sunshine project

In association with CRIAMAR - a Group Pestana charity

Funded by donations from caring Pestana Vacation Club members and guests, the ‘sunshine project’ initiative supports vulnerable young people in Madeira and assists them in integrating into the local community.

The inspiration for this project comes from João Carlos Spinola, the head of Guest Relations at Pestana Vacation Club resorts on Madeira Island. Affectionately known to friends, colleagues and guests as ‘Spin’, he has dedicated many years to supporting the Diocese of Funchal, who through the auspices of the Salesian Missions established the ‘Aldeia da Paz’ in 1994, a refuge for vulnerable young children in desperate need of love, care and guidance.

The refuge, while receiving some government funding does rely on charitable donations and Spin together with the support of work colleagues has helped bring the plight of these children to the attention of local residents and visitors alike.

In 1994, Spin organised a weekly Saturday night quiz and raffle for members and guests staying at the Madeira Beach Club resort. This initiative was quickly taken up at the Pestana Palms and was subsequently adopted by other Pestana resorts.

These weekly raffles, together with other initiatives as well as generous personal contributions from members, have to date raised in excess of €125,000 for the refuge and latterly the ‘sunshine project’. Father Luciano Miguel, the former administrator at Aldeia da Paz was able to re-equip the laundry and kitchen, buy computers and educational software, plus, buy a new minibus to transport the kids to and from school, as well as building and stocking a large greenhouse which enables the youngsters to grow and cultivate crops, thus improving their agricultural skills.

Almost 20 years on, the children from those early days have now grown to adulthood and while many are successfully making a life for themselves, there remain some vulnerable individuals that need ongoing support and guidance in their day to day life. The ‘sunshine project’ was created for that purpose and a number of local businesses have given their support by offering work experience and apprenticeships. The project has now been expanded to include vulnerable youngsters in care institutions throughout the island and CRIAMAR, the charitable foundation created by Group Pestana chairman - Dr Dionisio Pestana, to help children in need within the Autonomous Region of Madeira, is providing valuable administrative support and guidance, which allows Spin to spend more time raising funds and support for meaningful apprenticeships and skills training courses.

If you would like to learn more about João Carlos’ endeavours or offer a much appreciated contribution, please email him at joao.spinola@pestana.com or call him on 00351 291 239720. If you are visiting Madeira then pop in to his office at the Madeira Beach Club, you’ll be sure of a warm welcome.