





Introduction

According to a report compiled by the Commissioner For Human Rights Office pertaining to the ratification by Poland of the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, their numbers in our country are estaimated at around 5.5 million. Approximately 60% are classed as persons with an intellectual disability, with the highest rate of exclusion: more than half of them have no primamry eduaction, and the level of unemployment in this group exceeds 85%. According to a survey conducted by the " Bardziej Kochani - More Loved" Foundation, for the Municipal Office of the Capital City of Warsaw, 50.000 people in Warsaw alone are considered persons with intellectual disability. No other social group is a subject of so many myths, prejudices and negative stereoptyping. Sometimes, even peeple with different types of disabilites object when placed in the same group as people with intellectual disabilities. The latter are condemned to starvation benefits, suffer the worst poverty (one in four families is at risk) – and most often tend to stay in an "exclusion ghetto".

About us

"We Also Want To Be" Foundation came about from a need of the heart and ... the moment. We are a group of parents with children considred to be intellectually disabled to a light or moderate degree. In 2011 our children, the pupils of Kazimierz Kierejczyk's Special (Vocational*) Schools Complex nr 105 (on Dluga street in Warsaw) finished their education and since there was no possibility of extending it by another year we were faced with a dilemma. In a life of every family with a disabled person there are two major difficult moments: the first when one has to face and accept the disability of one's own child, and the second one when the child graduates from school. When our children are at school life goes on more or less in a stable and safe manner – the same as in any other family – school, home, doing homework together ... But, after graduation brutal reality hits with a set of new challenges. How do we introduce them into adult life, knowing all too well how meagre their chances are of finding any, even part-time, work (full time emloyment being out of the question). How do we organize their time, and finally – probably the most difficult question of all, which during their schooling time could be put aside for the future, what do we need to do to ensure a semblance of a normal life for them when we are no loger here, so they are not forced to live on welfare, social benefits and condemned to a life in a care home....

This is how the idea of creating "We Also Want To Be" Foundation came to life. Since 2011 we have been trying to find answers to these questions and at the same time fighting to change the negative stereotyping surrounding persons with intellectual disability.

Our Foundation was registered at the National Court Register in August 2012 and the main objectives and duties layed out in the Foundation's Statute are as follows:

"The Foundation's aim is to promote and enable participation in employment and social integration of the disabled, and in particular persons with intellectual disability, and as a result to create jobs guaranteeing disabled people an opportunity of accessing posts compatible with their qualifications and abilities, and assuring additional means of support, also when their carrers are no longer present."

We invite you to review the presentation of "We Also Want To Be" Foundation's activities.

A Photography Exhibition "A Portrait With and Without a Hat"

One of the Foundation's first achievemnts was an exhibition of photographic portraits of students and employees of Kazimierz Kierejczyk Special Schools Complex nr 105, entitled "A Portrait With and Without a Hat". The photos were taken in improvised space at the school on Dluga street, and they were also showcased there for the first time in June 2011.

The portraits were taken by a father and son duo. The father – Tadeusz Pozniak, a photojournalist for a weekly magazine "Polityka", a member of Polish Society of Photographers and also a teacher of a new generation of photographers, and the son – Maciek Pozniak, a disabled pupil from Kierejczyk school, with a keen interest in photography.

The photographs shown at the exhibition were the first and irrefutable evidence of how wrong we are when judging the capabilites of people commonly regarded as handicapped/disabled and of the great potential they can hold. We have also shown that, with proper education, the people under our Foundation's care can function freely in certain occupational sectors, and also that a reltionship: parents – child – work opportunity – can be very effective.



A Social Campaign "We Also Want To Be. An Intellectual Disability Doesn't Exclude From Life"

In the autumn of 2013 we undertook an even greater task. We decided to organize a social campaign promoting our motto: "An Intellectual Disability Doesn't Exclude From Life".

We wanted first of all to promote the ideas contained within the ratified by Poland UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with particular reference to the plight of persons with an intellectual disability.

We also wanted to draw attention to a difficult, often desperate social and economic position of people with intellectual disability.

We were looking to break negative and often false stereotypes relating to these handicaps.

We managed to enlist the help of great partners. Prfessor Irena Lipowicz - the Commissioner For Human Rights – took the honorary patronage of the campaign while the media patronage was provided by Polish Radio One. Our other partners included "Promyk Slonca' a Foundation from Wroclaw and Stroer company, who let us use promotional space on their bilboards at a reduced rate: 42 bilboards in Warsaw and 20 in Wroclaw.

