



Η Κρήτη Δίνει Ζωή
crete for life

ACTIVITY REPORT 2014

ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΩ!





DEAR FRIENDS OF CRETE FOR LIFE,

This year has been one of the happiest and most successful since we started our association in 2005. In fact, after some demanding years, we were able to successfully achieve all the plans we set up to do. This has been possible thanks to the support of the Rozalia Stiftung, that has allowed us to concentrate on what we do best: supporting children and young adults through difficult times.

We have hosted a month of “Rest and Recuperation by the Cretan Sea” for twenty children living with serious chronic diseases, and were helped by some wonderful volunteers from Greece and oversea. I cannot describe the sheer joy of the experience but I know I shared it with everyone involved, big and small. Children and adults did not know each other before landing in Crete, but somehow the chemistry, and the magic of the island, helped to create four weeks of friendship, well being and fun.

Some of the children who have come to Crete for the “Rest and Recuperation” in the past are now young adults and we have seen and heard the positive effects this experience had on them. Crete is a place where they have collected many happy, positive memories, improved their health, learned about different cultures and made many new friends.

Crete For Life exist because we wish every child a happy and healthy life, but this is not always possible. Chronic conditions, leukemia, cancer, poverty, social and mental problems are only some of the obstacles that the children we help have to deal with, everyday of their young lives. We believe that practical help, and knowing that someone is reaching out for you, can have a positive ripple effect on the mind. Positive thoughts can take roots in the happy memories of childhood, staying with you for life.

This is why, with your help, we will do anything possible to continue our programs in the future.

Olimpia Theodoli
President
Crete For Life

P.S. all the photos in this report were taken by the children



Piccolo Criminale and his pal Vlad



Palina, swimming champion



Anastasia, future jewellery designer

CRETE FOR LIFE OBJECTIVES

Programs

❖ “Rest and Recuperation” for children from Belarus has the aim of offer a one month’s respite to children living in the Chernobyl affected areas, one of the most polluted areas in the world. A one month’s stay by the sea and a healthy diet allows the immune system to recuperate and generally greatly strengthened their health and spirit. We offer it to children that could not otherwise have this experience, and we do it because there is medical evidence of the direct benefits of a long period away from contaminated air and food.

❖ “Rest and Recuperation” for children living in Greece offers respite breaks by the Cretan Sea to children affected by congenital chronic condition such as Cystic Fibrosis and chronic asthma. The aim is to offer a period of hospitality by the sea side for children whose condition will particularly benefit from the clean sea air. The families of the children hosted are vetted together with the pediatric specialist Dr. Eleni Michailidou of the University Hospital in Crete, one of the largest in Greece. We offer it to children that could not otherwise afford to have this experience, and we do it because of the evidence collected by Dr. Michailidou.

❖ The support program is an ongoing project developed in cooperation with the community’s social careers. The aim is to help in practical ways children and young adults living in the local community but who are not supported by the national system. Our help is usually practical, such as arranging and paying for medical visits and therapies, food, school supplies, clothing etc.

We do it because we realize that there are those who have no right or access to the national health system, and if the parents are out of work, as in the case of forced migrants, they can be in situation of extreme poverty.



Art therapy...



Conquering fear



Worries-free!

CRETE FOR LIFE OBJECTIVES

Communication

❖ During these past months, Crete For Life has strengthened its bonding with the local community and with other associations and institutions in Greece and abroad reaching out to even more special children (among others the Red Cross and the University Hospital of Crete). This has been greatly facilitated by finally renting our own premises. Until now our meetings were held in the local public library and we could not collect and store donations in kind. We were thus able to help out children from the local Cretan community in many practical ways .

❖ We organize community events for children and their families, with the aim of promoting our projects and finding volunteers and donations in kind, especially among the younger generation. This past year we have organized a football tournament, a Cretan cooking workshop, art classes, etc .

Fundraising

❖ The local program of fundraising has included a major concert of Cretan Music, an evening of Cretan dances, bazaars offering artifacts from the Mediterranean and those made by our volunteers.

❖ Thanks to the new premises we were finally able to collect donation in kind (especially long life food and clothing) to distribute in our support program.

❖ International fundraising has included the use of social media and of public funding (particularly the charity tax allowance “5 x 1000” in Italy)

Expansion

❖ An immediate effect of having our own space was an increase of volunteers: finally they knew where to find us! We are also looking forward to increase our communication and fundraising programs to include many events during the next year. We plan to increase our program of support while preparing to host many children in the summer of 2015.

