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MIGRATORY BIRDS

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MIGRATORY BIRDS The newspaper produced by and for refugee, migrant and Greek youth



Journeys, hopes, miracles

We have said goodbye to the old year and to all the terrible things that went with it. Goodbye to all those scars that tried to etch themselves indelibly on our bodies and in our souls.

We experienced injustice, we shed tears, we were frightened and injured, we ran, swam and walked for days and nights on end. But here we are today with renewed strength, praying that those difficult times will fade into the distance as we open our arms to embrace the joy and optimism that 2018 will bring.

Our team continues its weekly Saturday meetings and grows bigger by the day. We have visited Germany, Patra and Pyrgos in the Peloponnese

and Crete. We have spread our wings even further and now have four reporters in Germany: Essen, Heidelberg, Wissbaden and Hamburg. In just a few months, both the printed and digital editions of our newspaper have found their way to five continents: America, Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia.

In this first issue of the New Year we write about new places we have visited, we describe the holiday season from a different point of view and consider what it really means to have hope. We discuss what adults think of us and we immerse ourselves in a country full of... miracles.

We wish everyone a Happy New Year – and happy reading!





Like links in a chain

By Madinah Zafari

There is a healer that goes by the name of "friendship" that has a place in our hearts... You may not know what gives it shape and form. Yet, the joy it brings is so wonderful that you feel it is a gift from God...

I want to describe the life of a team of girls who, despite being "fragile", are full of determination and strength of character. Girls who walked on a rough and dangerous path in the hope that it would lead them to a brighter future.

Girls who overcame their difficulties as one, like family, side by side, with love, solidarity and friendship. They endured hardships but over time urged each other on...

Those girls decided to lighten their heavy hearts by letting the universe hear their voices. They wanted to put into words and to describe what they went through on the rugged paths they walked as a result of decisions they took...

This is what led to the launching of the newspaper "**Migratory Birds**".

The idea of such a newspaper was originally met with hostility by some.

There were those who tried to put the girls off publishing it, but the team was too strong to give in and reverse its decision.

The team was united in its effort and, despite the "wishes" of some, the first issue was very warmly received, even by those who had originally spoken against its publication...

This reception encouraged the girls to work towards a second issue... In the end, with each new edition our supporters grew, as did our circulation and the size of our team.

Meanwhile, during the course of this journey some team members were obliged to leave us, because they moved onto other countries in order to fulfill their hopes and dreams. It won't be easy for some of them to realise their hopes but they have to try.

Those that left us will continue their efforts. Wherever they are, they will continue to write and to circulate their newspaper successfully....

Even I, who am describing the team's success, am witness to the departure of some who lived through difficult times, but with solidarity, hope and love managed to stand on their own two feet and make a new beginning, just as I continue our joint venture from here...

The rest of us girls are sad because we miss them, but at the same time, we are happy for the bright future awaiting all those who left.

This team is based on friendship, and no obstacles, not even distance, will destroy it. All its members, wherever they were, are or will be, are joined like links in the same chain.

Our friends are far away, but our hearts touch each other!

Christmas and New Year through the eyes of a refugee

By Najmiah Hossaini

Christmas. What is Christmas? It is not just a time of year. It is a memory, a thank-you for peace, safety, tranquillity, respect and love throughout the world. It is a Christian festival that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. An icon of Jesus is displayed, a fir tree is decorated, presents and cards are exchanged, carols are sung and Father Christmas arrives.

Christmas is really about goodwill, the value of peace, forgiveness and the embrace of family. It is such an important festival for Christians that during World War 1, German and British troops carried out an informal ceasefire in order to celebrate Christmas and sing hymns. Yet, even though at Christmastime families gather together, and goodwill and love prevail, thousands of refugees continue to live in the camps, yearning for hope and kindness.

Thousands of refugees are waiting for the moment of family unification.

They are hoping that they can all be together again and that their homes will be filled once again with joyful voices and laughter, rather than with tears.

New Year and St Basil. St Basil was born in the 4th century AD and was religious from a very young age. He dedicated his whole life to Christianity. He was renowned for his kindness and generosity and for his help and support for the poor and all who were suffering.

Orthodox Christians believe that St Basil is a kindly, good-hearted old man who hands out presents at New Year, especially to poor children, in order to fill their hearts with hope and joy.

It seems that thousands of old men with a white beard and red clothes will dress up as St Basil this New Year, climb onto a sleigh pulled by three reindeer and will offer presents to children everywhere, bringing joy to their hearts and giving them hope for a good, peaceful and tranquil year. Yet, for refugee children, this will not be the case. It would seem that the various St Basils have forgotten the refugees and their children, and don't have any gifts to give them and make them happy.

