



# BULLETIN

## INTERVIEW



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An interview with Božena Sekaninová, Vice-Mayor of Prostějov and Healthy Cities Project and Local Agenda 21 politician

**In late April, Prostějov celebrated the Earth Day. Were you afraid that people would be discouraged by bad weather?**

*Not even the bad weather prevented hundreds of Prostějov citizens from joining in the traditional Earth Day celebrations, this year devoted to endangered species of plants and animals. The event was organised by local conservationists as part of the Healthy Cities Project, and the City of Prostějov supported it financially. What people appreciate most about Earth Days is that they receive information that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Earth Days also encourage environmental-friendly behaviour in children. The main attraction this year was the tasting of healthy food prepared by students of the Secondary Business Apprentice School.*

**Talking about the environment, what did your city do for the Earth over the past year? What do you think was your major contribution?**

*The city supported the founding of a new park on a vacant plot of land next to the city hospital in response to a petition of the citizens. The city paid for an architectonic study for the park and for construction and earth works. Pedestrian and cycling paths are being built at the moment. The city has planted several hundred bushes on the plot; people who initiated the founding of the park participated in the planting, which is a very good example of cooperation between the city hall and citizens who care about the environment in their city.*

*There are fewer and fewer public green areas owned by the city in Prostějov. To reverse this trend, we approved a decree last year on compensation for environmental damage to public green areas. If, for instance, a citizen cuts down a tree or a bush growing on a city plot to build a parking place, they have to contribute CZK 5,000 to the newly established Green Fund. The city then uses the funds to plant other trees or bushes and to renew green areas. To begin with, the city allocated CZK 250 thousand to the Fund from the Reserve and Development Fund. The Green Fund is regularly replenished.*

## NEWS

### Trebič: Dogs Help Children with Learning Difficulties

*Specially trained dogs are used in Trebič to help pupils of a specialized school for children with learning difficulties. Owing to canistherapy, children become more relaxed, concentrate better and are less self-conscious. This year, the project is co-funded by the Healthy Cities Project.*

Fridays are special at one of Trebič's specialized schools in Cyrilometodejska Street – there are not only children in the corridors, but also dogs. Why? Supported by the city and other institutions, the school has launched a pilot project of *Canistherapy* in this school year. Canistherapy, or "dog therapy", simply means teaching aided by dogs, the aim of which is to make learning easier for children with learning difficulties. The pupils are mostly kids unable to manage a regular school syllabus. The quadruped friends help them relax, concentrate, gather energy and overcome inner barriers. Forty-eight pupils take part in the special Friday classes. The pilot project is monitored and regularly consulted with a child psychologist, with a final report to be produced at the end of the school year. "We are testing how canistherapy works in practice. Owing to the regular visits of the dogs, the children are now really looking forward to coming to school," explains the headmaster Jaroslav Matejka. This year, the Healthy City gave the project a grant to back it financially. The project is co-funded by the Czech General Health Insurance Company and other organisations. In the middle of May, the school organised a seminar for people from the region who are interested in canistherapy to share its experience. The Czech TV made a document about the project, which should further spread the best practice.

### Hodonin: Dancing City

*For the second consecutive year, Hodonin was the only city in the Czech Republic to have celebrated the international Day of Dance. Virtually all the city danced.*

The "D" Day was Thursday, May 13, when the whole Europe celebrated the *Day of Dance*. Throughout the morning, there was dancing at the city hall (TJ Classic dance group gave a performance at the meeting of the department heads and the city management), basic schools, kindergartens as well as the local children's home. In the afternoon, a large

platform was put up at the pedestrian zone; soon, it was surrounded by crowds of people and so it remained until the evening. "Everybody found something they liked - the four-hour program featured fifteen dance groups; there were most all dance styles – from standard, Latin American and Gypsy dancing all the way to modern scenic dance and tap dancing. The program was topped off by less common dance styles, such as break dance, hip-hop or electric boogie. I think the audience really enjoyed the medley," said local HCP coordinator Martina Pilikova. The "Thursday Night Fever" culminated in the dancing of the enthusiastic children from the audience. "The celebration of dance as one of the most natural and pleasant ways to move was organised by the House of Culture and the Free Time Centre as part of the Healthy Cities Project," explained Pilikova, adding: "This year, the Day of Dance also included a weekend parade of majorette groups, prepared by the parents of children from the Hodonin Majorettes group, the group's management, the Free Time Centre, and the House of Culture."



### **Boskovice: MCAPs and the First Awards of the Order of Children's Smile**

Another meeting of HC representatives took place at the Chateau Greenhouse in Boskovice on May 12. It was the fifth MCAP session this year, this one focusing on maintaining cleanness in the cities. Jaromira Vitkova, Boskovice's Vice-Mayor and HCP politician, presented a project entitled *A Clean City Is a Mirror Reflecting Its Inhabitants* and the history and various opportunities for cultural, sporting and recreational activities in the city. Representatives of a local kindergarten, basic school and maternity centre talked about environmental education in practice and about guiding children towards a healthy lifestyle. At the end of the meeting, the first three *Order of the Children's Smile* certificates were awarded. Boskovice will be granting the certificates as part of a project prepared by the staff of Boskovice Maternity Centre and the Healthy City in recognition of the international Year of the Family. The certificates will go to local organisations offering families with children favourable and healthier conditions for everyday life – such as barrier-free access for prams, non-smoking environment, the availability of playing

areas for children, etc. Out of nine nominees, three have received the certificate: Moravia Lasak Mill Hotel, Baby Clothes Centre, and The End of the World Ranch.



