gave the origin to the fire department of Arnoltice, supported by the district departments of Dětřichov and Kunratice, and materially supported by the department of Dolní Sedlo. The thanks for manifold help and understanding go to the commander of the fire-fighters in Dětřichov, Ladislav Šamek.

Our department has 20 members, and we have got an 'AVIA 31-DA 12 Special' vehicle. We go to fires, floods and other emergencies, including fire-fighter watches. We organize competitions, children afternoons, etc. In this service to our neighbours, the most important things are trust between colleagues, discipline, accuracy and keeping a cool head.

Presently, it is difficult to manage the VFD as I would like to. I spend the entire week doing constructions away from home, I sleep in hostels, sometimes the employer does not show much understanding, and when I get home for the weekend, I have to



do the administrative work, summon the training, organize the Saturday competitions, then I do something around the house, and suddenly it's time to go to work again.

I do the administration 'on paper' or by phone (I don't have the Internet). When necessary, I use my own car. A big problem is insufficient funding. When you want something to work as it should and as expected, you have to get the money for it, which nowadays is the No 1 problem. But those in the key positions do not even want to understand.

When performing an intervention, what is really not helpful is, when the watching public get in our way, raise panic and behave hysterically. Except for thanks, we sometimes encounter strange and evil reactions of people. But you must not let such moments discourage you, we do the service for others, for the community, not to become rich.

I only hope that the voluntary fire-fighters and their departments, especially here, in little villages, won't disappear with the present situation in funding, and will pass the humanitarian mission to other generations.

*On August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the voluntary fire-fighters Radek Fako, Michal Štrosner and Jiří Matoušek from VFD Arnoltice were leaving for a competition. On their way, they received a message from the operator centre in Frýdlant that requested an immediate help to the city. The river was flooding the roads and houses.*

*After an hour of work, a new order came, saying that their home village of Arnoltice was flooded. What they could see would scare anybody. The evacuation of people, rescuing animals, removing the debris and building dams repeated endlessly. A scared person came running, and shouted that there were two kids about to drown close to the building of a former shop (10 and 12 years old). They were holding onto the branches of some bushes there.*

*The above named fire-fighters ran to the place. Michal Štrosner tied a line around his waist and Radek Fako secured him. Despite the strong current of the water and the depth of 130 – 140 centimetres and floating wood debris, he succeeded in saving and getting the first child to a dry, safe place. Jiří Matoušek immediately sat on a tractor with a winch and a line as he had to get to the other side of the flooding stream, as close as possible to the other child in danger. He tied a line around his waist, and step by step across the strong flow, he moved towards the drowning child. First, he got him to the bank of the stream and then to a safe place. Both young lives were saved. For their exemplary attitude and bravery, the fire-fighters were awarded the medals **For Saving a Life** and **For Bravery and Courage**.*

# Voluntary Fire Departments

In the Czech Republic, **the voluntary fire departments** are either independent legal bodies or operate as organization units of civil associations (Sdružení hasičů Čech, Moravy a Slezska, Česká hasičská jednota, Moravská hasičská jednota)<sup>1</sup>. The fire-fighters are simply a part of the majority of Czech villages and cities. Except for extinguishing fires, they also intervene in cases of floods and other disasters, environmental disasters, traffic accidents, provide technical help and help in cases of other exceptional events. They also cooperate in fire and other undesirable event prevention. Fire departments bring up their youth and they are often important also as the social life contributors in their municipalities.

The voluntary fire departments of Sdružení hasičů Čech, Moravy a Slezska continue in the tradition of fire-fighters' organizations that once operated on the territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and are the legal successor of Svaz požární ochrany ČSFR<sup>2</sup> in the Czech Republic. The association had 7,856 voluntary fire departments (VFD) in 2010.

Only selfless, brave people who, at the same time, can act composedly may become successful voluntary fire-fighters – volunteers by their soul and flesh, who understand their service as a mission of helping both individual people and the society. For fire departments, generation blending is typical, frequently, this life path is 'hereditary' in the families. To become a voluntary fire-fighter thus means



to enter a certain tradition connected not only with the responsibility towards people in need, but also towards all those who devoted their lives to this service. Even in these days, the voluntary fire-fighters are aware that wearing the honourable uniform of a voluntary fire-fighter means the responsibility to refrain from any behaviour that would dishonour them or the organization whose sign they are bearing. And, frankly said, it is great that there still are such people. Thanks to them, even the localities where professional fire-fighters may not get in time are safe.

<sup>1</sup> The Association of Firefighters of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, The Czech Federation of Firefighters, The Moravian Federation of Firefighters

<sup>2</sup> The Czechoslovak Federation of Fire Security



## The Paramedic

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*Michaela Slováková (23) from Ostrava studies medically oriented social work. She is an extrovert who volunteers for the Red Cross, teaches English at a kindergarten and first aid at schools, organizes educative events for youth and adults, works in in emergency intervention service and tries to help wherever she can. She claims its fun and wants to go on with it.*





The story of this girl is definitely not a story for a Hollywood movie, for a book, a TV series, not even for a newspaper article. It is regular, a girl that is neither very interesting nor very boring. In fact, most of her qualities might be labelled as negative. She is talkative, has a finger in every pie, is quite big-headed, to be honest, she wants to be in control of everything and needs to get involved in everything. When we season these qualities with her obsessive need to help everyone around (and her entire family is similar), we can get a picture of the volunteer whom this story about. Her mother is a nurse, her father a prison warden, her sister studies social work, one of her grandmas was a youth custodian and the other a Czech Red Cross building caretaker. One of her grandpas was a jail director, the other a first aid instructor. As she classifies herself an extroverted and strong personality, there might be a chance for her to be the black sheep of the family and become, for example a shoemaker or a butcher. Not in her case. She, too, works for the Red Cross as a volunteer, she just carries the family tradition on.

When it comes to what influences her most, it is people. It has always been that way. Every single story wakes something up in her that needs to be developed further. Since her childhood she has, instead of fairy tales, been listening to stories how Mum, Grandpa, or Grandma helped somebody, so that is what she wanted to do, too. Apart from those lofty hobbies, she has got one less noble – movies. To be a hero, such as Mum, Spider-man, or Forrest Gump, that would be something, wouldn't it? So she started doing first aid, participate in competitions, teach younger children, do paramedic services, and she eventually got to help at such events as mass emergencies or car accidents. She is touched by every such event, and she is over-sympathetic, which might have its positives, but generally, it can complicate the situation a lot.

One of the emergencies that have stayed in her mind until these days was the collision of a train with a bridge in Studénka on August, 8th. Michaela did not play any special part then, she even was not present at the scene of the accident. On her way back from work, she got a call from her commander that a major accident happened, and that it was necessary to help, and as Michaela was 'the one to do the talking', she would have a special task there. She went to the Faculty Hospital where she and her colleague, under the supervision of other people, looked for the relatives of the victims, talked to them, helped to find the wounded friends, children and parents, she searched for who was in which hospital, directed people to the right places or just sat with them and waited for the news and information of their loved ones. People left one by one, the ends were happy or unhappy, but she stayed there for those whose stories yet waited for their ends.