If only war would cease once more for Christmas, as it did in 1914. If only war and the worries of the world would cease once more so that the hopelessness and hardship faced by refugees the world over would also stop.

I don't know why one of the many St Basils doesn't go beyond the decorated trees and fairy lights, reach the barbed wire and cut it, so that the promise of Christmas for peace, safety and harmony can come true for everyone.

I hope that there will come a Christmas and New Year when the fairy lights will illuminate the hearts of thousands of refugees once more and that a significant change for good will occur all over the world.



The social concerns of teenage Afghans

By Fereshteh and Elham Esmaili

As soon as we set foot in Europe we felt that our problems would soon be solved. However, it didn't take long for us to realise that the more we interacted with each other, the more difficulties arose not only because of our different personalities but also because of our religion, culture, social behaviour and attitude towards society.

For example, when we found ourselves all together in a classroom for the first time, we assumed that equality and solidarity would prevail between us, and that we would look towards a brighter future for our community in order to resolve our problems. Quite the contrary, we noticed that many of the boys would taunt and mock the girls in the class. It's as if they felt they had the right to mock not only their fellow pupils but also the teacher herself. It's as if they thought that this behaviour would somehow make them worthier, but of course this is not so. One thing that characterises us Afghans is that we think that by coming to Europe we acquire unrestricted freedom.

It is sad to say that there are some who have been obliged to cross all

reasonable boundaries and have turned to prostitution, abandoned their husbands and children, changed religion etc.

Others have fallen for handsome men and have left their husbands and children to get together with younger partners in the deluded belief that their lives will be better.

One of the main problems we face is that people want to interfere in the private lives of girls. This upsets us and creates tensions. No one has been "assigned" the right to interfere. For example, some girls prefer to wear brightly coloured clothes, put on more make-up, go to parties and gatherings, or out for a walk. That's when problems start. Why is that? It's so simple! If people see a girl socialising with a lot of people they begin to bad-mouth her and cause her emotional harm. The question "why" comes up so often. Why don't we have the right to decide our own future? Why are women and girls perceived as property? Probably because most of us wear some kind of mask, without actually knowing what it looks like. We don't really know right from wrong and we simply talk without thinking.

Like all children the world over, we want to study, do well and make our country and family proud. And just as we wish for only good things for ourselves, we should do the same for our fellow men and women without passing judgement. We want to ask our families not to put so much pressure on their children but instead to work alongside them. It is evident that the more their children are under pressure and criticised, the more discouraged they become, the more likely they are to turn away from those closest to them, resulting in them being less compliant and a possible danger to themselves.

Despite all this, we are Afghans and proud of it. We wish for a bright future for us and our peers. We hope that the day will come when all our countrymen and women will live calmly, peacefully and tranquilly, without problems and upheavals.





The Last Night of Autumn

By Farangis Safari

The 21st of December is the last day of the month of Azar, which begins on November 21st. December 21st is the longest night of the year and is known as Chelleh or Yalda in Afghanistan. In many towns, including the capital Kabul and the city of Balkh, families have gathered together since ancient times to celebrate this night. They keep this old tradition alive by narrating tales and describing past events.

One of the most common pastimes during this night is the recounting of myths. Families get together in the home, make it nice and warm and offer a variety of sweets and fruits as they listen to the narrators who stand in the middle of the room reciting their beautiful words.

This night symbolises darkness. Afghans and Indo-Europeans all know that from then on the days get longer. They therefore stay awake through the night, waiting for the dawn in order to witness the rising of the sun. They look forward to days of sunshine.

Sunrise symbolises brightness and warmth. Locals believe that with the regularly increasing length of the day and the increased brightness of

the sun after the 21st, darkness shrinks and the strength of Ahriman (the devil) diminishes.

In ancient times, it was believed that a fight between Good and Evil took place during that night. Evil was vanquished and so daybreak and the brilliance of the sun (the victory of light over darkness) revealed the beauty of Good.

The beliefs behind the foods offered on Chelleh night.

As well as gathering together in their homes and narrating myths, people eat specific dishes. Not only is the actual food itself important, but so is the way it is presented.

For example, watermelon, which symbolises the coming of the summer, is one of the basic fruits consumed that night and has to be cut and decorated in a specific way. People believe that if you eat watermelon that night you will not fall ill the following winter.