ACHIEVEMENTS



Objectives set

- Rest and Recuperation for ten Belarusian children
- Rest and Recuperation for Greek kids
- New members /volunteers
- Find premises for the association

- Contact with associations, institutions and charities

- Trip to Belarus

Achievements

- ✓ Fifteen children, three guardians and volunteers hosted in Crete for four weeks
- ✓ Five children and their families hosted in Crete for one week
- ✓ Increase from twelve, to thirty new members
- ✓ Crete For Life premises up and running
- ✓ Collection of donations in kind
- ✓ Workshops

- ✓ Partnership with The Sara Hope Foundation
- ✓ Cooperation with local Red Cross
- ✓ Cooperation with University Hospital
- ✓ Cooperation with local associations and institutions

- ✓ Renewed partnership with the association “Medicine and Chernobyl”
- ✓ Development programs in Belarus
- ✓ Meeting and reconnecting with children and young adults who have been hosted in Crete in the past



Confronting any obstacle: calm preparation, focused effort, success!

IMPACT AND VALUE

- **The children hosted in Crete suffer from various severe pathologies**, including acute lymphoblastic leukemia, brain tumors, thyroid tumors, kidney tumors, Burkitt's lymphoma, congenital cardiac abnormalities, Von Recklinghausen's disease, cystic fibrosis and chronic asthma.
- Moreover, **several of the children hosted live in very difficult familiar, social and economical circumstances** and a few of them are in the care of social services.
- **70% to 90% of Belarus was contaminated by the fall of radioactive material from the Chernobyl catastrophe (1986)**. Today, the country soil and ground water are still contaminated, and therefore all livestock and food grown and consumed in the country is to some degree radioactive.
- **The United Nations recognizes that 3-4 million children were affected by the disaster**. Many types of tumors and birth defects have greatly increased since the Chernobyl disaster. The consequences of Chernobyl and the fall of the Soviet Union, has had a huge social and economical negative impact on the country. The people of Belarus continue to suffer medically, economically, and socially.
- (See: [www.chernobyl-international.org / documents/chernobylfacts2.pdf](http://www.chernobyl-international.org/documents/chernobylfacts2.pdf))
- **The children travel with a specialist doctor, a teacher and an interpreter**, who are their legal guardians while abroad.
- Children are hosted in Crete for at least three years in a row because **the recuperative break with Crete For Life is not a one-off prize, like a trip to Disneyland**, but a yearly appointment where the same children can improve their health and strengthen their spirit, while collecting positive childhood experiences and memories.
- **It is medically recognized that the age between 10 to 16 is crucial in reinforcing the immune system**.
- **Belarus is land-locked**. Crete offers the ideal sea - dry climate for convalescing and recuperating from many conditions such as thyroid cancer and chronic asthma. **The experience of seeing the sea for the first time is magical**.
- The Cretan diet, rich in fish, vegetables, pulses and fruits, is world renowned for its health-giving qualities. **One month's of Cretan diet can visibly reinforce the children's system**.
- **Children who have been on the program in the past testify to the positive physical and mental effects the experience had on them**.

MEDICAL REPORT

by :

Tatiana Shinderova, doctor
Lidia Pshanitsyna, teacher
Galina Kovalenko, interpreter

Medical impact of the program

The trip was organized for the children with onco-hematological, oncologic and allergic diseases. The children were on a four-week “Rest and recuperation vacation” which was organized by the association Crete for Life to build their immune systems through healthy diet, vitamins, minerals, fresh air and exercise. Positive emotions, fresh air rich in iodine, fruits and vegetables and bright impressions promote health. Children did breathing exercises and played different games on the Cretan seashore of Koutsunari and Ierapetra. Fresh sea air helps to boost children’s physical health. Children who spend time outside improve their eyesight and make their bones stronger as they get vitamin D from the sun. This helps them be creative and active, reduce depression and will lead to a healthier adult life.

Sea air is charged with healthy negative ions that accelerate the ability to absorb oxygen. Negative ions also balance levels of serotonin, a body chemical linked with mood and stress. It helps children to be more relaxed.

