

OUR LIFE AT ANTA AKHI

Serving a life of dignity for the person with a disability

October 2019

“The sky is inside us, inside me.
 With this reality, my life becomes
 a symphony, a celebration, an
 incessant song of thanksgiving.”

Yvonne Chami, founder

**Anta Akhi,
 a miracle every day,
 a message of hope !**

But... how do you do? How do you keep going? What is your budget? This association has closed. This other one is in the process of closing! And Anta Akhi?

That was a very difficult year for Lebanon and an even more difficult year for charities. The Lebanese state is in deficit, the companies too. Demonstrations here, demonstrations there... This is the general

atmosphere that surrounds us. Where is Anta Akhi in all this?



We are witnessing a miracle every day! Yvonne always told us: “We do our part and we let her part to Mary, Set el Beit.”

And that is how we did it... we worked hard... late... each and every one of us had a responsibility to bear... without exception:

our young adults with disability through prayer, our support committees the gratuitous gift of their time, their contacts, the families of our young adults, the team, the friends... all of us without exceptions...

A difficult year, but filled with graces.

The economic situation has indeed affected the funds, but never the heart, faith, determination, perseverance... it never touched the smile, the joy of living of Anta Akhi' large family.

A difficult year, but filled with graces. Not a penny more, not a dime less.

Thank you Lord, thank you Mary, thank you friends, parents, contributors, support committees. You are Anta Akhi's family. Thank you all! Together with our differences, everyone with his potential, we tackled this challenge. Together, we succeeded in meeting the demands of every day's life for the continuity of our mission. And we were able to live our mission by transmitting joy and peace despite the difficulties.

With the power of love, we always succeed!

Roula Najm, CEO

NEWS FROM OUR HOME: FESTIVE MOMENTS...

Last months were rich in festive moments: every month, during our Seit El Beit day our whole family meets, and for the first time, in June, we celebrated the feast of the Blessed Sacrament with a procession in Ballouneh. The parish priest invited all the parishioners to join us!

On July 5th, our traditional family dinner brought together more than 345 friends and relatives of Anta Akhi around our young people! We were able to raise funds in a festive atmosphere that delighted everyone.

Our young people visited K9, a dog village: Samo watched from a distance, cautiously ... while Jean and Marcelino laughed well with these playmates they love so much!

Finally, in August, the folklore evening gathered us in the summer camp's location in Kleiaat, for a few hours of dabkés, and discussions around a good meal. The party, it was actually every day of the summer camp.



THE SUMMER CAMP



Since September, as every year, Samo starts asking everyone if he will be at the following "tolonie": no doubt, this is the moment she prefers in the year, and she is not the only one! The traditional trips to the pool, the campfire evenings, the days of play have surely something to do with it ... Simple moments which bring a special joy to our young adults with disabilities.



At the service of others

But how come, that from year to year, this holiday remains a magical moment? This summer, we innovated as each unit of Anta Akhi prepared a day for the young adults: an opportunity for each member of the team to spend more time in the heart of Anta Akhi, and to appeal to his imagination! It was especially the opportunity to put into practice the theme of our summer camp: "my gifts in the service of others". And each unit used its skills, its knowledge of young people to animate specific activities: Zumba workshop and theatre, evening with a singer

for the communication unit, or photo booth, bets and casino evening for volunteers... The logistics and donations units seem to have competed to know who would best feed our young people: preparation of typical and rare dishes, outing to a glacier, to a restaurant ... Our young people voted for the best day, and ... everyone won!

And our young adults, how did they put their gifts to the service of others during this summer camp?

Maybe not so differently from the rest of the year after all: Philippe and his jokes, Carole and her so contagious *joy of living*, Joumana always discreet in the service of others, Elie S. attentive to everyone, Nicolas always ready to laugh and to watch over the others, Aida who conscientiously helping in folding the linen ...

Visitors from around the world...

We also had the joy of welcoming many volunteers and visitors: A French family came 3 weeks with us. Sponsor of Ghassan for 19 years, Elisabeth has led her husband and their three children in the adventure to finally meet her "godson"!

Youth from Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Egypt also came for five days as part of regional youth days bringing together Christians from the Middle East. We lived five intense days, where these young people discovered the joy of service, and were deeply touched by our young people and their joy of living!

Finally, 22 young people of the Saint Paul

movement arrived at the end of August: an opportunity for them to bring us their missionary thrust, their motivation, their energy ... and an opportunity for us to raise their awareness on disability and especially on "living together". No need for long speeches, life with young people is a telling example...

A peaceful place

But what contributes in making the atmosphere of the summer camp so special is perhaps the beautiful place in which we are: the Saint George convent in Kleiaat. In the countryside, we spend our days outside, under the arcades that surround the garden, or under the trees. We hear the birds and the rooster crowing, we enjoy the view of nature and the sea, we pray under the beautiful vaults of the chapel ... This place breathes peace and goodness for the soul! It doesn't matter if there are less facilities than Anta Akhi: we love the "camping" spirit!



PAUL, WITNESS OF GOD'S TENDERNESS

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". No doubt, Paul, although suffering from mental disability, is one of those who see God constantly ... His big smile betrays his deep joy of life, that he draws from a very beautiful relationship with God. Let's see what he has to tell us about it:

Paul, do you like Anta Akhi?

A lot!

What do you love the most here?

I love Mary and Jesus, and Saint Joseph.

Do you like to pray?

Yes! I always pray.

How do you pray?

I pray Him with all my heart! I ask him to look after mom and dad. I tell him that I want to be his disciple.

What does it mean?

That I love him with all my heart! I love him and I love Mary. She is the mother of Jesus: I love her too and I also pray her.

