

Bricks and Cheese raise Awareness of Disabled

On May 5th Portus Praha begins its annual “Buy-A-Brick Action” to raise awareness for people with mental disabilities. The opening ceremony begins at 2 p.m. on Na Příkopě at the base of Wenceslas Square. To honor the occasion, actresses Simona Stašová and Jana Krausová, and violinist Jaroslav Svěcený will be speaking. Following the speeches, the band Pilgrime Pimple will be playing. The Action, known as “Akce Cihla”, will be going on until July 18, 2008.

Every year the “Buy-A-Brick Action” takes place in twenty-five cities under the coordination of Portus Praha. When someone buys a brick he or she can leave a personal message on it. Then, during the fundraiser the bricks are stacked into towers in the streets. Later, the bricks are used in pavements or walls for houses in Slapy. Public Relations Director Hana Zíková emphasizes, “We use every brick.”

Ms. Zíková explains that the aim of the brick towers is to raise attention to the fact that disabled people do not belong in special hospitals. They should have the right to live among others as anybody else.

Connected to “Buy-A-Brick Action,” on May 30th from 10am to 5 p.m. Portus Praha hosts “Běh s cihlou” (Run with a Brick). For each runner, Portus’s main partner Stavební spořitelny České spořitelny (SSČS) will donate 100kc. All are welcome to participate.

In addition to the brick fundraisers, Portus Praha sells marinated Hermelin cheese produced by mentally disabled residents in Slapy (30km from Prague). The cheese comes in normal flavor, and with extra onions, and it is sold in various pubs and restaurants throughout Prague. Locations include Café 3+1, Shakespeare and Sons, Klamovka Klub, Restaurace Vojanův Dvůr, and many others.

For the long term, Portus Praha will host the 6th annual Beneficni Aukce (Benefit Auction) in December 2008. Different artists can donate their work, and for a week in December the paintings will be on display before they will be auctioned off. The money raised goes to all the operations of “Akce Cihla”.

The civil organization Portus Praha was founded in 1994, and over time, the organization has increasingly focused on the non-institutional aspect of assisted living centers, like the Fara House in Slapy. The Fara House in Slapy was purchased in 2001 with the aim to help mentally disabled people work towards more independent living, and feel more like a part of the community.

The Fara House has been steadily growing since then. In early 2005 Portus earned a 200,000Kc grant from The Via Foundation’s Academy of Social Entrepreneurship Fund. With these funds Portus was able to build a workshop in which residents of the Sheltered House could produce and distribute marinated Hermelin cheese. The proceeds have been reinvested in the workshop, and thanks to the money raised in “Akce Cihla 2008,” the facility is still growing.

In addition to the improved morale of the Fara House residents, due to the success of their entrepreneurial activities, Portus keeps its work-staff up to date on additional training, too. Ms. Zíková says “We want to evolve. We put much pressure on education, because we want to keep the level of assistance as high as possible for our clients.”

Currently Portus Praha’s Hermelin cheese is sold in fourteen pubs and restaurants throughout Prague, and their distribution is growing. Customers can also order it over the phone in quantities between one and twenty-five pieces and pick it up from the Prague office or directly from the workshop. See the website for a list of participating restaurants and pubs in Prague.

For more information contact Portus Praha’s Public Relations Director, Hana Zíková at 267 312 509 or see www.portus.cz

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