

## LATEST NEWS FROM THE LIVSLUST-DZIVESPRIEKŠ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR ORPHANED AND OTHER VULNERABLE TEENAGERS IN LATVIA

### Livslust-pupils visit the President of Latvia



*President Valdis Zatlers invited pupils and staff to the celebration of Latvia's 90th anniversary of its first independency. The pupils had made a traditional "destiny belt" as a gift.*

### Serious economical crisis in Latvia

Latvia is one of the countries where the crisis has struck exceptionally hard. For people who lose their jobs and risk losing their homes it is a catastrophe as there is hardly any kind of social support from the state. It is extra difficult for retired people and young persons with low education, especially if they lack a social network. The unemployment is at least 14,4% with large regional differences. The situation is made worse as thousands of Latvians now return after losing their jobs abroad. The salaries of state employees have been decreased and schools and hospitals will be closed. It is easy to imagine the effect on the weakest groups. This time last year Latvia was still a growing economy. Business prospered and there were new shops and luxurious malls growing up everywhere. Now the shops are deserted and the tables are empty in the restaurants. There are more beggars in the streets and the soup kitchens are a condition of survival for many. Due to the crisis, criminality, alcohol- and drug abuse as well as HIV/AIDS is spreading.

### The effect on Livslust

The difficult times are of course bad for the economy of Livslust. We save as much as we can without cutting down on the core of our work – social rehabilitation and education. We have had to re-organise and decrease the number of employees by two persons, sad but necessary. The members of the staff are well aware of the situation and do whatever they can to cut costs. The general insecurity is spreading and the pupils no longer feel safe when they visit the village. The night guard is worried and has asked for more resources for surveillance and for taking care of the youngsters at night. We try to solve this with the staff we have at hand.

### Former pupils need help

A unique part of the work of Livslust is that we keep in touch with our former pupils after they have left school. They are always welcome to visit and are met by open arms. We are like a substitute family, which they can turn to for support. Normally more than 80% of our former pupils do well, but today they feel the effect of the crisis as everybody else. It is difficult times for companies and some of our youngsters have lost their jobs. Some have difficulties to pay the rent and are literally at risk to end up in the street. Several of them have called and told us that they have difficulties to manage and to take care of their children. The social welfare offices have scarce resources, the need is enormous and many people don't get any support at all. We do what we can to find financial and practical solutions to help our former pupils.

### We need your support more than ever

In order to secure survival of the school Livslust consequently must increase its part of the financing. In addition we need extra means to be able to support those of our former pupils who have got into trouble. We are grateful for all financial donations and there are different ways to support. A company can become a long-term **collaboration partner**. Private persons and companies can become **Livslust-sponsors** and donate an amount each month. One can choose to give a **single donation** or organise collections in connection with birthdays or funerals. For more information please call +46 8 6607784 or contact us by e-mail [livslust@telia.com](mailto:livslust@telia.com) or contact Edijs Petersons of Dzivesprieks Latvia at +371 29106718 or [edijs@mikronet.lv](mailto:edijs@mikronet.lv).





*Our collaboration partner Oriflame Cosmetics has donated new computers for the computer class.*

## Pupils will stay an extra year

Before the end of term in June the school was full and we have many applicants for the next year. We feel responsible for our present pupils and therefore hesitate to let them leave for an unsecure future. Instead we offer them to stay an extra year. During this year they will get more vocational training as well as improve their English and computer skills. In addition they will learn among other things how to recycle garbage and how to save energy in order to raise the environment awareness. We know that several will take this offer and stay. The result is however, that we have more applicants than we have vacancies when the school year starts in September.

## Book about our methods

We know of no other institution that works with social rehabilitation of exposed youngsters in the same way that we do. We don't believe in a final package solution. We look upon our way of working as a living process, which is improved and changed according to the experience we have. However, there is a foundation of security, openness and individual approach. There is an interest to learn about it and we give presentations at schools and institutions. This year we will begin the work on a new book about Livslust-Dzivesprieks. It will be available for institutions, social welfare offices and authorities. It can also be used for education of teachers and social workers. The book will be written by a Latvian psychologist/journalist Antra Krasna, and will be translated into English and Russian to reach Eastern Europe and Russia.