Children were provided with sunscreens, headwear, beach-shoes. Their rest was organized under the tree shade. Children were provided with water, tea and fresh juice. Juice, freshly made, is rich in vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and trace minerals which help to alkalize and normalize the bodily processes, which in turn helps to build up the immune system. Fresh juice is also easily assimilated into the bloodstream without putting a strain on the digestive organs.

Development of social skills

The rest and recuperation vacation in Crete provided the children with many opportunities for the improvement of their social skills via joint discussions and communication with peers, Greek children, disabled people. It’s a great possibility to be plunged into social and cultural communication with Greek children and their families. The interaction with the volunteers Carolina, Virginio, Luigi, Andrea, Panayotis, was very valuable for the children social, cultural and emotional development.

The children were involved into the decisional process of making the weekly schedule. They could discuss and choose the activities to do with peers. That helps to develop their capacities of planning. The volunteer of the association Panayotis organized interesting language games to learn Greek. It can’t but be mentioned that all the children started to communicate in English with great ease.

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Cultural Learning and Education

The program included many kinds of activities according to the age and individual peculiarities. The children were very interested in every kind of activities which were proposed to them.

Arts

Children participated in several workshops, expressed themselves and tried to do their best in making bracelets in different techniques, drawing on the stones, drawing pictures, making wooden boats and things, making postcards from paper, flowers from materials and paper. There were even cooking lessons.

Sport

One of the most notable sport activities was the football match organized between Belarusian and Cretan teams on the final day of the World Cup. Everyone was really happy to play football with Greek children.

There was an organized trip to the gym, where kids learned climbing and tested themselves. In Ierapetra's sport club the fitness lessons were organized by volunteer-professional trainer.

Thanks to the lessons of the volunteers the children learned swimming and overcame their fears of water. They enjoyed a one-day trip to Aqua Plus where they had a lot of fun on the slides and swimming pools.

Culture

The program was full of exciting trips. The most breath-taking trips were to the natural reserve of Chrissi island, museums, Crete Aquarium, the historical town of Aghios Nikolaos and to the small villages dotted in the mountains. The kids have touched to the national heritage, heard about famous Greek culture and many interesting facts about nature. Special attention was paid to Greek national dancing. The children had the opportunity to learn and dance during the festival of Greek dancing. They danced with great pleasure.

The time in Crete was full of happiness, friendship, joy and a lot of fun. The children made new friends, they had the opportunity to express themselves, to develop their skills. They got acquainted with national culture and tried, delicious healthy traditional Greek food.

THE CHILDREN'S IMPRESSIONS



Artem I liked Crete very much. I made friends with volunteer Luigi. Luigi taught me swimming and presented the mask for diving. I liked everything, especially the aqua-park.



Vlad I liked everything in Crete, especially Aqua Plus and the sea. Also I liked ice-cream and traditional food. I got acquainted with wonderful people such as Carolina, Luigi, Virginio and Olimpia. I thank all the people who help the association Crete for life.



Stas I liked Crete very much. We got acquainted with cool volunteers. We played football, swam in the sea, went to the trips in the mountains. I liked everything and I hope, next year I'll come here again.



Small Maksim I liked Greece very much, especially I liked the aqua-park. There were many huge super slides there. We had many parties here. We learned national dances and now I can dance Siganos! I'd like to come to Crete next year.



Max I liked Crete very much. I liked the aqua-park and aquarium. We had a lot of fun in diving centre and in the gym, climbing the wall. I got acquainted with kind people. I made new friends here.

Vica B I liked the traditional Cretan cuisine and sea. I liked making pictures and hand-made bracelets with Vulla and Aleksia! And the most remarkable trips were to the aqua-park and aquarium. Also I liked riding on the sofa in the sea. I'd like to thank Olimpia, all volunteers and all the people who helped us.



Small Vica I liked riding on the sofa in the sea. It's really cool to rock to and fro. The sofa jumped on the waves. So fast! There were so many splashes. I liked the food so much. I liked making something with Vulla. I liked the trip to Aqua Plus and making photos with Carolina. Thank you very much for everything!



THE CHILDREN'S IMPRESSIONS



Small Julia I liked Crete very much. We ate zatyki, watermelons and many other dishes. We went to the aquapark and played on different slides. Also I liked riding on the sofa in the sea. Especially I liked my birthday party. I had many-many different presents. And a delicious beautiful big cake was cooked for me. Thank you for this trip. It was really amazing.



