Special Olympics Europe Eurasia Family Members Conference

Location: Bialobrzegi, Poland
Date: 18-21 October 2012

Participants: Special Olympics (SO) Poland – (6 x Staff, 20+ family members & athletes)

SO Russia – Svetlana Makarova, SO Ukraine – Lubov Soltys, SO Belarus – Elena Morozova, SO Georgia – Irina Kurdovanidze, SO Lithuania – Ausra Kriskoviecienne (Parents of athletes)

Presenters: Marian Murphy – SOEE, Maureen Clarke – SOEE, Roxana Ossian - SO Romania (Young Athletes Programme), Guisseppe Montemurri – SO Italy (Family Programme), Boguslaw Galazka – National Director, SO Poland, Joanna Styczen-Lasocka – SO Poland, Svetlana Makarova – SO Russia
**Conference Goals:**
1. Training of implementation of Family Support Network & Young Athletes Programme in former-Soviet national programmes.
2. Further development of SO Poland’s Family & Young Athletes Programmes across the regions of Poland.

**Conference Elements:**
1. Welcome Session – Overview of Special Olympics, Family Programme & Young Athletes Programme.
2. Young Athletes Presentation & Discussion.
3. Young Athletes Demonstration at local Kindergarten.
4. Family Programme Presentations including Best Practice examples and Discussion.
6. Workshop 2 – FSN advanced training – SO Poland

**Challenges**
- **Language limitations** – The conference was conducted through Polish, Russian and English. Despite the presence of translators the presentations, practical sessions and discussions were carried out over a much longer period of time.
- **Varied levels of development** in both Family Programme & Young Athletes Programme in each country. E.g. some countries were already engaged in Young Athletes Programme whereas others were just beginning.
- **Limited resources** – Despite the high level training that took place, more translators and trainers would have ensured that each national programme was trained according to their specific needs and level of development.

**Successes/Outcomes**

**SO Poland**
- 20+ Community Builders trained across different regions in Poland.
- FSN meetings carried out in 7 regions of Poland.
- Increased communication between Regional directors using new found knowledge and resources.
- Formation of national committee of family members.
- Expansion of Young Athletes Programme in other regions of Poland.

**SO Georgia**
- Irina Kurdovanidze (participant) became Young Athletes coordinator after the seminar.
- Began implementation of Young Athletes programme in November 2012.
- Currently have 50 Young Athletes & registered family members.
- Seeking partners (such as UNICEF, Peace Corps) to develop the YAP programme further.
SO Lithuania

- SO Lithuania began their Young Athletes programme after the seminar.
- Ausra Kriskovieciene (participant) became Young Athletes Coordinator and is incredibly dedicated.
- Currently have 50 Young Athletes, 150 newly registered for September 2013.
- Seeking sponsors to sustain programme. Secured 1st sponsor in May 2013.

SO Russia

- Plan in place to recruit new family members, identify family leaders and organise family seminars.
- A national family coordinator will be recruited to help expand the family programme to more regions in Russia.
- Further development of Young Athletes programme with support from family leaders.

SO Ukraine

- Young Athletes was implemented in 4 new regions/cities in Ukraine.
- Recruited 50 new Young Athletes, 50 registered family members, 5 demonstrations since seminar.
- Registered family members trained as community builders to promote Young Athletes Programme.

SO Belarus

- Belarus continue to develop their Young Athletes Programme which began in 2012.
- Elena Morozova (participant) became family coordinator after attending the seminar.
- Registered 62 Young Athletes & 64 family members by March 2013.
- They are seeking partners (UNICEF, Peace Corps) to develop YAP further.

Evaluation

According to data from evaluation questionnaires the Special Olympics European Family Members Conference was a very important event which was a source of solid knowledge about Special Olympics, especially in relation to the Family and Young Athletes Programmes. The Young Athletes training (theory and demonstration) was very effective and of a very high level. The participants finished the seminar feeling very enthusiastic and very eager to make changes back in their own region/country.

Acknowledgements

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Young Athletes Demonstration