

PROGRESSO-NEWS

Issue
05

Intensive Pedagogical Care in Portugal

2013/2014

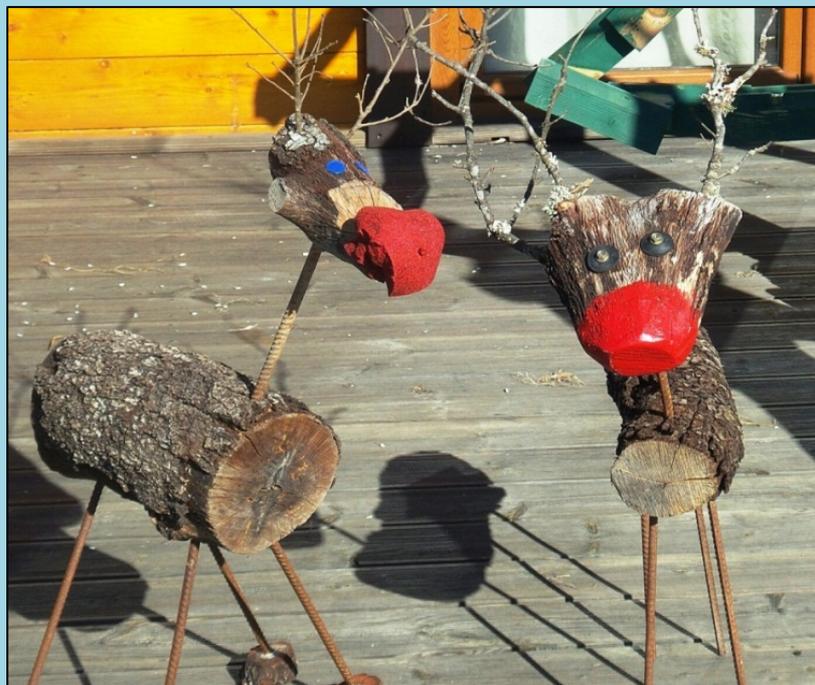
Progresso - Associação para o Apoio e Acompanhamento de Jovens em Portugal



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INTRODUCTION

We published our first newsletter seven years ago and our young people have wanted to take part in it ever since. I am really happy that in this issue too, our fifth, I am able to publish several articles written by our young people, where they talk about their experiences and feelings.

The Assisted Living programme is new at Progresso. In the article "That's How We Roll – Assisted Living in Almodôvar" the group introduces itself.

Many young people concluded their programme of care in the past two summers, and flew back home after their exams. That means I'm particularly pleased to be able to publish the first articles about their successes. Above all, I'd like to use this newsletter to thank everyone involved in the care process for their help, patience and support. That applies especially to our colleagues, teachers, parents, legal guardians, youth welfare office workers and cooperation partners: TELL-US, Trotzdem e.V., and Panta Rhei e.V.

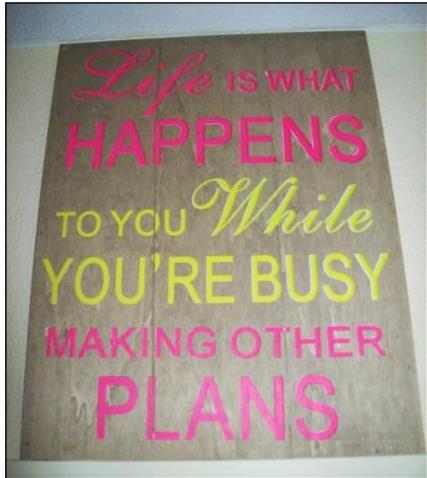
Dorit Brandauer
Managing Director



"That's How We Roll" – Assisted Living Provisions in Almodôvar

After young people successfully pass through the phase system, many of them are faced with the question: "What now? Back to Germany or Holland? Or move into my own flat?"

It soon became clear that the step from our project to living independently in their own flat in Germany or Holland was a very big one, and many young people weren't able to cope with the sudden freedom.



For that reason, young people who have successfully passed through all of the phases are able to then move into the assisted living provision in Almodôvar.

The basic idea was for young people to practise living independently in their own flat, under close supervision. But entirely in line with the fundamental concept of Progresso, we humans learn from experience. This year the experience showed us that this step is still too big for some young people, and they need a different transition phase. So a three-person team got together and developed conceptual approaches and checked over and over again that they were both feasible and effective.

In May 2014 three young people moved out of their flat again and into our "transition house". There they are supported and given advice by a carer who lives in the house with them. The carer is no longer the carer who says what, how, when and where things have to be done – instead they provide assistance and advice when a young person is having to think about how they can tackle everyday challenges and temptations independently. How do I budget my weekly money when buying food and drink? How do I handle all the many different free time activities that life "in the city" brings with it? How do I decorate my living space? How do I handle the fact that I always have a mobile phone or the internet available to me? How can I make sure I don't neglect school or work in the process? How can I organise myself in order to satisfy my needs? What do I have to do when I want to have my own bank account? And so on and so forth. Reality check: How do I apply the skills that I have learnt in the past months and years and what do I still need to learn in order to prepare to live my own life?

We're now looking back on twelve months full of changes and challenges and are pleased to be able to say that the assisted living provision have grown together to become a generally harmonious group of responsible young people.

It wasn't just day-to-day life that supplied us with important moments – our interesting summer holidays also strengthened the feeling of community.



