

**BLIND AND VISUALLY  
IMPAIRED PEOPLE**



**SHORT INTERVIEW WITH MS.ILONA JUSZCZYK-  
THE LEADER OF POLISH ASSOCIATION OF THE  
BLIND IN CZĘSTOCHOWA**

# **IS BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN ADULTS AND TEENAGERS IS SERIOUS PROBLEM?**

- It is a big problem in Częstochowa, a number of people with this kind of disability is still increasing, especially among teenagers whose eyesight is getting worse and worse due to the electronical devices. They are short-sighted in young age. In fact, blindness or visual impairment might be caused by genetical predispositions, our lifestyle or diseases such as glaucoma or sugar diabetes.

## **HOW BIG IS THIS GROUP IN CZESTOCHOWA?**

- In our city there are about 800 people, whose lost their eyesight.



# WHAT ARE EVERYDAY CHALLENGES BLIND PEOPLE STRUGGLE WITH ?

- Main challenging activity for them is walking on the street. They teach themselves how to walk with a white cane, it isn't as easy as it looks like. It requires a big courage. Our association conducts workshops for both visually-impaired people/children and their caretakers, and for young people to make them aware of what life of blind people is like.

## INTERESTING EXPERIENCE

→ Their task was to walk through the library with their eyes closed and holding a white cane. Firstly, they had an option to move around. They were frightened and afraid of the fact that they wouldn't see anything, even that they had the possibility to open their eyes all the time. Considering it, we can only imagine how demanding and difficult it could be for people, who don't have any choice.

- Another one is adjusting helpful services and stuff, which usually schools or other public places run out of, and teach them how to write Braille alphabet and handle with a typewriter



# HOW TO TEACH BLIND CHILDREN? INTEGRATING OR SEPARATING?

- Tolerance is a hot topic these days. Nowadays most people say: *I am tolerant. I am for integration.* But is it really true? Schools aren't well prepared to teach disabled children, both in the aspect of equipment and professional staff as well. Visually impaired children sit apart, spend breaks alone. In one of the middle schools in Częstochowa a blind student started learning with other students, but after a few weeks one of the healthy students brought a medical statement from a psychologist that the sound of taps of typewriter used by the blind student disturbs him in concentration during the lesson.

It is a real example. Obviously, there are some integrated schools in Częstochowa, but don't you think that it is harmful for them? Firstly, we have to change our minds and then we take a big step to make their life easier.



# SUPPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION AND THE ASSOCIATION

- Meetings with a psychologist , for people who can't cope with their disability, especially for teenagers because they don't accept themselves,
- Guide person, who help them to do shopping or go with them to The City Hall, clinics or other public places.
- Arranging workshops on 3D perception, or activities, where visually impaired people learn how to maximally use their eyesight
- Bibliotherapy for book lovers, where they hear audiobooks or read Braille
- Massages and rehabilitations (social and physical ones)
- Art classes for children
- Foundation VIS MAIOR and Foundation LABRADOR- training guide dogs
- Polish Nationwide Sport Club – support ambitious young sportpersons

