

THE ACTIVITY PERFORMED BY PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP'S BRANCH OF THE FOUNDATION FOR ACTIVE REHABILITATION FAR' S

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Abstract:

This article presents activities performed by Podkarpackie Voivodeship's branch of the Foundation for Active Rehabilitation FAR' s. The work was intended to show the genesis of its creation, organization, presentation material base. The authors are mainly interested in organizational, educational and sport activities of FAR. This article also shows the founders of the FAR.

In this work the following methods and techniques are used: the analysis of source material which is the basic source of information. Another method used is open interview which complemented the research.

INTRODUCTION

In the process of introducing rehabilitation procedures, the cooperation of a rehabilitation team consisting of a group of experts is crucially important. The assessment of abilities and needs of a disabled person is a basis for determining a full schedule of restoring general physical fitness which is constantly evaluated while in operation. The task undertaken by the Foundation for Active Rehabilitation (FAR) is to strive for restoration of a person suffering from a spinal cord injury's social independency in all its dimensions. In addition, FAR deals with mental rehabilitation of its patients that aims at restoration of a disabled person's mental balance, self-esteem, motivating and mobilising them to cooperation as well as to being active in various areas of one's own life¹.

THE ACTIVITY OF FAR

Relying on the methods used in specialist sport and rehabilitation centres in the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden, the Foundation for Active Rehabilitation introduced in Poland a model of the disabled rehabilitation with its main element being a sport training established by the Swedes. The activity of the Foundation for Active Rehabilitation is targeted at people with spinal cord injuries, dependent on wheelchairs. The active rehabilitation movement aims at exercising complex care after as many disabled people as possible, giving them a chance for returning to an active lifestyle by means of sport².

Since 1988 FAR fulfils and develops its original programme of social and professional activation of people suffering from a spinal cord injury. The objective of the foundation is to reach directly all those who have been dependent of a wheelchair as a result of a spinal cord

¹ J. Dudek, *Rehabilitacja - rodzaje, cele i znaczenie w odniesieniu do osób z niepełnosprawnością*, „Aktywni i sprawni”, Guide of Support and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Centre – the Students of the Rzeszow University, Rzeszow 2011, pp.1–3.

² Ł. Szeliga, *Stawiamy na sport*, „Sport niepełnosprawnych” 2013, Bulletin of Polish Sport Association of the Disabled „Start” no. 1, Warsaw 2013, p. 28.

injury³. The volunteers and instructors of FAR consist of both people with disabilities and without them. A characteristic feature of the foundation is a "role model" function, meaning that an instructor on a wheelchair shows how to maintain a normal lifestyle, pursue one's dreams and achieving set targets on the basis on his or her own experience. People on wheelchairs, so called first-rate instructors patronise hospitals and rehabilitation centres, reaching people suffering from spinal cord injuries⁴. Each region has optimally two first-rate instructors. Those being the candidates for an instructor position have to undergo specialist trainings conducted by all-Poland FAR⁵.



Pic.1. A meeting of FAR first-rate instructors with a person suffering from a spine cord injury.

Source: Informative Bulletin of FAR, bpn.

The instructor's task is to show FAR's activity and to encourage an active participation in help provided by the foundation. The foundation offers its help for the disabled and their families free of charge⁶.



Pic.2. The training in overcoming architectural obstacles during a children's camp.

Source: Informative Bulletin of FAR, bpn.

³ Active participation in social life, Complex social and professional activation of people on wheelchairs, Bulletin FAR, bpn.

⁴ Informative Bulletin of FAR, bpn.

⁵ A conversation with Lucyna Przybyło – a representative of Podkarpackie Voivodeship's FAR – conducted 3rd September 2015.

⁶ Informative Bulletin of FAR, bpn.

FAR has a lot of projects intended for each age group. One of them is a project intended for children called: "Complex social activation of children on wheelchairs aged 4-16".

During camps and classes for children, the training is enriched with elements of fun. Children with spina bifidia are the majority of participants in these trainings. The important part of such camp are the classes for parents and caretakers⁷.

The foundation in its organisation includes also a programme intended for women: "FAR's Women Programme" which is an attempt to approach needs and problems of women on wheelchairs in a complex way. During the classes, basic knowledge concerning psychology and anatomy is taught. In addition, topics of sexuality, friendship, maternity as well as lady's and male relationships are discussed. There is a lot of interest in practical classes helping in moving on a wheelchair on everyday basis, while doing domestic chores, shopping or dancing.