At the intensive care unit, there was a sixty year old woman, who nobody was looking for, and in the waiting room, there were the friends and family of a missing twenty year old student, who had been travelling to a festival. As in a movie, it was one and the same person, just her face was wounded so much, she could not be recognized. It was the idea of one of the fire-fighters to go and see her, because ‘you never know’. Our volunteer guided the friends and parents to the identification. After some seven hours of waiting, they finally found her, by a scar on her foot – it was her.

When Michaela was leaving the hospital, she was carrying such an amount of feelings at once in her heart, as never before in her life. Fears, anxiety, relief, happiness, sorrow, pain and joy. She felt she had managed it and felt proud of herself. It looked as one of the happy ends.

However, the girl died in hospital, two days later. And our volunteer has been fighting with it till today, and she will, on and on, as she wants to see the real happy ends. It is impossible to say, whether it influenced her positively or negatively, but it has not discouraged her, neither from writing this story.



# The Czech Red Cross

**The Red Cross association** operates all over the Czech Republic, especially in the humanitarian, social, medical, and health-education spheres. The International Committee of the Red Cross recognized the Czech Red Cross on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1993, and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent accepted it on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1993. In its work, the Red Cross continues in the work of its predecessors – of ‘Vlastenecký pomocný spolek pro Království české (The Patriotic Association for Assistance of the Czech Kingdom), founded on September, 5<sup>th</sup>, 1868, and of the Czechoslovak Red Cross, founded on February, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

Fulfilling the mission and tasks of the Czech Red Cross is a publicly beneficial activity. Presently, the Czech Red Cross has roughly 50,000 members and volunteers in 1,299 local groups. The Czech Red Cross deals especially with the following tasks: firstly, it is the civil defence and **protection of the population and helps in cases of disasters and other emergency situations**. In cases of such events, it provides paramedical, rescue, social and of he humanitarian services. It also acts as an exclusively recognized assisting organization of the military paramedic service and spreads the knowledge of the Geneva Treaties. It also provides health education and cooperates with health care providers.

The mission of the Czech Red Cross is to prevent and mitigate pain, protect the health, lives, and respect to human beings, to promote mutual understanding, friendship, and piece among nations regardless the national, race, religious, social, and political differences and to seek the fulfilment of the fundamental principles of Red Cross movement that are humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence, optionality, unity, and the world repute.





## Corporate volunteering

It is clearly obvious that here we are in a field that is very special within the entire sphere of volunteering. One cannot, but ask immediately: What is voluntary on the activities of commercial subjects – business companies? Of course, they can support some voluntary activities by their donations. But is there any other way? And yet, even here, we can really speak of volunteering (however, of a specific type) – as the primary decision of the company is to provide its employees some time off to work for the benefit of other, usually non-profit, organizations. It is, then, a certain type of corporate behaviour which is a part of a broader concept of the *corporate responsibility*.

This approach is very widespread and popular in western countries. The first steps in this area may be especially found in companies operating in the Czech Republic, but with a foreign owner or partner and therefore with the corresponding corporate philosophy. Presently, among these are for example *IBM Česká republika*, *Česká spořitelna (Czech Savings Bank)*, *DHL Česká republika*, *Kooperativa insurance*, *VIG*, *ČEZ Group*, *T-Mobile Czech Republic*, *KPMG Czech Republic*, *Santé*, *ING Investment management (C.R.), a.s.*, *E.ON Česká republika s.r.o*, *PwC Czech Republic*, *ČSOB*, or *Siemens*.

It is important to understand that this behaviour benefits both parties. It helps the companies to improve their public image but it also contributes to improving the efficiency of teams and removes the barriers among departments. Sometimes, it even facilitates the development of managing qualities, as volunteering often takes place in a real-life and demanding environment (such as emergency situations). A remarkable fact is that it helps create healthier communities to do business in. To NGOs and local communities it brings new skills and energy to solve their existing problems, helps in removing barriers and in increasing the mutual understanding among various spheres of the society, and it increases the numbers of volunteers, replenishes and diversifies the funding resources, and it also helps create working positions.



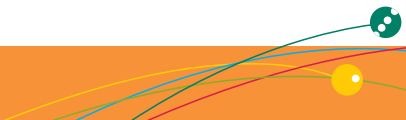
## The Power Engineer

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*Miloslav Svitáček (53) works as a metrologist of an accredited calibration laboratory of ČEZ, a.s. - Jaderná elektrárna Dukovany<sup>1</sup>. Except for volunteering, his great hobby is photography – he published a large pictorial publication with 170 photographs. With his wife, he has built a house and has even started gardening and growing fruits. He is also a loving grandfather.*

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<sup>1</sup> Czech Energy Works – the Nuclear power Plant of Dukovany



I have actually been a volunteer since my studies. After graduation I assisted in an organization of handicapped youth, which I, as a physically handicapped person, also lead for many years. After 1989, such organizations ceased to exist, and the most active people founded new ones. This was also the origin of the civil humanitarian organization Oáza (Oasis) that allowed me to interconnect my long-term personal volunteering with the corporate volunteering. And why did I choose Oáza among other organizations back then? I have known its leader, Josef Černý, for many years. Although he is blind, he was able to graduate from a college and organize a group of people, mostly with a physical or visual handicaps, who decided, that when the government does not provide them a sufficient help, they would do it themselves. I was engrossed, even fascinated by their doggedness and persistence in persuading their chosen goals and in proving, that where the will was, the success would follow.

This was why I recommended Oáza to my employer ČEZ – Jaderná elektrárna Dukovany as an organization that might help us within the program ‘Čas pro dobrou věc (Time To Do a Good Thing)’. Within the project, the employees of ČEZ may spend one day a year in the non-profit sector. They get paid by their employer for that day. Moreover, the company provides the organizing and logistic support for the day, it communicates with non-profit organizations, provides the volunteer with transport to the destination and the necessary equipment, etc. These organized volunteer days work as a good team-building activity. If some employees are interested in helping a specific organization that they know, they may do it individually, just like I do it. Gradually, also the employees of the Hodonín power plant joined me, and I have to say that also in the locality of Dukovany, there is a large volunteer group, some of them from the circle of my close co-workers.

So far, I have participated in all volunteer days, despite the fact that I have to travel over 130 kilometres from my village near Třebíč to the city of Hodonín. What was this year’s volunteer day of our company in Oáza like? The passers-by looked curi-



ously at the volunteers wearing orange T-shirts (made especially for the day), at times somebody asked what was going on. For some, our volunteer day was an inspiration – upon talking to us, they also decided to come and help at Oáza. That day, we needed to make a fence: to bring, trim, and paint the boards, and bolt them to battens. Also, we cleaned and stored several loads of used bricks.

