

## **Iniciativas Humanas, winner of Fundación Cepsa's Social Value Award, fights loneliness and isolation among the elderly due to COVID-19**

- **Volunteers of the "Aporto" ("I Contribute") project are young offenders**
- **The initiative, which is being rolled out in Tenerife and Gran Canaria, has been adapted to the circumstances arising from the state of alarm**

The Asociación Iniciativas Humanas (Human Initiatives Association) is fighting loneliness and isolation among the elderly population of the Canary Islands during these days of confinement through the "Aporto" project, promoted with the support of the Fundación Cepsa, which recognized the association with a Social Value Award in the Canary Islands last year.

Initially, the initiative emerged as a response to the need to promote volunteering as a tool for the social integration of young offenders, by spending time with elderly people suffering from loneliness in hospitals and senior centers in Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

The current pandemic circumstances have led to the need to adapt activities to the new situation. Therefore, since March 22, the young people involved in this project have been reinforcing their training online in order to maintain e-mail contact with the elderly residents of the El Pino and Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria centers, in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, respectively. Technicians in both social-health centers will be responsible for reading the e-mails written to the isolated seniors.

So far, Iniciativas Humanas has shared two previously recorded awareness-raising sessions, given the impossibility of holding them in a classroom setting: one designed for the young people at the "La Montañeta" Educational Internment Center for Juvenile Offenders (in Gran Canaria), and the second for the inmates at the Valle Tabares center (in Tenerife). In the case of minors on probation who are confined to their homes with their families, the session was adapted to their needs and posted on YouTube to facilitate access.

In the near future, two more previously-recorded awareness-raising sessions will be shared with the aim of making minors understand and empathize with the important role played by the elderly in society and to promote volunteering among them. In addition, two other training sessions will be held, which will focus on how to combat loneliness and isolation while avoiding risky behavior.

The "Aporto" project, on which the Fundación Cepsa collaborates, seeks to increase the degree of involvement of these minors in improving the society around them, as they also play a leading role. It addresses their education from the perspective of responsibility and helps them overcome criminal behavior without forgetting about the main purposes of education and social reintegration.

Fundación Cepsa's Social Value Awards in the Canary Islands were first given out in 2019. Besides Iniciativas Humanas, four other social entities were awarded, such as Asociación

Familiar Pro Discapitados Intelectuales de Tenerife (Family Association of the Intellectually Disabled of Tenerife, ASPRONTE), Centros Especializados en Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual (Centers Specialized in People with Intellectual Disabilities, CIVITAS) and the Asociación de Hogares para Niños Privados de Ambiente Familiar Nuevo Futuro Tenerife (Nuevo Futuro Tenerife Association of Private Family-Type Homes for Children), which will roll out their programs throughout this year, focusing on the areas of functional diversity, social exclusion and youth support.

Since their 2008 launch in the Canary Islands, Fundación Cepsa's Social Value Awards have received 558 proposals and contributed to the development of 50 projects of various kinds, awarding a total of 435,000 euros throughout the archipelago to date.

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