

Anta Akhi Newsletter

You, My Brother

At the service of a life of dignity for persons with disabilities



September 2012



Together, on earth, we can live equal and different, complementary, in joy and peace, through fraternal love, like yeast, salt and light...

→ Light to illuminate the path to Jesus,

→ Salt to give life a meaning and a taste,

glorified by the Splendor of the Holy Son,

→Yeast to lead, mobilize, and give desire to be with,

offer the fruit of Holiness, grant the desire to live this life,

as sons reflected in the Holy Son,

Following the logic of life of Jesus' values expressed in His Word.

Yvonne Chami

Joy throughout, Joy everywhere, Joy Always



Dear Friends,

There are moments in life when one is forced to find places to escape far from noise, oppression, and daily ritual, places where one seeks his inner entity, peace, joy, and the heart

serenity.

This place is Anta Akhi, where human and spiritual values enlighten the person and the community: everyone here has accepted to fulfill this inner journey, to live in joy despite difficulties, to live in peace despite

suffering, to live in complementarity despite the differences.

Anta Akhi is not utopia; it represents a truth and a reality that we try to live through the lighting given by the existential training, and all moments of spiritual, recreational and cultural life. Our home is full of life! It sings joy 24 hours a day, with more than 100 persons per day, between youngsters with disability, staff, brothers and sisters, parents and friends, especially during the summer camp in July and August, when everybody engage in being happy and make others happy.

In September life goes back to normal, the pace slows down and we can appreciate

every moment and make plans for the year to come.

Dear Friends, from year-to-year the flame that Yvonne lit up lasts and becomes brighter. Anta Akhi will always welcome those who want to engage in a journey of consideration, positioning and personal change. Our youngsters with disability are witnesses and are able to live joy in everything, everywhere and forever.

Come and see!

Roula Najem

Founder of the continuity of

Anta Akhi / HVE

Deputy General Manager

News from Anta Akhi

☆ **Yvonne received the Insignia of the Order of Merit... and she transferred it to Fadia!** After 35 years working serving a life of dignity for the person living with disability, the President of the Lebanese Republic, General Michel Sleiman, awarded Yvonne Chami, founder of Sesobel 35 years, of Anta Akhi 20 years and of the project Handicap and Life in the Church 12 years, the Insignia of the Order of Merit, on the 29th of March 2012. Yvonne accepted the decoration but she transferred it to Fadia, as acknowledgment of her role in founding the continuity of Sesobel from its creation. She also acknowledged Roula for her role as founding the continuity of Anta Akhi and the project Handicap and Life in Church - HVE.

☆ **Second visit to Anta Akhi of Mgr Jean -Pierre Cattenoz, Bishop of Avignon**

As part of the seminar concerning the project Handicap and Life in Church - HVE, Bishop Cattenoz and Father Christian Bezol stayed at the "Home of Tenderness" from 24th of July till the 2nd of August 2012. This seminar was about the rationale of the project, the identity of Anta Akhi and the opportunity for collaboration between our association and the Church. At the end of the seminar, Bishop Cattenoz, who also spent time with our children and our team, said: **"In various parts of the world, sadness radiates from people living with disability, but at Anta Akhi joy radiates in their heart!"**.

☆ **Summer nights at the " Home of Tenderness"!** On the 26th of July we organized a dinner for 75 friends coming from Lebanon and Europe to thank them for supporting Anta Akhi. On the 8th of August, an Iftar during the month of Ramadan gathered our friends from France, our youngsters with disability, and the Egyptians friends working at Anta Akhi: at the menu, buffet, dances and songs... During the summer camp, a "villager evening" gathered 200 friends! The beautiful atmosphere was also due to singing, dancing and producing some Arak, the national Lebanese drink.



Living together the Summer Camp "Anta Akhi Festival 2012"

What's the mystery of Anta Akhi? Where does this joy come from, the joy of our youngsters and our team, transmitted to everyone who gets in touch with them? It's true that during summer time, a camp helps increasing this joy, but thinking about 5 weeks in a row and the tiredness it generates, we can wonder how it is possible to have this oasis of peace and joy, so true, where youngsters, their parents, their sisters and brothers, the team and the volunteers live together in peace, joy through love as brothers.

Thanks to the efforts undertaken by the whole team, the summer camp 2012 was established. It took one month for our team to prepare for the camp and be able to give our youngsters the opportunity to have a beautiful summer time, starting from the 13th of July until the 15th of August, the feast of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Between preparing the theme and the activities, establishing contacts to ensure sleeping outside the Home of Tenderness, ensuring the in-kind donations, our logistic and operational teams were engaged body and soul to make this camp a success.