*On the wall of the school entrance there is a "Calendar of Goodness 2009" where all the pupils have contributed with positive encouragements. Day 1 Linda has written: "Begin this month with a nice day!" and for day 2 you can read "Be yourself! Enjoy every second! Notice what is unusual!"*

## Some of our earlier pupils

The Belova sisters come from a socially exposed family in the countryside nearby the school. They were seven children, but their brother Viktor, who also was a Livslust pupil, was tragically killed in a traffic accident a couple of years ago. Liene lives in the neighbour village Vane and is presently unemployed, Kristine lives in Tukums and is on maternity leave to take care of little Roberts and Baiba attends a 4 year education of textile design. She gets financial support from one of Livslust's scholarship funds.



*The sisters Liene, Kristine and Baiba Belova are all former Livslust pupils.*

Agnese Karklina is the first of our former pupils who has graduated from a higher education. She is an economist. She lives with her husband and two children in Kandava. Unfortunately she has been affected by the crisis and is presently unemployed.

We would also like to mention Juris Butans who came to Livslust when he was 14 years old in 1995. Juris did not fit into any of our vocational programmes but learnt to use computers and he loved to work in the garden. He stayed for five years and then began a garden education. Now he is working as head gardener on Guernsey.



*Igors Volkovs, who left the school already in 1997 to work with the Swedish company Skanska, came on a surprise visit in April together with wife and son. Igors now works at the local traffic company in Riga after several years of working abroad.*

## Impressed by the atmosphere at the school

*"At the beginning of May I went together with Elisabeth Melin Ceje to Aizupe to lead a staff seminar. It was my first time at the school, yes, it was even my first time in Latvia. I was really looking forward to get to know Livslust in this way. After a tour around the*

school we were invited to a nice dinner cooked and served by the pupils. I was really impressed by the nice atmosphere and the natural contact between the pupils and the staff. On the first evening the seminar started with all 13 members of the staff present.

The seminar went on with many lively, fruitful discussions and constructive plans. You could notice a team-feeling, a positive attitude and a strong commitment for the school and the work tasks. In spite of a strong concern about the future regarding both youngsters and employees, there was a belief that it is possible to turn something negative into something positive. I could really understand that Livslust is a fantastic place to come for those who need a secure environment, vocational training and a chance to build a future."

Catharina Sandström Skiöldebrand,  
new Livslust-volunteer



In the evening the teachers dressed up to perform a play for the pupils. It was very funny, especially as the drama pedagogue Ilva Liepina had to whisper the lines from a wardrobe where she was hidden. From left: Laima Baumane, school-manager, Juris Mazurs, painting teacher, Anta Birkensteina, sewing teacher, Irina Jakobovica-Murniece, temporary MD, Janis Steinbergs, carpentry teacher and Una Budzena, teacher of life-skills.

## Income from sale of farming business

After 10 years of farming we have sold the agriculture business. The main reason is that we have no farming education programme anymore. The reason is new complicated rules and laws and lack of work possibilities. We have also experienced that it is difficult to run a profitable agriculture business and the EU-subsidies have not developed according to the prognosis. We have kept the 200 hectares that we own and rent it out. This will give a stable and relatively safe income each year. The 15 boys that have attended the farming programme have been successful and have managed to support themselves – we don't know what effect the crisis will have though. We would like to thank all of you who have contributed in different ways to develop the agriculture activities and to give some young people a profession and a chance of a future!

## Staff club supports Livslust

"We are more than 70 members of the "Friends of Livslust", a club for employees of the Swedish company Electrolux. The purpose is to support the work of Livslust. An extra inspiration is the fact that Electrolux doubles the amount that we manage to raise during the year. This makes our efforts double worth. All members pay a monthly fee. In addition we arrange different events where we sell Livslust products and lottery tickets. The prizes are Electrolux products donated by the company. In January we have an After Christmas Party where we also collect children's toys. The pupils of Livslust in their turn, run an aid-project in Latvia, the orphanage Dzirciems. This is where the toys go. The youngsters appreciate to be able to help others with a difficult childhood. Then we have a Spring Market with a cake-party to recruit new members and in December there is a Christmas Market. In November we collect clothes among the staff. We normally manage to fill many pallets which are sent to the school. Electrolux Logistics arranges the transport."

