



DE REGENBOOG
GROEP

Nr. 02 - 2024

100 x ON A ROLL

Meeleven Special Edition | Annual Report 2023





Foreword

100 x ON A ROLL

When I first heard about the concept for this annual report, I thought: how great would it be if a 100 things could be thought of! But the editorial team managed. And the best part? They are all true. That's pretty incredible.

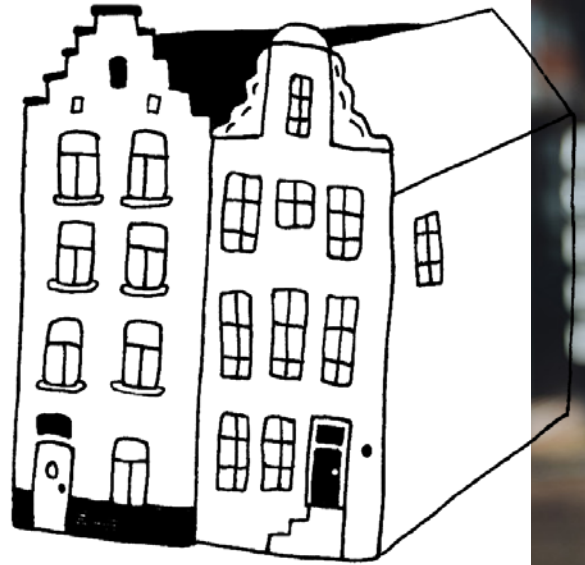
What a turbulent year 2023 was. Many social changes took place, both nationally and internationally, to which we, De Regenboog Groep, had to react.

For example, the number of Ukrainians in our care grew enormously last year. Both in terms of the number of refugees and in terms of the commitment of the volunteers who help these people to find a temporary home far away from home.

What's more, 2023 was a truly unique year, as it had been at least 25 years since a new drop-in center was opened. But we opened two: Villa Westerweide in Zaandam and AMOC-West for stranded EU citizens in Amsterdam.

In 2023 we welcomed Amsterdams Buurvrouwen Contact (ABC) into our organisation. This wonderful organisation of volunteers has been helping non-native, socially isolated women to actively participate in our society and work on their own development, for over 20 years.

Then there is our relatively new target group: the economically homeless. In cooperation with the municipality of Amsterdam, we have been able to raise public and political awareness of their plight. Both locally and nationally. In 2023, we made preparations for a major expansion of our capacity to help these people in 2024.



Returning to my thoughts at the beginning of this foreword, the answer may be clear. When called upon, we are there. All of us. This flexibility is built into the organisation. Whatever happens, De Regenboog Groep reacts and does what is necessary. That's when we're in our element. Let's just call it 'on a roll'.

This annual report is therefore an ode to all the people who work so tirelessly in and around our organisation. The huge number of volunteers, but also the funds and donors that enable us to start projects and make essential investments, the companies that donate goods, the clients who follow a learning-working path, the people who rent out a room, the peer support workers.

There are so many ways to contribute to a more social city. And every contribution, in whatever form, really does have an immediate positive effect on someone else's life.

Hans Wijnands, Director



Meeleven 2 - 2024

Colophon

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ANDROID OF APPLE
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STREETLIFE is mede mogelijk gemaakt door Enjoy My City 

1.

AN APP FOR STREET SURVIVAL

Are you unhoused in Amsterdam? You might have to find your way in a new world. Where can you shower, eat and get clean clothes? Can you register for social accommodation or permanent housing? Where can you find social work, medical and psychological care?

De Regenboog Groep has been publishing Het Blauwe Boekje (the Blue Booklet) for years. This is a guide with practical information on how to survive on the streets of Amsterdam. Since 2023, the information from the Blue Booklet is also available via the Streetlife app. The app is available for Android and Apple and can be downloaded for free.

With the Streetlife app, all services are now always at your fingertips. At the heart of the app is a map. One can easily find their way through the streets of the city until one reaches the help or service they need.

At the drop-in centers, an estimated three-quarters of our homeless visitors to the drop-in houses use smartphones. This is not surprising, as it is difficult to survive without internet. Most things can only be handled online. It is also good for social workers to be able to reach their clients, as they do not have a home address and can be anywhere in the city. For people without smartphones who cannot use the app, the hardcopy Blue Booklet is also available.

"The app is up to date. For example, you can alert people that extra winter shelters are available when the temperature drops below zero. That's important, because people sleeping outside in the cold can die."

**Marcel Kooijman,
day care coordinator at
the drop-in center**



2,500

The app was downloaded nearly 2,500 times in its first three months.



Streetlife is supported by Jeroen Goeman Borgesius (Enjoy My City)



2.

STABLE SOCIAL CONTACT

Naomi Gabriel is a buddy with the Regenboog Groep. She tells us what moves her.

"Loneliness is close to my heart. In my work as a doctor, I worked a lot with the elderly, and I often came across it with them. But young people can also be lonely. I meet regularly with a young woman who's in need of stable social contact. We often do an activity together, but we also talk a lot. I notice that she likes an objective, listening ear. But she also wants to hear my stories. So we are in contact as equals."



3.

FREE TICKETS

From 22 to 24 September, Marjolijn van Heemstra and many partners organised the first edition of the Amsterdam Dark Festival. For three days and nights, almost 2,000 unhoused visitors discovered the beauty of darkness. The organisation handed out free tickets for dance performances, beautiful walks and sunset events to the participants of the Buddy Projects. They were able to join their buddy for free.

Visit the website of this festival:



4.

SHARING EXPERIENCES

In 2023, our Informal Care department (Informele Zorg) had a small experience of pairing client-participants with each other instead of with a volunteer. These participants are more advanced in their recovery process. This yielded great results. Those who took part in the pilot experienced more independence, gained more confidence and built up social contacts. As a result, this method is now part of the regular informal care service.

5.

NUTS, OLIVES, AND CHEESE

The insurance company Athora Netherlands provided Christmas gifts for people who were going through a difficult time or had little money. The gifts included a full meal for the holidays, with nuts, olives and cheese, and after-dinner treats: coffee, tea and biscuits. There was even a tablecloth and napkins. Everyone was very pleased with the gifts. Our colleague, Nassiri Belaraj, personally delivered a gift to someone on Christmas Day. The recipient was visibly moved.

6.

FREE YOGA CLASS

For people on a tight budget, De Regenboog Groep organises affordable and even free activities. Pauline Overeem organises an hour of free yoga every Monday evening at the Claverhuis community center.

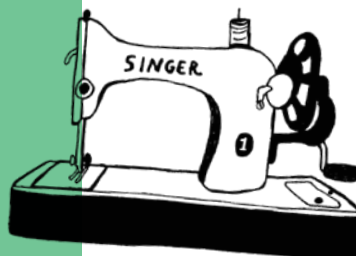
Pauline: "I notice that people here are a bit restless. Impatient. And they are worried. One elderly man, for example, finds it difficult to sit cross-legged. But he shows up every week. He participates in his own way and is not discouraged. I think that's beautiful. I can really enjoy the energy and warmth of the group."

8.

BRIGHTENING UP LIVES

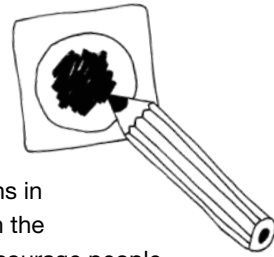
The social enterprise De Buurtboerderij (Neighborhood Farm) is run by a team of permanent employees, volunteers and people with a distance to the labour market. Bart Blaauw is the project manager:

"The people we support include young adults with burnout, people recovering from psychosis and people with autistic spectrum disorders. We want to provide a safe place. At the Buurtboerderij they experience structure, social contacts and appreciation, the pillars that are essential for every individual to function well and to give life a sparkle. By offering these three pillars, we want to be a safety net. And a place where people can learn to open up to others. In peace and under professional guidance.



7.

VOTING FOR THE UNHOUSED



Together with other aid organisations in Amsterdam and in cooperation with the municipality, we worked hard to encourage people experiencing homelessness to vote in the elections for the House of Representatives on November 22nd, 2023. Because their vote is just as important as any other vote! Our location De Derde Schinkel, home to six learning workshops, became an official voting venue. Through our Streetlife app, where unhoused people can find important information about life on the streets, we sent out a push notification, motivating people to vote.



Tim Wagelaar researched the political participation of unhoused people. You can read the results of his research here

REVIVAL

9.

Justine Colin is a work supervisor at ZigZag sewing studio. As well as learning to use a sewing machine, ZigZag provides structure and the opportunity to develop social skills. Justine: "I regularly see participants blossom. People who come in quiet and shy and within weeks or months become social creatives who enjoy being part of the group. Just the step of someone daring to ask for help is a wonderful milestone!" Maytham works in the sewing workshop: "Personally, ZigZag means everything to me. It's a very safe environment. ZigZag has helped me to

improve my situation and gives me the freedom to be creative".



10.

HELP AND SUPPORT IN AMSTERDAM WEST

On July 3rd, De Regenboog Groep opened the doors of a new walk-in center: AMOC-West.

It provides refuge to Europeans who are trapped or even unhoused in Amsterdam.

Visitors who experience homelessness can eat, shower, use a computer and the internet, get clean clothes and talk to a social worker. The drop-in center has space for 60 visitors. AMOC-West focuses on Europeans (without a Dutch passport) who are in need of help.



