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8 out of 10 youths got on track with their lives

Sweden's most effective youth project did not receive any more money

A project led by the American therapist Sandy Levey-Lundén got 82% of the involved youths on track with their lives. But the project was terminated. Nobody wanted to pay for it.

A youth who is a criminal or a drug addict, cost the taxpayers 3 million kronor (more than 300,000 USD, about 500,000 CAD) - each year. With 2 million kronor given by a Swedish businessman, 60 youths got on track with their lives and came back into society.

The woman behind the project called "Fri Sikt" is the American therapist Sandy Levey-Lundén. Together with about 15 other co-workers she created "Fri Sikt" in two Swedish cities: Stockholm and Malmo in 1996. With help from the employment office, "Fri Sikt" came in contact with 85 unemployed youths with different kind of problems like crime, drugs, depressions etc. After one year 82% of them were drug-free and employed or on a study program.

Sandy Levey-Lundén wants the youths to find a meaning with their lives, some-thing that many of them feel they do not have. The idea is to give each individual a lot of time and teach them how to speak openly about their feelings. This method is taught together with more controversial methods like Rebirthing.

- *There are so many things inside a person that never comes out. With me they learn to express themselves. They feel bitter towards their mom and dad and the society. No wonder things don't turn out the way they want.*

During the yearlong program, the youths got to try out jobs they only dreamt about before.

- *It is not always clear what your dream is about. Now they got a firsthand experience of what their dream job actually is like,* says Carlos Mosqueda, project leader in Stockholm.

Even though the project was a success, it did not receive any more money, neither from companies nor from society. Sandy Levey-Lundén returned to America where she has been working with similar projects for youths in Canada.

- *I was very disappointed. Canada dared to put money into something new since nothing else is working. There is more bureaucracy in Sweden.*

Patrik Pelosio, now 27, was sentenced for assault and had drug problems and a criminal career behind him when he joined the project. Today he is working as a lecturer and he is creating his own youth project in Upplands Vasby outside Stockholm.

- *I have felt put down my whole life, but I started to believe in myself during the project. If I can get out of it, as bad as things were for me, anyone can.*

Sandy Levey-Lundén has returned to Sweden to try again. In August it is time for the New "Fri Sikt"-project, if somebody wants to finance it that is.

She lifts the spirits of the youth in Malmo

Sandy Levey-Lundén is a modern life-guide. She helps youths with their problems to find their way in life.

- *I am trying to make them leaders of their own life,* she says.

Sandy Levey-Lundén comes from USA but has been living in Skane the past ten years.

She calls herself a learning specialist and is driven by the conviction that everybody can realize their dreams, no matter what background they come from.

With money donated by a Swedish businessman – who himself received help from her - she started the youth project "Fri Sikt" four years ago. About 80 youths with different problems from Malmo and Stockholm participated. The youths went to different courses and meetings to learn to get in contact with their emotions and how to be honest towards themselves and the people around them.

- *You have to be 100% honest if you are to get anywhere with this kind of work,* says Sandy Levey-Lundén.

The youths also got to learn to work towards a goal in their life. It could for example be a dream job.

- *It is very important that you do something that gives your life meaning.*

The result of the project is said to have been very successful. According to Sandy Levey-Lundén about 60 of the 80 youths who participated in the yearlong project are now drug free and has a job or goes to school.

- *I still have contact with many of them through e-mail and telephone. Also, they have started to meet on their own.*

After working with the youths in Malmo, Sandy returned to North America where she is now working with a similar project in Vancouver, Canada. When we meet her she is back in Sweden for a short visit.

Right now she is trying to create another course for Swedish youths, a job not altogether easy. There are several communities interested in the project but they backed out when they started talking about the financing.

- *I hope that there are more companies that are interested to help us finance our work,* says Sandy Levey-Lundén.