The whole group spent five days camping near Sintra in the summer holidays. The situation at the outset was as follows: We have a certain budget, everyone has different interests, everyone wants to do different things, everyone has to help plan.



Therefore, each of the young people was responsible for organising one of the days of the holiday. As the carers, Saru and Manu looked after the travel there, the accommodation and the journey back.

To get us started we went to a Richie Campbell concert and danced our way into the holidays: "That's How We Roll".

At Praia de Adraga, near Sintra, we found a magical and relaxing place where we could put up our tents. We got to know interesting people from different countries who had the same goal as us: to have an enjoyable time.



The first day was planned by Tim. First challenge: showering... Where can we find a public shower? Well who can you turn to in any emergency? THE FIRE BRIGADE

Clean and smelling good, off to the city of Lisbon with all its many sites, just being a tourist and hopefully not getting lost.

After the stresses of the first day, a wonderfully different schedule

planned by Sean: "Let's explore the western edge of Europe and then enjoy the beach!" But what nobody really expected: "God, it's so windy and cold, and god, the water is freezing..."

For the last two days Rebecca and Ken had planned cultural activities in the unique Sintra.

And so we dived into the magical world of Serra de Sintra and discovered the origins of heroes, princesses, kings and gargoyles and visited the Palácio da Pena and the Quinta da Regaleira.



Now we're back to the normal routine and in our new team we tackle the new day-to-day challenges and changes that come with it. We're all looking forward excitedly to what the future will bring.

Manu (Team Leader)



The Big School Move: Going to a New Building



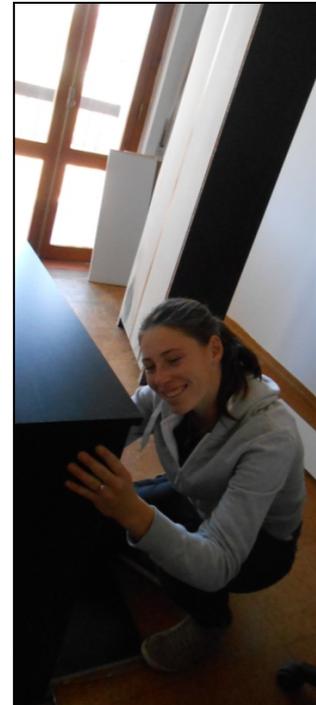
The new school is an apartment on the second floor. Because the school is in a block of flats, we have to be considerate of the neighbours that live next door and on the floor below. We have very nice neighbours and we say hello to them when we see them. The building is in a pretty, quiet area, with trees, flowers, friendly pets walking around and a few benches where we sit during our breaks.

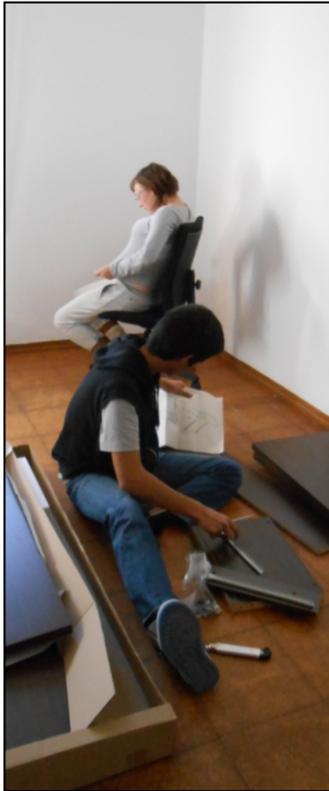
The building has three classrooms, an additional quiet room, a kitchen, a WC and a bathroom (where you can get changed if you came to school on your bike). There are three different types of schools: the Marien School, the Flex School (distance learning) and the Dutch class (which is given the name Casa Henk, because there is a skeleton there called Henk). Bärbel and Sabine teach the German students and Marcia teaches the Dutch ones.

The new school is definitely much better than the old one. The old school was made up of two rooms behind the Tulipa Café. The two rooms were large, but there wasn't enough ventilation or fresh air. When you opened the door to let fresh air in, you could hear all the cars out on the road and the people sitting in front of the café. In the new school there is enough ventilation and there's no problem in opening the window to let fresh air in. In comparison to the old school there is also much more sunlight in the classrooms. Because the school is in a quiet area, there's hardly any traffic noise. The school is a real improvement, there are lots of advantages and being there gives you a much warmer, relaxed feeling.

Before we could move into the new school, a few things had to happen. First the new school had to be cleaned completely. I was given the job of cleaning the school. It took a few hours for me to complete my task, and I was happy with the end result. We also needed new furniture, but that was done by the women from the office. They drove to Ikea in Lisbon in an empty bus and came back with new bookcases, desks and clocks for the new school.

The next step was to bring all of the furniture, school supplies and all the new IKEA furniture to the new school. The Quinta did that job, and it took us one and a half days.



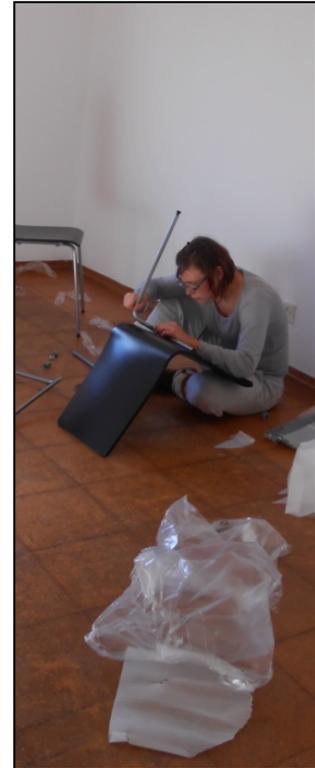


We had to build the bookcases and desks and put them in the classrooms. Then we had to put the school supplies into the cupboards and make it into a real school. It was a very sociable day and everyone did the best they could to organise the school as well as possible.