Birgitta Skoglund, "Friends of Livslust"

## Modris is going to Stockholm

The Livslust-pupil Modris Eglitis has a dream. He would like to become a lawyer. A great dream. Modris is intelligent, speaks good English and is prepared to work hard to succeed. He is 19 years old and since 2 years he stays at Livslust while he attends upper secondary school in Tukums. Last summer when Modris was an intern at the Oriflame Gold Conference in Athens, he told about his dream and was offered a one-year internship at the Oriflame office in Stockholm. After finding a solution to be able to continue his studies at the same time, he accepted and is now looking forward to come to Stockholm.



Last-year pupils Modris, Baiba and Igors with some of the furniture that has been donated to the school by If Latvia.

## Changes of the boards

Christer Magnusson has resigned from the board of the Livslust Foundation after being a member from the start in 1994. We are deeply grateful for his valuable support and advice during the years. As new members we welcome Martin Moström and Maria Cakste, former chairman of Asociacija Dziesprieks. There are some changes in Latvia as well: Sarma Upesleja, one of the initiators, has resigned. Sarma has been of great help in introducing us to the culture and society of Latvia and we thank her for her long commitment. New members are Ausma Ece, Dmitrijs Petrovs and Andris Mozorovs. As mentioned the former headmaster of the school, Edijs Petersons, is now working chairman of the Dziesprieks board.

## Nordea Marathon ni Riga

Like last year, staff and pupils had prepared to run some of the distances on May 17 at the great running event of the year in Riga. Most of them participated in 5 km, some ran half a Marathon and one pupil Juris Zagars and Edijs Petersons finished the full Marathon. Everybody was very happy and content after passing the goal and who wouldn't be.

## Miscellaneous:

- The British Chambre of Commerce in Riga (BCCL) has chosen to support Livslust-Dzivesprieks and Ceribu Sparni in Sigulda during 2009. The charity event "Burns Night" raised 10.000 LVL which was divided between the two.
- BCCL arranged a visit to Volkswagen for the pupils. Among other things the staff told the youngsters about the importance of studies in order to succeed in life.
- Edijs Petersons has made several presentations of Livslust, among others in Matisi municipality and for municipality chairmen, social workers and teachers at a seminar at the University in Liepaja. Social workers from Jelgava has made a study visit to the school.
- A radio programme about the Vane municipality was mostly about Livslust as an active part of the municipality.
- The pupils performed a play at a home for elderly people in Rauda and in connection with the graduation of teachers in Riga.
- The Labour Market Board of Latvia gave a seminar at the school and taught the pupils how to write a CV and a job application and how to behave at a job interview.
- All four vocational programmes have been accredited by the State at level 1. This means that the pupils will receive a report with an authorised stamp when they finish, which is of great value when you apply for a job in Latvia.
- The school had a visit from Hauska & Partneri, a PR company that renders its services free of charge to Dzivesprieks. They help to spread information about the school and its methods.
- In January everybody went to visit the Museum of Barricades and the Academy of Defence.
- Some of the pupils attend ninth class at the village school. When there is a parents meeting, somebody from our staff comes along instead of the lacking parents.
- There have been some funny events like a carnival with the theme "Longest horns and longest tail", the yearly Valentine Party, a party with guests from Saldus and a visit to the Daile theatre in Riga.
- There has been one First Aid course and youngsters from the organisation "Youth against Aids" have visited the school to inform.
- The church collect at the SEB Christmas Concert in the Jacobs Church of Stockholm was donated to Livslust.

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**Collaboration partners 2008 – 2009:** Colorex, Electrolux, Essen, Knauf, KPMG, Krasu Serviss, LMT, Länsförsäkringar, Nordea Latvia, Oriflame Cosmetics, SEB, Snickers Workwear, TeliaSonera, Tikkurila-Vivacolor, Vairak Saules, Vattenfall

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