

LIBERA

**Croatian Association for Education, Entrepreneurship and
International Cooperation**



We are a civil society organization, founded in 2013. Our statute book emphasizes the main fields of interest and impact – education, developing entrepreneurship and volunteering, social care, environment protection and international collaboration.

Our goals are: improvement of non-institutional education of children and young adults, but also other target groups, designing specific educational programs in educational institutions – elementary schools, high schools and colleges, encouraging development of volunteering and also prevention of violence among children; encouraging development of social entrepreneurship; international cooperation in all segments of the Association’s work, initiation of mobility in education but also promoting of Croatian cultural and development strategy; help and support to people in risk of poverty; initiation of protection of human and minorities rights; initiation of environment and nature protection and environmental awareness of target groups through organization of courses, seminars and workshops.

In Republic of Croatia we are operating for seven years already and are registered with Registry of Non-profit organizations.

With this project WE EMPOWER CROATIAN CHILDREN TO OVERCOME FEARS we want to intensify work with children, with the help of experts - psychologists, pedagogues and doctors, in order to prevent the escalation of behavioral disorders caused by various fears (one of the causes is the recent earthquake in Zagreb).

This will help prevent later severe forms of anxiety in primary school children, and at the same time contribute to solving related specific social problems and proactively influence the development of the community as a whole.

The general goal of the project is:

- *strengthen professional and analytical capacities for the purpose of continuity of activities from the civil society organization LIBERA through cooperation with the Global Giving organization.*

The specific objectives of the project are:

- *establish sustainable programs for the prevention of behavioral disorders in children aged 7 – 10 years old*
- *to form a systematic approach to children with the problem of excessive experience of fear at the age of 10- 14 years old*
- *hold group consultations with interested parents in order to improve educational methods in the established target group and*
- *develop the competencies of all stakeholders in the educational process in this area.*

In this project we will use Animal Assisted Therapy method, as we firmly believe that this type of therapy and education will contribute children's faster recovery from various types of fears.

Animal assisted therapy (AAT) is an option of therapy that involves the aid of animals as a form of treatment. It is used for the improvement of patients social, cognitive, physical, mental, emotional functioning and skills. Depending on the child's needs, various types of animals can be used in animal assisted therapy. Animals can't speak human language, so they provide a very nonjudgmental and comforting zone for those who are struggling with a mental health or learning disability.

Animal assisted therapy does much more than provide time spent with a given animal. It provides children with responsibility roles, as well as giving a children the experience of achieving a goal or task. Animal assisted therapy can also take place in various locations such as the children's home. Anyone can own an animal, but this type of therapy is normally facilitated by a licensed therapist or a person who has expertise in this field (a person who owns a therapy dog, etc.).

Animal Assisted Therapy can also be facilitated in groups, or as individual treatment.



There are many benefits that stem from animal assisted therapy. They can target and improve areas such as mental health, physical health, physical therapy, and literacy support.

Mental Health

- *Increases self-esteem, and ability to take care of one's self*
- *Encourages communication*
- *Lessens feelings of anxiety, isolation, and grief*
- *Reduces feelings of loneliness*
- *Increases socialization and sense of community*
- *Can help children overcome emotional and speech disorders*
- *Reduces need for medication*
- *Increases trust, teamwork, and empathy*
- *Depression*

Behavioral disorders in school children caused by fears are becoming more common due to the modern way of life and especially due to the natural disasters so the task of us experts is to recognize certain symptoms of the disorder in a timely manner. According to researches, in Croatia, it has been established that only 37% of children with behavioral disorders are involved in extracurricular activities, although it has been scientifically proven that it has a major beneficial effect on them.

We will try to reduce an issue of fears within the children/animal interaction. Ten children with a strong sense of fear of earthquakes in Zagreb will be provided with free therapeutic riding lessons, and twenty children will have free education with dogs, in order to strengthen their self-confidence and self-consciousness with an emphasis on animal assisted therapy. In this way, we will increase the participation of children in extracurricular activities by 17% of their current status.

After conducted research, before and after the completion of the project, the results of the research on 30 children, the conducted training and the conclusions reached will be applicable to all school institutions in Croatia. The adopted modalities of working with children who have excessive fears, caused by external circumstances, such as earthquake or unique disruptions caused by corona virus which could not have been foreseen before, will be applied and tenable in the next project cycle.



We are honored by the fact that in this project we have the support of:

- *The Association of Croatian American Professionals - Zagreb chapter, Croatia,*
- *Equestrian club „Jarun“ Zagreb, Croatia and*
- *Veterinary Clinic „Fabela“ Zagreb, Croatia.*