

Our life at Anta Akhi

At the service of a life of dignity of the person limited by disability



September 2015



We are called, here and now,
to live a fullness of life, a fullness of joy,
a fullness of happiness,
despite the concrete difficulties experienced
in daily life.

It is a great challenge!

We have experienced it
with our young adults who are limited by disability,
who, from their early childhood till death,
walked on a very challenging course
in serenity, joy and peace.

They lived this way because they know that
being son of the Father is not a small common issue
that does not worth stopping at.

Being the son of the Mother is not insignificant.

It is worth stopping at!

Yvonne Chami
Founder President

365 days, 12 months, 7 days a week, 24 hours / 24, 25 events / year,
3903 visitors / year from Lebanon and abroad...

A life that never stops, a hive that knows how to overcome fatigue
and manage to maintain the joy and peace...

Anta Akhi, a family for everyone, young adults limited by
disability, parents, team members, friends, visitors, supporters... All
together, hand in hand with our differences, our strengths and our
limits, we try to live in complementarity. Everyone gives his part to
complete that of the other, because we believe that "Together" we
can build a life path, where we grow and make others grow, we are
happy and make others happy.

As runners, we all stand on the starting line, but unlike athletes, at
the signal, we hold arms, and we give rhythm to our steps, so that
together we can win the race: there is no gap between the weakest
and the strongest, no difference between the small and the big. Our
differences do not make discrepancy; on the contrary, we transform
the difference into wealth.

Is this a poem? Is this a utopia? No, because through the definite
presence of Mary, Set el Beit, in our Home Anta Akhi, and through
Jesus' presence, we are strong through their love!

We face all the difficulties, we fear
nothing, and even if sometimes we
fall, we rise together straight away.

On behalf of all young adults limited
by disabilities, and their families, to
each and every one of you, dear
members of the team, thank you!
Thank you dear friends of Lebanon
and overseas! Thank you, members of
the support committees, and members
of the General Assembly. Thank you
for your generosity, your
commitment, your confidence and
your loyalty.

With you we can tell everyone:
"Life is beautiful with you, my
brother ... Anta Akhi."



Roula Najm
Vice president, G.M.

Our visitors

We are grateful to **Archbishop Jean-Pierre Cattenoz**,
Archbishop of Avignon, for accepting for the 5th
consecutive year, as a pastor, to assist Anta Akhi and the
project Handicap and Life in the Church: he is helping us
in our journey for continuity, in fidelity to the mission,
i.e. to live every day together as children of God,
spreading joy, peace and love

They came from France ... trying to give a deeper sense
to their lives, wanting to discover the world of disability,
having the desire to serve, coming for a master's course,
or for a vacation time with their friends. This summer
more than 18 people came from France, to Anta Akhi.
Their presence was an opportunity for our young adults
to continue being testimonies that a life full of joy is
possible despite the difficulties.



Joy in everything, joy everywhere, joy always



Every year we eagerly wait it: the summer camp, long awaited by our young adults, is a time of joy and resourcing. Whether in the outings, at the breaks, or during the reception of friends, they are happy to "live together" in a place that screams summer and holidays!

Activities abound in the summer camp. The team works hard to find beautiful activities for our young adults, activities that allow them to enjoy a pleasant and useful summer time.

The activities were numerous; trips to the pool, picnics, visits to friends, riding ... However, our young adults never spent time alone they received friends from Lebanon and abroad, volunteers, scouts, parents, brothers and sisters, they all came to participate in evening games or songs, lunches, masses, moments of prayer... Our young adults enjoy the beautiful festive atmosphere, whether in small groups or all in big ones.

Nevertheless, what matters most is this "living together", which distinguishes our Home of Tenderness.

How is this translated practically in the everyday life?

With the team

This year, to fully participate in the "living together", and break the routine of the office, we spent two days together both the young adults our young adults with disabilities and the team, the first one was a picnic in Kfardebiane full of games, songs, and animations, as for the second one it was day of competitive games on the site of the camp, they were both concluded by a lunch in nature!

"These days have recharged us with energy! All those who participated, were ecstatic ... the "chabibé" young adults were expecting us, they wanted to share with us these beautiful moments that were astonishing!"
Sabine

With the Lebanese visitors

One of the most touching experiences is the presence of the local community with our young adults. As Lebanese are really generous, neighbors and friends, often came loaded down with goods, fruits, vegetables

and good pastries, to share a moments of joy with our family.

With the non-Lebanese visitors

"Here our presence is all that matters. I know my presence is not vital... but I'm here! And it shows that the relationships, not the task carried out for "profitability" purposes are those that prevail and give meaning to life." **Mathilde**

"We were admiring the ability to live the moment in joy, without worrying about the future. We saw how the "living together" in kindness and goodwill could be considered as the lifestyle of that Home." **Elizabeth and Benedict**

"I received a slap... Me who thought that by giving food to Barbara, I was trying to accomplish my mission. But when she told me I was wrong, I was surprised... and then she said: "we have to eat together, not me alone!" **Marie-Hélène**

With the volunteers

As part of a volunteer project in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, a group of about thirty students aged between 15 and 18 shared our young adults' life for during three weeks.

"Anta Akhi is truly a rewarding experience at all levels: cultural, psychological and spiritual! An education to follow tirelessly! A knowledge for life!" **Chekrallah**

"I like being here with you, helping you by doing simple things that give happiness; it's like my second family." **Dona Maria**

The most important thing in this camp, remains the will of each and everyone to overcome the difficulties and give the best of himself. This was noticed by all visitors who overcame an idealistic vision where everything would go perfectly well ... No! It is a daily effort that can only be crowned by the fruits that love holds, including the joy that we want to live in everything, everywhere, and always.



How to look ? What to see ?

