

## **AsperCan and Fundación Cepsa, allies for the mental health of people with ASD**

- **Preventing self-harm and suicidal behaviors are the focus of a winning project for the Social Value Awards**
- **More than 190 people with ASD benefit from this initiative**

Fundación Cepsa has made a visit to the Asperger-ASD Association Canary Islands (AsperCan), reaffirming its commitment to social welfare. Together, they are promoting the project "Mental Health Care for People with Level 1 ASD: Preventing Suicidal Thoughts and Addressing Self-harm," one of the winners of the last edition of the Social Value Awards. This innovative program focuses on providing professional, individualized psychological care to people with Level 1 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), improving their mental health and psychological well-being.

The project is mainly aimed at teenagers and adult users of Aspercan between 15 and 40 years old, and their families. Throughout this year, individualized care sessions have been carried out, as well as awareness-raising talks for families. The goal is to prevent and address suicidal thoughts and behaviors, providing a supportive environment and appropriate resources. To date, the project has benefited 61 people in Tenerife, 101 in Gran Canaria, and 35 in Lanzarote.

The head of Fundación Cepsa in the Canary Islands, Belén Machado, accompanied during the visit by Yurena Santana, the sponsor of the project at Cepsa, highlighted the importance of this initiative, as it is "crucial to offer resources and support to both people with ASD and their families to improve their well-being and prevent critical situations, such as self-harm or even worse circumstances. At Aspercan, they find relief and essential tools to manage the complexity of these issues. At Fundación Cepsa, we believe in the importance of mental health and the need to create supportive and understanding environments."

May Bernal, member of the Aspercan board of directors, who was accompanied by Sheila Reyes, technician of the winning project, stated that "suicidal thoughts and self-harm are realities that must be addressed through prevention, providing individuals and their families with effective tools and strategies. Awards such as the one received from Fundación Cepsa are essential for our association, as they allow us to strengthen our psychological support services, which are so necessary for the ASD population."

Bernal added that "this group experiences a lot of anxiety and stress in all areas of their lives. They need continuous psychological support to learn personal strategies that help them manage these difficulties, since the autism spectrum is very broad."

The program also aims to increase knowledge of and access to mental health-related social resources for those affected and their families. Support groups offer guidance and counseling, in addition to raising awareness among social agents and institutions

about the personal and social challenges faced by these individuals and their impact on mental health.

With these actions, Fundación Cepsa and Aspercan seek to create significant change, not only in the lives of people with Level 1 ASD, but also to transform the perception and understanding of mental health in the community, creating significant change.

### **About AsperCan**

The Asperger's - ASD Association Canary Islands (AsperCan) was born from the concern of a group of families who, far from seeing their individual, health, educational, work and social needs covered by the existing administrative structure, decided to come together and form a legal entity to fight for the rights of their children, and their rights as a family, and thus be able to access services under conditions of equity.

AsperCan was established in 2005 for this purpose. Today, the organization promotes the goals of providing services and support to individuals and social groups diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder Level 1 (Asperger's Syndrome) in order to promote and enhance psychosocial support, both individually and in groups, personal autonomy in daily activities, personal and community development in their natural contexts, etc., through activities and services that allow for an improved quality of life.

### **Social Value Awards**

These annual awards, which began in 2005, are one of the stand-out initiatives of Fundación Cepsa. They are held in the Canary Islands, Madrid, Huelva, Campo de Gibraltar, Portugal, and Colombia, and are aimed at supporting disadvantaged people, groups and sectors, in addition to promoting solidarity values by involving Cepsa's professionals, who sponsor the projects presented by the non-profit organizations.

In the Canary Islands, a total of 74 projects have already been recognized as part of these awards, with a contribution of 712,000 euros from Fundación Cepsa in the Islands.

The 2024 call will start on September 2.

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