

## BETTER WITH MUM

Request for a grant from Carrefour

Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad  
Sierra Elvira-Atarfe (Granada)

## THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE ESCUELA DE SOLIDARIDAD

The foundation “Escuela de Solidaridad” (F.E.S.) was constituted on 4th November 1997, but activities had already begun in December 1995. It is constituted as a non-profit organization in accordance with the law of Foundations 30/1994, of 4th November, registered in the Registro de Entidades, Servicios y Centros Sociales de Consejería de Asuntos Sociales de Junta de Andalucía, with the number AS.ATNI/3.028. The entity is classified as Asistencia Social by the Resolución de la Dirección Gerente del I.A.S.S. on 1st June 1988, BOJA number 69 of 23rd June, registered in the Registro de Fundaciones de Andalucía, in the Sección Registral Tercera “Fundaciones Benefico-Asistenciales y Sanitarias” with the number GR/634.

## WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION?

The foundation Escuela de Solidaridad (School of Solidarity) is a Project whose aim is to recover the sense of family in people who for various reasons have been unable to experience it.

The root of this idea is a spirit of non-biological “maternity” or “paternity”. Those dedicated by vocation to this task act like any mother or father and do not receive payment for their work.

The point of departure is a concept of a universal family in which any creed, idea, belief or religion is accepted and fully integrated, together with a willingness to compromise and agree to differ as an integral part of our own personal growth.

Based on these premises, the Foundation welcomes into a *home* those who are socially disadvantaged, rootless, excluded, or the victims of domestic violence, such as mothers with children in an emergency situation, young immigrants, sick and abandoned adults, disabled people without family, or adolescents at risk.

The *home* is the point of departure for personal recovery and it is in the home that the key means and skills for reintegration into society are developed. A home is a nurturing space that feeds and promotes the learning of domestic tasks and their continual improvement.

The Foundation has an open philosophy and imposes no condition on those it takes in, with the exception that it does not take in people with problems of addiction (to alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc). These are referred to appropriate rehabilitation centres. However, when they come out of rehabilitation the Foundation can help with the follow up care of the individual as would any family.

We have found that living and taking responsibility in the organization is a steep learning curve for most people, but once they have got to grips with their tasks they soon become a model for newcomers to follow.

The development of the concept “School of Solidarity”.

This concept implies a dedication to transmitting the values of sharing, service to our neighbours and community, and respect for the dignity of others.

The development of the concept of a school of solidarity is the method we are trying to employ in creating the home. We are under no illusions about the difficulty of realizing this ideal and know that we need to maintain a courageous faith which is not discouraged by the enormous obstacles we will inevitably encounter. The method consists of introducing to those who live here the ideal of SOLIDARITY as the most practical means of living together, taking responsibility, communicating with others, and organization of the tasks of day-to-day life.

The fact that it is a “school” implies an effort to transform the place of residence into a space of learning. It is a training ground for transmitting these values into society in general.

#### HOW DID THE FOUNDATION BEGIN?

The Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad is the fruit of a process of work with abandoned children and teenagers which began in 1985 with an agreement with the Servicio de Atención al Niño in Granada. These children and teenagers were taken into a home where a family environment they were provided with an education and help with integrating into society.

In Spain the responsibility of the Social Services for a child in care ends on his or her eighteenth birthday. By 1995 many of these children had reached the age of eighteen, so we needed to make an important decision: should we continue to care for these youngsters on our own, without any help from social services, or should we throw them out into the street? Our answer was to found the Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad and continue to provide a home for these young people until they were ready to live by themselves.

Parallel to caring for these young people, other emergency situations presented themselves, and the Foundation decided to include within its aims the following:

- Mothers with children who need help to move forward and need a family environment to do so (prostitute mothers, mothers who are the victims of domestic violence, mothers unable to work or in extreme poverty, mothers with mental or physical deficiencies.
- Young people and adults in need of living within a family

#### PUTTING OUR HEART INTO CREATING FAMILY

What is the worst thing that can happen to a socially excluded child? To be separated from his or her mother. But this is precisely what almost always happens in Spain when for one reason or another a mother finds herself unable to support her child.

It is this that the Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad aims at all costs to avoid. With the idea NOT TO SEPARATE CHILDREN FROM THEIR MOTHERS, the home of the foundation takes in mothers together with their children, providing them with a warm family environment in which not only are they given food and lodging, but also affection, work, and the opportunity to learn the skills needed to reintegrate into society.

The Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad has two other programmes geared mainly towards those who are not mothers:

- The programme “Better Qualified”, aimed at young people at risk and with a high degree of academic failure. These people are given the opportunity to learn both academic and practical skills through occupational workshops and courses of study.

Not included within the scope of the work of the Foundation are people with any type of addiction, who are automatically referred to specialized centres.

#### AIMS OF THE PROJECT “BETTER WITH MUM”

The programme “Better with Mum” is a programme of intervention in cases of mothers with children who find themselves in emergency situations. The intention is to help these mothers to recover both physically and psychologically and to prepare them for employment, so that they regain their independence and reintegrate into society.

The objectives are:

- a) The social integration of these mothers and their children through various work based methods to enable them to regain a lasting independence.
- b) The methods employed should be channelled towards training for employment, acquiring basic domestic skills (hygiene, a balanced diet, domestic organization ..), gaining school qualifications, helping the children with their education, and legal and psychological assistance.
- c) Continued help for these mothers and their children once they have moved out of the centre and are living and working in society. We do not want to see the advances we have made to dissipate over time.
- d) To create “family solidarity”, families who volunteer to help look after these mothers during their process of reintegration.

#### 5. RECIPIENTS OF THE BETTER WITH MUM PROJECT

The recipients of this project are:

- a) Mothers with children:
  - coming from a severe situation of domestic violence.
  - who live in a precarious economic situation due to the absence of a partner, employment, or family assistance.
- b) Young pregnant women without families, or who have been rejected by their families.

We work to ensure that the family group (mothers and children) are not separated. We also try to ensure that their academic education begins or continues so that in the short or medium term they can join the labour market.