When the white Škoda Fabia with the logo of ČEZ and another one with a Prague licence plate came, my colleague commented on it: ‘An inspection from the power plant of Hodonín and from Prague’. However, the nice lady who got out of one of the



cars was the coordinator of the entire project at ČEZ, the driver turned out to be a professional photographer. The other nice lady was in charge of the communication in the power plant of Hodonín. Josef, the director of Oáza, showed them round the entire premises, showed them both the finished and the yet-to-finish buildings, explained the organization’s activities and future plans. Both young ladies returned already wearing overalls and took up the colours and brushes. Michal, my colleague, just stared: ‘The guys at work aren’t going to believe me that.’

There were still some digging to be done in the yard, we needed to paint the tin roofing, to weed and cut the lawn, to fix and paint the children’s climbing frame and to remove a window broken in an unsuccessful burglary attempt. We managed to do a part of the work, the rest was left for the next volunteer team to finish.

The project of corporate volunteering at ČEZ means another form of help for Oáza. Except for participating in it, I also informed the people of Oáza of projects opened by the foundation of my employer, in which they participated quite successfully. The financial resources from Nadace ČEZ foundation then, in total, allowed to finish one of the six duplex houses which Oáza is building.

What to say for the conclusion? Many people react reluctantly to corporate volunteering, comparing it to the half compulsory Communist ‘Z – action’ activities. However, those who have come once, keep coming on and on. For me, it is an honour that I can help a good thing within corporate volunteering activities.



## Čas pro dobrou věc (Time To Do a Good Thing)

Power engineers often provide everyday assistance to people and institutions by their professional technical help. However, they are also ready to help people around as volunteers. **The ČEZ Group** further develops this natural help through its project of corporate volunteering 'Čas pro dobrou věc'. It takes place in particular regions in seven stages. Apart from that, other activities take place continuously. Volunteers thus help all over the Czech Republic, especially in organizations with a social and environmental focus. Since the beginning of the project in 2008, 1217 corporate volunteers of the ČEZ Group participated in it, helping in tens of publicly beneficial organizations. Donating time is, as a supplement to the **corporate philanthropy**, a part of the corporate responsibility of the ČEZ Group. The employer has for four years been paying its employees for one day a year that these employees spent working for the benefit of people in need. It is a voluntary cooperation of a company with a national operation scope and the local communities in the vicinity of the headquarters of the power plants or their subsidiaries. Alena Čepelová from ČEZ customer services greatly expressed the benefits of corporate volunteering for the employees:

*'Thanks to the project called 'Čas pro dobrou věc' I have found out how much difference one act of help can make. It's almost addictive, you start once and then you want to go on helping. Putting my shoulder to the wheel wherever necessary makes me feel happy and fulfilled. Volunteering has given me a lot of experience and also a chance to work with interesting people. Those would be the organizers of the activity, my colleagues from Ostrava who shared my excitement, but also the people of the organizations whom we offered our help.'*

*The ČEZ Group thus increases the awareness of philanthropy among its employees, who have the option of helping one day within their work time, but this may bring them to the decision to do good things in their leisure time, too.'*





## The Trade unionist

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*Ilona Zárubová (44 years) is employed by the company Telefónica O2. She lives in Prague and has two grown sons. Her hobbies are: working with people, which is not only at the work, but also in her free time. She also finds time for sport, e.g. tennis. She has come to volunteering through the company foundation.*



I became a volunteer many years ago when I joined the venue organised by Foundation O2. It was a trip with children from an orphanage. It was a very touching experience for me, so I started to volunteer periodically. I have a gift with children as according to their reactions, they really take to me, because the I consider the fact that they share their childish troubles with me. They also call me and write to me all year, as is proof of my volunteering success.

Parents and relatives of the children in orphanages cannot or do not want to take care of them. Even though, adults that work in orphanage have a positive relationship with the children and do their work with joy, they cannot dedicate their attention individually according to their ideas, because, they always care about the group as a whole. As volunteers, we step in and we take care of the children individually. I am happy when Tomáš from the orphanage shares his childish secrets with me and I also welcome Stella, from another “family”, to do the same and tell me about her first love experiences. I feel needed and the children feel loved which confirms that my work is significant and has meaning. For example, during one of our joint ventures, that I would call a weekend of mutual harmony, I became convinced of what we give to the children – possibility to feel their own uniqueness, individuality – they return the same way to us, adults: at this trip to the Moravian Lednice there was a colleague, who felt alone, as he got divorced. Spontaneous the children with their strength and sometimes quite entangled fate shoved him a new view on life. My colleague is now a valued, regular volunteer with a new attitude and has begun to smile again.

I have succeeded to bring other colleagues to volunteering, even to venues that are organised in cooperation with association Lékořice. We periodically attend volunteering days – working Saturdays – e.g. together we help to modify the spaces at the departments of the Thomayer hospital in Krč and surrounding premises. We make needed changes like painting the fence at the department of newborn children or benches in the garden. Other time we visit old people in medical institutions with



long-term illnesses and help to fill their free time and refresh their mind this way. Last time, we helped create small presents for their close ones.

In the last few years our company is participating on project of International day of volunteering. This day is especially dedicated to the employees in all countries in the Telefónica group, who can participate in ventures that will show the world, what we can do as a company team. To make world better is the main motto of this venture.



Almost six hundred of our colleagues at eighteen different places all over the Czech Republic helped this year to organise the International day of volunteering. I personally spent a whole day in orphanage in Pyšely in the Benešov region and together with my colleagues we helped to paint the halls and the kitchen in the house, others helped with the maintenance of the local garden.

I have volunteered since 2007 at an orphanage in Lipová close to Šluknov – I visit the children, we organise trips with them and various sporting ventures. In cooperation with this orphanage I had joined the contest for the employees of O2 – Grant of Foundation O2, where we succeeded and gained finance aid to create a beautiful children's playground and recovery of the interior of the children's rooms. We organised a trip to the Prague ZOO as well.

Volunteering gives me the possibility to have extraordinary experiences and a great feeling from being helpful, where it is needed. If there would not be a foundation of our company, I would not know something like this is possible. My colleagues, which I brought to the foundation just by talking about my experiences with it, would be deprived. They participated once, twice – and they have become steady volunteers.

## Corporate volunteering Telefónica O2

Volunteering of the **Telefónica O2 Czech Republic** is developed through company's Foundation O2, whose goal is to support the projects that help the development of mental and physical health of the youth. Foundation O2 also helps to develop and preserve the environment and communities, in which we live. Foundation O2 implements its programmes thanks to the volunteering help of the Telefónica employees. They dedicate their free time to volunteering activities or support the projects financially.