The original AMOC on Stadhouderskade will continue to serve current unhoused visitors. Drug consumption room and the night shelter will also remain. AMOC-West will not have a drug consumption room for hard drug use. As of July 3rd 2023, new visitors to AMOC on Stadhouderskade will be referred to AMOC-West, where they will be welcomed with appropriate help and care: specialised and tailored to their needs.

"AMOC-West is a really good place. They offer help with everything you need to get back on your feet."

Milan, visitor

The AMOC on the Stadhouderskade, which has been in existence since 1978, does not have enough space to offer the necessary support to the growing number of people seeking help. This leads to queues of people waiting outside, which is annoying for the visitors and a nuisance for the neighbors. This is the reason for opening a second location for this growing audience.

The new AMOC-West is open to visitors seven days a week, from 9am to 4pm. The team of coordinators and social workers is fluent in many European languages. They also have access to an international network of social workers. And they have experience in counselling the target group and in repatriation. This makes AMOC-West an extension of the services AMOC has been providing for 45 years.



PREVENTING VACANCIES 11.

What do you do with an empty building? You can leave it empty or rent it out to the economically homeless: people without a home but with an income. Owner NV Zeedijk chose the latter.

De Regenboog Groep specialises in creative housing solutions and also targets property owners like NV Zeedijk. This works well for the temporary residents. They do not have to worry about a roof over their heads for twelve months and can take their time in looking for a sustainable housing solution.



Read more:



13.

STANDING UP FOR THE VULNERABLE

Tamara Kuschel, coordinator of Tijdelijk Wonen (Temporary Housing), was a guest on the NPO television show Op1, on December 13. She sat down with Dawa, Toyah and Denny - inspiring people who have experienced economic homelessness and wanted to share their personal stories. Another guest at the table was Amsterdam alderman Rutger Groot Wassink: "The group of economically homeless people, people who work or recently had a job, aren't really eligible to anything. This makes their situation very difficult. In Amsterdam, we're seeing a huge increase in this group of unhoused people. We are now making extra efforts to ensure that they don't become houseless in the long-term. We need to solve this social problem. It's dramatic for the people

involved and a shame for society.



Want to watch the talk?
Click here:



12.

SHARING THE PROFITS

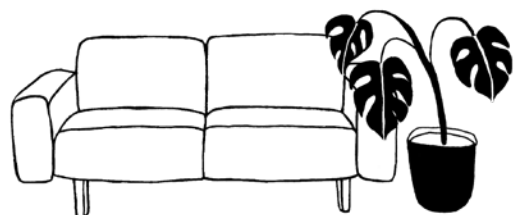


Every month, approximately 120 Amsterdam residents in need of housing contact De Regenboog Groep for temporary accommodation. There are many reasons for this, such as divorce or loss of a job. But young adults are also evicted because of their orientation. MEIJT, a platform for and by the LGBTQ+ community, raises awareness for these people. On 19 January 2023, De Regenboog Groep received a check for €1,250 from MEIJT and Regulier Rosé at the Blend XL bar. The donation will be used to help young and unhoused LHBTIQ+ people.

14.

PEACE IN RELATIONSHIP CRISIS

Parentshouses provide temporary accommodation for parents who can no longer live together due to a relationship breakdown and are unable to move in the near future due to the current housing market. Marcel stayed in a Parentshouse and used the time to talk to a mediator with his ex-partner. Marcel: "Parentshouse brought peace to our situation. After a few months we were able to talk about the children, our house and the future. And with success! We sold our house and both of us were able to buy a new house close to each other. It is nice that the children have been able to get used to this new family situation. And we have been able to take steps and work on solutions."



15.

RETURNING HOME

With the Soft Landing project, De Regenboog Groep helps people from Eastern Europe who stranded here to return to their country of origin. Social worker Ewa Wielgat was in Poland to support a 'returnee' and his family.

Ewa: "People do not make the difficult decision to return overnight. It has to do with complicated dilemmas, shame and fear. Not everyone wants to, or is able to go back. Often there's nothing or no one to return to. Or there are complications, feelings and problems. Some use alcohol or other drugs. Some have mental health conditions or psychiatric problems. And almost all of them have money problems. But sometimes they manage to return."

16.

JOB FAIR



The B.Amsterdam business incubator in Nieuw-West made its premises available for a job fair for the (economically) homeless on 17 October. The contact was made through UseSpace, which connects real estate professionals and the business world with social organisations. Employers such as Tatrix Techniek, Festival Academy Amsterdam and Albert Heijn participated in the job fair. "It's crucial that we help vulnerable target groups to return to the labour market in order to prevent the further downward spiral," says Sven Kleijn, project manager of Bijzonder Bewoond at De Regenboog Groep.

"The homeless job market is one of the first social initiatives for which we have provided a venue," says Tessa Bakker, CEO of B.Amsterdam. "Here, the participants are surrounded by entrepreneurs and talent, allowing them to feel part of society and working life again."

17.

FREE FROM DEBT

Tackling poverty requires initiatives that break through existing structures. Like our project Uit het Krijt (free from debt), which makes quick work of debt. Relatively small debts paid off in one go, combined with personal support.

Jelena Miljatovic, project manager of Uit het Krijt: "An innovative approach for which the appreciation is enormous. We often hear: 'I have my life back'. With the help of funds such as Kansfonds, Uit het Krijt helps around four people a month to get out of debt."



18.

FINDING YOURSELF AGAIN

When someone close to you has dependency or mental health issues, the relationship comes to a head. How do you deal with it? At De Regenboog Groep you can turn to Partner and Family Support (PFO) for free help.

Peter talked to Dick Claassen from PFO. "Dick asked me: 'What gives you energy?' This question had not been asked for a long time. It got me thinking. What makes me happy? At PFO I learned how to set my boundaries and in the process I found myself again."

Need help too?





19.

A SECOND CHANCE



It might sound strange for someone who spent 10 years in a TBS clinic for a series of violent crimes, but Mark (34) - gold teeth, lots of tattoos - was quite nervous about meeting at Bagels & Beans. "I didn't know this kind of cafe," he says. "I had no contact with the people who come there. The regular or normal world was new to me."

At Bagels & Beans, Mark had an appointment with his buddy Manouk Trentelman (22). Through De Regenboog Groep (Manouk) and Inforsa (Mark), the two were matched. Mark is an ex-convict whose tattooed tear under his eye could be a reference to murder. When asked, he says: "That's right, I won't lie about it." Trentelman is a psychology student who volunteered for the project more than two years ago.

Mark explains why he finds the buddy contact useful. "It gives me an insight into how you can live. I have had a turbulent life. I was eleven years old when I came to the Netherlands from South America with my mother and stepfather. The man abused me. I lived in a bad neighborhood and then I got involved in crime. Because of violent crimes, I got involved with the justice system at a young age. I never had a normal life, but I am learning that now. The contact with Manouk helps me a lot. I don't want to live a life of crime anymore."

HUMAN-TO-HUMAN CONTACT

What is the idea behind pairing an ex-TBS patient with a buddy? "Someone who has been sentenced by the court to forensic psychiatric treatment benefits from a human bond," says Lise Swinkels, who wrote her doctoral thesis on the subject at Amsterdam UMC.

"It has to be a mutual and equal contact that exists AFTER the professional counselling process. It's about personal contact. It's a simple idea, but it was studied for the first time in a forensic setting in my doctoral programme."

Ex-convict Mark (34) is staying out of crime thanks to the Buddy Project:

"I've never had a normal life, I'm learning that now."

Read the full article here:





20.

PANCAKES

De Regenboog Groep celebrated National Volunteer Day on a cold winter's day in December by treating local residents to pancakes. Prepared in Studio Pancake's bakfiets by clients of the Oud-West drop-in center.

A visitor experiencing homelessness: "I don't really like pancakes, but I think it's really nice that you're here". In the afternoon, the mobile community center moved to the Osdorpplein, where shoppers enjoyed a cup of coffee or tea and a pancake fresh from the frying pan. The activity was sponsored by H&M.

22.

MEANINGFUL WORK CREATES HAPPINESS

The Works Council (OR) of De Regenboog Groep deals with management reviews and protocols, but also commissioned a study on job satisfaction. The research was carried out as a pro bono assignment by young consultants Hieroo. The main question: why do the employees of De Regenboog Groep have a relatively high level of job satisfaction despite the workload? What were the results? Nice work with nice people is an important factor for job satisfaction. And: having a meaningful job contributes greatly to happiness in life.

21.



PROVIDING SOMEONE WITH A FUTURE

There are two centers for refugees from Ukraine in Weesp. Regenboog volunteer Maarten van Ham (32) is a buddy of refugee Andrej (32).

Maarten: "I show Andrej nice places in Weesp, like the swimming pool; he is an experienced swimmer. Sometimes we go to the gym or have a beer in the tasting room of a brewery. I give him credit for finding connections in society and daring to make plans for the future. Maarten

realises how good his life is and that he can't take everything for granted. "I can help someone a little who has had to leave everything behind."



23.