Personally I am very happy about the new school. I especially like the fact that we have a better place to go during the breaks. After an hour of school, we need a break. In the old school we could only stay in the classroom, where during most of the day there was no sunlight. It was surrounded by large walls, we didn't have any benches and we also didn't get to see any nature. After breaks in the new school I feel much more awake and much fresher than I did in the old school. I can tell that everyone thinks the new school is much better. And another reason it's so great is because of the way we put it all together.

When I look back on the whole school move, I see all of the hard work that went into it and what we managed to achieve. That's why this article is called "The BIG school move", because it was something big and important and that was made possible because lots of people worked very hard. That's what made it BIG. I think that's something that we can all be proud of.

Tim (Quinta/Assisted Living)



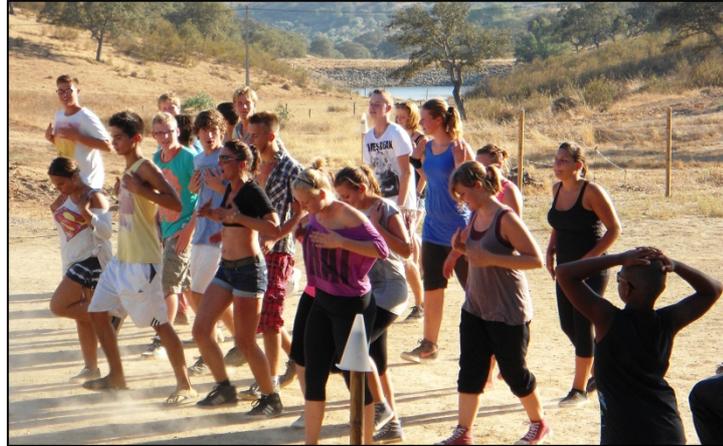
Rhythm and Dance

Hello I'm Sean and I want to tell you about a really nice activity we did!

One day in August 2013 we had a dancing day at Fronteiras.

It was a day that all projects came together for an activity.

Quinta, Semblana and Fronteiras were present and there were also three kids from counselled living.



We were waiting for the teachers Tessa and Wally and then we started dancing on the football field at Fronteiras.



I thought a dancing activity was strange because I had never danced before. I was prepared for the worse because it could have been ballroom dancing for example. Till then we didn't know anything about dancing.

On the football field we got explained that we were going to do hip hop and rhythm, No ballroom dancing luckily!

It was an interesting experience for me and I think for the other kids as well because we do not dance that often.

I think most of the boys really enjoyed the rhythm that we had to make with clapping our hands to our chest and then to our legs. We were making a rhythm with our body! It was really nice because me and three other boys got the rhythm quickly and we had lots of fun with it.

I think the dancing was more a 'girls thing' and they were much better then the boys in my opinion. I tried really hard but every time I got out of my dance structure again, such a pity!

But even though it did not went well all the time, it was great fun and afterwards we had a nice meal together prepared by all the kids. Unfortunately there were a lot of wasps so that was a bit less fun. But luckily nobody got stung by one or at one for dinner. After dinner we had some social time with the whole group an we were talking a lot. It was a lot of fun and I hope this will be continued later on!

Sean (Assisted Living)



The Hike



When my team leader in BSO told me that I was going to go hiking with João and Britt, I was shocked. I didn't know what to say, I wanted to cry – I didn't understand why, maybe it was a punishment or something. But after the hike lots of things became clear to me. It definitely wasn't a punishment at all!

We left on 27.10.2013. I was completely nervous and slept badly the night before. I checked at least six times to make sure I definitely hadn't forgotten anything. When João, Britt and I arrived at our starting point, Almogrove, I realised there was no turning back now. Walking for six days was really hard work. I thought about myself a lot, but also about my family and what they might be doing or thinking in that moment. I can't ever take back what happened in

Germany, but now I've come to realise that lots of things that I did were not right. I've learnt to have trust and be willing to try out new things.

The first two days were terrible for me, but on the third day I started to enjoy it. I was surprised at myself for having already nearly seen the whole thing through. To be honest, a couple of times I doubted whether it would help me, but looking back now, I think it was a good thing to do. I approach things with more confidence now, and don't give up so quickly. It was very important for me to write my mother a letter afterwards, without being scared about how she might react. I think it was a very positive experience.

Kim (Semblana)



Puzzle Day



It was a completely normal day for the young people of Quinta do Cerro. It was the Christmas holidays. All of them were in very low spirits because of the weather – rain, clouds and wind.

Then the pedagogical staff and interns told us that we were going to do a treasure hunt. We had to find clues, and each time we found one, it would take us to the next clue. We thought that didn't sound too hard. So we got into teams. Tim and Sean, Patricia and Nathalie, and Maja and I went off on the famous treasure hunt.

