

# Anta Akhi Newsletter

## You, My Brother

*At the service of a life of dignity for persons with disabilities*



March 2012



*May this path, this road to Easter,  
help us open ourselves to the Spirit,  
surrender to Him and place our entire life in His hands,  
so He directs our steps in the way they should go!*

*May we find in Mary, through the Spirit,  
the traits of the luminous Face of the Resurrected, Living Son !*

*May we every day, share His Victory over death,  
over the root of all evil in our hearts,  
blessed with the triumph of Love granting life, peace,  
so our happiness would never ever be torn away.*

*He is alive, so close to our life to reflect in Him,  
the living who abundantly give life by giving ourselves in the name of Love.*

*Jesus is resurrected! He's Alive!*

*He is really living here and now, tomorrow and throughout eternity,  
living in us, in His Body, in the Church,  
the Risen Jesus is bracing,  
sharing with us His Victory.*

*Jesus is Resurrected! He's Alive.  
Happy Easter*

*Yvonne Chami  
Founder- President*

## *Living the Easter Joy!*

Celebration, hope, these are words that truly reflect what lives in the heart of our youngsters, of the team, of friends, and anyone who enters the Home of Tenderness - Anta Akhi, eager to live together different but complementary in peace, joy, in the name of Love, and Brotherhood, desiring to celebrate their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Among this family, the challenge is taken up daily: youngsters with disabilities and healthy persons are united to wend their way through the prayer, the blessing of sharing the word of God, the silence, and the fasting towards the Easter joy, joy of Resurrection!

The ultimate dream of Anta Akhi is to accompany the person with disabilities in his spiritual journey to accomplish the fullness of his humanity beyond his disabilities and their limits, beyond all

difficulties, in the bracing meeting with the Resurrected.



Indeed, Anta Akhi is a school of life where we find the sound of joy and the taste of holidays, a place of learning and diffusing the culture of love and hope.

Indeed, Anta Akhi takes up this great challenge: we are called to discover together the vocation that makes each one of us the living witness of the Christ's love that shines forth from the power of Resurrection.

Dear friends, the Resurrection of the Christ may take place in our hearts and be reflected to all those who surround us. Together, let's sing Jesus! Let's Praise Jesus the Savior, the Living and Resurrected.

*Christ is Resurrected!  
He's really resurrected !  
And we are all witnesses of the fact !*

*Roula Najm  
Deputy General Manager*

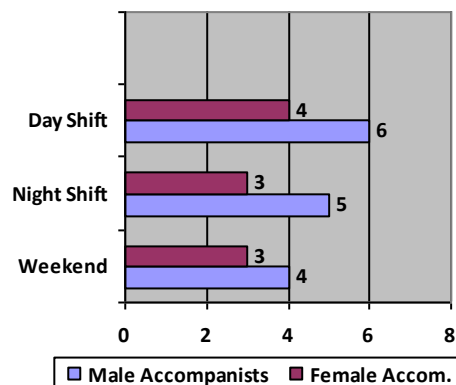
# Accompanying our youngsters: work or mission?

Our youngsters are very limited in their independent living and this situation necessitates an urgent need for accompanists, 24/7 in their daily needs as their personal hygiene, eating, getting out of bed, brushing teeth, nose-blowing, shaving, and many other actions. The life accompanists are young boys and girls who agreed to accompany the daily requirements, a heavy but rewarding work to take on! Without this look of love sculpted on their faces, a look that considers the youngster with disabilities a human being, on an equal footing in value and dignity, it is difficult to those in good health to accept and carry on serving the daily needs and personal hygiene.

Accompanying the youngsters should be carried out 24/7 by people who take turns. It is essential,

Our youngsters who are limited in their independent living by their handicap, acknowledge their mission as being « witnesses, message carriers, enabling men to become more a human being, to discover what gives value and meaning to their life, reaching the fulfillment of men and societies' humanization » Yvonne. That is what our youngsters live everyday with the life accompanists ready to love them in return, and serve them with discretion. For Jessica and Alain, serving our youngsters helps them discover the way they should be in order to support their families and be an active member in the society.

