

3. ONE-OFF EVENTS



We believe that children learn best through experience and through their senses, so we try to make our activities as diverse as possible. We invite the children's parents and relatives to come and join our regular activities. We are convinced that spending time together as the whole family benefits everyone involved.

In addition to the regular activities, we organise several one-off events for different groups every year. Through these events, we want not only to diversify our activities, but mainly to expand the perspectives of the community members and show them ways to spend their free time meaningfully. We believe that children learn best through experience and through their senses, so we try to make our activities as diverse as possible. We invite the children's parents and relatives to come and join our regular activities. We are convinced that spending time together as the whole family benefits everyone involved. Parents see the relationship we have

with their children and can trust and appreciate our work, and they have an opportunity to spend time together as a family, and attend activities they otherwise would not have attended. We get a chance to see the whole family dynamics, which then helps us to better tailor our support to the individual needs. The children themselves always enjoy the activities most when their parents are present, and it makes the activities even more memorable for them. Our activities can be divided into four categories, each with different purpose, number of participants, and venue: community events, educational events, trips to nature and motivational events.

Community events – Are our largest events. They are intended for high number of participants (tens or lower hundreds of people for outdoor events). We organize events in the premises of our children's club, or directly near the homes of our clients. Whole families are always invited, and the events are "open" for public. Thanks to these events, we remain in touch with the whole community throughout the year and deepen mutual trust and relationships. At the same time, we introduce to the families what we do, so they understand better how we work with their children. We sing songs, say nursery rhymes, and perform small theatrical, dancing or music performances. Teens and parents help

with the decorations, costumes, props, they work at various stations and contribute to the program, for example, as St. Nicolas, angels, devils or theatre characters. Our traditional community events include: Christmas and Easter festivals, costume events, St. Nicholas' Day event and workshops focused on making related festive decorations.

Educational events – We regularly try to visit various places and events that are not only fun, but also have an educative value. We also try to make our regular events enjoyable. Our aim is to show that learning and entertainment are not necessarily separated, but there are many activities that combine both!



This helps the children overcome their resistance to learning. We try to show families that exploring new learning opportunities can be fun as well as useful. We encourage natural curiosity which is essential for a healthy relationship to learning. We try to visit various exhibitions as well as one-off events that are interesting for the families. We regularly visit the Science and Technology Centre "Techmania", Zoos, the aquarium "Akva Tera", swimming pool, theatre and other places. On top of that, we try not to miss interesting and unique

events. For example, we attended the introduction of the first Bible translated into the Romani language and published in the Czech Republic.

Trips to nature - Outdoor trips are one of the activities we have been doing for many years. At the beginning, before our association was established, we didn't have any premises or funding. Trips to nature did not cost much, as we only needed to pay for a bus or train ride. We then took a small hike, searched for

geocaches, played outdoor games, learned about nature, and towards the end of our trip, we roasted sausages over a campfire and visited an outdoor workout area. Even today, we still try to organize an outdoor trip at least once every two months. We believe that being active outdoors has many benefits. Children love outdoor trips and we are happy that their parents often choose to join us, often

with their babies in a pram. For us, this is a precious time, because we have a chance to spend several hours together with the families, chat with them and often casually discover new problems or needs of both the children and the parents. In this way, we may learn about an issue that they do not share during our regular meetings, either because they are ashamed, or because there is



no convenient time for sharing. Spending time together in nature again deepens mutual trust and relationships. We can get to know everyone better. While we walk, we talk about trees, history, animals, ways to navigate through the environment using a map, and so on.

Motivational events – Every six months, we arrange a motivational event for each group of the children attending our extra-curricular activities. They are events to reward the children for their active involvement in our events, for helping in the garden, for making an effort, and for attending the tutoring

classes... We try to motivate children positively, not negatively. We praise them for proper behaviour and their various achievements. We find that more effective than criticizing them for failure. Unfortunately, many of these kids often try their best, for example at schools, but their results are still below average. This makes them frustrated and they often lose motivation to learn or to make an effort. Which is why we try to make these events enjoyable. Children are often invited to decide about what they want to attend as their "reward." Most often, we go to the Jump Arena trampoline park, go-karting or laser games.