Maja and I had problems as soon as we started with the first clue, which was: "From the rest is nothing left". That immediately made us think of Christmas food and we ran to the fridge. We found a clue there too, but unfortunately it wasn't the next one. Neither of us had realised at the beginning that they were organised in a certain order. The other teams sometimes also spent a long time thinking about where the next clue might be. The envelopes had been hidden throughout the whole of the Quinta. The carers had sometimes been very clever, and got us running from A to B then back to A again. But despite that, bit by bit, all the teams found all of the clues. Our hunt took us to the garage, the horse stables, the old ruin, the fridge, the wooden house, the chicken coop, down into the horses' field and then finally to the river alongside our garden. We actually thought that that was the end, but we were wrong. Each of the envelopes had puzzle pieces in them that we had to put together as a team. We knew there was going to be something written on the back of it, so we had to think logically in order to decipher it, because the pedagogical staff's handwriting isn't very tidy.

But we managed to do it, and we found out that we had a group task to carry out. Our task was to pick up a package from an island that was laid out in the form of ropes. But we weren't allowed to step into the circle and none of the equipment we used was allowed to touch the floor. We discovered a climbing rope over 100 metres long, a climbing harness and a carabiner. After talking about it for a long time, we came up with a solution. We tied one end of the rope to the tree. We all held the other end tight so that it didn't touch the floor. And Tim played the role of the rescuer and picked up the package by climbing the rope like a monkey. We carefully opened the package and found a cinema voucher inside.

Our treasure hunt was over. We made a campfire and ate stick bread (twist bread). We all had a little laughing fit when Patricia's marshmallow caught fire and started glowing blue. We were all laughed so much that we cried. And we sat there like that for a while and whiled away the evening together. We all really enjoyed the day and had a lot of fun.

Vanessa (Quinta/Assisted Living)

Colour Run



On 17.05.2014 the Quinta team and the assisted living team went to Lisbon (Cascais) to do the five kilometre Color Run.

We all met in front of the school at 10 a.m., packed everything up and drove in the bus for nearly two hours towards Almada.

When we arrived we received our number, t-shirts, sweat bands and stickers and each of us got a packet of paint, that we immediately put to good use.

Then we went to the starting line, where we had to wait for a while, because so many people were taking part and we weren't all allowed to start running at the same time because that would have been pure chaos.

You could see that the people were having fun – and we were too, of course. There were even little children running together with their parents. They had an absolute whale of a time at the paint stations of course, rolling around on the floor and throwing

paint at each other. There was water every two kilometres, and we had a wonderful view of the sea.

We laughed about the other people, some of whom looked just as funny as us, or even worse. We laughed as much as we normally would in a whole week.

We were all hungry after the run and decided to eat something. We had to wait for quite a while because all of the runners were naturally hungry after the run. When we finally got our food, we sat down on a step and ate our hot dogs while looking out over the sea.

Rebecca (Semblana/Assisted Living)



Off Road Mountain Biking in Santa Clara a Nova

On the 8th June 2014 Ken, Rebecca and I left our houses in Almodôvar at 6am and cycled 10km to Santa Clara a Nova. We met up with our carer Saru in Santa Clara. She was due to cycle the 35km together with us, but unfortunately she was ill. Nevertheless, she came along to offer moral support.

The village was full of cyclists walking around, around a hundred or so of them. They all had professional cycling gear on and were forming teams. We were 'Team Progresso'. We all received a name badge with our name on, and numbers for our bikes. The organizers provided breakfast for all of the cyclists. And each of them also received a present too, of some Alentejo bread and local honey.



We started the BTT at 9am. We cycled down the first hill together. When our athlete, Ken, saw how far behind Rebecca and I were, he cycled off to cover the whole course on his own. At the beginning, seeing Ken out in front of us was a great motivation. We tried to catch up with him, but in the end we gave up and assumed that he was too far ahead. Rebecca and I were tired. We were used to cycling 20km to school, before we moved to Almodôvar, but that was always on a road. This was mountain biking. We had never done that kind of thing before: we had to cycle up all these hills, through rivers and along difficult pathways full of sand and stones. We realised then that we weren't physically fit enough to cycle off road for 35km.

About 5km from the end, Rebecca and I decided to take a break in the shade of the only tree that was suitable. At some point Rebecca was so exhausted that she called Saru for her to come and pick us up. The only problem was that we didn't know where we were. Saru said that Ken had arrived a long time ago, and that they would come and look for us. That was when I told Rebecca that she wasn't allowed to give up. We had already made it so far, and if we could complete it, it would prove how strong we are and that we don't give up. In the end we decided that we were going to carry on. After a few kilometres we ran out of water, but luckily we passed by one of the organisation's stations, and they gave us water. The water gave us the strength to cycle the last few kilometres. When we reached the finish we were really happy and proud of ourselves. Saru and Ken were also pleased to see us, and said that they were proud of us for not giving up. After the BTT everyone was given a free lunch.

The BTT was a good experience; we saw lots of different landscapes and we faced up to lots of different challenges and overcame them. Personally speaking, I would definitely do it again. A few days after the BTT we went to a good pizzeria in Castro Verde. I'd like to thank Progresso/Tell-Us, my carers and my friends from my group for this special experience. I gained a lot from it. Who knows what my next BTT experience will be like?

