



9 January 2009 – RCF radio column Association for Handisport and Recreational Activities

Voice Over: The Helping Hand programme launched by the BNP Paribas Foundation provides support to many different organisations. “Handisport et Loisirs” (Handisport and recreational activities) is one of them. Today Hacène ZITOU, financial management and accounting advisor for International Retail Services in Levallois Perret, Paris, who is also treasurer of the association, presents it on the French radio RCF.

Jingle: An RCF radio column produced in partnership with the BNP Paribas Foundation.

Journalist: The Association for Handisport and recreational activities is affiliated with the International Handisport network and based in the Maisons Laffitte commune in the department of Yvelines in Paris region. In fact, to be more precise, it is based at the Maisons Laffitte public swimming pool, as swimming is its core activity. Let me present Hacène ZITOU, its treasurer.

Hacène ZITOU: As its name suggests, there is both a sports element to this organisation : swimming, which takes place once a week at the Maisons Laffitte public swimming pool for an hour and half, or two hours, and a recreational side which we are developing together with the parents and our disabled members. Basically we organise parties and social events once every three months or so as well as outings and even fairly long-distance trips to places such as Monaco, Biarritz, Geneva, or Brussels, and once a year we organise one or two visits to a large French town, giving the disabled an opportunity to get out and about.

Our organisation is a bit like the Tintin comics in that it is suitable for all ages, from 7 to 77. There is no selection process, nor do we make any discrimination on the grounds of age or type of disability. Unfortunately because of the intensive support required in terms of assisting the disabled with dressing, undressing, putting them to bed etc., we have to limit the size of our organisation to no more than 80 to 90 people, of which around 40 to 60 people are disabled.

Journalist: In fact, many able-bodied people have asked to join, as they were so impressed with the dynamic approach of the organisation and the number of activities it offers disabled people. Hacène ZITOU, who is neither disabled nor the parent of a disabled child himself, came across the organisation by chance.

Hacène ZITOU: On Saturdays, I used to go to the Maisons Laffitte pool to do a few lengths, and I came across the organisation quite fortuitously, completely by accident. I would help them out when I noticed they were struggling a bit. When they needed a hand I would give them a hand. The chairman at the time asked me to join the organisation, so I accepted and here I am. Basically it is all about giving people with reduced mobility as many opportunities as possible, giving them the chance to live like you and me. If you and I want to go to the cinema, we go to the cinema. Disabled people

encounter a lot of difficulties and often do not dare going to the cinema alone. When they have organized themselves in a group, that makes it a lot easier.

Journalist: The same is true for travelling. The next trip that is planned is to Strasbourg in May. According to Hacène ZITOU, the only thing that is still missing is volunteers to assist the disabled, despite numerous incentives, including financial ones, offered by the Maisons Laffitte council.