The mission of a life accompanist is not easy, but Jessica, a 24-year-old student in Social Sciences, admits that **the day she will feel that Anta Akhi is work, she'll leave.** "I joined Anta Akhi, in spite of the idea of my parents and friends who thought that this work would be so heavy and restrictive. However, 4 years later, I'm still here for the fact that I found joy and peace that I cannot find elsewhere. Although there has been difficult beginnings related to the work requirements such as the logistics, the organization, and the youngsters' hygiene, all I can say is that I changed and learned enormously! Oh yes, through this mission, I learned to be patient, especially that our youngsters' rhythm is way different to ours; I learned to control my character, for that to live in community, we make concessions; I learned to respect the way the others operate, and to serve with plenty of love, in Anta Akhi and at home: when my grandmother was sick, it was mainly me who took care of her... I advise anyone who wants to « grow », to join Anta Akhi : we learn so many things from the youngsters and we make a progress in life, humanly and spiritually, rewarded by a beautiful friendship with some of the youngsters, a friendship that provided me with happiness and courage in difficult moments. I don't know what I will do after I graduate, all I know is that I accumulated an immense reserve of knowledge for life and that every time I need to recharge my batteries, thirsty for energy, I will certainly have recourse to the pure water of Anta Akhi !".



according to the heaviness of the handicap, an accompanist for 2 youngsters limited in their independent living. For the year 2012, a minimum of 26 accompanists remains indispensable for our 59 youngsters. It is necessary to note that in case an accompanist is absent, it is essential to find a substitute.



As for Alain, a 23-year-old man who brilliantly accomplished his studies in the Biomedical Maintenance, a sportive man, a musician, and fond of life, declares that **Anta Akhi experience is for life!** "At the age of 12, I was a volunteer in Anta Akhi, but from about 3 years, I became an accompanist. I serenely accept the idea of handicap, though it is not difficult for me to serve the youngsters, because I appreciate their company, along with other accompanists I consider friends. However, being a night accompanist is not an easy thing, especially when we need to sleep, exhausted. That is exactly where I learned to go beyond myself and to serve; the service is magnificent, immensely magnificent! And very rewarding! It's true that I live in happiness, but during the moments of fatigue, and seeing the heavy handicap burdening our youngsters, I feel revolted! It's while discussing with them that my anger dispels, giving way to an immense feeling of peace. Standing back, I touch the value of my presence and the presence of all accompanists serving the youngsters: we give and earn a lot. In conclusion, I would like to say that facing all my problems in life, I think and react presently with clarity and joy, even in the absence of solution! A thought for those who are reading me today: What about you? Where are you? I wish you a happy life. It's worth it!"

A life accompanist to accompany our youngsters' needs...



...Eating

Getting out of bed

Brushing teeth

Nose-blowing

Shaving

# Our youngsters and the handicap

## How do they live with, on a daily basis ?

We often talk about a limit in our youngsters' independent living, knowing that alone they are incapable of managing their different needs. We hereby present the situation of our youngsters that always requires more responsibilities, more presence, and especially more love!

In the Home of Tenderness of Anta Akhi, our youngsters suffering from various types of disabilities, live together different but complementary in peace, joy, in the name of love, as brothers (see graph 1). This diversity of handicap, whether it is a physical, mental, or poly-handicap is richness for all, because it allows complementarities and presence for one another, each according to his capacities. During the Christmas season, our youngsters transformed into

guardian angels for one another: each granted his donations for the service of others. Those who are able to use their hands fed those who can't, and those who lacked any autonomy at all prayed for others. As for those who still have their voices called the accompanists in the name of their friends who couldn't. This chain of solidarity and love in the frame of complementarity took effect: a beautiful ambiance was created during the holidays and our youngsters were very close to each other!

