

## NEWS FROM THE LIVSLUST-DZIVESPRIEKŠ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR ORPHANED AND IN OTHER WAYS OTHER EXPOSED YOUNGSTERS IN LATVIA

### Many new students in September 2006

In September, the school-year started with 27 new students. The largest group of newcomers so far. It is up to the staff and the old students to make them feel welcome and secure in their new environment. Many of them have problems of social and psychological nature caused by a difficult childhood and they need a lot of support and attention. Before the school starts, all the students and the staff use to make an excursion together in order to get to know each other. This year they went to the Tervete nature park, where everybody enjoyed the beautiful landscape. After that they went to a village, which is built up as scenery for film-making. The excursion was carried out thanks to a contribution from **World Childhood Foundation**.

There are 42 students at the school divided as follows: 13 in the kitchen assistant programme, 7 in the joiner programme, 6 in the painter programme and 11 in the seamstress programme. 5 students finish their 9th grade in the nearby village school and will after that chose a vocational programme.



Excursion to Tervete.

### A broadened target group

In spite of promises, Livslust-Dzivespriekš still receives no financial support from the Latvian State. The accreditation of the school and the vocational programmes according to Latvian rules did not help. It even turned out to have a negative effect as only pupils who have passed the 9th grade exam, are allowed to attend accredited

programmes. This excluded many youngsters. Due to this, we gave up the accreditation of the programmes from the start of the autumn semester. This allows us to accept also those who are in most need. We still provide the same vocational programmes but they will not lead to a State diploma. Instead, we have agreed with our partners **Krasu Serviss**, **Vairak Saules**, **Snickers Workwear**, **SAGA** and other companies, that they will accept Livslust students as trainees. For many this will lead to employment. For our students these agreements open a door to the work market in spite of the fact that they have no official diploma. Students, staff and partners are all very pleased with this solution.

It should also be said that the Ministry of Education has taken an initiative to investigate the possibility to look upon the Livslust-Dzivespriekš operation as a new way of taking care of vulnerable youngsters. The aim is to change the rules so that the school will be eligible for financial support from the Latvian state.

### Visits to former students

As far as we know, Livslust-Dzivespriekš is the only school that stays in contact with its former students for a long time. The school functions as a substitute family who gives support and encouragement and who cares also about life after school. **Gita Priede** is responsible for the students when they are at the school and for the follow-up after they have left. In the autumn she went to see some of the girls who have become mothers during 2006. She sees to it that everybody has what they need. Former students are also welcome to contact the school for help and support. Thanks to this on-going contact, we know that at least 85 % of the former students are doing well.



*Gita* pays a visit to *Jevgenija Zoreva* and her son *Daniels*. They live in Jelgava together with *Daniel's father Maris Sidrevics*, also a former Livslust student.



## Trainee experience at Livslust

*Evelina Davidsson, student of the Child- and Leisuretime programme at the Tessin school, Nyköping, Sweden, carried out her workplace training at Livslust's school in Latvia (13/3-7/4). Here she writes about her experience:*



*Evelina with Gita Priede, who was her mentor at Livslust.*

*"It is not easy to come to a country with a different culture than your own. If you don't know the language it is even harder. However, my stay at Livslust-Dzivesprieks was characterized by hospitality, openness, curiosity and warmth. Both the staff and the pupils made their best to involve and engage me in their daily lives. When their English was not sufficient, we used body language. Difficulties were overcome and my visit developed into a fantastic experience.*

*The unique concept (a mix of school, vocational education, social rehabilitation, home, family and workshops) might sound like an odd combination, but it really works and has helped many young people to a good life. Actually, I could notice how the youngsters changed day by day and I saw them in a different way when I left than when I first came. I am quite sure that, without Livslust, many of them would not have had the slightest chance of getting a real job, a home or a family.*

*During my trainee period I tested everything from office work (as far as I could) to being an assisting teacher at the English lessons or just a friend. Due to language problems or the delicacy of the process, there were some activities that I could only watch. Every day was different except for meals at fixed hours, the daily morning gatherings and evening activities. I took part in lessons on technical drawing, vocational practice, math, work-security, computer skills, English, life skills, social psychological training and the Girls Club. In the evenings I joined the others for guitar lessons, choir-singing, sports, aerobics, line-dance and pottery.*

*While I was there, the school made two excursions to Riga. One was to see a comical theatre play and the other was to celebrate a Memorial Day for the victims of communism. It was interesting to notice how the Swedish and Latvian culture differ.*

*The way I see it, the secure and family-like atmosphere of the school is a necessary condition for the youngsters to be able to discover their special talents and develop their own interests. Livslust-Dzivesprieks works in a completely new way. An important part of the education is to involve the students in all the work that needs to be done in and around the school. This is a way to motivate the students to take responsibility.*

*I knew quite a lot about the school in advance, and yet, it was not until I was there that I got a real understanding. The warmth, the feeling of security and openness that I met was incredible. Even if the youngsters don't have a "real" family of their own, Livslust is their family.*

*During my visit I learnt a lot about pedagogic and social professions, in this case in the perspective of another culture. Most important is perhaps that I learnt a lot about myself. In conclusion, I think that I believe in people in another way and that I have a new attitude towards people I don't know. I have seen how you can bring about change using, apparently simple, means. As far as I see it, Livslust shows how charity can work in a successful way. It is obvious that their work is very important and in my view, they are both role models and pioneers in this field."*



*Students can apply for financial support for further studies from the Oriflame Cosmetics scholarship fund. The picture shows students holding scholarships and representatives of Oriflame and Livslust-Dzivesprieks at the annual gathering at the Oriflame office in Riga.*

## The Saint Laurentii Order Awards 2006



*Mats Johansson, on the left, presented the award to Best Girl Pupil, Edite Sila and to Best Boy Pupil Arturs Grigulis, who is on the far right next to headmaster Edijs Petersons. In the middle Sergejs receives the award for Best Friend on behalf of his brother Vadims Katans. Vadims was not able to be there himself due to trainee work. The award consists of a diploma and 100 EURO.*

## Staff seminar at the school in Aizupe

A seminar for the Dzivesprieks staff was arranged on October 2-3 at the school. It was led by **Christer Magnusson**, who is a consultant of leadership and staff development and a member of the Livslust board since the start in 1994. It was the third staff seminar at the school with the purpose to strengthen the team-spirit and good working environment. When the seminar finished, everybody was happy and pleased with what had been accomplished during the two days with group work, discussions and many laughs.