And at Anta Akhi, do you manage to help others?

Yes, I help Eva, I set the tables, I help the young adults...

How do you help the young adults?

By being with them. I help Joe too.

And how do you help him? What do you tell him?

"Enta habibi"! You are my sweetheart! I love you. I love Joe a lot! He is very nice. I also love "Addoula" because she is very nice and she gives me a napkin to eat.

What makes you happy?

I love to pray. That makes me truly happy. Jesus gives me the strength to stay happy. I want to thank Jesus with all my heart! I love him very much.



Caring to everyone around him, Paul also remembers those who are not here: he asks Samira news about her brother every day, a brother that he met... once, 15 years ago! He is very affectionate and loves to hug the people he meets: there is nothing like a hug from Paul to boost a "companion" or a tired volunteer. He generously loves to share his food: Even if he only eats stranded food, he always checks that all the young adults have enough to eat... He is also very affectionate to Stephanie, a young chouchou *suffering from multiple disabilities* who loves him back: if he is not with her in the bus back home, she cries! One day, trying to help her, he stood behind a chair and started talking to her but strangely she didn't answer ... He looked in front of the chair and surprise... there was Kiko in that chair!

Faithful in friendship, Paul intercedes with God for his friends and relatives: one day, Michel asked him to go and pray in the chapel for someone... An hour and a half later, he finds Paul still praying, calling God "habibi", *honey!* But Paul also loves to party, and does not need a lot of invitations to clap his hands rhythmically, with enthusiasm... Source of love, laughing and tenderness, Paul is a key witness of the mission of Anta Akhi. He is disarmingly simple and knows how to touch hearts! Let's leave him this last word:

«Do you want to tell me something else Paul?»

Yes, I love you very much! »

All is said.

Anta Akhi FRANCE



Founded in 2004, Anta Akhi France is an association composed solely of volunteers. Our friends seek to support us financially by raising funds. Its members are Lebanese or French-Lebanese wishing to support us despite the distance.

The annual gala dinner is one of their major events, honouring a personality who is sponsoring this dinner. The team also organizes a race in Paris every September: a great opportunity to gather families with young and not so young persons for a sporting and solidarity challenge. This year, Toni was delighted to participate with his "life companion" Dani.

With Anta Akhi France, we witness a beautiful French-Lebanese friendship and several generations who unite according to their means, to support us. On November 30th, Anta Akhi France will celebrate its 15th anniversary at a gala that promises to be exceptional!

Dear friends, thank you for your faithful support and your great love!

Our priests

119 priests of parishes or orders, or simple friends, in Lebanon or abroad, are part of our project. Each year, our young adults, together with team members, commit to pray for one year for one of them starting from Holy Thursday. We know how essential spiritual support is to help them in their mission. One of our young people even prays for Pope Francis! The answers that these priests have addressed to us show the importance of this commitment:

“Thank you very much for your prayer, it is very touching for me. You are the family that every person needs. It is very beautiful, every time, you remind me to always carry you more in my prayer, you give me a strength and the motivation to continue in my community.” “It is a grace for me to know that there are people who pray for me and give me love and time when they do not know me; while people who know me very well cannot give me this love. It deeply moves me.” May our prayers help them in their pastoral missions, day after day, following Christ.

Our Visitors of the Year..

Sent to Anta Akhi by «L'œuvre d'Orient » and the «Délégation Catholique pour la Coopération », Louise, French volunteer, lived at Anta Akhi during one year to work within the communication unit and to accompany the young adults. A year that she will not easily forget!

When I reread the past year, I cannot help but being amazed by all the gifts I have received at Anta Akhi. As a person who loves to give but has trouble receiving, I learned here how to receive the other as a gift. I also learned how to see my own weaknesses, to accept them and to count on those surrounding me in difficult times. I felt an incredible love from the young people. Some natural affinities were immediately really beautiful ... and I was taught to go to those I love less, those who exasperate me, those with whom I always have to make big efforts... and I loved them.

Another surprise has been my relation with the “chouchou” adults with multiple disabilities thanks to other volunteers. I was afraid of Marie at first, but one night, Joachim standing next to her, told me that he really appreciated her. The penny dropped: Then I am also capable of loving her! It is also thanks to Hussein and Hassan: I saw how affectionate towards them the others were, since the beginning. That was so moving to see: I needed to find what the others had already found! Finally, Kiko is the one who truly opened my heart. With him, you can only be in the present moment. I learned to be with him, to let him stare at me with his big beautiful eyes, to let him hold my hand and squeeze it with his small and distorted fingers ... and to let him smile at me with all his heart. His Smiles, his innocence, his



purity make me forget everything else. Kiko, maybe more than any one, is the incarnated fragility, the total dependence. He is Christ made man, helpless. With Kiko, I'm just here. And that makes me profoundly happy.

The final gift was the accompaniment. Being a part of the young people life was extraordinary. That taught me humility and patience. I was profoundly moved by the faith the young adults had in me and it allowed me to re-discover them. These moments with them were among the most beautiful at Anta Akhi. Uneasy, exhausting but fulfilling: it gave me joy and a profound peace.

Now I can say, without doubts, that it has been the happiest year of my life. I have had the chance to experiment the will to live in happiness in spite of difficulties. I cannot find the words to say how grateful I am: thank you, a thousand times thank you!

CALL FOR HELP

Dear friends, Elie Bou Zeid needs a new wheel chair, better adapted to his needs than his current hull chair. It includes anti-decubitus cushions, a seat with better support and more settings. This new chair costs 1700 dollars. Thank you for your generosity!

Sponsor a young adult from Anta Akhi

Sponsor part of the cost of accompaniment of a young person from \$ 10 (or € 10) per month

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