From all of the activities of the corporate volunteering programme, project of **Partnership with orphanages** in Klánovice, Pyšely u Benešova, Brno and Frídek Místek takes a leading position. Money is not always the most precious gift – interest from adults is exactly the thing that these children need the most. Employees spend their free time with the children and they organize entertaining sport weekends, trips and other ventures for them through the year. Every year, one hundred and fifty employees join the ventures, of whom one third attend the ventures periodically.



From May 2008 there is another volunteering example of Telefónica O2 Company, which is the cooperation with **Volunteering centre Lékořice** in Thomayer university hospital. The goal was to try a model of cooperation of commercial and non-profit sector within the community of Prague 4 and to provide specific visible help towards the patients in the hospital.

Since that time, seven whole day events have taken place already, which 250 employees attended (including general director Mr. Luis Malvido and Operation division director, Mr. Petr Slováček). Volunteers worked almost 1500 hours. Bravely they engaged in direct contact with patients, assisted in art workshops at the department of people with long-term illness, helped to improve the environment at the clinic and other departments of the hospital. Strong binding of the participants to specific departments has been created and some of the employees of Telefónica have become regular volunteers in the Volunteering centre Lékořice of Thomayer University Hospital thanks to this programme.



# Community volunteering

The basic 'pattern' of this form of volunteering is: *diversity of activities + sharing common values + active fellowship*. To use a more expert language, community volunteering is a natural and creative means of creating a functioning civil society, the aim of which is to promote social integration and increasing the quality of the citizens' life through the partnership of the civil, public, and commercial spheres at both local and regional levels. This type of volunteering, especially, is important for restoring the confidence and severed relations among people, and also greatly contributes to the development of the municipality and the quality of life of its citizens.

This means that a wide variety of activities might be fitting into this category. From local groups of neighbours, or people sharing an interest (such as the programs 'The Place Where We Live'<sup>1</sup>, or mothers' clubs), through programs of interconnecting communities (e.g. the project 'Home is Also Behind the Door'<sup>2</sup>), to sharing values within the civil society ('Nejsme v tom sami/We Are Not Alone' or 'Cesty ke kořenům/Journeys To the Roots'). Activities that create opportunities for close cooperation between the citizens and the local NGOs, administration, and business people are especially valuable.

The following guidelines, taken from the publication 'Moje obec, moje město – věc veřejná (My City, My Village – a Public Issue)' (Chaloupková, H. L., Nadace VIA, Prague 2000) provide a brief and accurate description of the process of involving the public in building the community:

- Put a strong and charismatic personality into the leadership of the project.
- Cooperate with the Mayor, the administration and various organizations and companies.
- Appreciate the knowledge of local people and use it.
- Be an apolitical organization.
- Realize the project in small steps – each finished step is a success.
- Involve the citizens in the work on the project in a targeted and meaningful way
- Try to design the tasks for your assistants in a manner that would allow them to develop their organizing and communication capabilities and skills.
- Concentrate on achieving visible results.
- Do not forget for the long-term goals.
- And most importantly – have fun and enjoy the project.

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1 Místo, kde žijeme

2 Doma je i za dveřmi



## The Mother

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*Pavla Tesařová (32) got her degree in elementary school teaching at the Pedagogical Faculty of the South Bohemian University in České Budějovice. She is married, has two children, and presently is on her maternity leave. She lives in the town of Teplá, close to Mariánské Lázně. She is active in the local congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, where she teaches in the Sunday school, sings in the choir, and participates in the operation of the mothers' centre.*



As a mother of little children, I had been thinking of how to use the time on my maternity leave meaningfully. I tried (and still am trying) to give the children as much care as possible, but at the same time I didn't want to feel isolated from the rest of the world. Therefore, I and two other mothers from the congregation of the Czech Brethren Church in Teplá founded a mothers' centre in the building of the congregation in March, 2007. We were given a partially equipped room there for our meetings. One of the families gave us some toys for the kids, together with the mothers, we bought a mobile swing and a slide. We also used the congregation's kitchenette and the hall, so the kids had a lot of fun. The volunteers from the local congregation cleaned the rooms for us and provided heating in winter or when the weather was cold. We offered the opportunity to come to the centre to all mothers of our town, no matter whether they were believers or not.

After the reconstruction of the parish building, we got the opportunity to organize the mothers' centre in the small hall. In the corner, there is a carpet, that we spread for singing and exercises, we added a fence for the smallest kids, lots of new toys, a fold-up crawling tunnel, plastic tables and chairs. We used the collected money to buy art supplies and decorated the room by our 'artwork'.

We take turns with other mothers in preparing the program of the mothers' centre and adjust it according to how old the kids who come are. The aim is to let the children develop both personally and socially. The children have the time and space to play, the mothers can share and open to each other. They can also enjoy the home-made delicacies that they bring there.

The idea of a mothers' centre has also inspired the local library. Once in a month, we met in the local library in the library in order to enrich the children's program and to foster their interest in books. We don't meet there any more, as the majority of the children started going to kindergartens (the time schedules don't match). But



it is possible that we will restore the cooperation again.

The popularity of the family as a legal institution is on its decrease in these days. This situation lead us, mothers, to organizing of so-called ‘wheeled parade’, that has been taking place in Teplá for four years now, always on the International Family Day, i.e. on May, 15th. The parade is open to anybody with a pram or children’s bike, etc. During the first two years, people took part in the parade even though the weather was bad. They were rewarded by sweets and commemorative cards. However, we thought that was insufficient. For the next two years, then, volunteers from among parents and friends prepared games and competitions for children in the local park. The kids learned to recognize various plants, carried wood on a wheelbarrow, had a children’s bike race, trained their memory by playing Kim’s game, threw balls at a goal, etc. This year even the voluntary fire-fighters of Teplá took part in the event. Children could see the fire vehicle and tried to hit tin cans with a water jet from manual pumps.

I know that participating in the work of the mothers’ centre would not be possible without the help of my family. My husband supports me, and my parents help in case of need. Also, the people from the Brethren congregation in Teplá are open to the needs of the centre. They made a collection among themselves and used the money to build a playground in the parish garden.

I’m grateful to God that the vision of the mothers’ centre has been fulfilled. I can see that the work is meaningful, even watching my own kids. They look forward to going to the centre and enjoy participating in the activities. They also learn to resolve various situations in the group – to yield to others, or to assert themselves in a healthy way, to help, comfort, or share. They cannot learn this spending time only within the family. For me, the reward is in the happy faces of the children and the satisfaction of their mothers. When I presented the idea of a mothers’ centre to the other mums, I didn’t know whether I would be successful or fail. And now I know that it was worth going for it and getting involved in (sometimes even sacrificing my time with family or leisure-time). The mothers’ centre and the people in it enriched my life.