Tim (Quinta/Assisted Living)

Our Office Move

During the last two years we had talked more and more often about moving to a different, bigger office, because in our one the files had been piling up for years, and the library was starting to burst at the seams. In the past few years the size of our team had increased hugely too, and our open-plan office had ultimately ended up more and more often resembling a busy train station. Our office is like the mainland to our project “islands”. It’s where the post arrives, the accounts are settled, books or films can be borrowed and ultimately where all the organisational matters are carried out by our office angels, Susana and Angela.



We had always shied away from moving offices because the effort involved seemed to outweigh the problems that we had: in bureaucratic Portugal, not just the current invoice addresses, but everything else as well, would have to be transferred to the new address, even the car documents, all of which costs money.

The impetus for the move ultimately came, without him realising it, from the new mayor of Almodôvar. When we came back from our Easter holidays in 2014, our lead administrator Susana, told us that she had some news to give us, and that we should sit down before she told us. That’s when we found out that the local authorities had not only changed the name of our street overnight, but that they’d changed it from the lovely “Rua da Praça” to “Rua João de Brito Camacho” (a well-known man in Almodôvar, but with a name that’s difficult for foreigners to remember). Our excitement was written all over our faces...



We used this unexpected “fateful” blow as an opportunity to look for a new office building, because if we were going to have to go through all the hassle of re-registering anyway, then we might as well do it with a new office.

After visiting several different buildings, in October 2014 we finally found a nice suitable office, that met nearly all of our requirements. It was close to the centre, had several rooms, including a consultation room, a room for our therapist, enough space for all the files and the library, as well as individual rooms for us so that each of us can concentrate and work in peace and quiet. However, we’re all very sad about the fact that we no longer have a café right next door. Now we can’t just pop out to grab a coffee, an ice.-cream, or a pastry from what was, for us, the best bakery in Almodôvar.

Nevertheless, we’re very happy with our new little office building.

The office team
Tanja, Susana, Angela and Dorit



The Power of School

My name is Vanessa, I'm 18 years old and I made the decision to complete my schooling here. My youth welfare service only approved a further six months when I applied for an extension, so I did some tests here at the Quinta to review my existing knowledge. I had to sit them without revising again. In each of the three main subjects I was given three tests. After working on them I handed them into Ms Wolfrum and Ms Braundauer, who marked them and contacted the Marien School later on by telephone. The teacher there said I was a Realschule (middle school) candidate, but completing the Realschule qualifications within six months would be too stressful. We then agreed I would complete my Hauptschule (lower secondary education) qualification in the six months.

During the winter holidays I sat in my bedroom doing homework to prepare myself for going back to school. A month later I started at the project school – a school exclusively for young people from Progresso.

My teacher Sabine Mac Key supported me in all subjects from the start. During February I met a teacher from the Marien School called Renate and we got talking soon after. We liked each other. We talked about my future subjects: Maths, German, English, Biology, History, AWT (Work, Science & Technology) and Geography. When she said Geography, I was taken aback – I know I'm terrible at it. But I was allowed to drop one subject, so of course I dropped Geography.

In March another teacher came back, she was called Bärbel Fermino. I then worked through the material together with both teachers.

I had some initial difficulties at the Marien School. Over the next months however I met my examination teacher Mr Offermanns. Each week I wrote to him with feedback and he supported me with his understanding. My teachers too were understanding and sincere with me. I could talk to both of them when my Latin was driving me to the brink. I managed to survive all of the crises because my carers and teachers stood behind me and helped me develop.



Doubt, helplessness, anger with myself, over-ambitious expectations, negative criticism, the feeling of failure, no self-confidence, no self-belief and constant stress – these were on my list of feelings and thoughts in those first months.

The time was flying and between 20.02.2014 and 30.05.2014 I undertook my service internship in a hairdressing salon where the manager also spoke English. It was not all easy, but I got on well with my boss the majority of the time.

In July, the time had come. Life got really serious from 14.07.2014 until 17.07.2014. The examinations took place here in Portugal.

The worst thing that happened to me was when my mind went blank in the History exam. I dropped two marks below a 2 in Maths and also bungled a point below a 1 in my German. My teacher helped where he could, but he was very demanding in the oral exam.

I was completely nervous before all the exams, but really I had all the time in the world to calm myself down. All the teachers gave me encouragement.

After every written exam, my teachers monitored my written texts and after a double check of my papers I was given my results. Even though it was hell having to wait, I was so happy to receive the results immediately.

It really was a wonderful day. I was so unbelievably proud of myself for taking that step. Every anger, every doubt, and all the stress and hard work was more than worth it. Because on 17.07.2014 I was awarded my lower secondary education qualification (Type A Class 10a) with an average grade of 2,125. That's a really good grade, which I would never have achieved without all the help I was given.

Vanessa (Quinta)

*We also congratulate
the other students
graduating in 2013/2014:
Shamal, Nick, Carlo, Nathalie,
Chantal, Matthieu, Laurens,
Stefan, Robin, Bieneke, Tim,
Mirjam, Rebecca und Luis.*

Living and Working With Young People

The personality of each of the team members is an important factor when it comes to working at Progresso. As a result, not everyone who is chosen by Progresso has carried out pedagogical training.