As part of the campaign we also recorded a song, written by Marcin Wlodarczyk. The song, which served as a kind of anthem for our Foundation was played on radio shows where we talked about our campaign. You can listen to the song at: http://bit.ly/tezchcemybyc



Social campaign "We Also Want to Be" in the streets of Warsaw and Wroclaw

A Commercial Spot for the Commissioner for Human Rights

In 2013 our protégés acted in a commercial spot shot for the Commisioner For Human Rights. The Commisoner's office screened a documentary film about the ratification by Poland of the UN Convention for the right of people with disabilities and the areas of authority of the Comissioner For Human Rights. It was filmed using a language adapted to the needs of people with intellectual disability.





On the set of the spot of Polish Commissioner for Human Rights



Formal presentation of the spot at the commissioner's office



Among the guests of the ceremony



Our protégés receiving a special word of thanks for taking part in the video making

A Christmas Carol "Our Hearts Give Most at Christmas time"

Our next undertaking was a recording of Chrstmas carol "Our Hearts Give Most at Christmas time".

It all started with the idea Mrs Blanka Barkan-Popowska, one of our co-founders, had in summer 2013. She came up with a concept of composing a special Christmas song and wrote a few lines of lyrics.

We were able to realise that idea with the help of many people. Among them were Anna Jozefina Lubieniecka, Varius Manx vocalist, who sang on the record and Marcin Wlodarczyk, a film music composer, who wrote the music and the final version of the lyrics. And the song was recorded at his studio by the Foundation's charges and a group of pupils from the Special Schools Complex nr 105 in Warsaw. It was an important and challenging experience for our protégés. Each one of them had to enter the recording booth, put on the headphones and, overcoming timidity and stage fright, sing on their own the chorus lines of the carol. And they all did tremendously!

The next idea was to film a video clip to go with our carol. We were helped by the students from Melchior Wankowicz School of Journalism. Mr Stefan Bratkowski provided us with the location at the Foundation Press Centre and Mrs Elzbieta Slazak art directed the video. More than 20 people were directly involved in the production and shooting of the clip. The filming took the entire day and it was a great lesson of patience and humility for all, both able-bodied and disabled participants.

The copy of our video clip, which was broadcast by channel TVN24, can be found at this address: http://bit.ly/klip-swiateczny



Recording a Christmas carol

A Calendar "For a Good Year 2013" A Photographic Exhibition "Vertigo" and a Calendar for 2015

The main characters of our first calendar are our protégés. With a partial aid from Bre Bank Foundation we published a limited edition of 100 copies, which were sent to all the prominent figures in the country and to the media. The calendar promoted our motto: "A Disability Doesn't Exclude From Life". One copy was sold at an auction for 750zl!

We shot the photos for the calendar during various outings and excursions organized for our Foundation's protégés, which included an ice skating rink, a zoo, a cycling trip and a basic course in horse riding.



In 2014 we had an opportunity to present our second photographic exhibition entitled "Vertigo". We invited pupils from the hairdressing class at the Special Schools Complex on Dluga street to help with preparing the photosession. We asked them to do hairstyles and stylize the looks of their fellow ex-pupils, our protégés. Their creations were photographed and artistic portraits were later presented in the exhibition.

The photos were also used in the calendar for 2015, which was published with the backing from the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights.



A Social Campaign "Siblings with a Disability – love of the highest order"

In 2017 we decided to tackle the subject of siblings of persons with different types of disabilities. All the experts we invited to participate in the campaign pointed out straight away that this subject has never to date been discussed at any serious level and that nobody wondered at what the life of sibilings was like.

A video clip was shot for the campaign in which eight sets of siblings answered a simple question: What is your brother like? What is your sister like? We asked a famous actress Stanislawa Celinska to take part in the campaign.

We also organized a conference with the participation of experts: professor Ewa Pisula and educator Mrs Renata Sajdak, who talked about the difficult situation of siblings of persons with disabilities, about the great help and assistance they so often provide to their brothers and sisters but also the problems they must face in everyday life. The campaign also allowed an opportunity to bring the subject to the media's attention. We took part, among others, in a radio programme "Integracja" for Polish Radio One.