Speaking of autonomy, it is important to note that our youngsters are becoming dependent day after day due to regression and age (see graph 2). Therefore, it is necessary to manage the health changes in order to provide them

with adapted accompanying. A health network and physicians, friends with Anta Akhi, assisted by members of the team, Daniele, nurse and Roger, a physical therapist, perform a regular follow-up answering medical emergencies taking into consideration the pathologies, the respiratory distress being the most frequent.

In the eyes of the society's values' logic, our youngsters limited in their independent living, are unable to be productive money-wise. But, adopting a more profound look, we acknowledge that they are very « productive » in operating changes, calling out to human beings to get in touch to the meaning of life by their presence and the joy of living. All the same, 75% are not autonomous (see graph 3), and this situation urges the team to be more present among youngsters, and to do their utmost in finding activities aiming at developing and maintaining their potential, guaranteeing a recreational and festal time generating the joy of living.

**Theater workshop:** once a week, our youngsters gather for the theater workshop that favors self-expression and positive release. Those who are gifted: Gharib, Tony and Carole will participate in a theater called « The justice » along with the students of Notre Dame de Louaize School. Good cheer young people

**Reading workshop:** A day-to-day reading of a saint's life, gathers all our youngsters.



During the Lent, the reading covers life of Jesus by Maria Valtorta. Barbara, Carole, and

Ghassan are those who are the most interested and they discuss the story together!

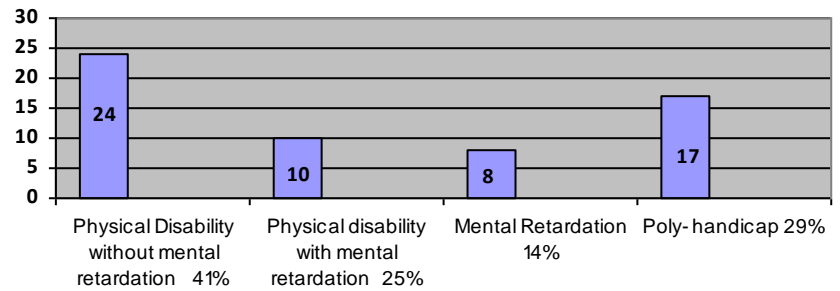
**The know-how workshop:** helping our youngsters to be delicately present for others. In role playing, Paul suffering from mental retardation, had to wake up his mother in the most possible gentle way: he knelt down next to the bed tenderly calling his mother: " nani (for mami), dear nani, wake up! It's me, Paul!"



Lavender workshop

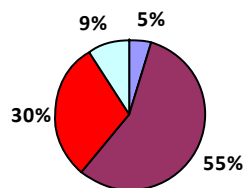
**Facebook workshop:** our youngsters communicate every Monday with their friends via facebook, address Anta Akhi. You can check out our youngsters' comments, their photos and know the

Graph 1

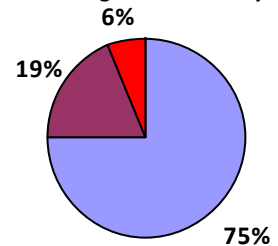


Ages of our youngsters

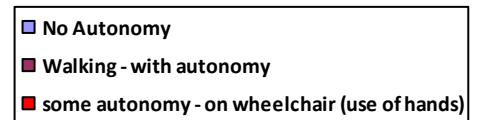
Graph 2



Youngsters autonomy



Graph 3



ambiance of the Home while visiting the webpage! Our youngsters are waiting for you!

**Music workshop:** to be familiar with the singers and learn how to sing: our youngsters, who are still capable of singing, are practicing today to sing right. We will make it in time, inshallah!

**Imitation jewelry workshop:** What started as a wonderful hobby is generating today some pocket money. Our youngsters, mentally limited, excel!

And our female friends are delighted wearing the cute jewelry!