Accommodation

The camp of 2012 was very special: for the first time since 2005, our youngsters spent almost 3 weeks outside the "Home of Tenderness": at the Convent of Saint Joseph, where they were divided into 2 groups, and at the Bishopric of Sarba in Mount Lebanon, all together, they were able to appreciate and benefit from the mountain. They got back to the "Home of Tenderness" to spend the last 2 weeks of the Camp. Despite the fact that the new locations were not ideal for persons with disability, our youngsters and their caretakers were really happy. It's true that a camp is not that always easy, but during these times, the team was able to excel and live fully every moment.

Theme

"The festival of Anta Akhi" was the selected theme. In summer time, Lebanon



Concert in the presence of the well-known Lebanese singer, Carole Samaha



Cooking competition between care-givers, volunteers and parents: France against Lebanon!



Outing in the swimming pool!

has plenty of small and big festivals in various areas. Anta Akhi decided to have its own festival and join other countries in the world renowned for the festivals: France Cannes, Italy Venice, Brazil Rio de Janeiro, and India.

Activities

All the activities revolved around these various countries, their cultures and lifestyles. Games, competitions, workshops, such as music therapy or smile therapy, cultural and recreational activities, gave our youngsters the opportunity to enjoy themselves and, at the same time, widen their knowledge. They were also able to appreciate the Lebanese culture that is so rich!

Trips

All trips were graciously offered by our friends: at the swimming pool, in a boat trip, at the National Museum, at concerts, or in picnics, joy was always present!

The parents of our youngsters also enjoyed some trips to the mountains, and they were delighted to make such a change!

Financial and in-kind donations.

Many thanks to all our friends

Night hosting, daily food supply for up to 110 persons, personal and household hygiene and all the trips were taken in charge of by our friends.

Many thanks also to all who contributed with financial donations to cover almost all the expenses of our summer camp!!

Surprise ! Surprise ! Good and not as good ...

One day we experienced an electricity power cut - very frequent in Lebanon - but the generator of the Convent Saint Joseph didn't work! Rana had a respiratory problem and we just had time to plug the respiratory machine into the UPS that supplies electricity for 15 minutes and then bring Rana to the "Home of Tenderness" where everything is equipped. It was scary!

Another day, Mary Set El Beit, *the Lady of the House*, Queen of Impossible, resolved a problem: Tammy and Rachid, an American-Lebanese couple, met our youngsters at the Convent of Saint Joseph. After discussing with our team, they noticed that there weren't any wheelchair ramps, which meant additional work for our team. After 10 days, and before the end of their holidays in Lebanon, they came to the "Home of Tenderness" with a gift: they gave us their movable ramps! Thank you so much!



Our youngsters, their parents, brothers & sisters, caretakers share with us their impressions



Mikael and his mother

The parents of 15 youngsters, 6 brothers and sisters, 8 volunteers from France and Tunisia, 10 Lebanese volunteers have participated at the life of our youngsters with disability during the summer camp, for one day up to several days. Below are their impressions.

The parents:

“What do I like about the summer camp? Everything! Above all, I like living with others where we all form one heart. Our children are happy to spend time with us, and they express it perfectly! I like also to work in groups, with the other mothers, present here: we have fun together, we sing and dance. I feel so fulfilled here and the atmosphere is great!” *Pascale Cosma, Mikael’s mother.*

“Every year I anxiously wait for the summer camp! At Anta Akhi I feel at home! I am happy to make this cut because usually I don’t go out; the camp is my only escape. I forget about everything, benefit from the beautiful atmosphere, and my heart finds peace. I am so attached to my children!. May God give them patience, joy and faith to continue living happily. I walk with them, for them, in joy and I want to be strong for them. With patience and I overcome all difficulties, and life goes on.” *Amale Rachdane, Fadi and Rita’s mother.*



Elie happy with his sister

The brothers & sisters:

“I have participated in the summer camp since I was very young. I am happy to spend time with my sister but this is not the only reason. I am here for “Mela” but also for all the youngsters. We share a special moment, and I receive more than I give.” *Mikael Mikael, Melanie’s brother.*

With the youngsters I feel like I am in my element. I feel a great joy while sharing their life and listening to them. Particularly, the camp is a source of energy for me, an escape, where I can share exceptional time with my brother, the youngsters, their parents and all the team.. *Eliana Khoury, Elie’s sister.*



The joy

The care givers:

We like the summer camp! For us it’s an escape and a way to break the routine! The atmosphere is always very nice between us and the youngsters. Sometimes it can be a little demanding but there is also a lot of joy. Our holidays? We’ll take them later on...