PETS AS SUPPORT AND ADVOCATES

Dier & Vriend (Pet & Friend) supports people who are eligible for social care but have no money or network to care for their pets. A new project was launched in 2023 to enable people to bring their pets into social care. Project coordinator Nerissa ten Velthuis is working with HVO Querido to develop a toolkit and create accessible policies for pets. Her colleague Miranda Dijks is travelling around the country to make as many Ukrainian shelters accessible to animals as possible. She does this in collaboration with the Mendoo Foundation and the Coalition of Help for Animals from Ukraine.

24.

90 ADDITIONAL SHELTERS

In April 2023, the city of Amsterdam will create 90 new winter shelters for unhoused homeless people. With the additional shelter space, the municipality wants to help the most vulnerable people when the winter shelter closes.

"We have looked at how we can give these people both the best help and a perspective," said alderman Rutger Groot Wassink (Social Affairs and Shelter), explaining the decision. "That is why we are now investing immediately in additional shelters, so that these people do not end up out in the cold."

26.

LONG LIVE THE CHEESE TOASTIE

I am grateful for the people who work here

They make this possible

I am thankful for the people behind the scenes

De Regenboog

I am thankful for the shower

It allows me to freshen up every morning

I am thankful for the food

Long live the cheese toastie

I am thankful for this physical space called De Spreekhuis

I am thankful for the toilet

Imagine if there were none

I am grateful for the things I am allowed to use

I am thankful for my fellow visitors

Together we form a family, a home

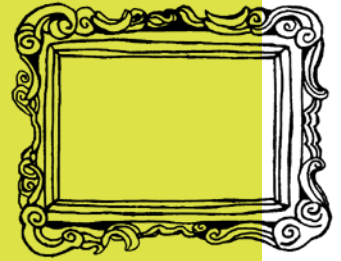
I am thankful for the coffee

I love coffee and it is delicious here

If you like tea, I am thankful for the tea



Written by an unhoused visitor of De Spreekbuis



25.

10 YEARS OF ARTBRUUT

artBRUUT is a project in which talented artists from the Makom walk-in shelter are inspired in workshops by established Amsterdam artists. All works are for sale and 100% of the proceeds go to artBRUUT in the art suite of the Makom shelter. In December artBRUUT celebrated its tenth anniversary. We celebrated at Sexyland World with an amazing exhibition, a crazy art auction, delicious food, tasty music and much more beauty.

OMBUDSMAN AS TECHNO DJ

27.

Amsterdam Ombudsman Munish Ramlal performed as a techno DJ at our Blaka Watra drop-in center last year to connect with the people experiencing homelessness. The theme of the techno set: 'Crying and Laughing'. Because life without a home, on the streets, is of course very hard. And this brings some positivity. As one participant says: "I'm going to dance for six hours. They have to come and take me off the dancefloor. Because I'm going to DANCE!"



AT5 was there, watch:



28.

HOUSING PROTEST AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

On 28 October 2023, as part of the Housing Protest, De Regenboog Groep took a stand against the housing crisis, the real estate industry, government mismanagement and the unambitious plans of most political parties. With new, concrete and immediate demands. Tamara Kuschel, project manager of Tijdelijk Wonen (Temporary Housing), spoke at the protest on behalf of De Regenboog:



"It is abundantly clear that the Netherlands is in a housing crisis. That something has to be done structurally about the lack of affordable housing in the Netherlands. But these structural solutions



De Regenboog Groep is committed to giving people who are bearing the brunt of the housing crisis a temporary place to stay in the vacancies that already exist today. By making the empty rooms in people's homes available through hospital rentals (Onder de Pannen), from demolition and renovation properties of housing associations (Tijdelijk onder Dak) and from all kinds of vacancies (Bijzonder Bewoond).

"We look for housing solutions in vacant properties. Vacant properties that are available now. This is how we alleviate the acute need of people without the right to housing."

Tamara Kuschel, Temporary Housing Project Manager

17,000

De Regenboog Groep estimates 17,000 homeless in Amsterdam:



do not prevent people from being homeless now and becoming homeless every day.

I am here today to draw attention to the people who are already victims of a failed housing policy. Every week we receive an average of 40 people with housing problems. People whose lives have come to a standstill (...) At the same time, there's is an awful lot of empty homes. This vacancy can be used today to create living space. Empty rooms in people's homes, empty office buildings, empty school buildings.

That is why we are demanding now:

- For property developers to take responsibility and make vacant property available for living.
- For the government to make this possible.
- For the state and municipalities to facilitate sharing of housing, for example by renting out rooms.

Because structural solutions are needed, but we need to do something NOW for all the people who are experiencing homelessness now and those that become unhoused every day.



29.

WALK-INS FOR ELDERLY UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

De Regenboog Groep has long been involved in helping undocumented people. These people have roots in the Netherlands, but lack documentation. In reality, they have little or no access to essential medical and social services. Elderly undocumented migrants have a double burden. They are often in poor health and need medical care, and they need support to find and keep a job. For this group of people, we have set up Wereldhuis Seniors: a drop-in morning where older undocumented migrants can come twice a month with questions and answers - after all, old age also means wisdom.

30.



ORAL CARE FOR ALL

Two dental practices in Amsterdam are selflessly participating in our dental project for people experiencing homelessness. Social worker Mika van 't Ende explains why this is so important: "One of our visitors applied for a job as a receptionist in a hotel. Everything was in order: diplomas, work experience. Only the representative picture wasn't right. She was missing half her teeth. Such a rejection cuts into your soul. And the threshold for trying again gets higher and higher". Mika was able to arrange dental restorations for the rejected receptionist. "She got a job in another hotel. They hired her as a cleaner, but said that if she had her teeth fixed, she could be at the reception, welcoming guests. And that's what happened. Now she's been working at the reception desk for a year".

Are you a dentist and would like to help?

Email tandarts@deregenboog.org

31.

SELF-ESTEEM AND RECOVERY

Daniel had a substance use disorder for 20 years, living on a boat. One day he decided to seek help and went to the Claverhuis community center. There he struck up a conversation with one of the day care co-ordinators, to whom he mentioned that he had worked a lot in the hospitality industry. He started a day care programme: cooking at the Claverhuis. Daniel: "I was enabled to participate again. I was allowed to make my own decisions again. I was among people and slowly regained my self-esteem". Daniel figured out what he wanted to cook and did the shopping. "And because there was always something left, I always had some extra food." Daniel is now five years into recovery, four years clean, and works as an expert by experience. He is also studying to become an dependency and recovery counsellor at the Academy for Coaching and Counselling.

32.



JUSTICE

In November 2002, FairWork held an information session for our visitors at the AMOC-West drop-in center. The social workers were also informed about the rights of migrant workers from the EU. We also work closely with FairWork to properly inform our stranded visitors from outside the Netherlands and to identify abuses. Most of the time it's about employees not being paid or being unfairly laid off. Unfortunately, social workers hear stories of exploitation, underpayment and dismissal on an almost daily basis. Better (working) conditions start with more information about workers' rights.

33.

COSY

Kitsch Kitchen donated a beautiful tablecloth to the Buurtrestaurants (neighborhood restaurants) De Horizon and De Gravin. Now it looks even cozier. Leroy regularly eats at the neighbourhood restaurant. His life changed when he suffered his first psychosis at the age of 22. "You end up sidetracked, although my friends never let me down. I come here to eat, but also to have fun. The people here are lonely or, like me, have had a rough time in life. It's easier for me to talk to them what's on my mind."



34.

30,000 KILOS OF LAUNDRY

An enormous amount of laundry was done at Colors last year. No less than 4,300 washes. That's more than 30,000 kilos of trousers, socks, jumpers, shirts and duvet covers. Colors is for people who don't have a washing machine at home. Or don't have a home.



Colors also cleans donated clothes. Recovering people work at the launderette every day. There are morning and afternoon shifts that wash, iron and fold. We use cargo bicycles to transport the laundry to different locations around the city. It's great work: it provides satisfaction, daily rhythm and social contact.

35.

A SENSE OF EUPHORIA

Every Friday, the Streetwise Cycle Team cycles through the city and the province of Noord-Holland. Koen Polder is the initiator. "We are an unusual cycling team. We are people for whom, for various reasons, life does not run so smoothly.



One of the cyclists is Cedric: "On the bike you produce the right substances that give me a feeling of euphoria. It also makes me more concentrated for the rest of the day. Cycling also keeps you in shape. Anyone can do it. You don't need to be super fit or experienced. You also don't need to have your own equipment. We provide a bike, clothes, shoes and a helmet. We take care of each other, no one is left behind in the group.

Watch the award-winning short documentary about the Streetwise Cycle Team:



36.

SINGING HAPPILY OUT OF TUNE

SCIP is a collection of very different work projects. There is plenty to do for people interested in computers, but there is also plenty to do in terms of culture, literature, good food and much more. You can volunteer, take courses, meet interesting people, but also find help if, for example, you have not dared to open your mail for weeks. From 2023, SCIP will also be open in the evening. Socialising is a priority. Everyone is welcome. You can play chess with Seeltje, sing along with Lea, take part in an origami workshop with Rouella or go to the cinema with Frits.



37.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMO- DATION FOR REFUGEES

In May, the municipality of Amsterdam opened a new reception center for 150 refugees from Ukraine in Weesp. Like the shelter for 200 Ukrainian refugees in a neighboring building on the Van Houten industrial estate, this location is run by De Regenboog Groep.