## Some students' testimonies

In the frame of the training and awareness activities, 52 meetings with 1325 students coming from 24 different secondary schools were set from December 2010 until December 2011, in the Home of Tenderness. These meetings aimed at changing the look of healthy people towards the world of handicap, of the values' logic through the live testimonies of our youngsters. Below moving testimonies of some students:

« Thank you my Lord for opening my eyes, heart, and soul. » *Emile*

« They taught me not to complain and realize the chance I had. » *Rita*

« The youngsters made me touch the internal peace, their joy is contagious. Thank you for being what you are. »

« I admire your courage. You taught me how to see the world from another angle. We can live happy indeed. » *Elie*

« Our teamwork showed me, thanks to the youngsters' testimonies, their faith in God and traced a smile in my heart. They take advantage of each second of their life. » *Zeina*

« This visit made me realize the marvelous value of life. » *Georges*

« Lord, I came to help the members of Anta Akhi, to grant them what they needed. Once there, I realized that it was me who needed help and it was them who filled the gaps inside my heart. They taught me that happiness lies inside us, so no need to search for it elsewhere. Every person has the chance to be happy despite all the problems he encounters because happiness is universal and by Praising Jesus and discovering the secret of life that we become happy. Forgive me for heading sometimes to darkness and I thank you for all that I have, all that I am. Amen » *Rayane*



## Juliette : « In Anta Akhi, I lived love beyond words »

**Juliette, a 22-year-old speech therapist wanted to live a strong experience in a different context than the one in France: she traveled for 3 months, hoping to grow maturely. Her staying for 1 month in the Home of Tenderness left its mark on her and traced in the heart of our youngsters and all the team the memory of a joyful and lovable presence.**

« I did not know what to expect on my way to Anta Akhi : based on a friend's advice and on the website I came across, I took my decision. I was seeking a training in speech therapy but realising that it was impossible, i told myself to help as much as I could by investing my energy. So here I am in the Home of Tenderness, a different volunteer: a quality of presence is necessary in this environment, where the art of « living together » is amply lived and where we find the essence of the person behind his handicap.

I rapidly felt at home. Far away from mine at Christmas, I asked Jesus a family, and He answered my prayers as always offering me this gift and I lived this period with plenty of joy.

In the Home of Tenderness, I participated in the youngsters' daily life ; I appreciated everything, especially the mealtimes where we witnessed a real exchange, the moments of trainings with Yvonne, and the moments



of prayers: praying in a language I ignored helped me meditate and deepen my rosary.

I was close to Barbara, Elie and Pierre but with Samo and Aïda, it was so simple! We did not understand each other, but it was love beyond words.

Indeed, it is enough to be attentive and see with the heart, though many things go beyond words.

I leave to France with many images engraved, memories and joy. Anta Akhi fulfilled its mission in my heart. I am delighted touching the real joy and wending through faith: I did not know I was that thirsty and that I would go much further! I leave trying to live with my patients what I lived with the youngsters; I know I would be more free and serener in my relation with them, positive that a relation of quality, of friendship is possible.

## Call

*Dear friends, taking into consideration the global economic crisis, we call for your generosity for the purchase of 2 bath trolleys for daily use. Our youngsters take turns today on one trolley and this precarious situation leads to a loss of energy and time. The 2 additional trolleys we are asking for would help us enormously! The price of one trolley is about 3.100 Euros. Thank you!*

## How to help Anta Akhi:

1. Sponsor a youngster starting 10\$ (or 10€) per month, 120\$ (or 120€) per year.
2. Make a punctual donation by specifying, if possible, the need you wish to support.

To get a tax receipt for your donation in France, please call beforehand [elisabeth.gorius@neuf.fr](mailto:elisabeth.gorius@neuf.fr)  
Thank you for sharing what we are building together in our journey of life

*If you wish to receive the newsletter on your Email, instead of your postal address, thank you for indicating it by mail.*

## Writing and supervision

**Roula Najm**

*Deputy General Manager*

**Maya Aoun**

*Project service*

**Joëlle Haddad Andary**

*Translation to English*

*With the glance of Yvonne*