

Inauguration of a local UPF Chapter in the Eastern area of Austria, Burgenland

Peter Haider - June 5, 2019

On June 5th, 2019 a local branch of UPF-Austria was inaugurated in Parndorf, a small city in the eastern part of Austria, Burgenland. Johann & Yoon Ja Rechberger, who had moved to their hometown 18 years ago, built a stable foundation with the local community by developing a Nordic Walking club and involving themselves in the local political work. The inauguration of UPF was supported by several local City Counsellors, Members of the Nordic Walking Club and other Clubs of the town.

The place of the inauguration was a former barn which had been rebuilt as a market place where local people sell their bio products once a week.

The program was opened by energetic dances of the local children's - and youth rock group *Hot Rock Dancers* followed by Anela Cindrak and her sister Dzejlja, who played beautiful melodies on the violin and the harmonica.



Johann Rechberger, the host, welcomed everyone and moderated the Program. He gave an Introduction on UPF as an international NGO and its founders. He also gave a forecast of future activities of UPF in Parndorf. One of the planned projects is *Peace Road 2019* in autumn.

Peter Haider, UPF president of Austria, gave an explanation of activities in Vienna. He spoke about Interreligious Conferences in the UN in Vienna commemorating the Interfaith Harmony week, on cultural exchange events and on Peace building projects like the Horn of Africa Peace Initiative.

The next topic of the evening was “1989-2019: **“The Green Belt along the former Iron Curtain”**”.

Mag. Barbara Grabner gave the presentation. As a journalist and former co-worker of the “Club for the protection of nature” she was able to explain that along the former Iron Curtain nature had recovered and developed in an unexpected way, like many plant- and animal species which had almost been extinct in Europe, could recover there and accrete again. It was very inspiring to see photographs of beautiful plants and animals which could flourish because humans were not allowed to enter the Iron Curtain zone. Nowadays, Mrs. Grabner is organizing excursions to some of the most beautiful places near the Austrian-Slovak border, places that were a no-go zone during the communist rule.

The president of the Club for the protection of Nature, Dr. Michalek added more facts to Mag. Grabner's presentation.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Rechberger appealed to the participants to sign a petition against building more highways in the area around Parndorf which would destroy more precious nature on the Green Belt.

The significance of the event was that it was supported by the local politicians and several clubs, which will enable Mr. Rechberger to expand UPF's work on a local level.