Katinka Hilders-van de Wetering, chairwoman of the Weesp board of directors: "To our great regret, the war is taking longer than we all expected. We will do our utmost to make the Ukrainians feel welcome in Weesp".



Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the municipality of Amsterdam, in cooperation with various aid organisations, has been hosting refugees. Most of the emergency accommodation for Ukrainians takes place in hotels and hostels. Not all of these places are suitable for the long term. Since the summer, at the request of the Ministry of Justice and Security, temporary sites have also been developed that are suitable for long-term accommodation.

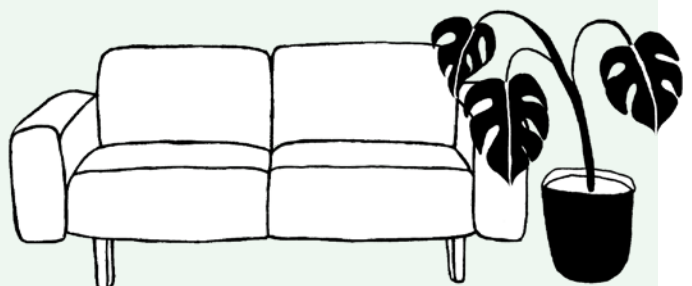
De Regenboog Groep opened the first emergency shelters in Amsterdam almost immediately after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. In the shelters, the first things needed for a stay in the Netherlands are arranged. Think of a BSN number, a residence permit, registration with the basic administration, a school for the children, a visit to the family doctor, advice on finding a job or vaccinations for pets. Residents can also get a buddy to show them around the city.

"We are very lucky to live here. It couldn't be better, but we want the war to stop. The conditions here are very good for a temporary shelter."

Weesp Shelter Resident

1,800

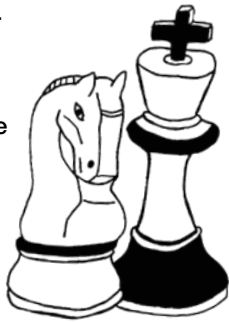
By 2023, we housed 1,800 people from Ukraine across 9 sites



38.

CHESS GAME

Barend Vink is a buddy of De Regenboog Groep. He is paired with a 26-year-old boy. Barend: "I meet him once a week or every two weeks. This boy has no family, friends or other contacts. Because he had a difficult childhood, he has developed few social skills. Little by little he is getting better. We often get together to do something fun. For example, I teach him chess or we play pool in a café. It doesn't cost me anything. And it brings him a lot, which in turn gives me satisfaction."



40.

APPLE PIE

In 2023 several activities, for people who don't get out much and don't have a social network, took off. For example, there is a Connectcafé where one can play games or enjoy an Apple Pie-concert. There are also four coffee clubs in boroughs Zuidoost, Nieuw-West, Oost and West. And there is a chess club, which meets on Sundays in West. Neighbors meet every two weeks to drink coffee, discuss their week and support each other. The group from Zuidoost attended a singing performance by their fellow coffee drinker, Angelina. The Nieuw-West crew regularly goes to the theatre and cinema together. Enjoying Herman van Veen perform in Carré for free was a true highlight!

39.

WIN-WIN IN HEALTHCARE

'Zorgbrigadisten' (care brigadists) are people who have been unemployed for a long time and get back to work by providing informal support in people's homes and care facilities. They also receive practical training. This is a collaboration between Pantar, Burennetwerk Amsterdam, Cordaan and De Regenboog Groep, with us at Nieuw-West providing the matches and information for the brigadists. Frida receives weekly visits from Zorgbrigadist Julia.

Frida: "In the meantime we have become friends. My own social circle is too small, so I really need this extra help. I am very happy with Julia." Julia is also happy: "Working in health care was always my dream job. But because of the Dutch language it is difficult for me to do the training. Now I still get the chance to work in care and I learn a lot of Dutch".

Watch City Reporters New West's documentary about the Care Brigade:



A NICE HOME

41.

One of the most important things in life is to have a roof over your head. Unfortunately, this is not always a given anymore. Due to the acute housing shortage, more and more people end up lost, unable to find a permanent home. They sleep on friends' couches, in their cars or in hostels. That eventually breaks one down because it brings a lot of stress and anxiety. To help this group of people, Charlotte Riem decided to become a volunteer. Every week she helps unhoused families find accommodation.

Charlotte: "I know what it is like to have a nice home. It's valuable to be able to help others get one."





42.

SHARING LIVING SPACE

As part of our national project 'Onder de Pannen', De Regenboog Groep matches the economically homeless with vacant rooms. Toos van Mourik (59) and Yariv Ephraim (65) share a house in Amstelveen.

Toos: "The house has three bedrooms for our children. But they have now left home. For more than a year, I couldn't stand the fact that there were people who couldn't find a room, while we had so much space here. For me, the housing problem is a distribution problem. There is a small group of wealthy people who can easily get a house, while singles and students can't find anything.

44.

POSTAL ADDRESS

The Stedelijk Team Economisch Daklozen, abbreviation: STED (Urban Team for the Economically Homeless) does not provide housing, but the social workers help to get everything right around housing. One of their first questions is; "Do you have a mailing address?" If necessary, STED will request a postal address at the Citizen's Desk (Burger Loket). Mail can be collected at fixed times. The social worker is there to answer practical questions, but it is also a good opportunity to make contact. Sometimes it turns out that someone has other needs in addition to a postal address. In 2023, a total of 112 postal addresses were provided.



43.

PHOTO FRAMES

Yariv rents a room from landlady Toos. Yariv: "I am used to living in other people's houses. I used to stay with friends in Amstelveen. This is the first time I have rented a room from a landlady. Toos and her husband are very welcoming. We talk and laugh a lot and give each other plenty of space. Still, I want to have my own room someday. I have been searching for seven years, but it remains difficult to find something affordable. I have been working and contributing to society in the Netherlands for 37 years. Sometimes I feel disadvantaged because I can't have my own house. In the long run, I hope to have a house with my own furniture and paintings. I see my contact at Onder de Pannen twice a week. She helps me to find a house of my own. After seven years, we have to succeed."

During the creation of this annual report, Yariv found a home!



45.

A PERFECT CLICK

Bert van der Loo (60) has lived in a nice neighbourhood in Noord for years. He has an extra room and rents it out through Onder de Pannen to someone who desperately needs it. "These are people who have temporary problems because of divorce or work. I can help them out". Soon Bert will have his third tenant. The contract was signed in mid-November 2023, for a maximum of one year, with three months' notice. His experiences have been positive. The first tenant, for example, was a perfect fit. "It was unfortunate that he left, but he found his own home. And that's the way it should be."



Ilse van Kessel,
supervisor of the bicycle
workshop

FINDING YOUR NICHE

The first person we meet in the bicycle shop is Angelo, 56, from Naples, who has lived in the Netherlands for decades: "There's coffee, is there enough? Is it hot? Is it hot? Good, espresso, huh?" What a warm welcome.

We're early, so Ilse - with whom we have an appointment - is still a little busy. She's nervously doing something complicated with a rear wheel. "Hi." She holds out a hand, black with grease. "It's dry, though." We shake hands and I notice her pink painted nails between the black of the grease. This is where work is done, in style.

Ilse van Kessel (36) joined Koen Polder (40) as a supervisor in the bicycle workshop on January first. This has doubled the number of supervisors at the workshop. Here, people who are unable to find a job, repair bicycles for low-income Amsterdam residents.

Koen: "Nowadays we only fix city bikes, without gears and with back pedal brakes. That's something we changed in 2023. In the beginning we took all jobs, but it turned out that it was too much work for the mechanics. Not only do we not have the time, but our people are much more satisfied when they can work independently and actually get things done. It works very well, work goes faster and there is more peace and quiet in the workshop. And that's important, because this place is really a sanctuary for people.



A GOOD LIFE

In a mixture of Italian, Spanish, English and Dutch, Angelo (56) says: "The group is nice, the work is nice. I have learnt a lot here. I didn't know anything about building bicycles. I've been here for seven years and now I look good again. At the beginning I looked like shit. I came to Holland to work in the hospitality industry. Lots of stress, lots of drinking. And after three years I got addicted to coke, I was addicted for fourteen years. Now I've been clean for seven years. I have a small house, this job and a little money. I have a good life."



Ilse: "When I came here, I didn't really know anything about fixing bikes. I also had to learn. And now I can. What's really nice is that the people I had to accompany were actually able to help me learn how to make bicycles. This change of position is obviously doing something very valuable. After all, these people are often in the situation of being told how things should be.



47.



70,000 CUPS OF COFFEE

Thank you, Coffeecompany! 70,000 cups of coffee... These were collected by Coffeecompany for our walk-in centers, by their 1 for 1 promotion. If a customer bought coffee in December 2023, we received a bag of coffee beans as a gift. So a big thank you to all Coffeecompany customers! And for the big picture: we welcome around 5,000 unique visitors to our drop-in centers every year. So each one of them received fourteen cups of coffee from Coffeecompany!

49.