People also eat pomegranate, which symbolises joy and fertility and since ancient times was believed to increase blood circulation in humans. Nuts, such as pistachios, walnuts and hazelnuts, as well as dried fruits are also considered by locals to be very good for you. In this way, even the darkest night of the year ends with daylight and the brightness of the Sun.

Oh Chelleh, I love you as much as all the stars that shine in your eyes.
Oh most desirable night of the year, you taste as sweet as the sunshine at dawn.



The Life of the Homeless

By Ali Raza

My heart breaks whenever I see a homeless person. The homeless are people, just like us. Unfortunately they often fall victims to racism or sexual exploitation because of their poverty, making their life hell. The homeless do not just consist of adult males; women and children have found themselves in this awful situation for several generations.

The homeless find it much harder than everyone else to access education and healthcare.

Every time everyone else takes part in family or religious festivals during

winter, under dim lights and a quiet atmosphere, I think of those lonely people and feel sorry for them. They hum to themselves and remember the good times in their past.

They deserve our sympathy because they have no place in society. Circumstances do not allow them to stay in one place. At the same time, they are humiliated and make headline news every day. Their daily life is a challenge.

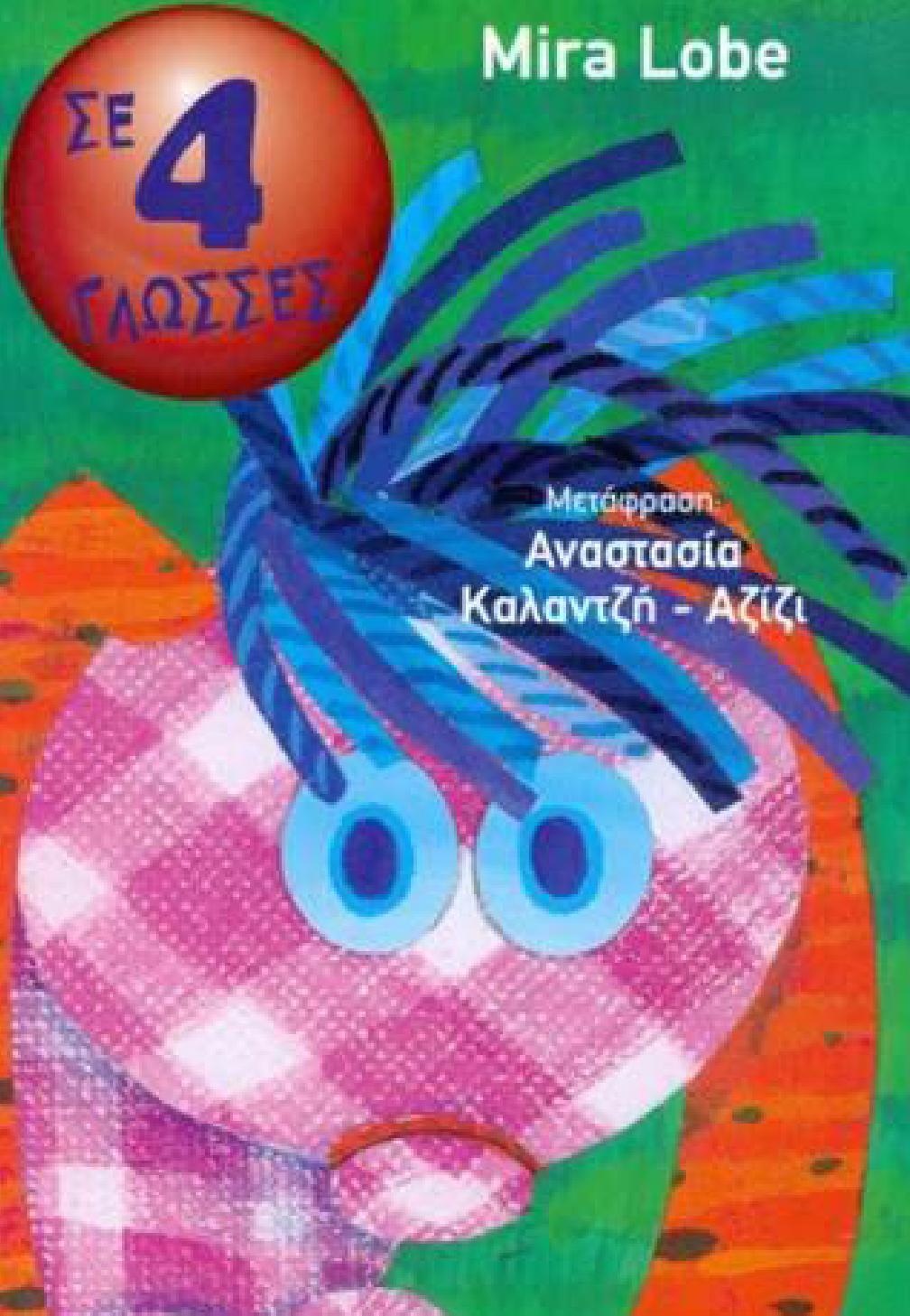
Some live outside the cities and send family members into town to work. When the workers return at night after dark, the sorrowful eyes of the rest of the family are there to greet them.

