

Fundación Cepsa and APANATE promote family respite for caregivers of people with ASD

- **16 users of the Association can enjoy a two-day accompanied stay in hotels in Tenerife, while their caregivers rest**

Fundación Cepsa visited the Asociación Canaria del Trastorno del Espectro del Autismo (APANATE - *Canary Islands Autism Spectrum Disorder Association*) to learn about its "Family Respite" program, winner of a Social Value Award in 2022, and aimed at responding to the respite needs of family caregivers of people diagnosed with ASD, who are in a situation of social or economic vulnerability.

The program, which seeks to improve the quality of life of both those affected and their families, offers 16 people with ASD four two-day stays in accessible hotels throughout the year, always accompanied by caregivers, while their families have that time off, at no cost to them.

With a ratio of one caregiver for each Association user benefiting from the activity, 5 of the 7 respites have already taken place, while the remaining two will take place in August.

The head of Fundación Cepsa in the Canary Islands, Belén Machado, and the project's solidarity sponsor at Cepsa, José María Pérez, visited the organization, where they were received by the president of APANATE, María Rosa Díaz, and its manager, Victoria Gómez. They were able to learn first-hand about the experience of some of the program's beneficiaries, both users and family members.

For Belén Machado, "Family respite actions are fundamental to the well-being of the families of people with ASD, who play a crucial role in their emotional, social and physical support in their daily lives. Family respite also contributes to building a more inclusive and compassionate society, recognizing the effort and dedication of those who care for people who so desperately need their presence and support to live."

For Victoria Gómez, "It is essential to implement policies and programs that facilitate access to family respite, providing adequate resources and services so that family caregivers can take care of themselves and continue to play their valuable role. Unconditional emotional and psychological support from the family can make a difference in their self-esteem, confidence and ability to face and overcome difficulties. These are policies that do not always reach them, which is why awards like the one granted by Fundación Cepsa are essential to be able to offer these family respite programs."

Constantly caring for a loved one with ASD can be emotionally and physically draining for family caregivers, making it essential to implement practices that allow them to

take breaks and take care of themselves by temporarily stepping away from that responsibility.

The care is very personalized, because APANATE's own staff, with whom the users are already familiar in their day-to-day activities at the Association's day center, accompany the users during their stay at the hotel. Family members leave the users in their care and can rest assured that they will be fine, allowing them to really rest and disconnect.

Some of the reasons why family respite is essential include improved emotional well-being of the caregiver and an increased level of autonomy and independence on the part of the person with ASD by performing activities on their own with appropriate support. In addition, the program provides family caregivers the opportunity to participate in social and recreational activities during this time, or simply take time for themselves, which helps prevent social isolation and promotes their psychological well-being.

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