The foundation organises also all-Poland Active Rehabilitation Camps for women, children and adults that aim at increasing the independence of the disabled (the beneficiaries of the project) by conducting group and individual classes. The classes result in acquiring, developing and sustaining skills essential for the disabled to function independently. The camps are organised, among others, in the biggest sports centres in the country, such as Spała, Kołobrzeg, Wisła⁸.

FAR conducts also computer and car trainings that give opportunities to study or work professionally for those who wish to extend and develop their qualifications⁹.

In order to accelerate the disabled's return to the active lifestyle, FAR takes part in the Reduction of the Disability Results Programme "First Wheelchair" created by the National Fund for the Disabled Rehabilitation. The programme allows for funding as well as adjusting of a wheelchair to a potential user's individual needs¹⁰.

What is more, FAR is the organiser of regional and all-Poland sport events, exhibitions and seminars. The biggest event organised by FAR is the Active Rehabilitation Games¹¹. The foundation organises social campaigns such as all-Poland campaign of able-bodied and active that promotes social integration of the disabled and counteracts their discrimination¹².

In spite of sport and training activity, FAR also popularise data regarding daily problems of the disabled. The data includes experts' advice concerning where to seek the sources of motivation and optimism in everyday life with the disability, how to deal with architectural barriers, how to help a disabled person to become an active participant of a family life, how to deal with stress and how to open to people as well as surrounding world, how to properly plan and organise one's time, how to care about one's image, how to accept the disability¹³.

The organisation of FAR until 2012 was funded by National Fund for the Disabled Rehabilitation (PFRON) and since 2012 from the EU funds as well as PFRON's.

THE ACTIVITY OF PODKARPACIE VOIVODESHIP'S FAR

All-Poland organisation of FAR consists of 16 regional bureaus in which there are local training groups in operation, meetings with the youth are held as well as volunteers' trainings.

⁷ FAR, Informative Bulletin of National Fund for the Disabled Rehabilitation, bpn.

⁸ Informative Bulletin of FAR, bpn.

⁹ <http://www.far.org.pl/obozy.html> (access: 23.06.2015).

¹⁰ Informative Bulletin of National Fund for the Disabled Rehabilitation, bpn.

¹¹ Informative Bulletin of FAR, bpn.

¹² FAR, Informative Bulletin of National Fund for the Disabled Rehabilitation, bpn

¹³ FAR, Complex social and professional activation of people on wheelchairs.

FAR also cooperates with institutions dealing with the disabled, local administration, moreover, with non-governmental organisations and medical environment¹⁴.

In 1999 the first camp of the foundation organised by Piotr Prycz took place in Zamość, attended by independent instructors, for example Grzegorz Sujdak, as well as physiatrists including Lucyna Przybyło. Following the camp in Zamość, FAR created regional bureaus. Podkarpackie Voivodeship's branch originated in 2000 with Lucyna Przybyło chosen as the representative.



Fot. 3. Lucyna Przybyło – the representative of FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

Source: Archive of FAR.

Grzegorz Sujdak became a first-rate instructor, serving this function until 2010. After Sujdak's resignation, Marek Kargul – a tetraplegic and Zdzisław Jablecki – a paraplegic have adopted this role.

The first bureau of FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship was placed in Rzeszów at the place of living of the representative. Since 2008 the main office was situated in 7th Junior Secondary School in Rzeszów, where there were two shifts a week. From that year the number of bureau's workers has increased. Since 2010 the bureau has started to operate on full-time basis (five times a week).

As a result of the introduction of the EU projects in 2012, the bureau employed additional employees for projects' implementation. Since 8th April 2013 the location of the bureau changed to Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński Street¹⁵.

FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship operates in the following fields:

- overcoming difficult life situations with a particular focus on social help, helping families and people in difficult living situation as well as on evening of their chances,
- protection and promotion of health,
- protection of human rights, civil rights and activities contributing to the development of democracy,
- countering the unemployment,
- job centre, career counselling, advisory service,
- trainings, skills improvement,
- international activity, activity concerning European integration,
- promotion and organisation of voluntary work,
- activity concerning ethnic and national minorities as well as regional language,

¹⁴ Guide of Active Rehabilitation Foundation – Regional Bureau of FAR – Podkarpackie Voivodeship, bpn.