These people are oppressed and we must show them love. The state ought to take care of them and improve their lives so that they can live under better circumstances, somewhere permanent, where they can work for themselves and for their country.

It would be unfair of me not to mention the organisations and institutions that continue to help the homeless. I personally feel very proud to have had the opportunity to get to know them and work with them, offering the homeless either financial help or clothing, depending on my ability.

ΤΟ ΜΙΚΡΟ Ε ΓΩ ΕΙΜΑΙ Ε ΓΩ

Mira Lobe



**We read, we looked at and we listened to
“Little-I-Am-Me”**

By Parastou Hossaini

“Little-I-Am-Me” by Lobe Mira, published by “Topos”, has been translated into many languages, including Greek, English, Persian and Arabic. It is about a small creature with large ears that doesn't know exactly what type of animal it is.

It lives in meadows amongst brightly coloured flowers and trees and was happy listening to birds singing. It was perfectly contented until one day it met a frog and everything changed. The frog asked, “who are you, what sort of creature are you?” and the little thing was so taken aback that it simply replied, “I don't know”. From that day on it no longer drew satisfaction from roaming happily around the meadows, but instead began searching for someone who would tell it what type of creature it was. It began to wander in the forest and would ask every animal it came across “Do I look like you?” “I really want to find out what I am”. It would even go around towns and streets in its dreams, asking the various animals it met “Do I look like you?”

Finally, the little creature thought to itself, “Even though everyone tells me I am nothing, I must be something, because I am Me”.

We sometimes come across people who confuse us. But this story helps us realise our uniqueness and deal more easily with any identity crisis we may have.

Wonderland

I am standing in an entrance, staring at the door in front of me, which only one year ago I thought was the "way in" to Wonderland

By Mahdiah Hossaini

A land so far removed from Alice's. A land full of white tents, tired and miserable people, and a crowded health centre. In my Wonderland, children leant their heads against the stones in their vegetables gardens to rest, afraid that their tents would collapse. The inhabitants of this Wonderland were not products of previous centuries, nor were they ever cave dwellers. They used to live in cities, yet they were treated as primitive beings. As a result, all they have left is faith and hope.

It is difficult to compare your own life to life in Wonderland, your house with the tent, the school and the dormitory with the scrapheap in the camp, and your friends with the unhappy girls in the tent next door. I kept looking for a way to escape, kept wondering to myself if I would ever get out of this land.

Hope of life was the trigger for change; the tent became a container, a white one no less!

One year later, this Wonderland became a small metal room, but at least it was white, the colour of cleanliness and hope. And I became more hopeful and more optimistic.

After a few months of waiting, we finally slept in the containers and enjoyed a good night's sleep that reminded us of home. Of course, we slept well when the sky was kind to us, but when it "wept" it was a disaster. It made you think that the roof would collapse on your head. Even the sound of a single raindrop was frightening and very unsettling.

And yet, I ask myself "why do I miss that Wonderland?"

Probably because that was where I became a resilient and determined individual.

A very different person to the one I was before!

I often used to wish that I could live in a normal house once more, one made of bricks and stones. I often asked myself "will I ever yield to serenity at night and manage to fall asleep?" And because wishes do sometimes come true, I was notified that I would be moving to a proper house. I still had my doubts however and wondered about my relocation.

I asked myself whether it was time for me to migrate once more, the way birds do. Was it time for me to gather up the remains of all my memories, both bitter and sweet? Did I have to say goodbye once more to those who had taken the place of my friends and relatives? It is so very painful to part from friends with whom you have shared sorrows, joys, the heat and the cold, in tents and containers, in snow and rain or under the searing sun; people who walked with you, friends with whom you laughed when they laughed and cried when they shed tears. This is the second time I stand and stare at a large doorway, but this time it is not the entrance but the exit from Wonderland. It is the last day, and I find leaving so hard, there's a lump in my throat as big as the mountains around the camp and there are tears trying to escape from under my eyelids. I feel the two scenes – the entrance and the exit – colliding inside me. The same person who was there to greet us is now seeing us off, but his expression is very different. And thus I leave the place that taught me determination and patience.