A NAP IN THE ATTIC

We ask Willemijn Los, manager of the Zeeburg drop-in center, what keeps visitors coming back. "Here you can take a nap in the attic if you are very tired. This is appreciated. People often say, 'I come to Zeeburg to rest'. We also have three computers, Wi-Fi and plenty of charging points. People also come for the dentist, for clean socks and for social work. We have two surgeries, in different languages and for different needs. And the food is always a celebration and a point of discussion. Vegetarian? Halal? Healthy? Delicious? So many people, so many tastes. We solved this with many different chefs and cuisines: China, Surinam, Poland, Romania, Italy..."



48.

CAREFREE SWIMMING

At the Oud-West drop-in center, we see an average of 100 different faces every day. In order to get away from the homeless life for a while, the crew organized a boat trip with the drop-in center's unhoused guests in the summer. Swimming in underpants in the Nieuwe Meer, drying up in the sun. A day where everyone, no matter what is going on in their lives, could enjoy a moment of carefree fun. People are visibly cheered up and the boat trip is still a topic of conversation.

50.

A SPLASH OF PAINT

The employees of the Maarsen Group rolled up their sleeves and painted the walls of our new Drop-in center AMOC-West. This center is located in a former juvenile detention center and was in need of a splash of paint. In fact, it was a sad, grey place. Now the place has been brightened up and given color, both inside and out. The result is a much nicer place for tired people who experience homelessness to rest.

51.

PEACE AND SPACE

Linda (37) had an accident three years ago which left her with non-congenital brain damage. Since then she has had difficulty concentrating. Through De Regenboog Groep, she found a financial helper: Wouter (70). He helps her to get her administration in order and to keep track of things. His weekly presence alone gives Linda the peace of mind she needs to sort things out. For example, she discovered that she was making double payments to an insurance company. By putting a stop to this, she now has more money to spend. Linda feels more confident and less stressed.

53.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

"In the beginning I asked my mate: what do you want to learn about digital? Not very helpful, because how can you know if you don't know what's on offer? Paul Ponten (68) is a digital buddy who helps Gert (64) become more digitally savvy. "Then I asked: what are your hobbies?" "I don't have any", he said. But in his house I saw a lot of records of bands from the 70s. On YouTube, I showed him a previously unknown song by his favourite band. It opened up his world. That is the beauty of this work. Everyone is capable of change, even if you are 64. It motivates me to continue with the project.



52.

MUSEUM BUDDIES

There are a lot of lonely people in Amsterdam. Match them with buddies. Volunteer Rhodé Klerks (52) was matched with Els Roelvink (69). Rhodé: "We both like to walk, drink coffee and visit museums. That makes us good buddies". Els lost her husband. She misses him very much and this led to a severe depression. She was admitted to a clinic and slowly recovered. Now she is doing better, partly because of the outings with her buddy. Rhodé herself is also happy with the company: "I have a lot of friends, but not many of them like museums. So for me, too, the trips are a complement."



54.

A SAFE PLACE

De Regenboog Groep organises a monthly Meet & Eat; a place where everyone can be themselves. At these evenings for LGBTQ+ refugees and their buddies, participants can meet other LGBTQ+ people while enjoying a meal.

Yassin from Iraq likes to come: "In the place where I live, a refugee center, I only see straight faces. I don't dare be myself there, because I'm afraid the residents will judge me for my orientation. Here, in the De Gravin community restaurant, I am with people who are like me. I feel free during the Meet & Eat evenings. I have fun and eat great."



Team Dobre020,
Raul upper left

STREET WORK IN THE PROMISED LAND

Dobre020 is a unique project in the Netherlands where teams of street workers and social workers go out together. Their strength: they speak the languages of most of the EU citizens stranded in Amsterdam. Raul Rosu is one of the team members: "We can give the proper assistance quickly because there is no language barrier."

Raul is an educated psychologist in Romania and has worked for more than 20 years in clinical and organisational psychology and social support. "We need to find out as quickly as possible why someone has ended up on the streets. And what do they need right now? Our methodology is based on Critical Time Intervention (CTI). This means that we stabilise the situation as quickly as possible. We do this by connecting these people with services they don't know exist or how to use. This could be anything from a drop-in center to a street doctor, a lawyer or a winter shelter. When the situation is stable, you start with a plan and put processes in place. Whether that is returning someone to their country of origin or helping with contracts or jobs.

LIFE ON THE STREETS

As well as the unfortunates described above who come here temporarily to work, there are others who are much harder to reintegrate. Raul: "There is also a group that earns a little by entertaining people on the street or by moving from job to job. They are used to the hard life on the streets and sleep wherever it is convenient: under a bridge or

in a tent somewhere. Unfortunately, dependency on various substances is common among this group. It's quite a challenge for us because you don't always know which drug is affecting their behaviour at the moment.

HELP FOR THE VULNERABLE

De Regenboog Groep cooperates with institutions that specialise in substance dependence, such as the general practice of Dr. Valkenier, the methadone programme of the GGD en Stichting Kruispst. And with hospitals, in case someone needs immediate medical care. Raul: "These people are even more vulnerable, with specific psychiatric and medical conditions. Interventions take longer. It often takes the combined efforts of many organisations to stabilise and support these people in need."

THE PROMISED LAND

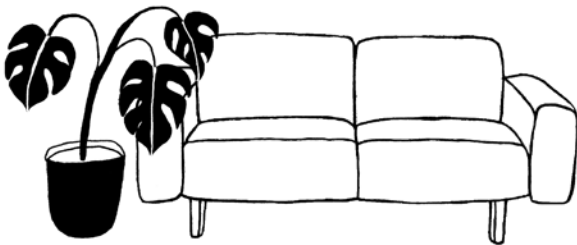
Many Europeans come to the Netherlands, which they often see as the promised land. Temporary employment agencies recruit people who want to work for little money, like in greenhouses and slaughterhouses. These agencies arrange transport and accommodation. The newcomers feel that the Netherlands is a civilised country, so their confidence is high. Raul Rosu: "But sometimes the employment agency loses the contract, or it turns out that there is only work for a few days and people are fired. Then they haven't earned anything. What to do then? They go to Amsterdam, hoping to find work there. And there you are, penniless, in a foreign country, and you end up on the streets. Those who are already a bit vulnerable will quickly disappear from the radar. So the sooner we find them, the sooner we can reintegrate them. That's our goal, and because of our unique approach, it works well.



56.

ALLOW SUBLETTING

Suddenly losing your home due to redundancy, bankruptcy or divorce can happen to anyone. In today's housing market, it is often very difficult to find shelter and peace to get your life back on track. That is why housing investor and landlord Vesteda has started a cooperation with Onder de Pannen. Vesteda tenants who have an extra room available can temporarily sublet it to a fellow citizen in need of housing. Onder de Pannen guarantees that the rent will be paid on time. In this way, the Vesteda tenant earns an extra penny, gets company and helps another Amsterdammer.



LIVING IN AN OFFICE

58.

We are turning every empty building we can get our hands on into temporary homes for people who are losing their homes due to circumstances. By 2023, the Bijzonder Bewoond project will have created 18 places to live in six buildings, including three private houses and an old office building. Preparations have also begun for the creation of 26 places in five locations, including a parish and two former nursing homes. The aim is to create a further 75 temporary housing places by 2024.



57.

RENTING ACCOMMODATION DURING RENOVATION OR DEMOLITION

In our Tijdelijk Onder Dak project, housing associations rent apartments to the growing number of economically homeless people. Before the companies renovate or demolish the houses, they rent them out for a few months to sometimes several years. Jacqueline van Ham, Director of Client & Housing at Stadgenoot until November 2023, explains why this approach works: "By offering people temporary accommodation, we give them the time and space to rebuild a stable living situation on their own. In addition, this project ensures that there is no additional pressure on the housing that Stadgenoot wants to keep available for regular unhoused people". By 2023, 134 economically homeless people will have received temporary accommodation through Tijdelijk Onder Dak.

59.

GOOD TIPS

Ric (63) has been living in an empty council house through Tijdelijk Onderdak since the end of 2023. Ric lost his home after his relationship of 29 years ended. His import business went bankrupt during the Corona Crisis. With no income, his chances of finding a place to live became slimmer and slimmer. For four years he slept on the sofa of friends and acquaintances. Now Ric sees hope on the horizon. "De Regenboog doesn't patronize me, but gives me good advice. For example, about voluntary work. I'm going back to work soon, but I want to continue doing voluntary work. It gives a good feeling."

60.

CLOTHING FOR REFUGEES

When you have to flee a war, you can't take much with you. The people who had to flee the Ukraine had very little clothing with them. Fortunately, Perry Sport and H&M Netherlands donated boxes full of men's, women's and children's clothes for the refugees in our shelters. De Regenboog Groep depends on donations like this and we are very grateful to these companies!



62.

DOCUMENTARY ON OUTDOOR SLEEPERS

Nightfall in Amsterdam. Hundreds of people are out looking for a safe place to spend the night. But how and where they sleep usually remains hidden. In the documentary *You Can't Sleep Here*, directed by Jelmer Wristers, the viewer spends the night with them. De Regenboog Groep made this documentary possible. The film premiered on Saturday 23 September 2023 at the Netherlands Film Festival and was nominated for the Golden Calf. "After watching this documentary, such an orphaned sleeping place has a face forever," wrote Tara Lewis in the VPRO documentary guide.

Watch the documentary:



61.

