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Organizations Host Special Sporting Events for Kids with Special Needs

By Alexandra Tyan

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On Saturday, the organization Sports Dream and Gorky Park hosted a special table-tennis training session for kids with Down syndrome and their families. From 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., 10 children with Down syndrome and their families had an opportunity to attend one-on-one training sessions with professional table-tennis coaches.

Organizer Pavel Kuryshkin said this was the second time his group had hosted an event like this. "One of the main objectives of the project is to provide grounds for communication and integration. The coaches that work with us — all of them are genuinely enthusiastic about what they do, they can find a personal approach to anyone, be it an old lady, a professional sportsman or a child with special needs," Kuryshkin said. On Saturday, Galina Georginova, an experienced coach and Master of Sport in table tennis, was teaching, with the help of her assistant and best friend Elena Yakovleva.

Georginova and Elena were instrumental in getting the event off the ground. “This is a unique method of teaching that I started practicing when I was living in Austria,” Georginova said.

“It involves a combination of different techniques. I designed it specially for children with Down Syndrome. I also managed to attract Reebok; they provided gifts for all the little participants.”

While Sports Dream provided the trainers, Gorky Park offered the training space as well as free ice cream and lemonade for kids and staff.

Yana, 14, came from St. Petersburg to participate in the event. Said her mother, Tatiana, "Yana has been doing swimming close to professional level for a while now, but it's more of a competitive sport. We are trying to bring her to events like this, where children have the opportunity to engage with each other and work in teams, rather than compete against each other."

Kuryshkin agreed that teaching people to work together was one of the goals of the event. "Every activity develops a certain skill, for instance, shyness can be overcome by dance lessons, whereas team sports help children like Yana adapt to social environment," Kuryshkin said.



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Kuryshkin said he was inspired to start Sports Dream by his experience as a skier. His coach, who gave him unconditional support and always encouraged him to follow his dreams, was a huge influence in his life. Later, he decided to help others make their sporting dreams come true by founding his organization, which connects people with dreams of competing in sports with trainers to help them achieve their goals. For children with special needs, like Yana, the project has become a crucial space for adaptation and integration.

Sports Dream is already planning a ski event for the winter in Neskuchny Sad.

For more information about Sports Dream, visit sportsdream.ru.

Sports Dream isn't the only organization supporting families with children who have Down syndrome. Next weekend, charity DownsideUp will host its 20th annual Charity Bike Ride in Moscow. On Sunday, Aug. 23, participants will ride 23 km along the most picturesque cityscapes of the capital, starting at VDNKh. Famous Russian actors and singers, including Serebro, Dmitry Nagiev and Anna Sedokova, have already pledged to participate. To support the charity and join them at the starting line, purchase a part of the road online. Anyone over 14 with a bike and a helmet can participate. Gifts, competitions and a big concert, featuring Russian music stars will be waiting for finishers at the end of the ride.

For more details on the event, visit sportvoblago.ru.

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