As soon as I walked into the house, I felt I had been thrown out of my familiar surroundings and into a reality that didn't actually provide peace. Instead, I fell asleep cradling my sorrows. Yes, I felt sad once more. The sadness of a refugee never ends. And yet this new place isn't full of the noise made by the children in Wonderland. There is no piercing wind at night and the rainy days are almost inaudible. Even so, I miss all that!! I apologise for repeating myself, but it is my life that has become a series of repetitions.



Hope

By Mirna Aslan

Should anyone ask you about your dreams, just say: I want to die with my dreams still alive. I live in hope, after all.

Hope. Perhaps this word means so much more than what it seems, more than just a few letters strung together.

Hope is the fight for success; it's what motivates us and makes us struggle against ourselves.

You should fill your hearts with hope because tomorrow will be even more beautiful. You should face your challenges and spread the feeling of hope to the minds of the unfortunate, the despairing and the disappointed.

Hope is a like courtyard with the best view. It spurs us on to face our challenges so that we can overcome all obstacles in our way.

Most of us have to confront painful and difficult situations every day, and this often leads us to give up hope. Yet hope remains in our hearts, it strengthens our desire for a better life, one in which we will overcome our problems in the best and easiest way and with the fewest losses.

Hope is a tiny window, from which you can look out onto open horizons, regardless of how small it is.

It is not always easy to have hope and particularly hard when health is

involved, because that is when people are at their weakest.

In the case of cancer, for example, all medical studies have shown that one of the most effective medications for its treatment is hope, because it offers the patient a sort of resistance against it.

Hope in God is a life raft that we need to hold onto. We need to set new goals, and make every effort to attain them and not allow obstacles and difficulties to stand in our way.

Hope is the positive energy offered by God, allowing us to become stronger and enabling us to overcome any hurdles through our belief that he will give us everything we desire, and more.

Life may well teach us some harsh lessons, but what we learn will stay with us forever. One example is the ability to think calmly and rationally, because regardless of the magnitude of a particular problem, we know that a solution always lies before us. All we need is a little self-confidence.

Life is hope... and if you lose hope... you lose life.

Hope makes a barren land fertile.

Hope is the start of every act and the beginning of creation. Success derives from it... That is why you must always have hope.

Hope is you!



A different kind of therapy

An introduction to the Therapeutic Riding Association of Greece

By Mohammed Majbur

I want to start by thanking Mrs Dimitra Karouzaki who welcomed us to her office. We were there to learn about the type of services provided at the centre, which specialises in the treatment of those with special needs. We also wanted to find out about the horses.

The Therapeutic Riding Association of Greece is a non-profit volunteer organisation whose aim is to treat people with various forms of disability.

A group of Greek and foreign women set it up in 1983; in 1992 it became a legal entity and began to function more formally. In 2004 it moved from the Riding Centre of Goudi to 10 Kanelloupolou Avenue, Athens.

Do you own the premises? How many horses do you have and how many people work here?

We do not own the premises; they were ceded to us by the army, so that we could accomplish our mission. Before 2004, we did not have the necessary specialisation to start offering rehabilitation classes and exercises, but from 2004 onwards, we attended seminars in order to become specialists in therapeutic riding. We started with three horses and now we have ten, we also have eight staff members including a

stableman who comes from Pakistan, a psychologist, an occupational therapist, a special needs trainer, a social worker, a horse trainer and an office administrator. 170 people come for riding lessons and other treatment every week!

How can someone book a lesson?

We welcome telephone bookings, but unfortunately, we have a long waiting list. This is because we charge very little in comparison to other privately run establishments that offer the same services, plus we have the best trainers and therapists.

This means that we are always busy and many people benefit. In addition, we collaborate with other European associations to provide educational seminars for training instructors. We offer internships to university students and give them a certificate at the end. For all those reasons we sometimes delay in responding to applications. However, as soon as we have a vacancy we get in touch with the applicant and book a date for their therapy.

What are the most common forms of disability?

We have people with mobility issues, mental illness, autism, various syndromes and psychological conditions.

Now tell us something about the horses. How does one care for a foal from birth to weaning?

A foal needs to stay with its mother till it is three years old. After weaning, we feed it, look after it and make sure it stays healthy. It needs longer care than racehorses do because it needs to mature fully and not be prone to illness. We then train it to make it suitable for therapeutic riding.



How is a horse trained?

