

Für Sie, 05/18/2004

HOPE FROM THE OCEAN

The 43 year old founder of the support organization dolphin aid has fought for 10 years continuously and with great success against all critics. When everything started she often stood in front of her bathroom cabinet thinking that the sleeping pills would be enough for her and her son, and that her little daughter was still young enough to get used to a new mummy.

Meanwhile Kirsten Kuhnert wrote books about her new life, her two children and dolphin therapy, which freed her from her hopelessness. As charity lady she developed into a media expert, who very often is invited to talk shows. Next to her sit women like Ute Lemper and Desire Nosbusch, fighting with tears, since all mothers are thinking about their own children when Kirsten Kuhnert tells her story.

June 18, 1994: Family Kuhnert celebrates the baptism of their newborn daughter Kira at a golf club. Her brother Tim, two ears older, falls into an unused pool, still filled knee-deep with water. When found, he is clinically dead. Sirens, emergency doctors, intensive care. The two year old survives, but falls into a waking coma. The cruel comment of one of the doctors to Mrs. Kuhnert: "Just forget about it. Tim will never walk, swallow, talk or smell again. Maybe he'll go blind. The child will not even know that you are his mother".

In the first days after the accident, Kirsten Kuhnert thought a lot about dying. She felt left alone by the doctors treating her son. "For them my son was reduced to a syndrome. Tim was no longer Tim, but the condition after the drowning accident". Kirsten Kuhnert herself was a case for a shrink - a mother unable to accept reality.

Many doctors and friends said that Kirsten Kuhnert was acting unrealistically when flying with her family to Florida so Tim could attend dolphin therapy. Hardly anybody wanted to believe what happened in the bay in Key Largo. Kirsten Kuhnert: "I was holding my child in the warm water. A dolphin approached, searching contact with my son. After 1-1/2 years in a waking coma, he came back to life with a loud laugh." To avoid misunderstandings: Tim, now 12 years old, is still severely handicapped. He is in a wheelchair. He cannot talk, but he communicates. He loves it when his mother or sister read to him. He loves audio tapes. He can communicate what he likes and dislikes, can nod his head and talk with his eyes. Compared to what doctors predicted, this is nearly a miracle. And of course he knows that Kirsten Kuhnert is his mother. Key Largo is not Lourdes. The blinds are not starting to see. The paralyzed people are not starting to walk. The sick ones are not getting healthy immediately. But they get hope. Some doctors are still behaving like dolphin aid would be voodoo. But why can parents of special needs children not just try to find new courage? School medicine is important but it is not everything.

A two weeks stay in Florida costs approximately 10.000.00 Euro - 12.000.00 Euro. These costs are for a family of four, including flight, rental car and accommodation. Kirsten Kuhnert defends these high costs since a lot of therapists, psychologists and assistants are standing by. It is also important for the healing process that parents and siblings participate as well.

When Tim's accident happened, Kirsten Kuhnert was a successful business woman in Dusseldorf, Germany. She ended up pawning her jewelry in order to fly to Florida once a year. In order for dolphin therapy to be affordable to more than just top-earning people, Kirsten Kuhnert founded the organization dolphin aid. Since then she has collected 10 millions Euro in donations to help families with sick children financially. Down syndrome, epilepsy, cancer, multiple sclerosis and many more.

Behavioral scientists from the university in Munich proved that the positive effect on various illnesses is verifiable and this continues even over a long term. Kirsten Kuhnert believes that the effect has to do with the sonar system of the dolphins. The progresses that certain children are making could hardly be imagined before.

Dolphin therapy in Europe: Kirsten Kuhnert's new goal is to implement a therapy center in Europe, where dolphins can swim freely in a bay and the medical assistance for the sick ones is guaranteed. There is one such facility in Eilat, Israel. However, the ocean there is pretty cold. Thus Kirsten Kuhnert dreams about a bay in Spain or Croatia. With mirrors warming the water. "Some say it can not be done, but I am not giving up that fast," says Kirsten Kuhnert.

Dolphin therapy: Who may profit from it? Most patients are between 3 and 12 years old and suffer from severe mental or physical impairment. In Florida, such illnesses as cancer are also being treated.

Book recommendation: Kirsten Kuhnert's book: "Dolphin therapy: Proof of a miracle".