

## SozialMarie Submission 2019

### Young & Old

### *Intergenerational work in geriatrics*

### Project Description

*Submitted by*

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## **Young & Old**

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### **Projekt Description**

#### ***Baseline Situation***

We live in a time of demographic upheaval. "Classical" family structures exist less and less. Patchwork families are the order of the day, but so are many households with single parents. Grandparents are often only rarely tangible because of the distance, are still working themselves or are so fit that their life planning involves many journeys. As a result, children have less and less opportunity to engage intensively with the grandparent generation and to learn and profit from it.

On the other hand, there are more and more older people who have little or no contact with their own grandchildren or who have no family at all, also because of their geographical distance. An increased need for care in old age also leads to immobility and social isolation. To "stand in the middle of life", to "mingle with the people", to be able to use cultural diversity in a self-determined way, all this is only possible in a very limited way and usually only with the support of other people. Therefore, de facto contact to other people, in particular to the young generation, is severely restricted. Everyday encounters are almost completely omitted.

Here the integrated young & old thought brings a real added value.

#### ***Past History***

Casa Leben im Alter is a provider of nursing homes and has also been running a kindergarten for several years. Due to the close relationship to one of the nursing homes, the first encounters between young and old were possible on the basis of the personal commitment of the carers and showed positive behaviour patterns among the senior citizens as well as among the children. With the change in the Casa's strategic orientation (expansion of childcare facilities in addition to nursing care), the topic of "young & old" came more and more to the fore. With the move to the new nursing home Casa Sonnwendviertel with integrated kindergarten (Casa4Kids Sonnwendviertel) in 2017, "Young & Old" became the focal point of the house. It serves as a source of experience for future intergenerational projects.

In 2018 another kindergarten was integrated into the Casa family (Casa4Kids Oberlaa). A new building is currently being built for this facility combined with apartments suitable for senior citizens. "Young & Old" is developing. Further construction projects are being planned and will be implemented continuously until 2024.

#### ***What are the goals of the intergenerational project "Young & Old" in the Casa Sonnwendviertel?***

- Creating understanding between the generations & raising awareness for other cultures
- Strengthening the identity and increasing the joie de vivre of the seniors with the feeling of being needed.
- Activation of seniors
- Expand the children's wealth of experience on the topics: Taking responsibility, showing appreciation for one's age, showing consideration, exercising patience, reducing fears of contact
- Building natural, personal relationships between generations
- Promoting cross-team work (care, childcare)
- Gathering experience for future intergenerational housing projects

#### ***What priorities are set in the project?***

The focus is on continuity, naturalness and voluntariness. In order to achieve a long-term positive effect, continuous cooperation is necessary. Sporadic encounters several weeks apart do not lead to the desired goal. Therefore, the focus of this project is on five primary initiatives:

- Weekly 60-minute generation meeting in the ballroom of the nursing home under a current motto with 10-12 children and a maximum of 10 residents - it is a fixed component of the weekly plan and is based on voluntariness.
- Birthday visit of EVERY senior by the children with singing, poems and a small homemade present.
- Targeted annual planning through senior care and kindergarten management - addressing cultural and social changes through special activities - accepting each other, finding common ground, e.g. through:
  - Common worship services for the activities in the annual cycle (e.g. harvest festival)
  - Play afternoons, puzzle, movement and dance lessons
  - Trips (e.g. Schönbrunn, Oberlaa, walk through the Helmut-Zilk-Park)
  - Viewing photos with pictures of shared activities - remembering
  - Celebrate parties (e.g. joint carnival party)
  - Sensory, playful activities - exploring each other, getting to know each other
- Promotion of sponsorships between children and seniors, where it makes sense to do so
- Regular exchange between senior citizen care and kindergarten management, for coordination, reflection and adaptation of intergenerational work.

***What results have been achieved so far?***

Building relationships between young and old people is an enormous enrichment for both sides. Learning from each other, exchanging ideas and meeting at eye level creates understanding between the generations. We experience this in our daily interaction. Even at random encounters we greet each other, address each other by name or smile at each other, signs of existing relationships and respectful interaction.