We start by putting a saddle on the horse, followed by the halter on the face so that it can get used to it. Then we bring children close to it so that it can learn to be gentle with them. The horse needs to be calm, because if it is irritable and gets angry, the therapy won't work. We use a light saddle so that the rider feels the movement of the horse.

Are all horses the same? Are some calm and others tense?

Horses can be calm or tense, but we always chose young horses so that we can train them and develop their character.

How do you look after the horses' health and what implements to you use for cleaning?

We clean out the stables daily, put down sawdust and remove any dung. We give the dung to farmers who use it as natural manure. We also ensure that the horses stay outdoors for long periods in order for the stables to be well cleaned and for the horses to be in the sun.

What do you feed them?

We give them hay. It doesn't have many vitamins but that doesn't matter because they don't jump hurdles.

How do you look after a sick horse?

We have our own vet who comes regularly to look after the horses. We vaccinate them every year, and we give them medicine to clear out their bowels should they get parasites.

What are the most common illnesses in horses?

There are two: parasites in the bowel and an inflammation that starts in the back and spreads to the legs that really affects a horses' health.

How do you value a horse? What does its price depend on?

Race horses and show jumpers usually command very high prices. A horse used for therapeutic riding or rehabilitation costs anything between five and seven thousand euros.

What type of patient responds best to therapeutic riding and what benefits do they gain from it?

We have seen good results in patients with mobility issues, especially in their balance and physical independence. We have had cases of people who had been totally dependent, and who gained some independence in certain aspects of life. We have also managed to give significant assistance to people with autism by helping them to bring out their personality.

How many times a week does someone come for therapy?

It depends on the kind of therapy... usually once a week for half an hour. The session doesn't just consist of riding. We also show them how the horses and stables are cleaned. We are kind to the horses so that they in turn are kind to the children.

With one half-hour session per week, how long does a child's therapy last?

That depends on the level of disability. Some people, who are receiving physiotherapy elsewhere, have been coming to us for fifteen years. In those cases, the riding therapy is considered supplementary.

Does good communication with a horse result in better communication with people, as far as the child is concerned?

Yes, especially in the case of autistic children. We have noticed that the majority who have interacted well with a horse, then start to say a few words and begin to communicate with humans around them.

Can you tell us something of your experience with horses? Is it a hobby or a sport?

I started in this field for personal reasons because my daughter has mobility issues. I loved the work and that is why I continue doing it. I have been doing it for 28 years.

How can someone become a volunteer here?

You can apply by email to triding@otenet.gr. We look into what each volunteer can offer and we train him or her to walk next to the horse, clean it and look after its stable.





It's not just about us...

By Alexia Maronikolaki, Alexandra Tayaroulia and Eleana Tila

Adolescents tend to be labelled as immature, naïve, selfish, uncaring and ungrateful. We ourselves have often been the objects of reproach and we have to confess how much these criticisms hurt us. People think that adolescents don't care about anyone or anything, apart from how to have a good time. But surely this is a rather shallow belief. The adolescent mind wanders daily into unfamiliar territory. We get anxious, we worry and we make a lot of effort for a lot of things.

One of our biggest worries is about the future, we think about it constantly. It begins with trying to get a place at university, which has to be one of the most soul-destroying procedures faced by any teenager. Then comes the job search, which is usually for something that interests us, but which might mean having to move abroad. We wonder whether we will ever turn all our dreams into reality or satisfy our curiosity about the world. Will we be able to travel? Will we get to know new people and different cultures? Our goal is always to lead a happy life. Will we be proud of the person we will have become at the end of that journey of life? We also worry whether we will be able to still be ourselves and hold on to our values. Or will we have turned into yet another ordinary, lazy adult, who betrayed the child she once was, someone who has remained intellectually unrefined, caring only about money and the material world? We even wonder how we can contribute to making this world a better place.

Another thing that adults believe is that adolescents are only interested in their appearance and how to have a good time. More specifically, that

they don't care about the mental and physical state of those around them and that they have no sense of any problems or difficulties that others may be facing. But here we are, writing this article, in which we can assure you that we spend a large part of the day worrying about you. You are family. We fully understand the problems you have faced and are still facing on a daily basis. We care if you are well, and would like to cheer you up. We ask ourselves "Are we good enough for you?" "Are you satisfied with our efforts?" Teenagers don't want to distance themselves from their parents; they want a meaningful, genuine relationship with them.

Our thoughts are not limited to the above but also have a religious, existential and personal aspect.

