

Foundation for People on the Autistic Spectrum in Zala County

Care Home for the Autistic, Boncodföldre, Hungary



A Short History of the Foundation

This Hungarian charity for people on the autistic spectrum was set up in 1994 to support autistic children and young people, particularly those with learning difficulties, and their families. Autistic people require 24-hour care and supervision, but only a few services are available to support these families and to treat these children's specific needs.

In the summer of 1999 we open a live-in care home with the help of 'Kézenfogva' (Holdig Hands) Partnership and Charitable Trust. Autistic children and young people from all over Hungary applied to come and live in this home.

Our care home aims to fill the gap mentioned above. It provides a safe haven for 14 children and young people. They are cared for and educated in a friendly, supportive environment where they learn to take part in the activities of the house as their age and abilities allow.

In 2009 our foundation's work received special honour of recognition from the Hungarian Government. In the same year, we were awarded the *Caring for Zala County prize* by the Zala County Assembly for our humanitarian work.

Autism

Autism is a highly variable neurodevelopment disorder that first appears during infancy or childhood and generally follows a steady course without remission. Overt symptoms gradually begin after the age of six months, becoming established by age two or three, and tend to continue through adulthood, although often in a more muted form. The condition is characterised by a triad of symptoms: impaired social interaction and communication; restricted interests and repetitive behaviour.

Causes

It has long been presumed that there is a common cause of autism at the genetic, cognitive and neural levels. However, there is an increasing belief that this is a complex disorder with distinct causes which often co-occur.

Management

The main goals when treating autistic children are to lessen the associated deficits and family distress and to increase quality of life and functional independence. No single treatment is best, and this is ideally tailored to the child's needs.

Our aims

The ethos of our foundation is to improve the quality of life of the autistic children and young people in our care. We do this through unique professional development therapies. People with autism require 24-hour monitoring, which is extremely physically and mentally demanding for their families; we work to reduce their emotional and financial burden.

Future plans and developments

- To construct a new residential home.
- To enlarge and extend our care home with new therapy rooms.
- To set up a day centre for children with learning difficulties

Our services

- **Creativity**

Children with autism can greatly benefit from creative activities. For example, pottery encompasses all of the five senses and is a calm and soothing means of providing sensory stimulation. The children can discover their creative ability as they turn a lump of clay into a work of art, which develops their self-esteem. We witness on a daily basis the amazement our children feel as they see their completed projects. They feel a great sense of accomplishment in knowing that they have created something unlike anyone else, and they have done it themselves. They make objects such as honey and milk pots, soup bowls, and ornaments such as tea light holders.

- **Music as Therapy for Autistic Children**

Music that engages autistic children in dancing and singing works very well in helping them to communicate and develop social skills. Autistic children respond to music by singing and some even start communicating in this way. Music therapy can help different autistic patients in different ways, solving their anxiety and replacing this with positive emotions

- **Hippotherapy and Therapeutic Riding**

Hippotherapy (treatment or therapy aided by a horse) and therapeutic riding use a horse's multidimensional rhythmic movements, which resembles the natural walking gait of a human. Our therapist's help patients ride a horse in different positions, including sitting or lying backwards or sideways; standing in the stirrups and riding on the horse without holding onto reins. Hippotherapy is useful for improving communication and socialisation. Autistic people are unable to integrate their senses and understanding of how their bodies relate to external forces and surfaces; hippotherapy can therefore greatly improve an autistic child's sense of their own bodies in space.

- **Aquatic/Hydrotherapy**

Children with autism have significant sensory difficulties. These children over- or under react to environmental stimuli and react strongly to certain textures. Warm water provides a safe environment; it not only supports the children but provides hydrostatic pressure that soothes and calms them, providing the sensory input that they crave.

- **BEMER 3000 Pulsed Magnetic Stimulation**

Magnetic therapy has been used for centuries and its benefits are medically significant. It enables children to feel more relaxed and helps to allay their fears. It is also good for sleep disorders and the respiratory tract, and strengthens the immune system. It is scientifically proven to reduce epileptic seizures.

- **Ayres Therapy**

The Ayres Method, developed by Anna Jean Ayres, a Californian researcher and psychologist, works to improve sensorial integration dysfunction through various methods designed to stimulate children. The balance system develops through various sensorial impulses; the primary reflexes disappear; the eye movement becomes normal and the integration of the two parts of the body improves, i.e. the nervous system matures.

- **Play Therapy**

Children with autism find it extremely difficult to relate to others, particularly to their peers. Instead of playing with toys in imaginative or symbolic ways (pretending a doll is "my baby", for example) they often perseverate with objects, using them for self-stimulation and becoming entirely self-absorbed. Play is a wonderful tool for helping children to move beyond autism's self-absorption into real, shared interaction. Properly used, play can allow youngsters to explore their feelings and their environment, as well as their relationships with parents, siblings and peers.

- **Bean-bag Therapy**

Our major objective is the continuous teaching of social skills at any age and in every situation. Autistic children need to learn how to function in a group and to perform activities that involve interaction. Special, play development and teaching situations for this purpose are known as bean-bag sessions.

Other Activities

The children who attend the school on a daily basis receive “work and learn” development in the Zalaegerszeg Methodology Institute. They are treated individually and in groups, taking into account their abilities. Other residents are visited by a special education teacher at home.

Contact Us

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