

LIBERA

Croatian Association for Education, Entrepreneurship and
International Cooperation

**PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT FOR „WE EMPOWER CROATIAN CHILDREN TO
OVERCOME FEARS“**



Dear donors and supporters,

thank you for supporting our activities with your donations.

First workshop titled "Rico's Paw Support " was a wonderful and engaging experience for the **2B grade of elementary school Julija Klovica**, focusing on helping children address their fears with the presence of a therapy dog named Rico.

The session took an unexpected turn when the leader and psychologist, Josipa, brought her two-month-old baby, Maria, as a delightful surprise for the children.

As the children entered the room of the school library, they were buzzed with excitement and curiosity since teacher Ivana had kept the surprise under wraps. The moment Josipa walked in with baby Maria, the atmosphere shifted to pure joy.

The children's faces lit up, and they quickly gravitated towards both Rico and little Maria, each embracing their roles in the workshop in different ways. Rico, the therapy dog, captured the hearts of many

kids who were eager to interact with him.

They took turns feeding him treats and were in awe of the tricks he performed. The genuine affection the students showed towards Rico created a warm and comforting environment, allowing some of

them to express their fears in a safe space. Meanwhile, others were completely enchanted by baby Maria. They gathered around Josipa, gently reaching out to see the baby and showering her with

attention. It demonstrated a beautiful mix of nurturing instincts and curiosity among the children, highlighting their capacity for empathy.

Despite the workshop being bustling with energy and around 24 children vying for attention, Rico remained calm and patient throughout the event, showcasing his exemplary temperament as a therapy dog.

The scene was lively, and the rustling of sweets added to the playful chaos a sweet treat that only enhanced the experience.

This unique workshop was not just about confronting fears; it blossomed into an unexpectedly heartwarming event that blended fun, learning, and compassion. It will be a cherished memory for everyone involved,

reminding them of the special bonds that can be formed with pets, babies, and friends.

During the lecture, Josipa explained to the children:

- What are emotions?
- What types of emotions do we know?
- What kind of change happens in our body when we feel one of the emotions?
- **What thoughts go through our heads when we experience certain emotions in our body.**

Considering the fact that this workshop was special in every way, and considering the children's interaction with the baby and the dog, Josipa did not want to burden them with too many activities.

She concentrated on two activities: Getting to know the children and Getting to know Rico.

Game 1. Say something about yourself... (25 min)

Objective: presentation and individual introduction of the children and the workshop leader, to encourage active listening and

remembering the information we learn about each other

How to play the game:

Hand out pieces of paper and felt-tip pens/crayons/pencils and adhesive tape.

Instructions: "Write your name on a piece of paper, you can decorate it with colors and/or draw a symbol next to your name and stick it on your T-shirt. Next, say your name and two things you like.

For example This is Rico the dog. He really likes to perform tricks, And he likes to go for walks."

Game 2. That's it! (25 min)

Goal: to raise awareness of the activity(s) that Rico enjoys the most and the activities that they also enjoy the most.

To share one's own interests with others, acquire a tool that can be used to lift one's mood

encouraging the experience of pleasant emotions

How to perform the exercise:

First, share with the students an activity that Rico really enjoys (performing different tricks, e.g.- fetching a ball, pulling a rope, etc.) And in which I enjoy (playing with Rik), describe how

I feel when I am engaged in this activity, how completely I am devoted to it. Encourage students to think about what for them represents this type of activity to which they are fully committed and in which they enjoy. I can write down the answers or say them out loud and share them with the group.

Emphasize the importance of having or finding a (favorite) activity that they are very good at, when they deal with it - they feel different pleasant emotions, they feel satisfied, happy, fulfilled.

Emphasize that engaging in this activity is one of the ways to "repair" a bad day, a bad one moods and a way of experiencing pleasant emotions.

Homework:

To draw myself and the emotions I experience while doing my favorite activity.

The children were especially emotional at the workshop because they became very close to dog. Rico also played a major role in

reducing their fear since he never barks during the workshop, except at Josip's request.

As he met all the children for the first time, he gently nudged them and greeted them with his muzzle before the workshop began.

He is extremely sweet and got under the skin of all the children. And we can learn a lot from his behavior, which is unreservedly supportive

of all the children he comes into contact with. He completely calms them down, they cheerfully carry out their tasks and know that even if

they make a mistake, Rico will certainly not judge them.

The implementation of project activities in the past period is in accordance with the set goals of the project, which refer to:

- socializing and workshops for 24 children with therapy dog Rica and his mentor Josip,
- conducting various topics that teach us about emotions and ways to control them,
- children's photo session to remember the wonderful gatherings with friends and activities with the therapy dog and
- distribution of gifts that included lots of chocolate and sweets.

All these activities will help in the prevention of later more severe forms of anxiety and at the same time contribute to the solution of related specific

social problems and proactively influence the development of the community as a whole.

Considering the relaxing and stimulating role of therapy dogs for children's development, this type of workshop represents

innovative activity for Croatian school students. So far, thanks to your support, we have included over 160 children aged 8-12,

and our intention is to implement the program in all schools that show interest in this form of holding workshops.

Dear donors, we invite you to stay in touch with us or contact us through social networks or through our website

if you want to know more about our project.

We believe that the pictures in the attachment will also cheer you up.

Warm regards

The Libera Team