Why is there such a huge gap between the various religions when in fact they all advocate love and kindness? To what extent would a Buddhist be welcomed into a Christian society? Instead of keeping our religion private and spiritual, we have to declare it to the state right from the start, which goes against the whole point of religion. Who said that people who don't believe in a God don't believe in love, kindness and human ability? Why are so many wars fought in the name of religion leading to so much loss of life? Whenever we think of our world we ponder on how much beauty there is in nature and wonder how did a creature such as man come to be created, who despite his intelligence destroys it and is unaware either of its or his own good. We are all responsible, because we all live on this earth. So, what is our role in this life and how will we determine it? How will we find a way to connect with our environment and with those around us? And most important of all, what is our relationship with our own selves? With our soul and mind, with which we will coexist, and with our body in which we will reside all our lives. Isn't that how everything begins? With love, with acceptance of ourselves and those around us.

The minds of teenagers are full of endless thoughts about difficult and complicated matters. At the same time, we look for answers in the world, in ourselves, in everything we observe and perceive. So don't rush to conclusions. It's not just about us...



The Final Tournament of 2017

By Mohammad Reza Hossaini

On Friday November 22nd 2017 the final football tournament of the year with "Network for Children's Rights" and journalists from the EFSYN newspaper took place.

The tournament was held at the "Kifissos Soccer Club" sports centre and consisted of the following four teams:

1. Teenagers from Schisto camp
2. Children from Schisto camp
3. Staff at "Network for Children's Rights"
4. Staff at EFSYN newspaper

The tournament was covered by reporters from the "Migratory Birds" and also by web-radio Dandelion. There were ten matches in all. One of the best was between the Schisto teenagers and the EFSYN staff, in which the youths had the opportunity to play against adults.

Meanwhile, as the coaches were organising the matches, we began considering the purpose of the tournament. The coaches argued that the main reason for holding it was to create something positive and enjoyable for children and teenagers.

I believe that the most important lesson we learnt from it was mutual self-respect between opponents. Another positive element was the experience the teenagers acquired in improving tactics and methods in team games and in cooperation. Around 50 spectators watched the matches and they encouraged and supported the players.

Ultimately, by the end of the tournament, the young refugees had acquired new experiences and the adults had rekindled some childhood memories.

We would like to thank all those who contribute to "Migratory Birds" and hope that we can organise similar events in the future.

With best wishes for better days and greater success.





The “Migratory Birds” go travelling

This time, the “Migratory Birds” flew to the skies above Chania.

By Parastou Hossaini

On Tuesday, 11th December 2017, a group of “**Migratory Birds**” went to Chania, in Crete and visited the exhibition entitled “**The Children who Crossed the Seas and the Game of Masks**”

The exhibition was held at the Center of Mediterranean Architecture in Chania. It opened on 12th December 2017 and closed on 6th January 2018.

Mr Panos Christodoulou, the Director of **Network for Children’s Rights** welcomed everyone at the opening and presented the Network’s programmes, including the “**Migratory Birds**” project. He also gave an interview and spoke in great detail about the programmes in the local Chania media.

The “**Migratory Birds**” team, together with their interpreter Mr Saam,

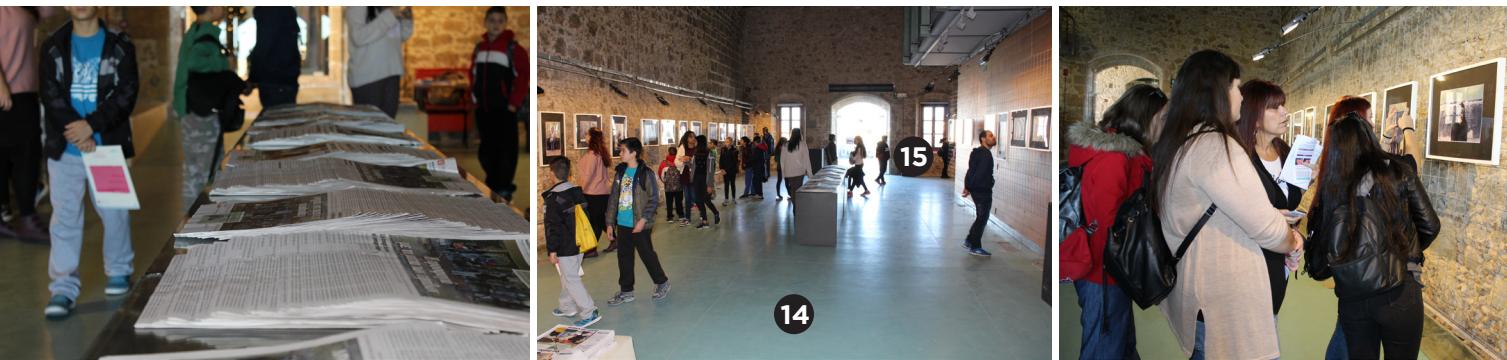
presented the project to schoolchildren who visited the exhibition. Ms Foteini Avdelli, who runs the Culture Lab at **Network for Children’s Rights** was also present and organised an experiential workshop designed to inform children of their rights and help them recognise their individual identity.