Bits and pieces of life

"Penguins, lions, monkeys, flamingos!" Our children's knowledge of animals is growing exponentially! Real animals are always easier to remember! The management of the Zoo of Pilsen has been so kind that they have repeatedly provided a special discount for us. We visit the Zoo several times a year - sometimes with parents, sometimes without parents, sometimes with volunteers, sometimes without volunteers. Dear Zoo, thank you very much for your support!

"Pavla, I saw you in my dream today!" Jan shouted at me when he saw me in the street. Of course, I was very flattered. The ensuing conversation revealed that I was there as the organizer of a soccer tournament, not as a princess dancing in a flowery meadow, but I was still flattered.

"This was my best most beautiful day." Meliska told me after our train ride. Trips with the Roma children are always very intense and I was very happy that this time, the experience was so beautifully cute!

"The Amazon river flows through Prague!"

Okay, this one was our fault. We confused Renata (15 years old) during our sleepover in Prague by giving her a quiz with one of the question being "Which river runs through Prague?" and the options a) the Amazon river, b) Berounka river, c) Vltava river. Renatka only remembered the Amazon river, so she selected it. Fortunately, we got to see Vltava river in Prague with our own eyes so many times, that it will be impossible for the children to forget this! Sabina (10 years old), who did not participate in the trip, asked me later, if we flew to Prague by plane, when it is so far away (it is a one-hour car drive). Well, there is still so much to learn! And Jan, who was with us on the Prague trip in January, came to us all excited one day: They discussed the monuments in Prague, and Jan knew a lot about them after the trip. He even knew that the Powder Gate Tower was named like this because it was used as a gun-powder storage place in the past. It's not very common for these children to shine at school, so every achievement like this motivates them a lot! We are happy that we could help

him with this one!

"Are you part of the Tretra Orienteering Club?"

We were flattered when one of the real orienteer asked us this question. It seemed we looked professional. Skrýše 2016 is a traditional local orienteering race. Our navigational skills might not be the best, but we have all enjoyed the race and finished in a good place within the children's category!

"This year was a bit wilder, and the boys were well-behaved!"

Praise from a football referee, who bravely officiated our football tournament, for the second year in a row. It made us feel very proud! In 2018, the tournament was only possible thanks to the financial support of a few individuals, because the donation we received for the tournament did not cover all the costs, especially the rent of the football pitch. We are very grateful for all donations and grants, and we are doubly grateful to the individual donors who make us less reliant on the official grants and give us larger flexibility in our work. If we organize a tournament, we want to provide snacks, medals and trophies - it wouldn't be the same without those little things!

Bits and pieces of life

"These kids are like blank slates!"

This is how an experienced ornithologist from the animal rescue station assessed our zoological knowledge. Luckily, he hadn't heard how Paja mistook a bat for a mosquito, and Martin thought that the squirrel was a wild boar. Oh well, we are working on it! On the other hand, we performed great at the costume party organized by the Paprsek dancing group.

"We had a lovely time! Everyone was there! When will be the next sleepover?"
"I didn't get any sleep. The kids were throwing them all..." The sleepover is one of the traditional events that children and leaders tend to have very different memories and experience of. Despite this, we organize one every year. Sometimes, I wonder why we are torturing ourselves like that!

"Oh, I am sorry." Our 8-year-old gentleman apologized when he was reminded that you go to the toilet of the Chateau Český Krumlov through the door and not through the window! Otherwise, the trip was great. We had a great guide who did not overwhelm us with an endless list of dates, but selected the most essential and memorable things from our history and even counted bears with us.

"I am so tired! I really need a break!"

Tom tried this strategy after walking 400 meters into our trip. When he saw that no one would carry him or pity him, he happily walked another 9 km. This is often a new experience for our children, that the world does not revolve around them, that the adults don't always cater to them, whenever they complain. That making a little effort of their own can bring a lot of satisfaction and fun, such as climbing a tree stand, or playing in the leaves!