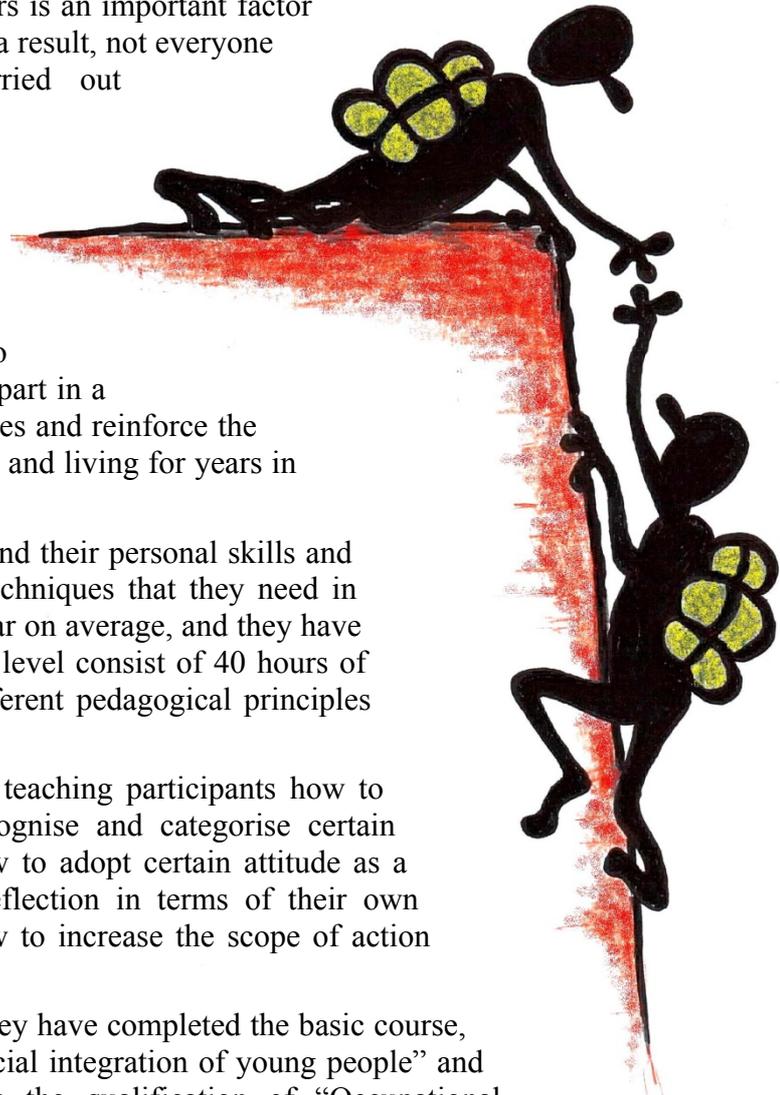
The CLCC training centre – Centro de Línguas, Culturas e Comunicação in Portimão has for several years offered the course “Working and living with young people”, that is directly aimed at this group of people. As such, Progresso gives its employees the opportunity to take part in a series of pedagogical educational programmes and reinforce the practical part, that they have been practicing and living for years in some cases, with theoretical knowledge.

The training programme also serves to expand their personal skills and knowledge and teach them methods and techniques that they need in their day-to-day work. The course lasts a year on average, and they have to pass through three different levels. Each level consist of 40 hours of lessons, where they learn the basics of different pedagogical principles around various topics.

Particular objectives of the course include teaching participants how to connect theory with practice, how to recognise and categorise certain processes within the provision of care, how to adopt certain attitude as a care worker, how to improve their self-reflection in terms of their own patterns of thought and behaviour, and how to increase the scope of action within the provision of care.

The participants receive a certificate after they have completed the basic course, which qualifies them as a “Carer for the social integration of young people” and after the levels that follow, they receive the qualification of “Occupational Therapist for young people with integration issues”.

Saru (Carer)



Trust is the Key

From 18.08.2014 to 22.08.2014 we took part in a therapy week with the therapist, Jutta. On the first day we learnt what feelings we have and why/when they come about. We also talked about the reasons why we feel things. We learnt that there's no such thing as negative feelings, we just categorise them as negative ourselves. In actual fact, all feelings are positive. Then we received a work sheet and were given the task of describing our feelings. We were meant to think of a feeling that we had had recently and demonstrate the facial expressions, the attitude, the thoughts and the feelings that it gave you. Some of us felt caught unprepared for and overwhelmed by this task, while other people felt relieved after they had done it.

We also performed an EQ test. That's a test where you find out how well you react to certain things, which emotions you have at different moments, and how well you can control your thoughts and feelings. Some people did well, others didn't. But it's different from person to person. Essentially, none of the results of that test are negative, and no answer is wrong, because you answer using your feelings. To have a better understanding of ourselves we listened to different types of music and produced creative pictures. They're all very different because we all have very different characters, feelings and thoughts.

They're one of a kind, because we just can't be copied!

Vanessa, Luisa, Joy and Patricia (Quinta)

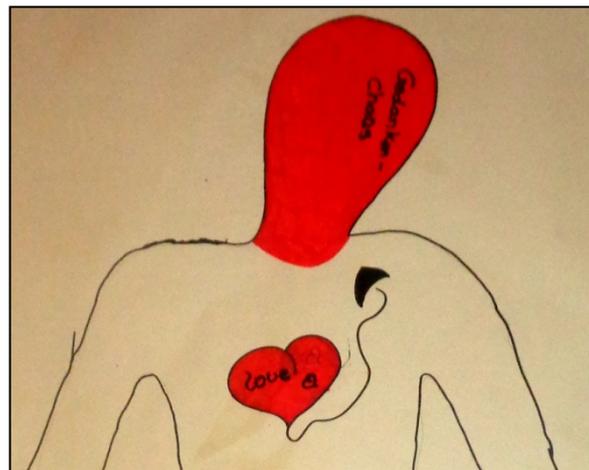
Someone told me I was brave to be taking part in the project week about emotional intelligence, because it was going to be in German and my native language is Dutch. Personally, I don't think it has anything to do with being brave. I trusted the therapist and the other girls to help me where needed, and that's exactly what they did. Trust and emotions were the main topics during these five days.