## Mothers' clubs

They are, together with the mothers' centres, quite a new phenomenon – in the Czech Republic, they have started appearing since the 1990s. In these days, we can encounter a large number of such facilities, often built upon volunteering. The **Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren** is one of the institutions for whom the support of mothers is natural. Although the club meetings take place on the premises of the congregation, they are often non-religious meetings of mothers who just want to offer themselves and prepare programs for their children and other mothers.

Mothers' clubs help **prevent the social isolation** to which women may get when they leave their jobs and start their all-day care for their children. Thus, they allow women to spend their maternity leave actively. The clubs prepare their programs themselves, according to the actual needs and interests: they comprise various activities for children, mothers, or the entire families. The variety of the program is secured by the willingness of the attending mothers to offer others something of their skills. That may be: contributing to the operation of the club, arts, lectures, drama workshops, exercise, or organizing public events. Women thus find self-fulfilment in a sphere that is close to them and they maintain their professional skills during the maternity leave.

A part of the program are also psycho-motor exercises, social skills development, playing, discussions. The advantage for the children is, that the program often fea-

tures the parish garden, which is quite often actually a well-equipped children's playground, usually built voluntarily by the members of the Brethren Church organization. The mothers take turns in preparing the program. Thus they have the opportunity, instead of staying at home, to spend their time in the company of other mothers, share their joys or concerns and also to learn something new. Together, they discuss the actual issues concerning raising their children and family life.

It also helps start new friendships and restore the neighbourly relations. This creates conditions allowing families to agree on and look for the ways and opportunities of improving the lives of the families of the given neighbourhood or municipality.





## The orchardist

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*Veronika Fišerová (24 ) from Hnojice u Šternberga at Haná is a student in environmental studies at Masaryk University. She is employed by Ecological institute Veronika in Brno. In her free time she plays various musical instruments, mainly folk and jazz music, explores close and distant countries, teaches, takes care of old fruit trees in the Sudetenland, cooks, takes photographs and marvels.*



I have never thought of volunteering as something special – I have always thought of it as a part of my free time. My friends mostly brought me to some interesting organisation or project. When I turned fifteen, I started leading a group of children from the children section, then I went to help preserve the nature in “Hnutí Duha” (the Rainbow movement) in Olomouc. Some might say I have grown like a volunteer there and even more, I had the opportunity to do interesting journalist work in Olomouc – I was an editor in chief of the “Biozpravodaj” (Bioreporter) monthly. However, since my secondary studies, I have been looking for something more long-term, I wanted to have my part of responsibility for a big piece of interesting work that cannot be found in a student job or at school. However, this was about to come.



When I was eighteen I attended the summer camp of “Hnutí Brontosaurus” (Brontosaurus movement) at Jeseník region –it was a discovery of a new world. We worked hard for six hours at the meadow for free, played cognitive games and discussed life, ecology, society. Organizers of this extraordinary event were unreachable role models for me - I was convinced they must have been learning these skills for years. Therefore I was really surprised when I received an offer from them to help them organise events just two weeks after the camp venue – that is nothing special.

Right after my graduation I started organising my first brontosaurus weekends and camps at Jeseníky for people of my age. All this was organised under the programme “Road to roots” which aimed to intensify the relationship of people to their region by countryside and monument preservation, to avoid emigration. As a matter of fact, these people do not really feel at home here even after living here for decades. Their roots are somewhere else. They arrived here after the Second World War as a replacement for Sudetenland Germans who were forced to leave. So, what were we

doing there? We mowed orchard meadows in the Protected area of Jeseníky (CHKO Jeseníky). We repaired unique spa springs lost in the woods and we built an educational route in the middle of nature about aqua therapy. We mapped ruined chapels in the bush and we succeeded in reconstructing some of them and now the local people take care of them. Every event taught me a lot of things – how to cook food for twenty people, how to use a scythe, plant a tree, lead a debate or an excursion. Even more, Brontosaurus taught me the art of improvisation – how to cope with any peculiar situation with a smile on your face.

Today, within the “Road to roots” I mainly take care of an old orchard in the empty town of Jesenice with my friends. There is a strange powerful atmosphere penetrated by the spirit of the displaced



German farmers. Old varieties of fruit trees can hardly be seen today. However, they are reservoirs of taste, smell, shapes and genes for breeding. It would be a pity to let pine trees cover this land - this would be same as leaving a Baroque church to decay. We planted there dozens of young trees, we take care of them every year, mow grass, lop the old trees and pick the fruits for juice. We have created the background for work and

adventure events where everybody can try interesting things – crafts, theatre, music programmes and simulation games. One day, a field Ecology centre could be created here, focused on Sudetenland and fruit trees cultivation.

My interest in nature, countryside and monuments brought me to environmental studies and to my work for the Ecological centre Veronica in Brno. I work there now as an ecology adviser, I work on the project “Natural gardens without barriers” and I am dedicated to ecological agriculture and bio/local foods.

Nevertheless, volunteering still plays a major role in my life. It is an addiction for me probably – life without organisational challenges and obstacles would be a little boring. Volunteering is a great school of life for me, too. I know that if I want to see the world around me change, I have to do it myself – well, let us go for it! However, the people who I have met thanks to such events and who are there for me for life are most precious to me. Thanks to all of them.



## Cesta ke kořenům (The route to roots ) with Brontosaurus

From the 13th century, there had been German people living in the Rychleb hills, these people were expelled from their homes after 700 years at the end of the Second World War. Many villages were re-inhabited only partly; some have perished and were replaced by plains or woods.

Sixty years after the war, in 2006, some people from “**Brontosaurus movement**” noticed apple, pear and plum trees of **old varieties** growing in the bushes and pine trees in the Rychleb hills, which cannot be found in gardening stores. The country is lined by the forgotten trees that were not taken care of for sixty years, found especially in places where the ruins of **old German farms** are located.

In the former village Zastávka (Still Stand) next to Uhelné, “Brontosaurus” tried to take care of the trees – mowed the grass, cut the bushes and trees. The magic of the place forces people from “Brontosaurus” to return to Zastávka (Still stand) every once in a while. You can see distant Polish planes from here, you can pass big piles of rocks collected from the fields by the farmers from old times, and you hold your breath looking at the hollow walls of former farms.

People from “Brontosaurus” progressively planted dozens of new fruit trees, cultivated the surroundings of orchards and placed an information board here. Pomologic and botanic surveys took place in the area. Discussions over the situation in the area with local people from Uhelné were organised, because the communication with all the interested parties is very important here.

In spring and autumn, they invite volunteers from all around the country – there is always something to mow, cut, plant and the autumn harvest is waiting to be processed. Even more, this place is ideal for hiking, sleeping under the open sky, historical and natural science field trips.

When planning the future of the locality, words like “a gene pool orchard”, “small field Eco centre built in a natural way”, “educational road”, “background for processing and selling of fruit products”, “teaching of old crafts”, or “ natural material houses, sensitively built within the ruins of old houses” are common-place.