"Mirek did a belly-button jump!"

Someone dives with their hands first, someone with their legs first... But Mirek has to always come up with something original. To perform his original diving style, you have to bend your whole body like a bow and jump so that your belly button is the first to touch the water. Going to the swimming pool is one of the most popular attractions among the kids. It feels great to come with the younger kids and see the older kids already there, because they came on their own! We taught them to swim, and to go to the swimming pool on their own when they feel like it...

"I feel like an adult, like I am going to work and all,"

said little Martin after visiting Go-Karts. This spontaneous statement was a nice surprise to me. Funnily enough, the link between adulthood and work is definitely not something he knew from his own family. His father left before he was even born, so he grew up with his mom and two older sisters. His mom was too busy taking care of the children and stayed unemployed. Even if Martin learns this only thing from the interaction with us, we are happy!

Bits and pieces of life

"What nationality are the kids?"

they asked us as we admired the Hot Springs at Carlsbad with our Roma kids. Apparently, they were not used to Roma tourists there. And in Prague, they talked English to us: "Rent a car? Good shopping! Friendly price!" to which our boys reacted in Czech: "I'd like to live in Prague, it's very beautiful, such a shame I don't speak English." Even in Prague, they were not used to tourists from the Roma community at all. They probably thought I was a pale Indian with a bunch of kids. Maybe one day our children will start a Romani Tourist Club, so the majority society will get used to it...

"They're so cute!" Petr,

otherwise a tough guy, smiled. While feeding the ducks and the swans, we learned how to recognize mommy duck and daddy duck. We also saw deer along the way. There is nothing better than seeing animals with our own eyes, because looking at pictures in books is simply not the same experience! We also visited the interior of the Kozel Castle, which reminded us of our summer camp "Knights and Princesses." The children surprised us, because they were well-behaved during the whole tour. Big thanks to our guide who was understanding and patient! The kids loved the potty under one of the beds and curiously explored other items of the exhibition, too!

"Do snakes wear pyjamas?"

The staff of Akva Tera aquarium park had to answer these and other expert questions asked by our kids. For three days in a row. There are so many of us that we had to make three separate trips. We liked the animals very much, broadening our horizons. For example, in front of the aquarium building, we had to explain to the kids that the fish do not talk, that the movie "Finding Nemo" was an animated movie and a fiction...

"Fun after hard work."

Just like last year, we took the kids who had helped us at other events go-karting. Boys and girls alike had volunteered to help us prepare and run various competitions throughout the year. Most of the games and competitions were about the Bible, introducing stories from the Bible in

an enter- taining way.

"Look, it's

a kangaroo!" Shouted an 11 year-old Denisa excitedly, when we spotted a deer during one of our hikes. It seems like we have to go to the Zoo again soon! "Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool" sang a 14-year-old Andrea when the kids were asked to sing a song they remember, featuring an animal. Because she was dead serious, we explained to her what "wool" was. Neither Denisa nor Andrea are stupid, they simply never received much attention in their lives... Which is something we are trying to fix. Our trips are not only about nature and exercise outdoors, but also about expanding our knowledge and overall preparedness for the challenges in life.

"We will go to the yeast!"

Romanek waved his hand and indicated where we should go. Compared to other teams participating in the orienteering race, our team was somewhat unusual. However, where we were lacked in knowledge, we compensated with enthusiasm and team spirit. We finished in the wonderful 3rd place in the children's category!

Bits and pieces of life

"What a cute little hedgehog!"

I was impressed with the snout and paws of a hedgehog during one of our trips in Pilsen - until my husband carefully pointed out to me that the hedgehog was still for other reason that I originally thought... It was February. Except the hedgehog, another thing that caught our attention was a poster with an invitation to a concert of folk music group Hop trop. The gentlemen on the poster were not nearly as cute as the hedgehog, but they made it through February alive, and we got a chance to attend their amazing concert in Pilsen....

"She cannot go, she has a toothache!"