After going round the exhibition and hearing about what we do, the schoolchildren expressed various opinions and queries, which they discussed with us.

In this exhibition, there were masks of varying colours, shapes and themes, which the pupils looked at and discussed. Behind each mask was a different message. For example, one mask portrayed an immigrant holding a ball of yarn that represented his life and the quest for hope.

Another mask which drew people’s attention was the one on which the flags of Afghanistan and Greece were drawn side by side. The children told us that this represented the union of the two countries. Although the majority of masks had been painted predominantly in bold colours, the hidden melancholy behind them was very apparent.

The visitors came from various organisations and schools. They spoke with the reporters of the “**Migratory Birds**” and asked them, amongst other things, about their stay in Greece and about the wars in their countries. All the visitors expressed their satisfaction with the way the exhibition had been organised and as a memento, they gave us a card with their comments and wishes for better days. Finally, a reporter from the newspaper “**Chania News**” interviewed members of the “**Migratory Birds**”.



The “Migratory Birds” twittered at the 20th Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People.

By Zahra Habibi

On Monday December 4th we took part, with great pleasure and success, in the 17th European Meeting of Young People's Audiovisual Creation – **CameraZizanio**, part of the **20th Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People**, with an animated film entitled “**Bird Song**”, which my friends and I had created with great effort at the Refugee Reception Centre of Schisto.

The trip

We set off from Athens and headed towards the town of Pyrgos in the Ilia region of the Peloponnese. After arriving in Pyrgos, we went to the Festival's film theatre where there were many participants from a variety of countries.

Each group was to present its excellent production, and before we knew it, it was the turn of our animated film. I was very nervous. Everyone watched it with great concentration, and at the end they congratulated us and appeared very pleased.

Afterwards we discussed our film with them and arranged to meet the Greek teenage reporters of “**Pyrgos Zizanio News**”. All of us had a lot of questions. When we finished, we gave them a copy of “**Migratory Birds**” and they gave us a copy of their newspaper.

We really enjoyed meeting the young Greek reporters with whom we chatted in a very warm and friendly way. It was late afternoon by the time we decided to go back to our hotel.

In the evening we went and saw a good drama film then had dinner. At around midnight we went back to our hotel to sleep.

The next day we showed our film again, this time to the teenage reporters of “**Amaliada Zizanio News**”, who were particularly pleased with what the refugees had created.

From there we set off for the village of Neochori in the region of Andravidia-Kyllini. We visited the school, met the 70 students of the senior high school and presented our film and newspaper. At around noon we got into the van and went to visit LM Village, the Syrian refugee reception centre in Myrsini, Ilia, where we were warmly received. Again, we showed our film.

After the screening, we presented our work and gave them a copy of “**Migratory Birds**”. We then had a meal in a restaurant and set off for Athens. Those two days were really great!



Contact Points

The publication of the newspaper ‘**Migratory Birds**’ is part of the parallel action program of the “**Network for Children’s Rights**” entitled “**Contact Points**”. The “**Migratory Bird**” project brings together adolescent boys and girls (aged 14-18 years old) from different nationalities to produce a multilingual newspaper. The project aims to introduce refugee, migrant and Greek adolescents to the principles of journalism and to give them an opportunity to tell their stories and promote intercultural dialogue. The program consists of **a)** strengthening the dialogue within the camp community and preparing the communication with the Greek

society **b)** informing the minors about the social and cultural European and Greek society **c)** their socialization and Freedom of expression through participation in social, cultural, athletic and artistic meetings and discussions with the participation of Greeks; **d)** the launching of integration processes through the Communication with Greek peers and groups of common interests such as sports events, recreational events, language lessons, newspaper editing, etc. In this context, we accept invitations and welcome ideas, comments and new proposals.

Contact the Teenage Teams of the “**Migratory Birds**” newspaper and the “**Dandelion**” web radio of the Network for Children’s Rights by sending an email to migratorybirds@ddp.gr or by calling **210 88 46 590**.

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