¹⁵ A talk with Lucyna Przybyło – the representative of FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship conducted on 2nd September 2015

- sport, tourism, recreation. Supporting and popularisation of physical culture and sport, sightseeing and recreation of children and the youth¹⁶.

The first stage of introducing people with spinal cord injuries to the organisation is, as it has been mentioned, a meeting with a first-rate instructor. Next, wards take part in active rehabilitation camps, then after their completion they have the opportunity to participate in recreation and sport classes taking place in gyms of various institutions on the territory of Rzeszów.

FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship organises Active Rehabilitation camps for children, the youth and adults. The first camp of Podkarpackie's FAR took place in 2000 in Zamość. Until 2015, 30 active rehabilitation camps were organised, with 5-15 participants attending each turn. The staff consisted of 8 people with volunteers on average¹⁷.

During the camps the disabled practice the techniques of moving on wheelchairs and they have classes in overall condition training. FAR's instructors pay much attention to teaching self-service. The outline of the camps includes elements of sport plays and games¹⁸.

Since 2000 FAR has organised physical activities with elements of sport disciplines such as basketball, rugby, fencing, tennis, horse riding, alpine skiing, diving or active pentathlon. Since 2005 the classes in swimming pool has taken place as well.



Fig. 4. The classes in swimming pool in 7th Junior Secondary School in Rzeszów.
Source: Archive of the authors.

Rugby on wheelchairs for people with quadriplegia was very popular. Rugby reached Poland at the end of 20th century. The first training took place in Spala. It was conducted by Tomas Ebgkim, then a player in the leading Swedish team Nacka Pick Pack as well as in the national team.

In 2002 the first rugby on wheelchairs team was created in Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The players from Podkarpackie Voivodeship from the beginning took part in all-Poland rugby on wheelchairs training camps¹⁹. Artur Sochacki²⁰ is Rzeszow's team coach since its creation.

¹⁶ Guide of Active Rehabilitation Foundation – Regional Bureau of FAR – Podkarpackie Voivodeship, bpn.

¹⁷ A conversation with Lucyna Przybyło – the representative of FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship conducted on 2nd September 2015

¹⁸FAR, Informative Bulletin of National Fund for the Disabled Rehabilitation, bpn.

¹⁹ www.nowiny24.pl (access on 19.06.2015).

²⁰ Artur Sochacki, M.A., lecturer in Physiotherapy Institute of Rzeszow University.

In 2009–2011 and 2014 Rzeszow's rugby on wheelchairs team won gold medals in Polish National Championships²¹.



Pic.5. Polish National Championship of 2014 in Radom.
Source: <http://www.flyingwings.pl> (access: 06.06.2015).

Instructors of FAR conduct also weekly classes for children. These are classes concerning arts, also elements of science, teaching and perfecting moving on a wheelchair, recreational plays and games as well as sport games. FAR's branch in Podkarpackie Voivodeship hosts regional events and classes, computer courses as well as training for medical personnel and volunteers.



Pic.6. Activities for children organised by FAR, playing with Klauz's scarf, Rzeszów 2014.
Source: Archive of FAR.

Professional and Social Activation Exercise is also organised, aiming at the increase in independence of the disabled using wheelchairs in terms of social and professional life by supporting a chosen unemployed group²².

²¹ Rzeszow Informative service (access: 1.12.2015).

²² A conversation with Lucyna Przybyło – a representative of Podkarpackie Voivodeship's FAR – conducted 3rd September 2015.



Pic.7. Professional and Social Activation Exercise, Rzeszów 2013.
Source: Archive of FAR.

CONCLUSION

FAR is an organisation offering support to people suffering from spinal cord injuries who move on wheelchairs due to their injuries. Until 2012 FAR's beneficiaries were exclusively people suffering from spinal cord injuries caused by, among others, mechanical injuries (car accidents, water jumps). Since 2012 FAR also takes care of children with inborn injuries of motor organs as well as with spina bifida.

FAR's instructors reach the injured as soon as on hospital level, showing on the basis of their own experience how to have a normal lifestyle, realise one's dreams and objectives. The first step for gaining independence is active rehabilitation camps. Further stages include sport and recreational activities in the gym and sport camps.

Various forms of the foundation's activity effectively fill the gap between hospital and home, enabling faster return to an active lifestyle.