## We thank all our summer-hosts

For the seventh time, students from Livslust visited Swedish families for a couple of summer-weeks and two boys went to Germany. The **Friström** family at Gotland has hosted Livslust youngsters all seven summers. Many of the youngsters have never before experienced a functional family and they bring home memories for life. We thank **Eva Ribbing**, who succeeded again with the tough achievement of putting together families, students and journeys. **To become a host, please contact Eva at [eva.ribbing@comhem.se](mailto:eva.ribbing@comhem.se) or phone +46 8-612 27 33.**



*Anita Starka became good friends with the guinea-pig Zlatan belonging to the Sandgren family.*

## The farm

It was a difficult season for farming with a draught in July and too much rain in August and the harvest turned out to be much smaller than calculated. Even if we made good use of the new corn dryer, it was hard to get it all under roof in time. Extra financial support from the Latvian State and EU subsidies helps up the financial situation though. **Janis Kleins** is our new farm manager from this autumn. We wish him all the luck and hope that he is good friends with the weather gods so that the farm will generate a good contribution to cover the costs of the school.

The farm has grown to 300 hectares (of which Livslust-Dzivesprieks own 2/3). It has proved to be a good investment as the land price has doubled and continues to rise.

We need some new machinery. For the time being we are trying to find a good second hand tractor and a combine-harvester. Since last spring the farm is run as a company, which gives better possibilities to obtain financial support from the State as well as financing of investments.



*The management of the farm: The upper row Christian Örup, Liga Landisa, Janis Kleins and below Ugis Cebers and Kaspars Pavars.*

## Charity Golf for Livslust

On a beautiful day in September, 76 golfers gathered to play golf for Livslust. **The Royal Golf Club of Drottningholm** opened the court for free. The participants paid "a double green-fee" which gave them a wonderful day of golf, a start-kit that was donated by the **SEB** bank, advice from the club coach, soft drinks along the course and many prizes donated by the sponsors of Livslust. The event resulted in a significant contribution to our work and we are looking forward to do it again next year.

## Collections for our youngsters

The students have everything they need during their stay at the school. In addition, they get a "start-kit" when they are about to settle in their first home of their own. When leaving they are given what they will need of clothes, bedding, towels and different household utensils. Most things, some new and some second hand, are donated by private persons and companies. The latest collection of different items were carried out at **Vattenfall, Snickers Workwear** and **Förenade Liv**.



*On October 3rd "Apkars Dzivespriekam" (Around Livslust) was arranged for the first time. It is a race where the girls run 1,8 km and the boys 3,6 km. This will become an annual event and we expect to see many new records.*

## News in short end of May-December 2006

- May 30 was last year's "Anti-Smoke Day", a part of the drug prevention programme. This time everybody went for a day-long hike in the beautiful surroundings of the school. Only five of the students are smokers and most likely they will fall for the group pressure and quit this unnecessary habit.
- In June, 50 **Vattenfall Veterans** took a trip to Latvia where they visited Livslust. They were guided around the school, bought products from the sewing workshop and after a nice dinner made by the pupils, they continued to Riga.
- The Latvian fish factory "Zivs" invited all the students to a fish-farm at Irlava in June.
- On June 22 it was **Graduation Day** for 14 students who had finished their basic training as seamstresses, painters or joiners. Professional experts from our cooperation partners **Snickers Workwear**, **Krasu Serviss** and **SAGA** assisted at the graduation. These companies have taken in all the graduates for employment or practice.
- On June 13 a group of 36 persons from the School and Youth Division "Navet" at Nyköping in Sweden visited Aizupe. They work with a similar target group and find the work of Livslust-Dzivesprieks to be very interesting.



*The celebration of Halloween turned out to be exactly the playful frightening experience that it is meant to be.*

- At the end of June the students took a long hike along the **Baltic Seashore** between Mersrags and Klāpkalnciems.
- On August 30, **Livslust's collaboration** partners held yet another meeting to share their Livslust experience. The host this time was **KPMG** Stockholm and the theme was "tax deduction for donations". A special thanks to **Anette Keiler-Arvedson**, who arranged this meeting.
- **Lattelekom** donated five new computers to the school last year.
- At the **SAS Radisson Daugava** hotel in Riga you can find an exhibition of Livslust products.
- **LMT** – Latvian Mobile Telephone is a new Livslust-Dzivesprieks sponsor in Latvia.
- Livslust's website is now also available in **English** at **www.livslust.com**
- The Christmas sales at **Länsförsäkringar**, **Electrolux**, **Vattenfall** and **Telia** were very successful.

## Thanks to all faithful supporters!

### Different ways to give support

A gift to Livslust-Dzivesprieks is a gift to exposed children in Latvia. You can be a partner with a long-term commitment, a Livslust-Dzivesprieks-sponsor and pay a monthly amount of your own choice or you can make a singular donation in connection with Christmas or birthdays. You can host a couple of our students in the summer. You can buy products made in our workshops. Contact us for more information at [livslust@telia.com](mailto:livslust@telia.com) or +46 8 6607784.

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