I spent the first day sizing up the rest of the group. How much do I want to tell this group of girls, half of whom I don't know?

During the exercise I got to know myself better, and I was able to open up a little more every day.

Sometimes the exercises were a little bit silly and childish, but they all had a point, which I realised along the way. We did exercises with movement, writing, on our own and together with others, as well as drawing and painting. We also did a relaxation exercise every day. The exercises where I had to draw and paint were the ones I enjoyed the most, and they felt very natural. Doing that helped me to understand my feelings and my emotions better. Sometimes I could literally see what I was feeling, which wasn't possible when it was only going around in my head. Sometimes during the exercises I couldn't help but laugh, or sometimes even cry, but it was okay. Nobody judged me or my feelings. All of my feelings are okay, whatever they are. That is the most important thing that I learnt in those days.

Bieneke (Semblana)



Why, why, why and why!

I am Luis. I was born in Brazil and adopted, which is important information for later on. On 14.01.2012 I came to Portugal, to the Progresso project.

Lots of people ask me, Luis, what is that exactly? What is it like? Or they're envious of me for living in Portugal. Of course, the first thing people think of is the sea and the sun, that's true. But to be honest, I had to undertake a long journey before I managed to fulfil my dream of living by the sea. I'll start at the beginning.

On 13.01.2012 I travelled to Hasenwinkel with my parents to meet with my youth welfare officer and Dorit, the managing director in Portugal. I was nervous. Nevertheless, I knew what was awaiting me: I was going to Portugal alone, a country that I didn't know, to people that I didn't know, who wanted to tell me how I should behave. It wasn't until I was sitting in the aeroplane that I realised how far I had let myself go, that my life had gone off the rails and that I had no other option except to go to Portugal.

Three months, that was the plan! I thought to myself: "Right, I'll show them what a lovely young man I actually am, and maybe then they'll let me go."

That was a nice dream, haha, I still remember Dorit having to spend a whole half of a day just getting there, because her car broke down on the way. When I arrived it was almost dark, the carers were having a meeting and the other young people were waiting for me, expectantly.

That was when I experienced my first big shock. Me and one other German were the only ones that spoke German. All of the others spoke Dutch and English.

I had huge trouble understanding everyone. I actually just had everything translated for me all the time, and tried to speak to the German carers as much as possible.

As I already said, it was a nice dream of mine to show the carers that I'm actually a lovely young man and then they'd let me go back to Germany. It went well for a week and a few days, but then I ended up in the tent and at the end of my tether!

I couldn't believe it. Suddenly, I wasn't at home anymore and I had to ask permission for everything! May I go to the toilet? May I smoke a cigarette? And much more. No Whys. No independent decisions. I couldn't get up when I felt like it, couldn't watch TV, and what made me really crazy: at first, no music. I actually had nothing left, apart from my clothes, my toiletries and myself.

For me, that was hell on earth! I thought to myself: why, why, why and why! What did I do to deserve this, what have I done to the world? I had never let anyone tell me what to do before, and now all of a sudden, people I didn't know were making decisions for me.

Phase One was important for me as a way of learning respect and acceptance, but above all, learning to appreciate the little things.

Then came Phase Two. I had done it, finally freedom! That was my first thought. That was because in Phase two you have more Freedoms. Music, laptop, school and the trust of the carers. One key thing is that you're then allowed to go and do something on your own, or with others who are also in phase two.

But feeling overconfident, I was soon brought back to reality. I had found my family in Brazil, after all these years... That affected me so much that a stay was arranged for me in Germany.

When I left Germany again to come back to Portugal, I moved to live on my own in Almodôvar, Alentejo. Cool, a house! I was finally going to get money and be self-sufficient. But everything was more difficult than I expected. To be honest, I still have problems managing my money. Because of that, I have a lot of respect for all the parents out there. We kids always had food on the table at home, the flat was clean, and everything at home was in order. That's what you learn in the assisted living provision: to be independent and mature.

But in my case there was also the fact that I was preparing for Brazil! About six months later, I saw my biological family again for the first time. That was actually the big turning point in my life, the point where I realised that I can be grateful for being alive, being healthy, and being able to live in Europe.

Then I had to make the decision between either Germany or Portugal. I stayed, and moved to Lagos, the next big step.

I've been living by the sea for about a year now – after a lot of hard work. Lots of tears have been shed, there have been ups and downs. I'm at a point now where I can say: Thank you, I can now live my life safe in the knowledge that I won't be committing any criminal acts, thanks to everyone who works at Progresso!

I surf and still meet with my carers. I am homeschooled, do Capoeira, judo, and most of all, I dance!

I recently danced with Les Twins and had a personal chat with them. And I met Beyoncé!

I owe all of that to Progresso. Without their help I don't think I ever would have managed to summon up the discipline to fight for what I enjoy doing and where my talents really lie.