Small Nastia I liked eating Greek salad, zatyki, and watermelons. I liked riding on the sofa in the sea. I liked everything. I'd like to thank everybody who took part in organizing this trip. Thanks to the association Crete for life I'm here. I'd like to come here once again.



Polina D I liked here very much. I became suntanned. Most of all I liked Aqua Plus. We went to the aquarium, rode on the sofa in the sea, played and swam in the sea, ate pizza, watermelons. We ate ice-cream and traditional Greek food. We swam in the swimming pools and went shopping. It was super!...

Masha G. My name's Masha. I liked everything in Ierapetra. I liked sea very much. It was fantastic. We swam under the water and saw different fish. Also I liked Vasili's tavern very much. He cooked delicious food.



Julia K It was cool. I liked to swim in "Coralli", in the sea, make different things with Vulla, have fun with Virginio and Luigi. I liked traditional Greek cuisine very much, especially zatziki and Greek salad. It was so interesting to travel around Crete. And trip to Chrissi was fantastic. I'd like to thank all the people who organized this trip and volunteers who helped and supported us.

Nastia N Thank you for this trip! It was wonderful. There was a lot of fun. Most of all I liked aqua park. It was great! Hotels where we lived were very good. Besides I liked swimming pool "Coralli". Food was very good there. But the best food was at Vasili's tavern. The sea in Ierapetra was wonderful. I enjoyed swimming there very much. National food is very delicious. Especially zatziki and Greek salad. Thanks for all presents you gave us! Thanks for a chance to travel to Crete. Thanks to all the people who worked with us and organized this trip!



WHAT THE VOLUNTEERS SAY



Building bridges and making friends

Hello, my name is Carolina and I am an Italian volunteer for Crete For Life 2014. My first impact with this project has been very positive. I have never volunteered before and it has been a fantastic experience. The beauty of the island, the generosity of the local people and the organization of the association have brought moments of sheer happiness to these very sick children,. I hope next year I can accompany again the children through this wonderful life-changing experience. Thank you to all the people who have made this project a beautiful reality .

Carolina Caracciolo



World cup champions

...Among this rich experiences it was wonderful to see how the children hosted immediately gained confidence with the healthy local food that was lovingly prepared to meet their taste. Boys first, quickly followed by even the most delicate girls, were emptying plates of anything that was offered them, and in particular seasonal vegetable and fruits, cherries, melon, peaches, not to mention the small ice creams that would close every meal...

Virginio Briatore

My name is Luigi Briatore and I am eighteen years old. This summer I jumped at the chance of volunteering for three weeks on the island of Crete, hosting a group of children with serious health problems. I was very curious and it turned out to be a wonderful experience. My main occupation was to help the children to gain confidence with the sea and swimming, in fact almost all of them have never seen the sea before!

Luigi Briatore



Wow! Learning to swim

This summer I volunteered for Crete For Life for the first time, and I cannot wait to repeat this great experience. The highlights of the months were the football match, relaxing together on the beach, making things with paper and dancing together .

Panayotis Mulonakis

AMBITIONS AND STRATEGY



2005



2006



2014



2014

Platform for future plans

The team of Crete For Life is committed to continuing the program of Rest and Recuperation which has proven to be so successful through the years.

Cretan hospitality and generosity insures that donation in kind can be collected and distributed locally, to children in need.

Greek children are helped, supported and hosted with the revenue from the local fundraising program.

Challenges

Greece has felt the brunt of the world economical crisis more than other countries. Fundraising has become almost impossible also because current legislation has taken away most benefits of charitable donation, tax reliefs etc.

The main challenge is to find a regular source of revenues to insure that the yearly Rest and Recuperation program can continue uninterrupted and more children can be hosted every year.

Opportunities

Our ambition is to be able to continue, reinforce and enlarge our Rest and Recuperation program developing the concept of a summer camp for children from all over the world.

Nadia's story

Nadia was born in 1999, thirteen years after the Chernobyl catastrophe, with a congenital condition called Von Recklinghausen's disease. Her father committed suicide some years ago and her young mother, who has other children from different partners, is an alcoholic. Nadia has always struggled with school and socially has problems in managing her anger. Her family have not always been able to look after her and even recently she was moved to an orphanage for six months. She first came to Crete when she was seven years old, almost totally self sufficient by necessity. She is very small for her age. She likes to embroider and do cut out, when she feels relaxed. Nadia says the sea calms her down, she loves Crete and the delicious food and she says she feels like a princess.



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