

Fundación Cepsa and the Canary Islands' Mental Health Federation promote volunteering among people affected by mental health problems

- **The initiative aims to give visibility to people with mental health problems and improve their quality of life.**
- **The project was a winner in the last edition of the Fundación Cepsa's Premios al Valor Social.**

Improving the quality of life of people with mental health problems by promoting volunteer actions carried out by this group is the objective of the project developed by the Canary Islands' Mental Health Federation, a winner in the last edition of Fundación Cepsa's Premios al Valor Social.

The head of Fundación Cepsa in the Canary Islands, Belén Machado; the solidarity sponsor of the project, Tanausú Cruz; and the president of the Canary Islands' Mental Health Federation, Cristina Acosta, attended one of the activities carried out within the framework of this project, led by the Canary Islands' Pro Mental Health Committee, at the headquarters of Atelsam, an entity belonging to the aforementioned Federation. The coordinator of the initiative, Natalia González, was also present.

Belén Machado stressed "the importance of promoting volunteering among people with mental health problems as a fundamental tool to give visibility to a group about which there is a great lack of knowledge, and to highlight their difficulties and needs in order to make progress in the search for solutions."

She also positively valued the fact that those affected serve as an example for other people in the same situation, an aspect which, as she explained, plays a key role in the motivation and personal growth of both the users and the volunteers who share their experience. She also concluded that this learning process helps empower these people.

In addition, Natalia González stated that, "if we want changes in mental health, we need to listen to the people affected and their families." She explained that Fundación Cepsa's support for the project allows the six entities that are part of the Canary Islands' Mental Health Federation to boost the volunteer driving groups and encourage the participation of people with mental health problems, as well as create a regional coordination space representing all the member entities.

"With all of this," she explained, "we are taking a step forward in eliminating the stigma around the group and ensuring their integration into society."

The project, which will directly benefit more than 80 people, is led by the Pro Mental Health

Committee, made up of volunteers from the different entities of the Federation who act as the voice of this group. Each member represents the entity that he/she attends as a user and makes proposals and contributions related to the social, educational and healthcare fields that could improve their quality of life at monthly meetings.

Within the framework of the activities that make up this initiative, the Pro Mental Health Committee is concluding a series of meetings with the six associations that make up the Canary Islands' Mental Health Federation in order to convey the need to promote volunteering among people affected by mental health problems and promote the driving groups.

The next action will be a training course on volunteering and mental health, which will take place online next November, to focus on key aspects when transferring their experiences. Communication skills and the channeling of emotions, as well as the association movement's guidelines, will be some of the points addressed. At the same time, emphasis will be placed on tools that help empower the group and make progress in the vindication of their rights.

In addition, the project includes an awareness campaign that will be activated at the end of the year. As part of the campaign, people with mental health problems will star in a video that is shared on social media to give visibility to their experiences and highlight the shortcomings they face in various areas, such as healthcare or education.

The project will end with a meeting between representatives from each of the associations that make up the Canary Islands' Mental Health Federation to strengthen collaboration with the Pro Mental Health Committee and the different volunteer driving groups.

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Fundación Cepsa
comunicacion.canarias@cepsa.com
Tel. no.: (+34) 922 60 27 07
www.fundacioncepsa.com