Luis (Assisted Living)



On the Path to Finding Myself



Before I report about my experiences, I want to explain some of my story, about what happened before I went to Portugal. From the age of ten I was in and out of institutions due to my difficult situation at home. Back then I was unable to establish contact with other people or children, I had a lot of difficulty recognizing emotions and expressing them in words, behavioural problems, an extremely self-centred manner and aggression issues. I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism. For me, the biggest problem was

dealing with my aggressions and not knowing who I was, or what I wanted. By age 16 I had been admitted to five different institutions on six occasions and all possibilities of finding an appropriate place for me were used up.

My carer from the youth welfare office also had no more suggestions left as to where I could be accommodated outside one of these institutions. After goodness knows how many searches and a temporary stay somewhere, the idea of Tell-Us came up. At the end of the search there were only two possibilities: a closed group or Tell-Us. From my experiences in closed institutions we knew this was a bad idea, so the only solution was Tell-Us in Portugal.

Before I left, I had no idea what was awaiting me. The only thing I was given beforehand was a list of things that I should take. I had never flown before either, so I was going to be on an aeroplane for the first time in my life. I suddenly received the news that I would be leaving in five days – I had never been so nervous before.

My carer brought me to Portugal. When I arrived at the “Nova Sembla” project, I had no idea where I had landed, or what the point of it was. Everything was different there. The surroundings, the way even the simplest household chores were carried out. But particularly the daily routine and the way the carers dealt with me were totally different to what I was used to. Slowly, I started to realise what the point of it all was, and in the first five months I worked hard against it. I thought it would have no use for me and that ultimately they would send me away anyway, just as the other institutions had done.

For me, one of the best moments of the project is still the moment I flipped out when one of the carers made an observation about a task I had forgotten about. I was so angry that I immediately started to scream and I threw the water bottle, that I had in my hand, in the direction of the carer. I really needed five minutes to calm myself down, but I wasn't given them. The carer walked after me and asked me, completely calmly, what was wrong. I carried on screaming. She said she wasn't angry with me – but I continued to scream anyway. In the middle of my screams I finally realised what she was saying, stopped screaming and began to cry. She asked me if she should give me a hug, and then she did. I was really frustrated with myself and I expressed it in the wrong way. But at that exact moment I realised what this care programme could mean for me and that they listened to me, even when I often didn't realise.

Slowly I started to see that everything I had done until then hadn't worked, but that if I did things in a different way, they probably would. Slowly but surely, things started to change. My first big success was reaching Phase 2 and being allowed to go to school again. I started to learn for my VMBO-TL exams straight away. Last year I took five (half) of the necessary subjects and passed all of them. This year I'll complete the rest of my exams. Until I reached Phase 2, I was only allowed contact with my parents through the form of

letters. The correspondence with my mother was better than with my father. The letters I exchanged with my parents taught me to appreciate that contact more and more. This was definitely because when I left the Netherlands I was very angry with them for no particular reason and didn't want to speak to them. From Phase 2 on, I was allowed a phone call with my mother each week. The further I progressed through my Phase plan, the more freedoms I was given back. And then came Phase 3. I was allowed to go wherever I wanted on my own again, send my own emails and I was given more responsibility.

Unfortunately for certain reasons I was unable to finish Phase 3 and am still not finished. But they didn't leave me in the lurch. I am now living in one of Tell-Us's follow-up projects in the Netherlands. At the beginning I found it very difficult to feel like I'd found my safe haven here, because the girls and carers from "Nova Sembla" had become like a family, and the project my home. Now I am slowly understanding that I need to find my home in the Netherlands. It is still difficult, because I need a lot of time to completely trust people.

When I look back at how I was two years ago and how I am now, I see many changes. They include me finally having the belief again that everything is going to be ok and that I will be able to help myself when I am finished here. I know now that all the feelings and emotions that I have are allowed to be as they are, because at the end of the day you only have yourself when you push away or repress emotions or feelings. I have no more problems with my aggression and can deal with my feelings and emotions. I have also lost 34 kilos by following the programme.

Summing up, the project was a kick up the backside for me, one that I desperately needed, and that no-one in the Netherlands could give me. The project wasn't all just positive, enjoyable moments, there were also times I just wanted to give up, but ultimately those were the moments I learnt the most from. But, as I mentioned, I am still not finished and I will need the rest of my life to get to know myself. Because, just as life is constantly changing, I myself am changing too.

Bieneke (Semblana)



- ANNOUNCEMENT PAGE

For everything that happened - thank you!
To all that is yet to come - yes!

Welcome to the world!



Rocky + Milly



Noa Serafina
Brandauer,
28.02.2013

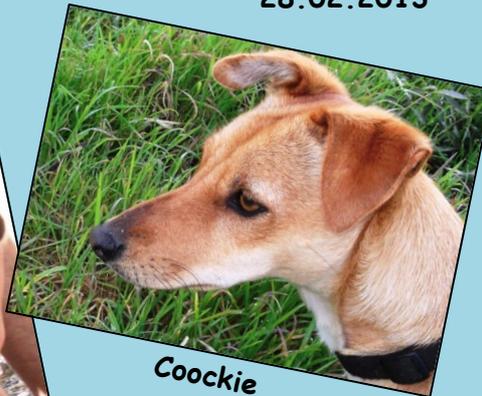


Lilu Amanda Jo Glover,
09.01.2014

We mourn the passing of...



Zwerg



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