### **Brno: A Week for Mental Anorexia and Bulimia**

*In mid-May, the general public and media paid great attention to the Week for Mental Anorexia and Bulimia, organised by the Health Institute in Brno and the civic association Anabell as part of the Healthy Cities Project.*

During the week, many people from Brno came to an exhibition of photographs by Lukas Horky, entitled *Anorexia, Bulimia – Two Deep Abysses*, opened by Barbora Javorova from the Healthy City Council. Over 30 people came to the accompanying lecture for the public at the Brno City Authority. Brno HCP coordinator Ivana Draholova said that these were mainly young people, their parents or grandparents, and medical doctors. At some schools, boxes for pupils and students to anonymously place their questions about food intake disorders will be available through June. According to Jana Sladka – Sevcikova, Director of Anabell, o. s., the campaign was successful.



The organisers are now considering the possibilities of further developing the activities; for instance, the questions most frequently asked by the students could serve as topics for lectures at schools, and the project could be introduced in other cities. "I had found out that people knew very little about food intake disorders; there was very little education, and only a few clinics dealt with the problem. What I did find, to my horror, were virtually crowds of hopeless girls looking up to me for advice and help. That is why I founded Anabell and will do my best to prevent anorexia and bulimia from being the nightmare of our time," concludes Jana Sladka – Sevcikova.

### Zlin: Healthy City Advises Non-Profit Organisations

As part of the Healthy Cities Project, the City of Zlin has been providing regular information to non-governmental non-profit organisations (NNOs) about grants offered by the government and various foundations. "The service has recently expanded to include information about EU funds," says Deputy Mayor and HCP politician Vladimir Rihak, MD. Accession of the Czech Republic to the EU opened new possibilities for financing publicly beneficial activities and NNO projects. Every Wednesday from 1 to 4 p.m., NNO representatives can address their queries to the local HCP and Local Agenda 21 coordinator Svetlana Divilkova.

### Prostejov: People Tried Out Food Prepared by Healthy Diet Experts

In mid-May, the chefs of Prostejov's Narodni dum Restaurant served the guests dishes prepared according to recipes of healthy diet experts. The educational event entitled *Spring Health Days – A Varied Diet* also offered several lectures on a healthy diet; the people could have their blood pressure taken and body fat measured. The seven health days included popular tasting of healthy food. This time, people enjoyed ecologically grown vegetables, cereal bakery and goat milk products, and the "meat eaters" could try out exotic ostrich dishes.



People who filled in a survey lottery ticket inquiring about how healthy the lifestyle in the city was could win a free dinner for two at the Narodni dum Restaurant. The Health Week was organised by the Healthy City of Prostejov together with the Olomouc Region Health Office and other partners.

### Chrudim: Thousands of People Visited the Bambiriad Festival

*This year, the largest festival of free-time activities for children and youth in Chrudim attracted record-breaking 6,662 people. With the support of the city hall, Altus, o. s. organised this event for the third consecutive year.*

This year, Chrudim's Na Strelnici Park hosted over forty organisations specializing in "tailoring" free-time activities for children and youth throughout the year. That they have plenty to offer was evident from the inexhaustible number of activities: handicraft workshops; games and contests for the youngest children; offer of summer camps; performances of dance groups; archery; and a fire show. In the media tent, there was a group of young journalists from the basic school of Dr. Jan Malik; supervised by the HCP coordinator Sarka Truneckova and with the help of seven computers and typists, they were updating the web pages [www.chrudimka.cz](http://www.chrudimka.cz), providing the latest information about what was going on in the park. The *Bambiriad* gave a warm welcome to a special guest - Czech Deputy Prime Minister Petr Mares. He walked through the whole area and then sat with the young journalists in the media tent, answering their questions. The main organiser of the *Bambiriad* was the civic association Altus, with the city hall as the traditional co-organiser as part of the Healthy Cities Project. *Bambiriad* 2004 was also held in other Healthy Cities - Brno, Trebic, Karvina, Ceske Budejovice, Prostejov, and Zlin.

## CONTACT

Healthy Cities CZ  
Srobarova 48  
100 42 Prague 10  
Czech Republic

T: +420 602 500 639

E: [paha@nszm.cz](mailto:paha@nszm.cz)

W: [www.nszm.cz](http://www.nszm.cz)

Petr Svec  
National Coordinator of the Healthy Cities Project

*(The photographs were provided by the archives of HCCZ members. The photograph from the Week of Dance in Hodonin was taken by Jaroslav Svanda.)*