Denisa's grandmother told me at the door. The eight-year-old Denisa was still babysitting her four younger siblings, while her other two brothers played outside. Mommy and daddy were not there for them. Grandma takes care of all seven kids. I admired the grandma greatly, but this time, I did not give in, and insisted to take Denisa with me to the weekend "Robinson" event. Like I thought, Denisa had no toothache, and she had a great time! There were eight Roma children and about two hundred "Gadjos", as the Romani community call the non-Roma people.

"Will you take me on a trip? Can I join the summer camp? Why didn't you come yesterday?"
The kids are great, and there are a lot of them. Really a lot. More often than not, I am not sure if I should be happy about that, or sad. Because they like our events but our capacity is limited. Many of the kids are little, and they only know "yesterday, today and tomorrow."

"We want to see Karlstejn castle!"

Karlstejn castle was a trip that the parents requested. Trips with parents are often marked by short distances and higher attractivity. We're glad that the kids can go together with their parents on some of our trips. These occasions make it possible for the young-gest kids to join us, who would not be able to attend on their own. The key take-away for the children is that trips can be organized by families, not only non-profit organizations. We hope to inspire the parents to undertake a trip or two of their own!

"Panda is from Asia and the kangaroo is from Australia, and that's what I remember too, from our summer camp." Meliska in Prague excelled, recalling knowledge she learned during one of our summer camps. The event called "Where does chicken live?" was great fun and the kids enjoyed it. Thank you very much! We also learned that some people are blind, and tried what it feels like not to see anything. That experience taught us a little bit about being understanding towards people with disabilities, and showed the kids that they are not the only ones in the society with some sort of a disadvantage.

"I can't keep going!"

Petr shouted at us in despair. But it was a race, after all, so Petr summoned all his strength and continued. In life, sometimes we all have to keep going when we are tired. It's good to learn early on that when I want something, whether it is winning a race, or getting a good job, a family, I have to make an effort, not give up. We were very proud of the children - they tried their best, and carried home with them not only finisher diplomas, but also a sense of achievement. It was great for them to know that they can beat a lot of their competitors when they give it their all. They will remember this better than a day spent sitting in front of

a screen.

Bits and pieces of life



"When are we going to play in the bubble again?"

The boys keep asking me. The 2017 Football tournament in the inflatable hall, called "the Bubble", was a real success. We invited friends from the Roma Plznatar association, whom we helped to found the association. The game was played with a lot of enthusiasm, goals were scored, it was great!

"The Neighbourhood Day - The Health Day - The John Hus Square in Pilsen filled with children again!"

Our cooperation with the projects of the Czech National Institute of Health made it possible for us to attend the traditional Neighbourhood Day and the Health Day. In addition to the traditional large bubble maker and rope attractions for children, we also had the opportunity to talk to adults about healthy lifestyle and health in general, such as how to wash your hands properly. Trying out special glasses, everyone could try out how a drunk person sees the world!

"Luckily, I didn't get slapped."

One of the moms was preparing their kids to leave with us. She slapped all of them as a prevention, so that they don't get lost. As for me, she only scolded me a little, because she was afraid that if something happens to the kids, she might get arrested. I assured her I am the one who would, in such cases, bear all consequences. Visibly relieved, she brought her youngest son to join us. Life is hard on some people, and we all have our own fears, and our own motivations...

"Daddy is here as well!"

We are very happy that our events attract more and more parents. One of the dads, Ruda, came with all his four sons and his wife to the Indoor Playground in Líně by bus. He visits the city part Líně regularly because his relatives live there. But it was his first time visiting the playground. After this, the whole family came to the Indoor Playground a few time on their own. This kind of family time and experience is essential for the healthy development of the children.

"These animals really exist!"

David exclaimed in surprise when we witnessed a car hitting a deer during one of our trips. The kids were speculating whether the deer will not be eaten by bears, so I explained to them that the forest wardens will come pick it up. And we agreed to visit the Zoo again. This time, we were a group of 50 people: three volunteers from the Give and Gave initiative, four moms, two Pavlas from the Close Neighbour, and 41 kids. We all had a great time!