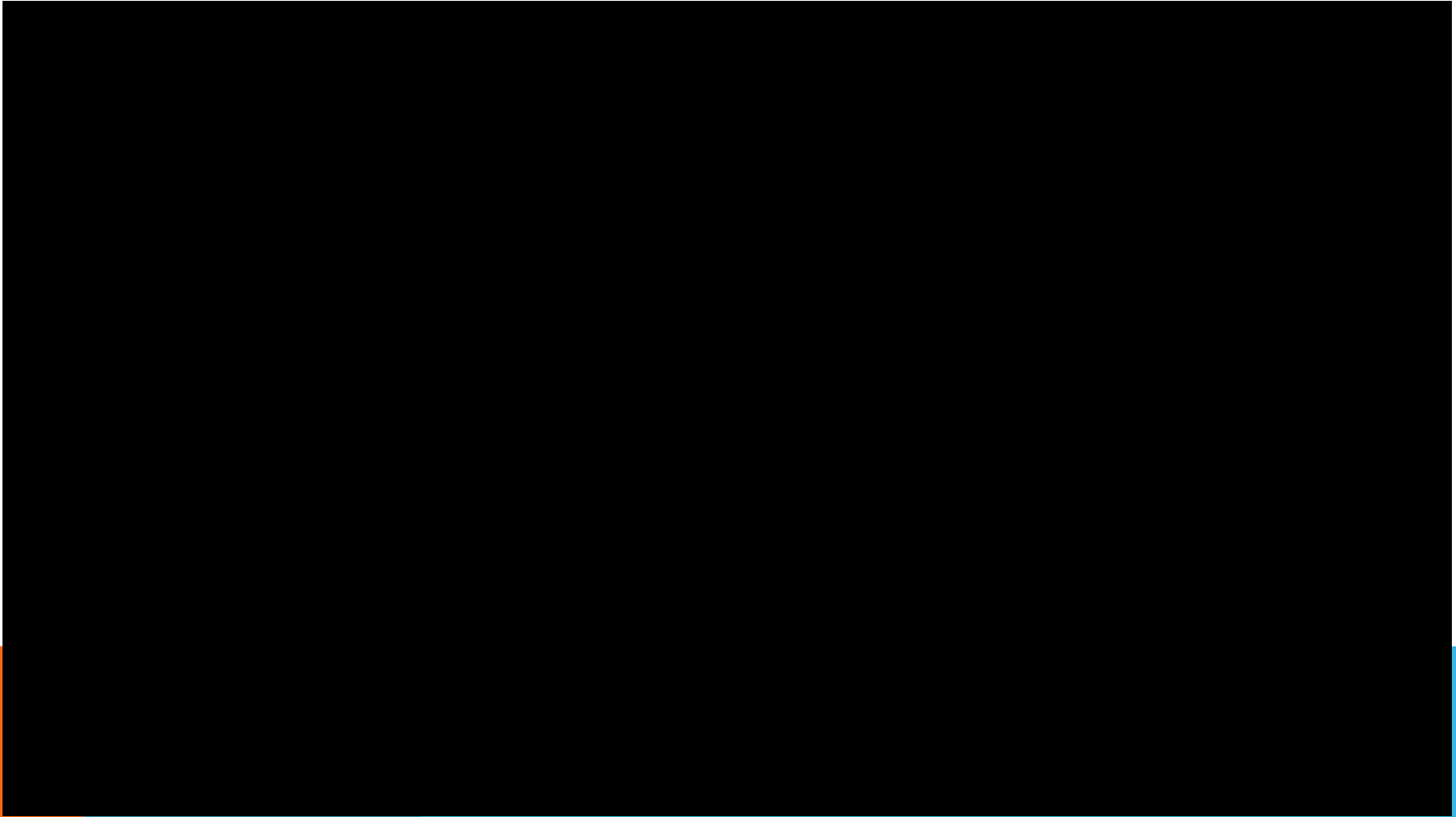


# MICHAŁ (27), A VISUALLY IMPAIRED MAN SAID:

*I have been blind since my birth. My mum did everything for me to help me cope with everyday problems. I am the only child. In Częstochowa there aren't any schools for children like me. I went to primary school which is situated very near my house. It is a small school, everybody knows everybody. I don't have any negative memories from those times. Well, maybe I felt lonely a bit because I was the only one with my disability. I also attended regular secondary school where my mum drove me every day and picked me from school every day. She didn't work, she devoted her life to educate me and make me forget about my disability. My father went abroad to earn money to maintain our family. After secondary school I did some courses on Physiotherapy. For 3 years I have worked as a physiotherapist in Częstochowa. I am not the only blind person who works in this profession in my city. Two of my blind friends work also as musicians, composing some music or playing in a band. But there are also people my age who do nothing. It is just their choice to live this way. I am happy.*

*(Michał let me put his words in my presentation, however I couldn't take a photo of him.)*

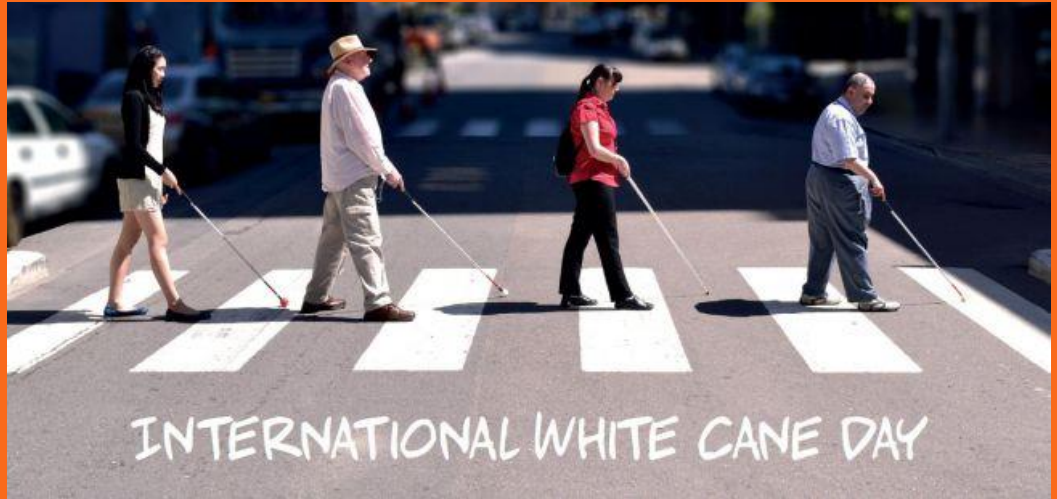
**WE ALL CAN HELP!**





# 15TH OCTOBER WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY

I CAN'T SEE YOU, BUT YOU CAN SEE ME!



INTERNATIONAL WHITE CANE DAY



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