Older people experience an enormous strengthening of their identity and an increase in their zest for life. We can see this in every encounter. The whole posture and facial expressions change positively as soon as the children are around. It even seems to our senior caregiver Mrs. L. that the pain in these moments is forgotten by the residents. The conversativeness increases and curious questions are asked. Often the residents digress into their own childhood, remember and begin to report and compare from the past. The change can also be seen in people who lie exclusively in bed due to their need for care. Sometimes the eyes open and a smile flits over the face. Our residents not only passively accept the intergenerational offer but actively ask for encounters. If an activity does not happen, the disappointment is usually very great. There are residents who hardly ever take part in activities in the house communities, but always want to be present at the generation meetings. For them, this intergenerational exchange is very important, which is particularly taken into consideration.

For the children, the encounters offer a high learning potential in the areas of empathy, responsibility, consideration, appreciation, patience and understanding. This presupposes that they are accompanied very well. The kindergarten management therefore gives them plenty of room to talk. Before the meetings, the course of events is discussed and suitable materials are collected by the children, special circumstances are prepared and afterwards there is time to discuss what has been experienced, if necessary. Usually there are some questions about the special behaviour of a resident or the physical limitations.

An important insight in the effort to build real relationships is consistency. The same children should meet the same residents. This creates trust and a better acquaintance. In this way, preferences, peculiarities and deficits can be perceived more consciously. Children help the residents in certain situations (e.g. when placing a playing figure or picking up a ball), show consideration more quickly and soon know what they like. Small conversations arise after some time. Both sides get to know each other more and more.

The fact that both areas (nursing, childcare) belong to the same company makes working much easier. Coordination is quick and easy, decisions are made promptly and budgets are defined across the board. The management stands behind the project and sees it as exemplary for the future of the organisation.

In order to live "young & old" successfully, our previous experience has taught us the following:

- Positive access of older people to children - not for all older people does young & old have positive aspects. It is important to decide in advance for whom it suits.
- Parents and employees should be enthusiastic about the idea in order to offer the necessary support.
- The majority of the senior citizens involved should be mentally active.
- Close cooperation/coordination between the kindergarten and the care of the elderly
- Open communication and professional exchange between the generation teams
- regularity of activities to promote relationship building
- Offer professional training for employees
- Define clear framework conditions and rules
- Define joint budgets for young & old activities
- Support from volunteers to cover the personnel expenses and to sensitize them to the topic "Young & Old"

***Examples of intergenerational activities:***

One topic at the generation meeting at the end of 2018 was "Our Hands". The hands of the children and the residents were drawn and then compared by size and shape. Our kindergarten in the Sonnwendviertel has a strong focus on sensory integration. It is about conscious perception with the help of all senses. This sharpens observation, arouses curiosity and gives rise to questions. "Why do you have so many wrinkles in your hand?" was one of the questions that was immediately discussed. Thus the differences between young and old are always present and approachable. What can we do with our hands? Which professions were practised by the residents with their hands in the past? How can we care for the hands? Where do our hands help us? How can we support when the hands no longer function properly? ... The topic could be viewed in many different ways and a lively exchange arose. The time was quickly up and everyone made an appointment for the next week.

Another remarkable example was the design of the new house chapel in the Casa Sonnwendviertel. Children and senior citizens gave free rein to their creativity and created colourful pictures together. These were refined by an artist with golden accents and perfectly staged by her on one of the walls. The pictures enrich the Christian space in a wonderful way and give it its own special glamour. So every service in the chapel becomes an art experience. The works and the names of the small and large artists were even mentioned and photographed in their own photo book about the chapel.

***What's the next step?***

The "Young & Old" project is now entering its next phase. Experiences of all participants (internal, external) are documented and conclusions are drawn. Work is underway on a comprehensive concept paper. We are planning a survey with the parents of the children and the relatives of our senior citizens in order to include their judgement. The documentation serves as a basis for the start of further "Young & Old" projects in the Casa Family and for adjustments to the current processes in the Casa Sonnwendviertel.

Furthermore we report in the press, on the homepage and at events about the project "Young & Old" (e.g. IMH Conference 2018). For this year's Vienna Home Commission Report we have compiled a first field report. The project is also presented within the KKTH as well as to the sponsors (FSW) and relevant authorities (MA40).