One Vehicle For a Big Impact

Monday 21 January, 2019

First-ever mobile skatepark for refugee children about to expand – one vehicle for a big impact

Thousands of children and young people in refugee camps around Greece are severely lacking in services that could help to significantly improve their lives.

Following the exposure of the terrible living conditions in camps such as Moria on Lesbos island, thousands of people have been relocated to camps on the mainland of Greece. This means that several of these camps are now overcrowded and all services are under a huge strain.

Children in camps outside of Athens are particularly disadvantaged due to their distance to the capital. There are few recreational activities currently running in the camps and many children are not attending school.

We are now seeing a large rise in organisations using physical activity as a means to improve mental health and wellbeing. Some fascinating new research shows how skateboarding can be especially beneficial in maintaining a healthy stress response system. For the young people Free Movement Skateboarding teach, who are struggling with the detrimental effects of trauma and stress, this means an increased capacity to manage their emotions, which in turn helps to form healthy relationships and learn new skills.

Free Movement Skateboarding are an Athens-based non-profit organisation, using skateboarding as a tool to empower refugees and locals. They currently teach 9 skateboarding workshops every week and run an educational program in partnership with Women Skate the World. Gender equality, social inclusion, and physical and mental wellbeing is at the heart of everything they do.

Their workshops are open to everyone and are attended by people aged 6-25, from 16 different nationalities, with 45% female participation overall.

They teach their workshops on a portable wooden skatepark which they designed and built themselves. This allows them to have a wide and varied outreach; facilitating for refugee camps, community centres, housing projects, squats and locals.

In 2019 they want to drastically expand their outreach and access more camps located outside of Athens. Their workshops will provide the young people living in these camps with a fun and creative activity to engage in at least once a week, helping to soothe the long-term effects of trauma and stress, and encouraging them to form relationships whilst learning new skills.

In order to do this, Free Movement Skateboarding started a winter fundraising campaign to raise £5,000 for a new van that allows them to transport the mobile skatepark to more hard-to-reach refugee camps.

It will allow them to double their engagement rate in 2019.

Testimonials:

‘When I am skating I feel free, like a bird flying.’ *Anonymous participant, aged 12*

'Some of the young people we work with struggle to focus for more than five minutes on one activity, but they will skateboard for over an hour, it’s amazing.’ *Myrsini Iliopoulou, Project Director - Secours Islamique France*

'From the start the children and teenagers of the camp reacted enthusiastically to the presence of Free Movement and joined the sessions in big numbers. What’s impressive is that most of the participants have stayed with the classes for more than a year now, achieving significant progress.’ *Andreas Ashikalis, Founder and Director – Project Elea*

Notes to editors:

Media:










- Free Movement Skateboarding is a non-profit organisation based in Athens, Greece and the UK. They use positive impacts of skateboarding to improve the sense of self-worth and fulfilment for refugee children. Free Movement's skateboarding workshops provide a fun and creative outlet for the young people living in refugee camps in Greece. Taking part in regular exercise has been proven to significantly reduce the long-term effects of trauma and stress, and helps binding young people into an inclusive community of diverse friends. Since January 2017, Free Movement Skateboarding have been working to establish connections with projects operating inside refugee camps, community centres, squats, the local Athenian community, and other skate charities from across the globe.
- Winter fundraising campaign : https://chuffed.org/project/fms-winter-campaign

Website: www.freemovementskateboarding.com

Instagram: www.instagram.com/freemovement__sb

Facebook: www.facebook.com/freemovementsb

Video: https://vimeo.com/304822201

Photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11oKD-8VaIiBX7aXMBceS3Cxerd6KDFjU

For more information please contact Ruby Mateja by email (ruby@freemovementskateboarding.com)







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