

## **Each day: A smile for one world**

An interview with Annette Kaiser, the initiator of the idea.

*How did the project “A smile for the world” come into being?*

It all began on September 11, 2001 when the entire world was still reeling from the events in New York. Then came the war in Afghanistan, which I experienced with particular intensity. It was as if it were taking place in my own consciousness, within me. That made me listen attentively. It was clear to me that *one* of the reasons why such terrorist attacks and the like can occur is that poor people with limited prospects in life can be won over for such ideas without much trouble. And I thought about how we people here in the West belong to the well-to-do, rich countries of this earth. I considered how we could share more of what we have.

*But now this sharing that you suggest does not appear in the framework we are used to seeing it in.*

Earlier in my life I was active for a long time in development cooperation projects and loved that work. It provides a lot of help to people in the so-called Third World in the sense of help towards self-help. But even then, there was an element lacking in our understanding of our help, namely that the world develops from inside towards the outside. This is a question of consciousness. And it is precisely here that the project “a smile for the world” begins: with consciousness or awareness. That’s what the smile stands for. It’s an opportunity to remind ourselves once a day that we are a single organism on this earth, that all people are connected with each other in a very deep way. And it is out of this consciousness or awareness that we share the actual 10 cents with others.

*In this combination, the act of donating has taken on something much more joyful for me, since the moral pressure is gone.*

*It’s something very simple that I can do in a spirit of lightness and at the same time something is transformed in me. With time I really feel this deep connectedness with the world, with its people. At first blush you tend to stumble over this idea of a smile.*

We’ve created a beautiful card for this project with a picture of our blue planet on it. When we look at the earth, this blue-white pearl, we feel a love, a joy. It’s like the astronauts who experienced wonder upon seeing the earth from far away. And that’s where the smile comes in. It’s pausing for a moment to look at the world. And in this feeling of joy I open up my wallet and put 10 cents (or more) in the cup that’s standing there to receive it.

*The money collects in the cup. What do I do with it?*

Most people know whom they would like to give the money to. It should be completely free, according to one’s own discretion.

*How is the project “a smile for the world” financed?*

For the first 10,000 brochures we paid the printing costs ourselves to some extent and were also supported by friends. Those who wish to simply help out with the printing and postal costs can send a donation to the project “A smile for the world.”

*What’s important for the project is that people become more aware and conscious. Can you provide more details about that?*

The world is a living organism and we humans are part of it. There is something that is common to all phenomena: life itself.

When we stop for a moment each day to just be there in stillness, there is a moment of deep peace. The smile means being at peace with oneself and thus with the world. And this “information” is passed on, in silence. So the consciousness of the person who does it as well as the total consciousness of the earth is influenced by it. Things change from inside toward the outside. It’s necessary for our survival in these times that the human beings develops in consciousness. A smile is a small contribution that is at the same time connected with an outer action, in this case sharing what we have.

*Could we speak in terms of a “globalization of the heart”?*

When we really understand what human beings are, what matter is, what this world is, we come to a common denominator. The practice of “a smile and 10 cents” gives people a feeling of lightness. The picture of our beautiful blue world that we see before us, connected with this inner pause, conveys the experience of how we are one. This experience of our connectedness could indeed be understood as a globalization of the heart.

Maybe it’s a start in developing respect, respect for each person, for the animals, for the plants, for water, for everything on the earth and for the earth itself.

*How will the project develop further? Is there a goal for the project?*

First of all, we have this vision that is the basis of the idea. I don’t know at the moment how this vision will take concrete form in Germany. Our goal for Switzerland is that, in five years, a million Swiss will be involved in living this idea of “every day a smile.”

I’m sure that it can be a basic contribution in creating a more peaceful world and coming into a new feeling of balance so that people can smile more.

*It takes so little to pause for a moment each day, and nevertheless I experience repeatedly how I forget to do it. What would be your advice on this point?*

The cup should be in a place where you can’t help seeing it. I have my cup on the kitchen table, so that I see it several times a day. And if you forget once in a while, it’s not so terrible. You simply put a little more in. It should be completely free and also free of dogma. I’ve noticed in my own case that a rhythm develops out of which grows a need to do it every day. It might be good to have the goal of doing it for a six months and then making a pause. You can start again at any time. It should be done in a playful manner and not be overly serious.

*My two young children received an old cup with a “smile card” and have fun watching 10 cents fall into the cup from time to time.*

Yes, the coin makes a sound when it falls into the cup, so that the smile is connected with the sound. That’s wonderful. Ten cents is a small contribution that each of us can afford. It was important for me that children could also take part in the project, since most of them are aware of what’s going on in the world. And when they can make a contribution on their own, both inside and outside, then most kids today have enough pocket money or allowance to put 10 cents in the cup from time to time. And they all have a smile to give anyway!

By Susanna Baumann