This all could be beneficial for people from Uhelné town, to which Zastávka (Still stand) belongs, and it could help to attract visitors to this forgotten place.





## Volunteering in churches and religious groups

Churches and religious groups are communities of people who, based upon their persuasion, decided to go through their lives together. Many of them also get involved in their community. The vast majority would, though, be surprised that someone may consider them volunteers just because they take care of a church building, sing or read the scriptures during worship, work in vestries, visit people in hospitals or senior homes, even though they may have been doing it for tens of years. For them, it is just a logical result of their faith.

The freedoms restored after 1990 allowed churches to organize volunteering in a much larger scope than what the *Catholic Charity* or *Evangelic Diaconia* could do during the Communist regime. Such service often aims to support the spiritual life of specific people or the entire group, however, it does not mean they would 'hover in the celestial heights'. The actual realization of the volunteer service varies. It may overlap with activities organized by other groups within the society, such as working with youth or senior care; in other cases it is the churches' own domain, such as supporting mothers with children, home care service, humanitarian and development assistance connected with sending volunteers into the Third World countries, etc. Moreover, many believers participate in voluntary activities organized by various NGOs or initiatives from a non-religious environment.

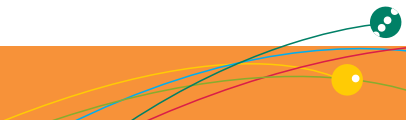
There are 35 registered religious groups in the Czech Republic, but there are many other associations whose main motivation is also faith or persuasion. These have not been registered because they, for example, are not numerous enough, or even do not wish to get registered. Even though, they may significantly benefit the society – from the most direct level of neighbourly help up to great works of international scope.



## The Preacher

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*Vladislav Páleník (53) comes from Moravia, but has been living in Prague for many years. He graduated from the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the Czech Technical University and worked as an investor of bridge constructions, later he started working in the sphere of industrial and business insurance. Now, he works mostly as a broker in a company that he partially owns. He likes sports and music and does these hobbies mostly actively. He has been an ordained presbyter since 1987.*



My path to the service of an ordained presbyter started sometimes in the end of the 1970s. I attended the youth congregation and participated very actively in the life of the entire church. Even back during my studies, I intensively communicated with my peers – among others also theology students. I was also influenced by a number of pastors, especially by their humanity, their attitude to the young and also to the Scripture and life. It was, for example Jan Keller in Zbytov, where we went for voluntary works, Bohdan Pivoňka from Svatouch, Jan Miřejovský from the parish of St. Kliment, pastors Jiří Šourek and Pavel Smetana, but also Miloš Bič, Miloš Rejchrt, or Svatopluk Karásek and many many others.

I also have to mention my aunt, Antonie Páleníková, who was one of the first women-theologians and pastors in our church, or my sister Jana – thanks to her I could see what the work in the congregation really was about and whether my heart should belong into it.

Therefore, unlike my sister, I did not decide to study theology. Although I disagree with many concepts of the Apostle Paul, one definitely spoke to me. It was that even apostles of God's Word should earn their daily bread by their own regular work. I did not want to be 'just' a pastor, but to share the standard environment of other members of the congregation, which also helps to refine the theological aspects. At the same time, I wanted to have a theology background, and so I discovered this way of serving the congregation even while having a regular job.

First, having completed the necessary courses, I was ordained an assisting preacher by the synod senior, ThDr. Hájek on November, 21st, 1984. Then, I could prepare the Sunday services on my own, however, I was not authorized to administer the sacraments. In the end of the 1980s, this kind of service was very important, as the totalitarian regime did not allow the pastors to serve and used to reject its official



consent with their service. Without the voluntary service of assisting preachers, who did not need the government consent, the life of many congregations would have been jeopardized.

I kept on in my education, successfully passed the exam, and on February, 8th, 1987 I was ordained to serve by the word and sacraments, again by the synod senior Hájek (the number of the authorization is 587) – I became a presbyter in the Prague



district of Libeň, but I also served in various suburb congregations of Prague. My service was gratefully accepted wherever there was a lack of preachers. Now, I am a member of the congregation of the Strašnice district of Prague and I often attend services especially in the town of Dobříš .

The service of an ordained presbyter is very demanding. It is, of course, a lot of work to prepare the entire liturgy, but what is the most important thing, is addressing the congregation. When I do not try to be very theological, I often succeed in getting closer to the people – I live in the same environment, I go to work I share their everyday concerns with them. In general, ordained presbyters have as much space as they dare to cope with. It is very demanding to come in front of the congregation as a layman and lead the service, that may be attended, say, by a faculty professor or a synod senior. It is not always easy – it takes some courage, but, on the other hand, also humility and willingness to accept a helping hand. However, I perceive this mission as a space for meeting members of various congregations and the opportunity to provide them with a view from a little different angle than their regular pastors offer them. Meeting them after the service is always somehow exceptional.

# The pastoral service in the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

In the life of the churches, a large number of volunteers get involved in various activities. A typical activity in Protestant churches are for example the pastoral services. In the **Czech Brethren church**, such volunteer is the **ordained presbyter**, who works as a deputy of the pastor. This is given by the presbyteral-synod type of arrangement, which means that even the pastoral work is done by lay people. The word 'presbyteral' comes from the word 'presbyter', i.e. 'elder', as the leadership of the congregation is done by elected elders; the word 'synod' captures the fact that the power in the church is divided among the congregations and the highest institution – the synod, which is the assembly of the representatives of the entire church. The church is based upon the **principle of the general priesthood of all believers**, which is not only recognized, but also practised by the church. However, to keep the order, it is necessary for the church to ordain (authorize) some workers – men or women – to administer the word and sacraments, and does it by prayer and laying on of hands. The Minister of the church is given a special gift of Holy Spirit for the service.

However, also other believers can work in the church and, are also encouraged to do so, as the church is well aware of the fact that it is not built upon the preachers, but firstly upon the lay people.

If a person wants to become an ordained presbyter, he or she has to pass exams that prove the necessary knowledge of theology. The work of an ordained presbyter is very demanding and is not paid in any way. An ordained presbyter does his or her work usually every week, or even more often, according to how active each congregation is. It is possible to say, that the work is done by people of high intrinsic qualities, who take it very seriously and see it as a very responsible task. The presbyters prepare their sermons, prayers and the liturgy of the services or biblical meetings, often leading the meetings themselves. There are many congregations with no permanent pastor and thanks to ordained presbyters, the service and also the community and its valuable fellowship can survive.