When society looks at our life companions – Our experience!

These are acquaintances, people we met on outings, visitors to the Home of Tenderness, friends... who love our youth and who, seeing the heaviness of their disabilities, address their companions, with *anxiousness* or with *plenty of admiration*:

"- It does not bother you to do this work all these years?

- Your sins are forgiven through the work you do!

- We have to remain friends because you are a "saint" since you work here!

- May God reward you for what you do with these people!

- It is a vocation ... I be like you.

- *Niyyélak you are blessed!*

- You do not spread despair to your children? "

These reactions could be described as normal but, despite the attention and love they express, they are not based on reality.

How to respond to these reactions?

What to see? Who to put at the focus of our concern?

Yvonne, our founder, always says: when a mother gives birth to a child limited by disability, she assumes her responsibilities. To care for her child, she will give him all

the love she can! Did she have a vocation to care for him? Would she be more holy than others because she has a child limited by disability?

Similarly a life companion who works in Anta Akhi, is not, for that, better than others; he will be happily living in this great family and taking care of the young, to the measure of the love he puts into what he does; to the extent of the difficulties he may exceed, by challenging himself, by not only being a receiver but a "giver" as well. A life companion has overcome disability in his eyes; he looks at the person he's holding, as equal in worth and importance and decides, by an act of will and love to take care of him every day. From there, the relationship becomes healthy: between "brothers" we laugh, we talk, we argue, but we also love each other... we particularly love each other!



Our young adults need friends who love them for what they are, in an authentic look. They understood: some crosses are visible, others are not; their cross is heavy in appearance and truth. We make them happy, if we can go beyond appearances and remain in the truth! The Truth of being! All children of God, are equal in worth and dignity!



The youth committee... at the Festival



Carla, Christian, Yves, Nadine, Joumana, Alex, Ghia, Imane and so many others...
Thank you!

Thanks to the initiative of the "committee of youth of Anta Akhi", we participated in *Mzaar Summer Festival*. For three days, youth and children have created opportunities to raise funds: selling cakes made by moms, sales of small jewelry made by the children...

But there was more than that... the presence of the committee was primarily to raise awareness regarding the issue of disability and of « living together »: after explanations, participants in the Festival, especially children, have expressed themselves by writing on a large sign. Below are some touching words, few words of life:

- Our differences make us unique!
- To live happily is to enjoy every moment
- I am ready to give all the way to joy
- Dignity, is to respect oneself and to respect others.
- Happiness is to be satisfied with what we have! And what we are!
- The only disability is hate.
- Happiness, is to make others happy.

Maxime Kunz, a 17 year old French shares her experience at Anta Akhi...

Anta Akhi was my first experience in humanitarian activities abroad. These two weeks have been very rewarding: both in terms of the discovery of Lebanon and its culture, and in terms of personal experience, with the young adults and the team.

Many touristic and well selected outings! I did not expect to see as much when I came! Thank you to all the drivers for sharing such amazing moments with me and other French girls.

We went on several outings with young adults such as the pool or to Jounieh...! These moments show well that the apparent differences are nothing compared to the strong personality that each one has. All are very open and ready to listen!

Life companions are also great and essential, since without them, little would be possible! A team, present all the time, to meet all the daily matters. The smiles and enthusiasm they all show hide sometimes difficult but always deep moments with the young adults.

Finally due to this commitment, I learned an important life lesson: you have to love the heart of others with your heart and not with your eyes! Each of us has something in himself that makes him unique and that we all have a role; and disability can't change that. We sometimes forget that in our daily lives and this is a misfortune. We must realize it to understand it. This is not an academic lesson: it is not about listening and learning but about living and sharing.



Anta Akhi also allowed me to focus on my faith and my relationship with God. I met believers who are very attentive to the word of God. I understood the lesson of life that I have written above through cultural visits for example the visit to the monastery of Hamatoura.

Finally, this volunteering experience at Anta Akhi mixed aid, discovery, faith, joy, enthusiasm and community life. I can conclude that these are the recipe for a humanitarian experience that was more than positive for me. A big thank you to everyone, do not change! A little attention to my second mom for two weeks: **Marianne!**

These schoolchildren who touched us

This year we welcomed 1192 students to Anta Akhi during days scheduled by their schools. Particularly affected by the spreading joy in the Foyer of Tenderness, despite the handicap, some decide to return ... One day we received an email that we would like to share with you:

Hello! My name is Roland M. More than 5 years ago, when I was a student at the school of the Rosary Sisters, we were taken to the Home of Tenderness Anta Akhi in Ballouneh. I met there a young lady who made me promise to revisit. Time passed, but yet I have not forgotten that promise, and I would like to meet that person again, if possible. In the attached file you'll find her picture sitting on the wheelchair, is she still there? What is her name? And how can I meet her? Best wishes, Roland.



We are grateful to the loyalty of each of you, our young adults limited by disabilities recognize the fruits held by their life. Thank you for being part of this adventure of generosity and love!

Note: who is that young lady? You guessed it! This is Barbara!

Call

Dear friends, our call during the month of April consist of the need to patient lifting units, essential to the safety of our young adults and for the prevention of back pain to those who accompany them. The cost of each unit equipped with a head holder and three slings is \$ 3,157. We thank the generosity of all our friends who have already responded to our call; however, we still have to provide the sum of \$ 1,258. Thank you in advance for everything you'll be able to do.

Is it not true that the small drops make great rivers?

How to help Anta Akhi :

1. Sponsor a share of the cost of the accompaniment of the life course of a young person with disability starting from \$ 10 (or € 10) per month, \$ 120 (or € 120) per year.
Bank Audi - Iban: LB07 0056 0001 6520 8465 0440 1605
2. Make a single donation possibly specifying the need that you want to support.

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