(UN)SOLICITED ADVICE

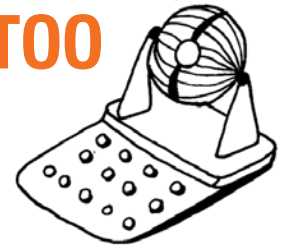
The Vrijwilligersraad (Volunteer Council) of De Regenboog Groep represents the interests of all volunteers and gives advice to the organisation, both solicited and unsolicited. The Volunteer Council consists of nine members. Topics they deal with include diversity among volunteers and the provision of informal care. In 2023, four new members joined the council.

Like Joyce Philippart: "I like to invest energy and time in representing and supporting volunteers. So that their needs are listened to and we can tell them what the organisation does for volunteers and those seeking help."

63.

THE COFFEE IS GREAT, TOO

In the summer of 2023, the kitchenette in the community center Het Claverhuis



was rebuilt into a spacious, shiny kitchen where good food can be prepared for large groups. The meeting room has also been transformed into a cosy, brown café with an unmistakably Jordanian atmosphere. The Claverhuis offers low-threshold access to (neighborhood-) care and services. But you can also go there for a bit of excitement and conversation. Gea (59) visits regularly. She has a lot of time and little friends, says Daphne Schat, coordinator of the Claverhuis. Gea likes to come there because "it's clean and cosy. You can sit comfortably and the people are nice. The coffee is great too."



64.

COMING HOME IN ZAANDAM



Patrick (34) from Zaandam is unhoused. He now visits the new Villa Westerweide shelter every day, which opened in Zaandam, in the summer of 2023. "I used to just wander around. Now I have somewhere to go."

His story continues after a puff on a cigarette and a sigh: "Last year my father, mother, grandfather, grandmother and stepfather died. All in one year. At one point I didn't know where to look. Then you make the wrong choices just to avoid



"The most important thing about a drop-in is that people can relax and pick up where they left off."

Bianca Koster, site manager



Read more about how the new open day came about here:

Day manager Laqeesha Boldewijn with a visitor at the entrance of the walk-in shelter

feeling. In other words: drugs. And it got worse and worse. Some people say it's understandable after what I've been through, but if I could change it, that's what I'd do. My relationship ended. I was living with her, so what are you going to do? I had no one. No safety net, nothing. I had money, I had worked as a roofer since I was seventeen. But it was more difficult than I thought, and if you don't have a place to sleep, you can't work. So I lost my job."

Not having a home causes a lot of stress. Patrick: "That's the nice thing about being here. You don't have to think about where to put your heart and soul. Here you can exchange your clothes for clean ones. It keeps you looking a bit better. Sometimes I help in the kitchen and we cook together. The nice thing here is that they don't always have an answer. They just listen. That's nice. I can speak my mind here."



65.

BIRD-WATCHING

Would you like to enjoy a group activity? Activities by De Regenboog Groep offer something for everyone, indoors or outdoors, in the pub or in a neighbourhood house, creative or culinary, cultural or sporting. You can participate with or without your buddy. For example, we went on a birdwatching excursion. Under the guidance of biologist, guide and enthusiastic birdwatcher Joris Buis, a group looked for special birds. Joris brought binoculars for all the participants and during the walk we saw and heard 28 species of birds.



66.

ATTENTION

At our neighbourhood restaurant, De Gravin, a lovely team of volunteers prepares a varied menu every week. Chef Katerina Charitopoulou, 64, may be Greek, but she cooks delicious dishes from all over the world, always keeping things fresh: a French stew, spicy harira or rice with sticky tofu. Katerina's secret is her attention. One of the regulars says: "She makes sure that all the dishes go together. It's like a restaurant: flowers on the table, candles lit. And she always makes sure that everyone is having a good time". Katerina: "I like to see happy faces. And I know that food brings people together. That's why I enjoy using my love of cooking."

67.

SHOPPING TRIP

Living on a shoestring can be very stressful. How do you keep track of your finances, where can you get help and what governmental support can you use? What can you save on? How can you eat cheap and healthily? These are the questions addressed in our Op Eigen Kracht training courses. Eddie (43) attended the course: "The free shopping trip was great. It was also nice to exchange tips and help each other." Isa learned to stand up for herself during the training. Now that she has more confidence, one of the steps she took was to sign up as a volunteer.



68.

ENJOYING YOUR WORK

KEES is a logistics company that employs people for whom it is difficult to find work through the traditional routes. KEES offers both jobs and learning possibilities. Hugo (54) likes working there: "I became homeless years ago and couldn't find a job either. Through De Regenboog I was able to start working for KEES. At that time I also had some paid work for a while through a temporary employment agency. Unfortunately, I couldn't keep up the pace. KEES offered a solution. With 'work according to wage value' I was able to get paid work. I am still working there and feel very much at home."



69.

RECOVERY FESTIVAL

At the Amsterdam Herstelfestival (Recovery Festival) on September 28, people engaged in a conversation about the future of recovery and mental health in Amsterdam. There was also an information market showcasing the range of recovery activities and initiatives in the city. There are long waiting lists at the GGZ. Fortunately, there are also many low-threshold services where many experienced professionals work. The festival was organised by several organisations, including De Regenboog Groep.



71.

BULL'S-EYE

Six months ago, Tom (34) became buddy of 71-year-old Otmar. Otmar had no home and no smartphone. He also found it difficult to manage things digitally. It was a big challenge for him to respond to houses online every week. Tom helped him to find a home by responding weekly on Woningnet. After six months, Otmar got a house; he was given priority because he is over 65. The house turned out to be around the corner from his family and friends - a perfect match! Because Tom spent a few minutes a week looking for houses on Otmar's behalf, he was able to contribute to his search. When Otmar received the key, Tom visited him to celebrate.

70.

A HOUSE AFTER EIGHT YEARS OF HOMELESSNESS



An income but no home. Denny had an above-average income but still ended up homeless. "I was self-employed and had bought a house by the water. Then my ex and I split up. We had been together for 20 years. I ended up in a big grey area. Because I was paying alimony, I ended up in the social rent category. And there are very long waiting lists. For the free sector you have to have a high income. I was homeless for eight years. I stayed at friends, acquaintances, in my van, on the street". Through Onder de Pannen, Denny was able to legally sublet a room for a year. It gave him peace of mind. And it gave him the time to respond fanatically to houses, which eventually made it possible to find a place to rent.

72.

FIGHTING STIGMA

"A homeless person in the house? Does he take his shopping trolley with him?" Yes, really. We received this question from someone who called us, in response to an ad to rent a room to an economically homeless person. Even people from the target group themselves do not always identify themselves as homeless, because they usually sleep on a couch or on a campsite. Not much can be done about the term, but the image can. And the Temporary Housing and STED teams worked hard on this. We really shook every tree we came across. As a result, we got a lot of media attention, in which our target group had a say. We're hearing back that it is great that the taboo is being broken and the stigmatising image is being adjusted.



73.

PARTICIPATION STARTS WITH LANGUAGE

"I can finally understand my child's homework," says the woman we teach in our language classes. Or we are told that someone has taken the tram for the first time". This is Sanne Berlemon, regional coordinator of het Amsterdams Buurvrouwen Contact (Amsterdam Neighbourhood Women Contact). Together with her colleague Summar Swidan, she matches volunteers with foreign-speaking women who are unable to take language classes outside. They do not speak Dutch, and some are illiterate. They are housebound because of small children, single or with a partner. The children are not yet in pre-school and there is no money for childcare, for example.

Staying at home creates a spiral of problems: loneliness, dependency and all kinds of mental health problems. "We see it all," says Swidan. She knows from personal experience how important it is to speak the language. She came to the Netherlands from Egypt, 27 years ago. She wanted to master the language first, so she was able to support her school-age children much better.

Berlemon: "By learning the language, one learns about the world outside our four walls. Your self-confidence grows. You dare to go to the supermarket or the doctor on your own". She immediately adds a nuance: "It's not just our language course. Often there are several paths that the women take with us. Then everything comes together and you see enormous changes. The women dare to leave their homes, become fully integrated, go to the community center and watch het Jeugdjournaal (news for the young) with

AMSTERDAMS BUURVROUWEN CONTACT

Since mid-2023, Amsterdams Buurvrouwen Contact (ABC) has been part of De Regenboog Groep. Both organisations focus on supporting people who are (temporarily) in a vulnerable situation. The organisations have already been working together; with this transition, ABC's services are guaranteed for the future.

125

In 2023, 125 volunteers of Amsterdams Buurvrouwen Contact reached out

Find out more
about ABC:



their children for the first time. I have also heard of a woman who has become a housemother at her children's school, even though her Dutch was not yet perfect. That is also the aim. Once you get out into society and make contacts, you are less dependent on your husband or daughter, who always has to interpret. You can discover your own talent. Otherwise, all that talent is lost, whereas there is something in everyone!"



74.

TREATING

As well as brewing delicious beer, Brewdog Brewery is committed to helping other

Amsterdam residents. On 18 October, they provided a great lunch for visitors to the drop-in center and participants in informal care. Brewdog invited 20 people to lunch at their new location at Amsterdam Central Station. Everyone enjoyed the delicious food and the hospitality.



75.