The recording of this programme can be found at th<mark>is add</mark>ress: http://bit.ly/integracja-pr1 The video clip can be viewed here: http://bit.ly/mojbrat-mojasiostra



The conference on the problems of siblings of people with disabilities

A Photographic Exhibition "My Brother, My Sister"

The Campaign was accompanied by an exhibition of photographs by Tadeusz Pozniak. We showed relationships between siblings in 17 beautiful images. The exhibition was showcased at Pozyteczna Café Club, at the workshops of the Foundation for Socio-Economic Initiative and at the Office of the Commissioner For Human Rights.



The Skills Academy

Our flagship and a trully inspired innitiative turned out to be the creation of the Skills Academy, which has operated since autumn 2012.

We currently have 12 students enrolled at the Academy and keep receiving plenty of interestmainly from persons with light or moderate intellectual disability.

Where did the idea come from? After the Vocational School was finished, we, the parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities, were faced with a problem of how to organize the time for our children as their chances of finding work were practically nonexistent. We did not want them to be confined to the family homes as this would lead to the loss of skills they learnt at school. Our convictions were further reinforced when after the first long holidays were over some of them kept returning to the old school, even just to play football with their mates. Our aim was to impart pratical knowledge, but most of all to help develop their personalities, prompt their curiosity about the world and also to maintain and develop, as much as possible, the skills they have already gained at school. We decided to use these ideas and create a programme that would on the one hand be interesting for our future students but on the other would not be a simple continuation of school.

The rules governing the Academy are simple:

- participation in the programme is absolutely voluntary and one is free to leave at any time
- participants are treated as students, as adults
- participants have a say in the curriculum and on what we do
- the classes should, as much as possible, be conducted as a dilaogue a conversation rather than a monologue or a lecture



The classes we run at the Skills Academy are:

- Art / Styling
- Photography
- "The World and I" classes led by a psychologist
- Physical Education
- IT Computing
- English language using Callan's method of teaching
- Acting Workshops
- History
- Media Appreciation
- Ballroom Dancing
- Capoeira
- Polish language
- Maths



The Academy also provides classes in First Aid, led by volunteers from a charity Wielka Orkiestra Swiatecznej Pomocy (The Grand Orcchestra of Christmas Aid)



What is important is that, although all the participants have been classsed as having intellectual disability, they all, within the limits of their abilities, can be and are intellectualy active. The Academy is there to provide the right environment for the development of intellectual activity, its continuous stimulation and to raise the bar highier all the time.

This is probably why it is the only Academy in the country that never ends... Because, really it is not about teaching these young adults job specific skills and abilities (this phase of their eduaction is already over and the chances for employment are very slim). It is about something much more elusive and fleeting but just as important. It is about a way of life, about expanding a sense of wonder, curiosity about and opening to the world surounding them.

This is the reason why we organize regular outings of all all sorts, mount exhibitions, visit museums. Our protégés had the opportunity to visit the TVN studios, observe from the wings the work of famous TV presenters and journalists. They also visited the Polish Parliament.



An excursion to Polish Parliament

Going to the movies



With Kamil Durczok at TVN television station studios



Behind the scenes of a news broadcast



Frequent trips to museums and exhibitions

And finally one more more reason why the existence of the Academy is so important to us. We want our protégés simply to be happy.... This is why we organize so many events which our protégés can attend with their families, parents, siblings and friends.

Among others we organized a kayaking trip down the Liwiec river, an excursion to Biebrza basin and a picnic at Powsin park. Every year during the winter season we regularly go ice-skating. We also celebrate together all the birthdays of our protégés and go bowling. We have been with a visit at the National Stadium and the go-carting track. One of our traditions is a "Ball for Friends", which we have been holding since 2014.





The Ball for our Friends

Celebrating birthday of one of our protégés



An excursion to the National Stadium...



... and to the bowling alley



A trip to the Masurian district



Canoeing down the Liwiec river

Voluntary work

For several years now our protégés together with their friends from the Special Schools Complex nr 105 on Dluga street in Warsaw have been devoting some of their time to a worthy cause. Under the supervision of their PE teacher Mrs. Anna Maslowska they have been volunteering during races and marathons. Over the years they have attended a countless number of sporting events. Regardless of the weather and the time of the year they are always willing and happy to arrive at the allotted place ready to help with organizing, giving out starting packs, cold drinks along the track and finally with the clean up afterwards. Their great energy and smiling faces make a positive impact on the contestants taking part in the races.



