

SKP HOPO

2016 Christmas Market Charity

Text by Barbara Woodard (USA) and photos by Gabriela Selingerová (CZE)

On the peaceful and pastoral property of a former castle in Horní Počernice, there is a unique residential family shelter called Středisko křesťanské pomoci – abbreviated to SKP HOPO and owned by the Evangelická církev metodistická (Czech United Methodist Church). Currently, they are refurbishing the residential dormitories. Donations from the 2015 Prague Thrift Store IWAP Fashion Show allowed for the purchase of six new dormitory windows.

Most families at the SKP HOPO shelter are referred by the Czech Child Welfare System, which works with the parents in an attempt to help them provide adequate care and supervision for their children. These families often have a generational history of difficulty coping with life, maintaining a stable home and steady employment. In addition to basic shelter, these parents need to learn about acceptable child rearing, child health, social responsibility and interpersonal relationships.

At SKP HOPO, families meet with a social worker who assesses their needs, and prepares a service plan to address their identified problems. As part of this process, the parents learn how to apply

for government benefits and manage the money they receive. Each family has one room with beds in a dorm; bathrooms, kitchen and social area are shared. The families pay monthly rent to SKP HOPO and purchase their own food. Learning how to cooperate with other families and keeping both the personal and common areas in order are integral parts of the program.

SKP HOPO is licensed by the Czech Department of Social Services. Although the facility is owned by the Czech Methodist Church, the program is open to any qualified family without regard to religious affiliation. SKP HOPO provides social and recreational opportunities for both the children and their parents. They also provide job training for adults who were previously incarcerated. SKP HOPO welcomes members of the surrounding neighborhood to the facility for musical concerts and senior activities. This is a way of helping the families assimilate into general society, and in return the community supports the shelter. Families can stay at this facility for one year, and before they leave they learn how to apply for

housing in the larger community.

SKP HOPO has been chosen as a charity for 2016 Christmas Market Charity, this will enable them to refurbish more family dorm rooms. •



The IWAP Charity Committee is currently assessing Czech charities to be the recipients of funds for 2014. SKP HOPO is requesting funds to go towards the refurbishing of their housing units. It is one of several family shelters requesting financial aid. In the spring issue of The Bridge, the city-run shelter in Azylový dům Kladno was featured.

Monika was fortunate to find SKP HOPO. She was a fairly typical resident: a woman who had struggled through fragile circumstances, seeking a solid ground for herself and her two children. SKP HOPO offered her a nurturing place that gave her hope to go on. It is a place where she found solutions to her problems, could grieve the loss of her partner, and learn how to live independently. "People come here to make their families whole, because they have to be successful in the program to be able to keep their kids," Monika says.

At the time, Monika's kids were seven and two years old. They adjusted to the new group home and lived at SKP HOPO for seven months. Monika worked on the premises, and soon was promoted to a kitchen job where she prepared meals for senior citizens in the area. Things were going so well that the director asked her to be an employee after her residential year was finished.

Monika and her kids advanced to a small flat in the Černý most area of Prague 14. She was offered a temporary kitchen job, but it called for her to deliver meals to the elderly. For that she needed a driver's license; she couldn't afford the high fee because she was paying off her ex-boyfriend's debts for the small business he had registered in her name. Without a driver's license, out of savings, and un-

able to take the offered job, she accepted another job. She would be accompanying the SKP HOPO residents to their appointments using the trams and metro. This was a natural segue: having been a resident herself, she could give back by assisting the current residents as a social worker at SKP HOPO.

Monika's next upward step was to enroll in university about four years ago. She's finishing her bachelor's degree at Charles University in the social work program. In addition to schoolwork, she has a caseload of families whose problems she is now helping to solve, and whose lives she is helping to put back on track. She coordinates peer counseling, makes assessments, and customizes plans, makes sure the plans are implemented, and liaises with state government authorities. Plus, she coordinates activities for the children's program and finds that she has a natural gift for it.

Monika's three kids are now 18, 12 and 4, and the family is living successfully in subsidized housing. She's looking forward to finishing her degree and to advancing her career in the social work field. Monika gives back with all her might, and is making a powerful impact on people's lives – people whose shoes she has walked in. •



IWAP CHARITY NEWS

Help feed the homeless

Sandwiches are collected at 10:00 on every 1st and 3rd Friday of the month at Café K, Senovazne namesti, for distribution at Nadeje's center on Bolzanova.

Moving

Think of IWAP and the Prague Thrift Store when you are moving or house

See IWAP's website for more details on how you can help.

cleaning and find you have small appliances, kitchenware, or furniture that you would like to donate to a good cause. Items are sold or donated, as appropriate.

Bake Sale

The sale of baked goods at the April General Meeting was a great success. The Charity Committee would like to send a big THANK YOU to all the ladies who

prepared not only sweet, but also savoury goods, and that way 7000Kč was made to be donated to our Charity account. WELL DONE TO ALL.

Books

When you need to lighten your bookshelves, think of bringing books to IWAP. The library holds book sales that generate money to support IWAP charities.

The Fourth Annual IWAP Spring Fashion Show

Text by Charlotte Sommer (USA) and photos by Natsuko Tanaka (JPN)

The Fashion Show held on 10 March at U Modré Růže Hotel raised 30,000 CZK, which will go to support SKP HOPO in Horní Počernice. Barbara Koncz, of the Prague Thrift Store, provided the clothes and some of the models, while our IWAP members Liz Norton, Dixie Bennett and Fernanda Escobar joined in the modeling fun. They were coached and prepared by member Alena Klenot and her team of back-stage assistants. Many thanks to them all for their hard work.

A big thank you to all of the IWAP volunteers, organized by Barbara Woodard of the Charity Committee, who contributed to the success of the morning.

Money was raised from many activities:

- admission ticket sales to non-members (Margie Sleath)
- raffle ticket sales (Barbara Woodard and her team)
- silent auction (Deanne Davies and Carmen Trankovsky)
- accessories sales table (Carol Marcum)
- fashion sales (Fernanda Escobar)
- vendor tables (Dana Westby)

Thank you to our vendor tables who added to the fun:

- Goshico: fashion and unique handbags
- Passion Chocolate: chocolatier Melinda Varga
- Faboo: the Kids Party People and photo booth

- Ritore: leather accessories
- RB Optic: Ray-Ban specialists
- Isabelle Trohel: fashion accessories
- 7 Design: fashion

The wonderful raffle and silent auction items were donated by IWAP members, as well as:

- Artel Glass and Karen Feldman
- Bad Jeff's BBQ
- Goshico
- K The Two Brothers Indian Restaurant
- The Little Gym
- The Prague Thrift Store for the LEGO sets
- The Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel
- Usborne Books
- V Zatiši Restaurant
- Žofin Garden Restaurant

It was great to have Gabriela Selingerová, the fundraiser from SKP HOPO, in attendance to thank us in person for our support of their work. The money they receive from IWAP will be used to pay for much needed window replacement.

For more information on SKP HOPO, see both the IWAP website and the article in the Summer 2014 issue of *The Bridge* magazine. •