## The Instructor

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*Marie Linková (59) is a volunteer in the Roman Catholic Church, in the congregation of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Prague. She has been working with young people since 1993, when she started preparing a dance show in the Salesian Theatre with them. Since 1995, she has been fighting cancer and other increasing limitations. In 2004, after a long and intense cooperation as a volunteer, she became a member of the Salesian family. Now, she works in a team of instructors of the Salesian School of Animators.*



*I've got huge troubles at school. I can't really study at home. It's quite hard at home, now. I am searching for my relationship with Good and the way to Him. I got no idea how to get out of all my troubles. With these and many other problems, young people come to Marie Linková, whom they open their, often severely wounded, hearts. Marie, despite all her difficulties and all the illnesses she suffers from, keeps shining with life. She says: 'In the time of my serious illness I started discovering the dimension of a living relationship with God much more, or maybe grew more sensitive to it. And the result? When He gave me the gift of staying here, in the world, I understood this much deeper: If our relationship (God – human) is to remain alive, it is necessary to seek the Resurrected One in those around. How simple! We are all on our way to the Kingdom together, so it is absolutely natural.'*

After a year-long work in a team of instructors of the Salesian School of Animators, Marie had won the hearts of the young by her personal attitude. The ability to express their deep desires by figure dancing or other creative activities helps the new, preparing volunteers discover themselves and God in a new way, more intensely. They easily find trust to her and open her their lives. One testimony for all: *'If I can say it that way, you are an example to me in many ways. You know, when I first met you, you shone with such light and peace, and I had no problem opening to you as if I had known you for a long time. I was also totally surprised by the openness and love with which you accepted me as if I had been somebody special. You know that my self-confidence is not the best, but you have shown me I am valuable, and I thank you for that so much.'*

Marie sees one very important recurring theme of the Salesian School in the instructor – animator relationship, i.e. in a very personal relationship, thanks to which the regular meetings with instructors may develop (for volunteers often outside of weekends). The initial impulse is given by the atmosphere of the intercession prayer,



comes from the thematic workshops or from the experiential form of the prepared program: meditation on gospel, praying in an alternative form, preparation, and searching the conscience, reflections of a part of liturgy, etc. The feedback then shows what suited or did not suite the girls or boys, what and in what level brought them closer to the Lord. Also the level of confidence is important, even for Don Bosco it was a space to open and fertilize the heart. She admires the elements of his prevention system more and more: a kind acknowledgement of every young, honest confession, his own experience of a lived-out relationship with God, the dimension of familialness, his joyful acceptance of everydayness, and also his trust in God's presence and His direct acting.



tion of familialness, his joyful acceptance of everydayness, and also his trust in God's presence and His direct acting.

*'I was really moved by the sermon on the meeting of animators in Pardubice: holiness presented as plain, everyday openness to love, to good, to a good relationship with the Lord - because I desire His friendship (but unless I see Him in the people around, it is hypocritical from me). It is a*

*simple, joyful holiness, because it is not an achievement, but love - His love, especially. I have seen the kids understand, gradually and with excitement, that holiness is in fact a normal part of the life of a believer, it's something worth living for!*

*'What spoke to me and gave me a great desire to work with youth, which means also with volunteers? It was the example of many Salesians. František's steady spiritual leadership, Ladislav's sensitive Scripture explanation and his great humility, Jaroslav's standpoints and his way of searching for his path, and also the presentation of these ideas by Jarda Trávníček, and the honest sincerity of these people and their devotedness to the path of the youth. Of course, there are many more examples, and everybody whom God has sent in my way is something like a pillar for me. Therefore, I see this as an important thing also among the animators.'*

Marie also appeared in a TV document 'Dobrovolnictví jako životní etapa (Volunteering As a Life Phase)' where the importance of volunteering for the life of faith is shown.



# Salesian Animators

One of the fundamental ideas of the **Animator** movement in the Salesian family is 'to educate those who educate others, and to give them a special attention and care'. An animator – a young person, just a little older than his or her friends – is a person of an intrinsic desire to do something for others.

Since 2005, Salesians and Salesian Sisters have been systematically preparing their young cooperators, animators, in a so-called **Salesian School of Animators**. Thus, they continued in the long tradition of work with animators in our country, and, apart from offering several Salesian centres, they came up with a new offer of animator preparation at the national level.

The program Salesian Animators is an accredited volunteer program intended for young people who want to share a part of their leisure time with children and youth, primarily in Salesian Centres – clubs, centres, parishes – in the Czech Republic. Within three years the, participants go through nine formative and educative weekends. The prepared program presumes young people who have already been participating in the life of a Christian community or have been seeking to



do so. The Salesian work includes also the spiritual dimension of a human. Therefore, it is necessary that those who get involved in the course (and also in the service in Salesian Centres) were capable of respecting the dimension.

The run of one year of the school is secured by a team of up to five members. It consists of Salesians, Salesian Sisters and experienced animators. It is desirable that the members of the team already have some experience with the Salesian School of Animators (SSA) or some other form of young people education.

It is necessary that everybody was familiar with his or her own role and with the roles of others. To keep the continuity of the SSA, it is necessary to have at least one person in the team who has some experience with the SSA and can apply the good tradition and the acquired experience. However, it is also necessary to rethink this activity continuously and reflect it in common meetings of all SSA team members.

The five year long tradition of the Salesian School of Animators showed many its advantages as well as limitations. Those young people who completed it evaluate gratefully its benefit for their own lives and for the service to others.

## Resumé

Ačkoliv se v odborných kruzích stále vedou debaty o přesné definici dobrovolnictví, je možno pokládat právě tento sborník za velmi dobrou „praktickou definici“ toho, co představuje dobrovolnictví v naší zemi. V žádné ze zpracovaných oblastí nebyl problém najít lidi, kteří část svého času a sil dávají bez ohledu na finanční odměnu k dispozici potřebným a u kterých nebylo pochyb, že skutečně naplňují všeobecně sdílenou představu o tom, koho lze určitě pokládat za dobrovolníka. A to navzdory tomu, že samotné dobrovolnictví má i u nás několik různých zdrojů.



Ve sborníku začínáme oblastí napojenou na služby **zdravotnické** a **sociální**. Tedy dobrovolnictvím s propracovaným systémem přijímajících a vysílajících organizací, akreditací, standardů péče a kvalitního managementu práce s dobrovolníky, který se opírá o stále narůstající počet dobrovolnických center. Systém navíc už v současné době podpořený i zákonem o dobrovolnické službě. Obdobně se vyvíjelo dobrovolnictví zaměřené na **mezinárodní a rozvojovou pomoc**, v rámci níž Češi působí po celém světě a současně se u nás objevují dobrovolníci zahraniční. A zjevnou podob-

nost s předchozími má i rámec dobrovolnické pomoci v **krizových a mimořádných situacích**: opírá se o účelnou dělbu činností mezi profesionálními pracovníky z institucí veřejného sektoru a dobrovolníky zajišťované dobrovolnickými centry, případně přicházejícími ze specializovaných neziskových organizací, které mají podobný původ, jako instituce druhé skupiny.