Real experts in organising sport competitions



A Social Cooperative "Pozyteczni (Useful*)" and the Café Club "Pozyteczna (Useful*)"

When we were starting up our Foundation we wanted to find a way for our protégés to lead a decent, adult life, also when we are no longer there for them.

Everyone, who has a disabled person in their family, and especially one with an intellectual disability, knows all too well what the situation is like. It is in this group – the largest within all disabilities – that the level of unemployment is the greatest. Furthermore, even those who manage to find some kind of employment, tend to lose their jobs pretty quickly – within a couple of months, and thus another long period of even more destructive unemployment begins for them.

We decided to reverse the situation. Our protégés will be looking for employment, but they will instead create their own work places and, eventually, employ able bodied people to do the jobs that exceed their abilities.

Over the years that Skills Academy has been active we have had a chance to observe how our protégés are managing specific tasks and jobs. Apart from working at sporting events we mentioned earlier, we helped with organization of several events, meetings and conferences. Most often our main assignemnt was catering and waiting. We could see for ourselves that our protégés were doing very well in these roles.

And this is how the idea of creating a Social Cooperative "Pozyteczni" (Useful*)" came to life. And it is within its framework that the Café Club "Pozyteczna" (Useful*)" has been open in Warsaw for the last two years.



The first assembly of the coopertive members



Grand opening of "Pożyteczna" (Useful Café)







... as well as bartending and waitering.

Summary

Thanks to all the actions we have described we are now offering disabled people a wide range of activities and opportunities for development. The Skills Academy is still active. We are contastly striving to develop and evolve. Our dream is to be able to offer our protégés new and even more interesting tasks.

New candidates, who after finishing special school would be condemned to living at their homes in islolation keep aproaching us. Here they have a chance to develop further, to discover the world and to find friends. We are happy to take anyone on board.

The Foundation has up to now operated from the premises made available to us by the courtesy of the Foundation Press Centre for Eastern Eurpean Countries. Is is also here that Café Club "Pozyteczna (Useful*)" was situated.

Unfortunately we cannot any longer rent our premises at a preferential rate and the terms the building's manager has offered us are in a long run way beyound our finanacial means. This is why we are alredy looking for new premises, where we could continue and develop our Foundation's operations. We also see the Academy relocating there, and hope to get a larger membership. We would also like to keep our Café Club "Pozyteczna (Useful*)" trading and open, as a place where people with disabilities, members of our Foundation, would have guaranteed work places.

Thanks to that we created a real center for complex help for all those who are in need.

For almost 8 years now we have been propelled by our desire to help our children, our brothers, our siters, our friends. We want to guarantee them the happiest life possible and to make their dream come true, which can be summed up in a few words: "WE ALSO WANT TO BE ... USEFUL"

Acknowledgements

All the things we have achieved up to now would not have been possible without the selfless, charitable, generous suport of very many people, the families and friends of our protégés. It has been however, and still is for all of us a lesson in patience and cooperation. We want to thank every person, who has over the years and still is helping the Foundation, the Skills Academy, the Social Cooperative and the Café Club. We don't want to omit anybody so we thank You All.

We would like to thank you you for giving your time reviewing the presentation of "We Also Want To Be" Foundation's activities. Please visit our website and our profile on social media. We would also love to welcome you in our Café Club "Pozyteczna (Useful*)".

Please contact us if you would like to offer a finacial support for our Foundation's activities.

About us – media coverage

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Our links

Początki działalności Akademii Umiejętności https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSTKJc0N_Mc&t=42s

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Hymn Fundacji "Też Chcemy Być" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXMzCv0Uksk

Teledysk konkursowy do piosenki zespołu M83, w którym uczestniczyli nasi podopieczni https://genero.com/watch-video/36627

Zakończenie roku 2016 w Akademii Umiejętności https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gERkSNbj9_k

Otwarcie Klubokawiarni Pożyteczna https://youtu.be/fUhbOuDAb5g

Pierwsze Urodziny Klubokawiarni Pożyteczna https://youtu.be/u0bCXkQpz2s

Projekt "Pojąć Głębię" z udziałem podopiecznych fundacji https://youtu.be/R4o6y8LVm74

The authours of the photos used in the presentation: Tadeusz Późniak, Maciek Późniak, Michał Czarnocki, Andrzej Czarnocki, Sławomir Popowski, Blanka Barkan-Popowska In the presentation we used the resources of "Też Chcemy Być" foundation.

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