TO SEE AND BE SEEN

Mohamed was unhoused, confused and neglected. He had lost his teeth. At Huis van de Wijk De Meeuw, he started working in the kitchen and received help from social work. Now, a year later, he comes in with a big smile. In addition to temporary accommodation and structural day care, his teeth are now being taken care of. Driess was also unhoused and had a dependency on hard drugs. He got clean, supported kickboxing classes at De Meeuw and started TOED training: Training Opleiding ErvaringsDeskundigheid (Training Experience Expertise). Dominique was living in isolation, in a dirty house. She had little or no contact with her family. Since receiving support and day care at De Meeuw, her son says he is so happy to have his mother back.

76.

THE HOMELESS PARTY

How cool was the Homeless Party! Every year this party is organised specifically for those experiencing homelessness in the city. Last year's theme was "Kijk me Aan" (Look me in the eye). This is because many unhoused people experience that they are often ignored or not even looked at. On the one hand, the theme was a personal call for everyone to look at each other again. It's also a call to the system we live in: don't look away from the problems in society. The party was organised by the Protestant Diaconate Amsterdam in cooperation with Homebass. De Regenboog Groep made a partial contribution to the party.

77.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

De Regenboog Groep is committed to a diversity policy with regard to our pool of employees and volunteers. Bureau Seba Cultural Management supports us in these efforts. Working on diversity remains a spearhead for the organisation, especially cultural diversity. It is a topic that requires constant mutual discussion and a lot of attention to image building. For example, what are we showing with the choice of photos in our communications? Are we not excluding anyone? Are certain images not unconsciously stigmatising? We want to show that we are here for all Amsterdam residents. For example, we encourage people from non-Western migrant backgrounds, diverse gender identities and people with lived experience to apply.

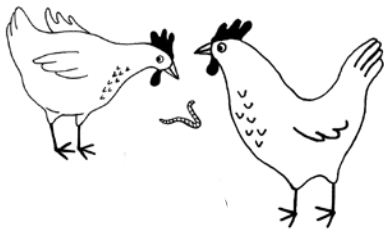


78.

TO MATTER



Every year, Inloophuis Princehof organises a thank you-evening for the visitors who work in the day care center. Without them we could not run the center. On the Thank You evening we cook delicious food and dance together to requested songs. It's a success every year. Wendy Broekhof, Site Manager: "We often hear from volunteers that it gives them a sense of accomplishment: to be able to work and do something for other people when you yourself are struggling. One nice statement was: 'Helping at the drop-in center makes me forget that I'm homeless for a while.'"



80.

HOMELY ATMOSPHERE

Sputten en Slikken, an educational tv-show of BNNVARA, visited our walk-in center Blaka Watra for a day. The two stars of the show, Emma Wortelboer and Ralph de Boer, were accompanied by the day's coordinator, Esmeralda Feringa. Their tasks: registering people, making the shower schedule, preparing lunch and getting the chickens into the coop. Ralph says he was expecting a more somber atmosphere, but this was not the case. Esmeralda: "I think it's because of the staff. We try to create a really homely atmosphere for our visitors. Because they don't find that on the street." Emma and Ralph also visited the drug consumption room and talked about the harm reduction policy of De Regenboog Groep.



See article here:



79.

HARM REDUCTION

Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN), hosted by De Regenboog Groep, was established in 2004 and focuses on drug use, harm reduction and social inclusion. Organisations and individuals can join the network, which now has more than 180 organisational members from more than 40 countries. The network aims to improve the quality of life of vulnerable groups, such as people who use drugs, sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS or hepatitis C. The network organises seminars and trainings, develops manuals for working with vulnerable groups and informs policymakers about developments in practice. In 2023, Correlation launched a manual on what is involved in setting up a drug consumption room. What exactly is a drug consumption room? Who is responsible for it? Who can you expect in your drug consumption room?

You can read the manual here:



81.

PARTICIPATION

De Bezoekersraad (Board of visiting clients) of De Regenboog Groep represents the interests of the visiting, unhoused clients of the Drop-in Centers. They meet on the last Monday of every month. Participation at De Regenboog is not even close to a sham. What the council suggests is actually listened to. "Otherwise we can't move forward," says administrator/director Hans Wijnands. He gives a few examples of what the Visitors' Council has negotiated. "One has to do with the role of the suspension committee. In the case of long-term suspensions, a member of the Visitors' Council takes a critical look: How is a suspension handled? Is the sanction justified? The members of the visitors' council have also managed to have the opening hours of the drop-in centers evaluated twice a year.



82.

A FINANCIAL BONUS



Divorce, job loss or extreme rent increases by landlords. In Amsterdam alone, thousands of people have lost their homes due to circumstances. With nowhere to go, due to the housing shortage.

These people move from couch to couch, or sleep in their cars. It is an inhumane situation that creates enormous stress and feelings of shame and failure. It increases the risk of long-term homelessness and mental and physical health problems.



"Besides a financial bonus, it was a fun experience."

Vincent, Landlord

"Economically homeless people seem to have a high chance of getting their lives back on track within a year, according to research by Wageningen University & Research (WUR). It's vital they have a safe place to live or stay during that year. Without the daily stress of finding a decent place to sleep, these people can find sustainable housing again. Temporary housing is therefore important in preventing a downward spiral."

SOURCE: MOVISIE



Help us find more rooms by sharing this video:



Let's fight this together. There is room in the city. So many people have room to spare. Through the project of Onder de Pannen, they can make the difference between spiraling down and rebuilding for someone else, in just a year.

Vincent jumped at the opportunity and rented a room to Tom. Vincent knew what to expect. Onder de Pannen handles and guarantees payment of rent and there is a guide for the tenant, in the search for a follow-up accommodation. Vincent: "You can state your preferences in advance for the

matching process. And so can the tenant. We met with a project manager a few times. Only if both parties are enthusiastic, the process continues. Both agree on the house rules and sign a temporary lease". Vincent is definitely considering renting out again through Onder de Pannen after the first year. "I can really recommend it to everyone, because apart from the financial benefits, it was a fun experience."

83.

KIND!

There are many ways in which a company can support De Regenboog Groep. Some examples from 2023: The employees of the data company Tencent came and brought a mountain of collected good clothes and shoes to our new AMOC-West drop-off center. Faire Oosten made special collection bins for clothes and sleeping bags. Pastry chef Dick from Bakkerij van Leeuwen provided bread and other goodies. UNIQLO donated around 2,000 items of used clothing and 1,000 items of thermal underwear. And Informa Connect, another data company, came with 48 bags containing scarfs, hats, foil blankets, gloves and socks. These were specifically meant for unhoused people living on the streets. Each bag had a personal, kind message written on it.

For more inspiration:



84.

FEELING USEFUL

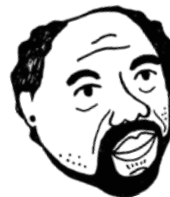
"Our added value is to make people more independent. In our drop-in centers, we support people who need help. People who used to be chased around the park in Zaandam now have a place where they can feel at home and useful. They are acknowledged and can participate. This is what these people often lack. With an enthusiastic team, we are working hard to give them that. For the first time, De Regenboog Groep is doing this outside Amsterdam. It's exciting, but it doesn't feel like pioneering. We have obviously been doing this work for a while, we know the target group and we can draw on all the knowledge we have."

Bianca Koster, Site Manager Villa Westerweide

86.

HELP ON THE STREET

Social worker Agata Rybus, originally from Poland, has been living in the Netherlands for two years. First she worked in the shelter for Ukrainian refugees, now she is part of Dobre020. This outreach team focuses on Eastern European citizens without a permanent residence permit. They come from countries like Hungary, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Agata: "It is difficult for this group to find their way in the system of reception, care and insurance. My four colleagues and I are happy to help. We go out into the streets, parks and meeting places in Amsterdam. This active approach is necessary because many people do not seek help on their own."



TEN LANGUAGES 85.

At our drop-in center in Oud-West, counsellor Volkan Caliskan meets visitor Samir for an intake interview. The adventurous Samir's life has been full of bumps and obstacles, sometimes causing him to lose his way. Due to various events, he lost his home. Samir starts at Colors Laundry, where people from all backgrounds work. Samir speaks up to ten languages. His language skills are very useful and welcome in this place. Now Samir has a place in social care with the prospect of moving on to his own home. Asked by Volkan about the importance of his job, Samir says: "It's a source of balance and structure in the midst of chaos. It's a chance to reintegrate into society, to be part of something bigger than yourself."

87.

50 LAPTOPS



88.

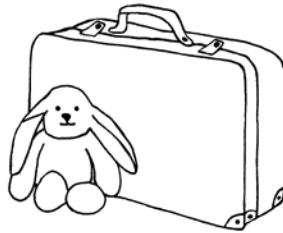
CREATIVE AND DETERMINED

Everaert Advocaten donated €5,000 to our Digimaatjes project. The co-founder of Everaert Advocaten, Carl Everaert, was a very involved Digimaatje (a volunteer who helps out with computers, smartphones and governmental websites) until his death in 2023: he was active in the project as a volunteer. De Regenboog Groep was able to purchase 50 laptops from the donation, thanks in part to good cooperation with the supplier Allemaal Digitaal. Smartphones and laptops have become indispensable in today's society. But the opportunities offered by the Internet are often not available to those who need them most. Informally called 'Digibeten' (Digibetics, originally a wordplay, now commonly used) are often poorly educated, have low literacy levels and live in poverty. With the purchase of laptops and smartphones and the support of a Digimaatje, we are helping these vulnerable Amsterdam residents to find their way in the digital world - and thus in the real world.

