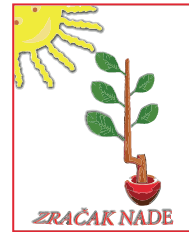


Zračak Nade

Knowledge Meets Love for the Best Results



Association of Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities “Zračak Nade” is a non-governmental organization (NGO) from Pljevlja (Montenegro) founded on February 1, 2002. It advocates equal opportunities and full participation of children and youth with disabilities in society, as well as the provision of support services in the field of education, health and social protection, employment and volunteerism. They are of the opinion that children with developmental disabilities should be given equal opportunities for growing up as other children so that, once they grow up, they can be equally included in all spheres of life.

“In a small town, we managed to raise the awareness of the local community to the point of becoming recognized as the most inclusive city in Montenegro, where children and youth with disabilities and adults with disabilities have become equal citizens, included in all spheres of social life.” We are proud because our children and young people with disabilities are exercising their right to family life, and very few of them are in institutional care. We are proud that there are almost no children and young people with disabilities who are not included in the education system, kindergarten or school”, says Sanela Žiga, a representative of the NGO “Zračak Nade”.



She adds that their Association authored numerous innovations in working with children and youth with disabilities in the region, and singles out the contribution of the Association’s Board member Svetlana Dujović, whose selfless efforts and visions lead to recognition of the needs of children and youth with disabilities. That is why she received the ISKRA Philanthropy Award in 2012, as well as the ERSTE Foundation Award for Social Integration in 2013 for her project “Half-day Care for Children and Youth with Disabilities”.



Also, this Association is proud of the longevity of work of social services they developed: half-day care, home help assistants, personalized transport, volunteer service, creative workshops for young people with disabilities and a digital printing shop employing persons with disabilities.

"We were the first to launch the Teaching Assistants service in 2009, which was later taken over by the Ministry of Education, and today it is a system service. That same year, we were the first in Montenegro to launch a volunteer service for high school students. Our volunteers are winners of the Volunteerism Award. They received recognition for their work at the state and even regional level. Those young people are full of enthusiasm, ideas and strength and are really an inexhaustible source of motivation, because their support is as important as the support of experts", Sanela Žiga points out.

The main source of funding and sustainability of the "Zračak Nade" NGO are the funds they receive from public calls issued by domestic and international donors.

"We ensure sustainability by applying to a large number of calls for projects, thus financing the work of employees in the administration, professional workers directly working with children and youth with disabilities and our employees with disabilities in the Digital Printing service." Since we do have a digital printing shop, we ensure sustainability by providing printing services as well. Also, there is a small percentage of donations from individuals and legal entities, which can be financial and donations of various work supplies and equipment. Us becoming fully sustainable would require changes to the Law on NGOs or the adoption of a new Law on Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, so that we can have the basic means for our work provided", says Svetlana Dujović.

She notes that philanthropy is very important, because an active and healthy attitude towards human values, especially towards other people, is an indispensable part of every community.

“Humanity in particular means caring for people who are unable to fulfill their basic human needs. A relationship of humanity does not mean creating the dependence of a weaker one, but on the contrary, respecting the personality of each person and strengthening their potentials. The significance of that was very much evident in our example. Throughout years of work, we have managed to move from being on the receiving end of pity and ignorance to empathy and improving the position and participation of our children and youth in society on the basis of equal opportunities”, Svetlana Dujović emphasizes.

“Zračak Nade” NGO places equal emphasis on both children and young people with disabilities and their parents and families.

“Parents are the founders of our Association, so the basis of our work has always been a partnership between parents and professionals. Parents are an indispensable link in all our treatments with children. They are trained to perform simple physiotherapeutic exercises at home and in nature, and they are also trained to work with children and youth using various didactic materials and elements of assistive technology, which is available for them to take home from the Association at any time”, says Sanela Žiga.

She emphasizes that the “Zračak Nade” NGO has built strong multi-annual partnerships with all sectors. That is the secret of their success. Their partners are civil society organizations, line ministries, social and child protection institutions, health and educational institutions as well as the business sector.

“We see the improvement of cooperation and partnerships through better connectivity among all those sectors. Without strong intersectoral cooperation there is no inclusion of children and youth with disabilities and persons with disabilities. We must all work together to create a functional database of children and youth with disabilities and persons with disabilities, because that is how we can strengthen the system and enable better participation of those vulnerable groups”, says Svetlana Dujović. She further notes that they plan to develop the already existing social support services, as well as accreditation for the provision of social services and the opening of new social support services.

She says that it is human to be afraid and make mistakes, but that we are not alone in any situation. Even when we fall we have to get up and keep moving forward.

“Don’t keep emotions to yourself, feel free to show them to a friend and share your dreams with others, because they are so much easier to realize that way. Secret of our success is that we have learned to combine knowledge and love. That is the only way to get the right results. Also, we respect and listen to others if we want others to respect us”, concludes Svetlana Dujović.

For more information on the “Zračak Nade” NGO, see: zracaknade.co.me

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