

International long-term voluntary service with Friedenskreis Halle e.V.  
profile place of assignment (POA) within the program: weltwärts



## S.C.H.I.R.M.-Project

<http://www.jw-frohe-zukunft.de/bereiche/schirm>



“Schirm” in German means umbrella. The S.C.H.I.R.M.-Project in Halle is visited by people who “sing a bit differently” as it is expected in our society because of their different life situations and experiences. They often had experience of being excluded or branded. 80% of our visitors live from social transfers and 38% have grown outside the parental home.

The aim of our project is to support socially disadvantaged youth as well as homeless people welcoming them in the friendly atmosphere of our house and offer low-threshold services. The people who visit S.C.H.I.R.M.-project can stay there, take a shower, wash their cloths, get a hot meal and use our computers. They can talk with social pedagogues, tell their personal stories and develop some common life perspectives. Many people come back again and again, because for some of them our center is like their second home. We often observe how these young people proudly bring their friends into the house and show them “their home”. Nevertheless, we do not want to be the end-stop for our visitors, but instead according to the guideline “I am allowed to be who I am and will be who I can be” (Jorge Bucay). We accompany and support them a bit on their way. Our work is a quiet success: we help many our visitors to get education, others succeed in keeping their little family together while some of them see us as a springboard into a drug-free life.

### Field of engagement and activities of the volunteer within place of assignment

The voluntary service at this poa mainly is open social work with disadvantaged youth!

The volunteer either supports the “Anlaufstelle” and/or the “Bürgertreff”. - currently only Anlaufstelle

### Drop-in center (german: “Anlaufstelle”)

The drop-in center has fixed opening hours from Monday to Friday (11-14.00, 15-18.00 and 17-20.00) in which the staff – including the volunteer – is present as a contact person for our visitors in the house and to provide a normal problem-free daily run. The visitors of the center change from one day to the next one.



Activities of the volunteer:

- to be a contact person for the visitors
- household activities for a problem-free daily run during the opening hours
- work in the form of supervision and consultation by agreement
- holding and support outdoor events such as billiard tournament, table tennis, theater, cinema

### Neighborhood center - "Bürgertreff"



The Bürgertreff is a place for the residents of our city in the Freimfelde district, in the east part of Halle. It is an additional integrative offer to a family, school and social environment for children, youth and their parents. The neighborhood center is aimed at people who are in a difficult situation, such as unemployment, modest means or family tensions. The offers of the center are primarily everyday practical help, the provision of a warm lunch meal and support for homework in the open leisure time.

#### Activities of the volunteer:

- to be a contact person for the visitors
- household activities such as doing preparations for lunch
- playing with children, handicrafts, homework support etc.
- preparation and holding of events, celebrations

#### Please be aware:

- You may work afternoon hours and weekends!
- In the past there had been single quite challenging, e.g. right-wing-orientated or aggressive, clients – The poa knows about that and will support you!
- There are lots of clients who do not speak english – and at the same time also clients who do not speak German (migrants)!

#### Volunteers profile – Specific for this place of assignment

"I want you listen to me without judging me." (Jorge Bucay)

- at least 23 years old
- open and respectful attitude towards people with different backgrounds, different ways of life
- openness to socially disadvantaged and homeless people
- willingness to work independently, create and bring own ideas
- Social and political interest and engagement

The volunteer is accompanied by a permanent mentor for the whole time and gets regular individual interviews to share his/ her experiences, give reflection, regularly takes part in team discussions, colleague individual consultations, qualifications etc.

#### Volunteers profile – General

- weltweit: 18 to 28 years (exceptions can be made, when reasonable), EVS: 18-30 years
- school graduation or comparable personal suitability
- basic knowledge of English and willingness to learn German starting in home country
- motivation: voluntary service as an opportunity to learn in different fields and to get involved with civil society (voluntary service as learning and peace service)
- openness to the special structure of a voluntary service with Friedenskreis Halle: We defined four „service related activities“ we expect next to the work in the place of assignment:

- (a) Participation in the accompanying educational program
- (b) Implementation of at least one own project
- (c) Occupation with and engagement in topics and activities of (local) civil society and
- (d) Learning German in depth
  - willingness to get involved in civil society after the service

## reports of former volunteers

### Milica, 2022-23



*"Schirm is a place where diversity is celebrated, and creating a safe and welcoming environment for everyone is essential. As someone who has worked there, I can attest to the challenges and rewards of being in such an environment."*

*"During my time at Schirm, I experienced both professional and personal growth. It helped me to develop my social skills, expand my perspective, practice patience and tolerance, and learn to appreciate different viewpoints. Working with a team of dedicated professionals to create a safe and inclusive space has been incredibly fulfilling. The positive feedback from visitors and seeing the impact of our work on their lives has been a source of inspiration."*

*"One of the most valuable lessons I learned at Schirm is the importance of empathy and understanding. Every visitor comes with their own story and unique experiences, and by actively listening and empathizing, we can create a space where they feel valued and understood. This approach has not only helped me to provide better service, but it has also allowed me to develop meaningful connections with the visitors and my colleagues."*

*"Working at Schirm has given me a broader perspective on social work. I realized that creating a safe and inclusive space goes beyond providing physical resources. It is about building relationships, trust, and fostering an environment where everyone feels seen and supported."*

*"Overall, my experience at Schirm has been immensely rewarding. It has pushed me out of my comfort zone, allowed me to develop new skills, and helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such a passionate and dedicated team, and I look forward to continuing to learn and grow in this unique and inspiring environment."*

### Milos, 2017-18

Here are pictures from my POA, some info from my experience and [a link to the official video](#).

SCHIRM Projekt, as a volunteer's place of assignment, is a social house dedicated for youth under the age of 27. Most of the guests that come here are socially and economically disadvantaged young people with



various background stories. In terms of nationality, it is a very diverse place. Here, guests can have a warm meal, take some food with them, wash and dry clothes, take some second-hand clothes (which SCHIRM gets as

a donation, mostly from locals), use gym in the basement, play pool, table tennis, some board games or just drink a cup of coffee while chatting with other guests. It is volunteer's and other social workers' job to keep the record of guests by writing their ID's number in the "presence book", talking with guests and advising them with some issues in their life, helping them fill out some bureaucratic forms, supervising guests' usage of the house's inventory (like wash machines, computers, guitar, gym, second-hand wardrobe, etc.) or simply playing with them.

Working here can be a real pleasure, as coworkers are very nice and inclusive, many guests are quite friendly and the general atmosphere is relaxed and without tensions.

It's good to know that some friction can occur with and among guests, but it is rare. In these situations it is best to calmly, but firmly, stand your ground and act as a team with your coworkers.

SCHIRM is a great place to practice your German language skills (sometimes other languages too), get a real picture of problems in Germany and of the way locals deal with them, learn about German culture and customs, advance your social skills, contribute to society as a volunteer and have many valuable experiences.

Best regards,  
Milos