Rutger Groot Wassink, alderman for Social Affairs and Reception (GroenLinks): "Amsterdam without De Regenboog? I don't want to think about it, honestly. If the organisation didn't exist, it would have to be invented. De Regenboog Groep is creative and decisive and plays a crucial role as a cooperation partner for the municipality. We also saw this with the reception of Ukrainian refugees, where we worked closely together. Thanks to the work of De Regenboog, people who are in dire straits can regain some perspective in their lives, for example because they can go to the winter shelter or move into a room with a fellow citizen who has a room to spare."

89.

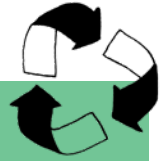
SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN NEED



The Marcus Fund donated €10,000 to the Parentshouse project. This enabled us to house eighteen parents and thirty children in six Parents Houses in 2023. A Parentshouse is a solution for parents who are divorced or divorcing. These are situations where the welfare of the children is compromised because the parents are unable to live apart due to a lack of affordable housing. A Parentshouse provides accommodation for one of the parents in a rented house where a total of three parents can stay for up to a year. There are also guest rooms for the children. Parents who use a parents' house live close to their ex-partner. In this way, both parents are able to have a good co-parenting relationship and the children get peace of mind.

90.

CO2 NEUTRAL



On 5 December 2023, the collaboration between De Regenboog Collection and De Regenboog Groep (and yes, the similarity in names is purely coincidental) will be launched. This impact agency will help us pro bono in the coming period to make De Regenboog more sustainable. The aim is to become carbon neutral by 2030. Meanwhile, preparations are made to install solar panels on a fourth building. The Christmas gift for employees was also about sustainability: a slow cooker to cook without gas. And good rain clothing to be well protected on the bicycle. Wherever we were unable to make structural changes to buildings, we took measures to save energy.



91.

5 YEARS OF VILLA BUITENLUST

Villa Buitenlust is an oasis of peace. It is situated in Westerpark, hidden among the trees. People come here to recharge and relax, but also to train, work or celebrate. The villa is (partially) available for rent. In 2023 we celebrated the fifth anniversary of Villa Buitenlust.

People with a problematic home situation or psychological vulnerability can stay here to relax. Villa Buitenlust is characterised by its preventive care - preventing an increase in vulnerability - with the aim of returning people to their own life and structure on a permanent basis. There is also accommodation for people who are supported at home, so that the stay also relieves the network or carer.

Edwin (45) is a regular guest. "The villa gives me peace, even though there is lots going on. During the day there are all kinds of meetings. You hear it, but you don't notice it. At Villa Buitenlust you don't have to do anything. That is the most important thing. I allow myself to be tired and spend the first two days lying on my bed, half asleep, mostly relaxing. In the evening I go for a walk in the countryside. Sometimes I talk to others. Everyone has their own story. Some talk more easily than others, but the group always feels good. Of course, that has everything to do with feeling safe in the villa."



THE TEAM

Villa Buitenlust is staffed by employees, volunteers and people in a work trajectory. It is this team that makes the social enterprise run: they do the work in and around the villa and help with events and activities. Villa Buitenlust has one main resident each year. This is a volunteer who sleeps in the villa and also has responsibilities and tasks there. And every six weeks there is a different artist in residence. This artist stays and works for two weeks in exchange for a workshop for the residents and a work of art for Villa Buitenlust.

**"I feel safe in
Villa Buitenlust."**

Edwin (45), guest



All opportunities
and activities can
be found at:



CONFIDENCE

92.

As coordinator of the Buddy Project, Btissam Aoulad Said matches newcomers with volunteers. She sees an improvement in the participants' situation. "A mother of four very young children was under a lot of stress after her divorce and was very insecure. She did not take good care of herself. With the help of a volunteer, she started exercising. She started to pay more attention to her diet. Now she has more self-confidence and looks healthier! And a nineteen-year-old boy living on the *Galaxy* (a cruise ship with 1,500 asylum seekers) learned a lot about Dutch society through contact with his buddy. He now has a part-time job in a supermarket. He goes with his buddy to the library, to the NT2 section, to practice Dutch. They learn from each other's cultures, which is nice to see.

AN ENRICHMENT

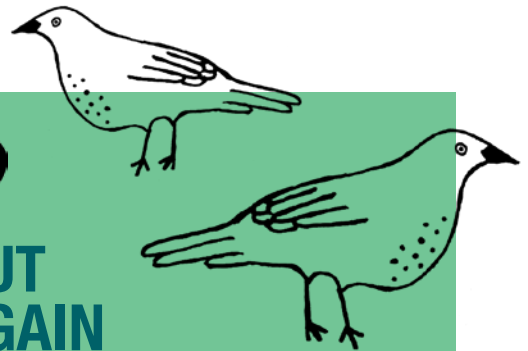
94.

Julia (28) is one of 125 volunteers of Amsterdams Buurbrouwen Contact (Amsterdam Neighborhood Women Contact / ABC) and teaches Winta (28) from Eritrea every week. Julia: "We both said that we were looking for someone who was a little bit our age. For me it was important that she lived in my neighborhood. The classes help Winta prepare for her integration exam. Meanwhile, Julia is also learning from Winta. "I was invited to Winta's house for Orthodox Easter. This celebration is different from Easter in Holland, a week later and with different traditions. These experiences enrich our conversations and lessons.

93.

NICE DRIVERS

Gina de Wit, coordinator Informele Zorg (Informal Care), noticed that some participants have many problems with transport. They only go where their mobility scooter can take them. The distance to a bus or train station, shops or an activity is sometimes too big. Special transport from the RMC (taxi service as addition on public transport) isn't always available, due to understaffing. Gina, with the help of a volunteer, looked for drivers and started a pilot project. There are now five drivers who are willing to use their own cars to pick up and drop off our participants. This could be to a hospital appointment or to one of De Regenboog Groep's activities, such as the chess club or the Connect Café.



95.

OUT AGAIN

Richard (36) had a lot of trouble picking up his 'new' life after he stopped smoking cannabis. He no longer sees his old friends because they are still smoking. The isolation Richard found himself in, made it increasingly difficult to go out on his own and meet people. With the support of his buddy Anna, Richard has regained his confidence in people. They now go out together. In the meantime, Richard has also taken up his old hobbies again.

96.

18.5 MILLION EUROS

The city of Amsterdam is allocating a total of €18.5 million extra until 2026 for support, shelter and housing for homeless people in the city. Two drop-in centers for homeless people in the city will be added. Additional centers are urgently needed. There are still no drop-in centers in Nieuw West, Zuidoost and Amsterdam-Noord districts. We notice that the queues at the other drop-in centers are getting longer. Transformatorweg already has 54 beds for vulnerable EU citizens and undocumented migrants. There will be 26 beds added. In addition to this expansion for EU citizens, 30 beds for homeless families will be added. Funding will also be made available for housing and counselling for the economically homeless.

Read more:



97.

VEGGIE SOUP AND KARAOKE



Carola Schouten, Minister for Poverty Policy, Participation and Pensions, was a guest

at the Christmas party at the Makom drop-in center. She enjoyed house made vegetable soup and sang karaoke. But most of all, she mingled with professionals, volunteers and people who could use a helping hand because of debt, poverty or other setbacks. The Minister: "Let us always keep in mind: who are we doing this for and what do they need? Every day in the Netherlands, an incredible amount of work is done by people who care about others. And for that I would like to thank them all very much". Kathleen Denkers, manager of the Makom drop-in center: "The Minister is not the real VIP today, the visitors, staff and volunteers are. She is coming to visit us. And we will show her how well we can throw a party!"

SOCKS AND HATS

98.



Tobias de Haan is a documentary filmmaker and photographer who has been working closely with De Regenboog Groep for some time. Last year he made a short film about drop-in center De Kloof, where he's also a volunteer. Recently he made a film about loneliness in the city. We asked Tobias to shoot the cover photo for our quarterly magazine, Meeleven. He took a beautiful portrait of Susan, a fellow volunteer as well as a scribe, for the Kloof council. This council represents (the interests of) (unhoused) visitors to the drop-in center. Together, Tobias and Susan decided to donate the money they earned to De Kloof to buy socks and hats for visitors.

Watch Tobias' latest film about loneliness and buddies "In Gesprek Met Maatjes" on YouTube:



99.

CELEBRATION

We were looking for more Aardige Amsterdammers and we found them. Equipped with a majestic throne and a shower of colours, we took to the streets twice in December 2023 to applaud everyone who does something nice for someone else. We didn't have to look far: we can easily do this every day without running out of Aardige Amsterdammers. After our call to action in December, 30 fewer people are lonely, thanks to the same number of people signing up as buddies. At the same time, hundreds of generous donors provided more than €60,000 to help Amsterdam's estimated 17,000 unhoused people. At our drop-in centers, they can eat, shower, exchange dirty clothes for clean ones, talk to social workers and warm up a bit.

100.

**HOW ARE YOU
ROLLING?**

**PROVIDING A WARM HAT OR A SMILE?
SHARING ROOM OR MONEY?
ATTENTION OR TIME?**

ALL HELP IS WELCOME!



**DE REGENBOOG
GROEP**