Další mohutný proud dobrovolnictví u nás totiž navazuje na mimořádně silnou tradici z doby národního obrození, kdy spolková činnost byla mnohdy určující silou společnosti. A tak se tu setkáváme s dobrovolníky ve **sportu** a v práci s **děťmi a mládeží**, kteří navazují především na činnost Sokola a obdobných osvětově – výchovných spolků, stejně jako dobrovolníci v **ochraně přírody** a velice členité a rozsáhlé oblasti **kulturní**.

Z ještě starších zdrojů nejen české, ale celé evropské tradice pak čerpá dobrovolnictví vycházející z prostředí **církví a náboženských společností**, které dnes ovšem na sebe bere mnohdy formy velice moderní – a nezřídka se prolíná s tím, co se nazývá dobrovolnictví **komunitní** pokládané právem za nutný rozměr zdravé občanské společnosti.

Konečně posledním typem – nikoliv z hlediska významu, ale časové posloupnosti rozšíření u nás – je dobrovolnictví iniciované samotnými **firmami**, které je velmi populární v tradičních demokraciích a je dokladem toho, že *komerční* nemusí vůbec znamenat jen hon za ziskem a necitlivost k potřebným.

V našem sborníku však nejde v první řadě o organizace – byť by byly sebevíc zasloužilé – ale hlavně o konkrétní lidi. O jejich skutečné životní příběhy. O jejich „cestu dobrovolníka“. A tady se ukazuje, že je to cesta otevřená skutečně všem. Mladým studentům, matkám od rodin, důchodcům. Mužům i ženám, děvčatům i chlapcům, lidem s různým stupněm vzdělání, životních zkušeností i ambic. Ve sborníku nám své životní příběhy nabízejí lidé z velkoměst i úplně malých obcí, ti, kteří po cestě dobrovolnictví krácejí desítky let, i ti, kteří se na ni vydali teprve nedávno. Navzdory této pestrosti je však mnohé spojuje a jsou si až neuvěřitelně podobní: v zájmu o druhé, ve schopnosti vytvářet s druhými společenství, v ochotě se s nimi dělit o svůj čas a síly, v důvěře, že taková činnost má smysl. Všichni, se kterými se setkáte v tomto sborníku, jsou potvrzením toho, co na závěr konstatuje i nedávný výzkum: *jako nejlepší dobrovolníci se jevíli humanisticky orientovaní jedinci, sociálně integrovaní a angažovaní v mnoha dalších aktivitách.*

# Summary

Although discussions on exact definition of volunteering are still being held among experts, this collection can be regarded as an apt “practical definition” of what constitutes volunteering in the Czech Republic. In all examined areas we could easily find people who, regardless of financial rewards, devote part of their time and efforts to those in need and who undoubtedly satisfy a commonly shared conception of somebody who can certainly be recognized as a volunteer in spite of the fact that volunteering itself has also in our country several sources.

The collection begins with an area of **health and social services**. It includes volunteering with an elaborate system of hosting and sending organisations, accreditations, standards of care and high-quality management of volunteers’ work that is based on an increasing number of volunteer centres. This system is at present supported also by the law on voluntary service. A similar development experienced volunteering aimed at **international and development co-operation**. In this field Czech citizens help all over the world and, at the same time, volunteers from abroad come to work in our country. The area of voluntary assistance in **emergency and exceptional situations** has many similarities with the previous ones: it relies on effective division of work among professionals from public sector institutions and volunteers recruited by volunteer centres or coming from specialized non-profit organisations that have alike origin as the institutions from the second group.

Another powerful stream of volunteering in the Czech Republic continues an extremely strong tradition from the times of national revival when activities in different associations often represented a determining social force. Consequently, there are many volunteers in **sports** and **children and youth work** who follow up the activities of Czech physical training union “Sokol” and other traditional educational associations, as well as volunteers in **environmental protection** and those working in a broad and differentiated sphere of **culture**.

Volunteering stemming from the environment of **churches and religious societies** draws from yet older sources of not only Czech but Pan-European tradition. However, today it takes very modern forms and often blends together with so called **community volunteering** that is justly considered to be a prerequisite of a sound civil society.

Finally, the last type of volunteering – not in terms of importance, but from the chronological point of view – represents volunteering initiated by **business companies**. It is very popular in traditional democracies, and can be regarded as a proof



of the fact that *commercial* does by no means involve merely a chase after profit and insensitivity to people in need.

But this collection is not primarily concerned with organisations – however meritorious they are – but above all with individual people, their real life stories and paths to volunteering. Here it becomes apparent that this path is, indeed, open to all: to young students, mothers, pensioners, men and women, girls and boys, people with different levels of education, various life experience and ambitions. This collection



include life stories of people from big cities as well as those from little villages, people who have been working as volunteers for dozens of years and also those who did not start until recently. Despite all differences among them, they resemble each other incredibly and have much in common: concern about other people, ability to create fellowship, willingness to share their time and efforts with others, confidence in meaningfulness of such activities. All people you will read about in this collection bear testimony of what we found out also in our recent research: *the best volunteers tend to be humanistically oriented people who are well integrated into society and involved in many other activities.*

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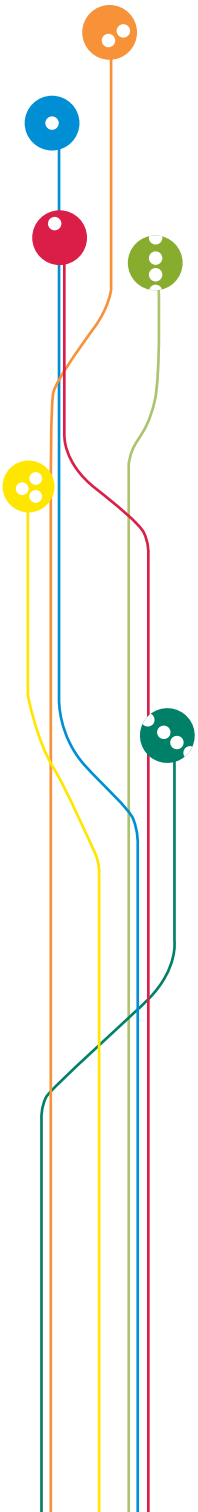
**Typesetting & graphic design:** David Urban

**Translation:** Radek Chejlava, František Volmut

**Photographs:** the archives of volunteers of the particular associations and volunteering centres mentioned in the stories, the archives of the National Institute of Children and Youth and the Czech Council of Children and Youth, Renata Vejdělková (6,7,9), Petr Vojtíšek (17,19), Silvie Juřicová (20,21,22), Dalibor Paleček (27,28,29), Petra Večerníková (40,41,42), archiv Huasaraň Velatice (53), Marie Dušková (57), Martin Karol (58), Jan Langer (67), Pavla Tesařová (97)

**An imprint of:** Studio REFOS, Praha 4

**Issued by:** The National Institute of Children and Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2011



**Volunteer!**  
**● Make a**  
**difference** 