

EVS OPPORTUNITY:
THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL CENTRE
"WALDEMAR KIKOLSKI"

Hosting organization: The Special Educational School Centre "Waldemar Kikolski"

City: Bialystok

Period: usually from September/October to June

Topic: Education for children with disabilities, culture, youth leisure time,

Number of hosting volunteers:2

How is the hosting organization like?

The Special Educational School Centre "Waldemar Kikolski" in Bialystok is a public educational school for children with mental disabilities. The aim of the center is to prepare these mentally handicapped children to integration with society and the ability to act self-sufficient. At the moment there are 132 handicapped children (at light, moderate, severe and profound levels of mental disability), 15 of these children are attending daily. The school realizes many interesting projects, for instance: sport projects (football, athletics etc.), cultural projects (such as theatre, painting or ceramics). The structure of the Center includes a primary school, a secondary school, a boarding school and the "Revalidation and Educational Group Activities" for mentally handicapped with profound level.

The special school center has been a host organization for volunteers since 2007. The school organizes different projects that helps in successful work on EVS. A representative example is "I am European". The program aims to foster pupils' sense of identity formation and shape their consciousness as citizens of the region, country and Europe and it consists three thematic blocks:

- cooking- know the dishes typical for other European countries,
- recreational- playing games liked by children from other countries.
- plastic- get to know beautiful places, specific to the European state and try to capture the various artistic techniques.

The facility also carries out other projects like "Joy cooperation" (2014), that had as objectives the following:

- creating positive image and acceptance of children with disabilities.
- stimulating the overall development of children through activities with parents.
- guidance related to social services for the disabled.



The school organizes special events or takes part in some other ones organized in Białystok or in other places from Poland, such as: music, theatre and art festivals, sports events, therapeutic and rehabilitations camps.

How's the area like?

Białystok (≈ 300,000 inhabitants) is a city located in the N-E of Poland, serving the function of the capital of Podlaskie province. It is the administrative, economic, and academic center of the region, which, due to its exceptional environmental assets, has been included into a special ecological area termed the Green Lungs of Poland. The location in the environmentally clean region, full of tourist attractions, as well as the rich infrastructure of Białystok, makes the city and surrounding area a great place for living, recreation and development of tourism. It has become an example of the integration of ethnic and religious groups, a meeting place for Poles, Belorussians, Jews, Lithuanians, Germans, Russians and Tartars. The multiethnic of the city was the reason for the Białystok - born Ludwik Zamenhof to start his work on the universal language of Esperanto. The volunteer has the possibility of getting to know the Polish culture and tradition as well as learning the Polish language. Being in Białystok, the volunteer will have the opportunity of getting to know the city and surrounding tourist attraction. In their free time, all the volunteers from Białystok and the surroundings can meet and participate in one of the frequent cultural events, go out in a pub or take a walk in the woods surrounding the city or near a lake.

Tasks for the volunteer:

- main responsibility: supporting teachers and students in their daily work (for example in art, sport, math, language classes)
- assisting during outings (trips, cinema)
- conduct in social/ recreational programs for the students: at the boarding school: helping students doing their homework and organising free time; also, assist students during eating and dressing up
- doing crafts, watching movies together, playing games, quizzes, organizing common meetings like teatime, birthday parties, going out, taking part of different evening activities etc.
- working on individual projects (relating to needs and abilities of the volunteer)
- collaborate with 3 Associations, which work for handicapped children.
- running language workshops for students and employee of the school
- develop manual, social and interpersonal skills of the pupils and gain some new ones
- the volunteers learn how to build and keep the relations with the mentally handicapped people.
- organising and participating in events a the school
- promoting EVS and Erasmus+ program on meetings, events and conferences.

The volunteer will start with a short introduction period and after, an exact schedule is created after meeting a volunteer considering her/his abilities and expectation.



The volunteer will get a lot of guidance at the beginning from the whole EVS Team (mentor, project-coordinator and task-related coordinator). Working with mentally handicapped children is challenging, but can also improve a lot of skills. The project coordinators will keep the close watch on that the volunteer is able to cope with these demands. The school will pay attention to help develop professional skills which a volunteer could use in the future of labor market. Regarding the accommodation, they will live with other volunteers in private houses or with other Polish people.

How should the volunteer be?

- Someone who wants to help the others, who is open for new activities, who wants to try work with different age groups
- who is not afraid of contact with mentally and physically handicapped
- who are ready to support teachers in their everyday routines and care
- who is open to new challenges and new people
- who has basic English skills
- who wants to share the knowledge of his/her country/region –culture, tradition, customs; artistic skills are welcomed (arts and crafts, music etc.), but not mandatory.