Yes, the joy...

The youngsters:

What’s the role of prayer in the summer camp?

- Everything we do is a prayer! When I am happy I pray, when I accept others as they are I pray! I never take holidays from praying! *Ghassan*
- Summer camp gives me the opportunity to feel better but praying helps me the most, it’s very important to me. *Barbara*
- When I pray for the others, I feel full of joy! It makes me stronger! *Marcelle*

What I like the most?

- Being together, going on a trip, welcoming new people. *Tony*
- Being open to others, learning new things about Lebanon and foreign countries, water games... During the summer camp I felt so peaceful...it was like being in Lourdes or Medjugorje! *Carole*
- I like a change of environment and being together. During the summer camp we build a stronger bond between us. *Ghassan*
- I like the atmosphere of joy and charity. *Joseph*
- Me? Well, I like surprises, the competitions between parents and care-givers...and the tasty chocolate! *Joanna*



Is the gift of Jesus...



... In music !

Our youngsters had a thought for those who couldn’t go on holiday

- I think of those who are staying at home and have children. *Gharib*
- We also find love by the gift of oneself. *Tony*
- Whenever you have time, we invite you to come to us and participate to our activities. *Ghassan*

Augustin: “One month here is too short... I will definitely come back!”

I came at Anta Akhi to spend 5 weeks in community, with persons having disabilities. But in Ballouneh, I found much more than I was looking for. Through my conversations with Yvonne, where I discovered the history of Anta Akhi, and I was taken by the issue which led to the creation of the project Handicap and Life in Church: what is the Church doing to accompany the growth of the son of God in its children living with disability? As a future priest (planned for next June) this question struck me. Seeing the support Anta Akhi is doing for its youngsters, and seeing its fruits, the Lord asks me: “What have you done to your brother? Why didn't he realize that I love him and that he is precious to me?” I was eager to change the look I gave to youngsters, and ready to work hard. Change the look: do I see the son of God in every person, and particularly with the one having disability, this son of God called to grow and bear fruits for the Church and for the World? Working hard: as a priest I will be responsible for enlightening and accompanying the growth of the children of

God that will be entrusted to me. The story of Anta Akhi is a testimony that this work is engaging and there are difficulties throughout the way... so is it an impossible mission?



Spending five weeks in this community, which is rather a family made me see the joy of the youngsters, the quality of the relations between them and the care-givers, their capability to thank and recognize the gifts of God in their lives. These fruits of the Spirit are too evident to decide not to work and follow the path of Anta Akhi. Accompanying these people is part of my mission. I was called for that by Jesus, when I entered the seminar. But how do we do it? One month here is too short, I will definitely come back.

As I spent two weeks with the youngsters in the summer camp, I would like to talk about the natural influence of Anta Akhi.

We were at Sarba's Bishopric in Achkout and a man came to the baptism of his daughter. He didn't approach us, even though he looked intrigued by the youngsters and the persons who accompanied them. The day after he came with his four year-old son: we were singing, he sat with us and started to ask me questions. He lives in Austria, and he explained to me that his son was born with a disability at the hand: because of an uneven growth of his hand, he has already undergone 3 painful operations... They stayed with us almost one hour: the father was astonished to see how joyful the youngsters were, and also his son looked more relaxed. It was difficult for him to leave us! Maybe this is a change of look? Of vision?

Augustin Bourgue

Seminarian at the Paris diocese

In the course of time, some pass away, some are born, but every moment of our life is a gift from God.



Rita Mjabber
Born on the 16-08-1992
Born in the world of God
on the 08-03-2012

Dear Friends,

*In March 2012 Rita and Pauline left us to join the world of the Father.
We believe they are resting in their heavenly Family*



Pauline Keddissi
Born on the 06-05-1989
Born in the world of God
on the 30-03-2012

Call

Dear Friends, We would like to thank a faithful friend who answered our call regarding the purchase of two bath trolleys. Today we rely on your generosity to help us to cover the transportation of the medical, social and recreational expenses of our youngsters. The cost of one (external) activity is about 370\$, for an average of 9 activities per month. Thank you!

How to help Anta Akhi:

1. Sponsor a youngster starting 10\$ (or 10€) per month, 120\$ (or 120€) per year.
2. Make a punctual donation by specifying, if possible, the need you wish to support.
To get a tax receipt for your donation in France, please call beforehand elisabeth.gorius@neuf.fr
Thank you for sharing what we are building together in our journey of life

If you wish to receive the newsletter on your Email, instead of your postal address, thank you for indicating it by mail.

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With the glance of Yvonne

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