

AFES mental health promotes therapy volunteering alongside Fundación Cepsa

- **Volunteering allows people with mental health problems to help others in the same situation**

Representatives of Fundación Cepsa visited the headquarters of AFES Mental Health to learn about the work of this non-profit organization and how this program, which was one of the winners of the Fundación Cepsa 2016 Social Value Awards, is progressing.

The managing director of AFES Mental Health, Alicia Silva, and José Luis Herrera, member of the Board of Directors and volunteer, plus other team members, welcomed the director of Cepsa in the Canary Islands, José Manuel Fernández-Sabugo, and the head of the Fundación Cepsa in the Islands, Belén Machado. José and Belén were shown round the modern facilities and learned about the history of this entity founded 35 years ago. They were also told about the "Promotion and training of volunteering in mental health" project, which was one of the winners of the Social Value Awards.

This project encourages communities to take part through AFES in activities aimed at improving the quality of life of people with severe mental disorders and their families. It also seeks to integrate people with mental health problems into the volunteer program as part of their process of recovery, so that people who have direct experience of mental health problems can help others in the same boat. The program helps do away with misconceptions and stereotypes about people with mental health issues, through direct contact with those affected.

This innovative project is aimed at any of the 800 members of AFES Mental Health who wish to carry out voluntary actions related to mental health, as well as those who want to approach this entity for the first time. So far this year, 25 people have registered as volunteers of the entity, on top of another 12 who have collaborated in a specific way in an initiative.

Alicia Silva said during the meeting that "many of the volunteers feel very grateful about what they learn and receive through this volunteering experience, on top of the satisfaction they feel from the act of giving. The people who receive your assistance, who also have mental health issues, are also very thankful and consider themselves understood. Both parties benefit and help each other".

José Manuel Fernández-Sabugo suggested that “mental health is an important part of our well-being, and these days, unfortunately, life is so hectic that these types of problems crop up more frequently. Entities such as AFES Mental Health are vital to help these people to recover and have something to look forward to in their lives,” he said.

The prize awarded by the Cepsa Fundación Cepsa has also allowed them to give specific training on social volunteering. In early October, they will take part in the 2nd Volunteer Fair with the University of La Laguna, to encourage the university to carry out volunteering initiatives with them. At the end of the year, they will also organize an event with the funds received, to recognize and thank the volunteers for their selfless work.

On top of all of that, they are also carrying out a digital awareness campaign to mobilize society to collaborate with mental health through volunteering. And, for the first time, they will promote corporate volunteering among the entity's staff, to encourage them to dedicate part of their free time, skills and talent to the causes and projects of a non-profit organization.

This visit to AFES Mental Health is part of Fundación Cepsa's commitment to forge closer links with the entities that have won the Social Value Awards, in order to find out in situ about the activity they carry out and show them their support.

This very week the Fundación Cepsa has announced the next year's Social Value Awards; the deadline for candidates is October 5.

Fundación Cepsa is a general interest, non-profit entity with the goal of undertaking initiatives to serve the needs and priorities of the local communities where its founder, COMPAÑÍA ESPAÑOLA DE PETRÓLEOS S.A.U. (Cepsa), conducts its activities. The areas of action for Fundación Cepsa are social, cultural, environmental, scientific-educational, and support for amateur sports.

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