



September 2009

A New Term

If you have been shopping recently, you won't have failed to notice the hordes of parents with children in tow looking for uniforms, shoes, school bags.... everything they need to start a new academic year.

This time of year is associated with new beginnings as children start school for the first time, return to school or maybe leave home for university. Despite the emotions attached to it though, very often in the UK we take our educational opportunities for granted.

In Lebanon this is not the case for many disabled people. They do not have these opportunities as they are still not fully accepted in society and are often ignored or mistreated due to a lack of understanding.

The Zvartnotz Centre is a small day care centre for children and young adults with special needs, some of whom also have physical disabilities. It offers them physical, spiritual and emotional care, in a family-like atmosphere. It also campaigns, at both local and governmental levels, for the favourable recognition of disabled people in the Lebanese community.

Many of the children come to the centre with little or no education and all of the beneficiaries have an IQ of less than 60. The main aim of the centre is to enable each student to become as self-sufficient as possible, so they each follow their own personalised programme of learning with regular assessments. This encourages them to overcome individual difficulties and achieve their full potential.

Whenever possible, work related skills such as carpentry or using a knitting machine are taught to the older students and some are helped to find employment in their local community. However, some of the students are unable to take part in vocational training and are therefore unlikely ever to find a job. The centre continues to take care of these students into their adult life.

Zvartnotz provides support for each student's family as parents are shown the best ways to care for their child and are given advice about medical and governmental benefits. Emotional support is also provided for parents who need it, so that the whole family can look to the future with confidence and hope.