



moments of hope - **augenblicke der hoffnung**

Sparkling Start with Plenty of VIPs

On 14 May, a new charity project for the benefit of visually impaired children and youths was launched. The project **moments of hope** will be based at the private clinic ZIRM headed by Dr. Mathias Zirm and supported by the ORF campaign LICHT INS DUNKEL to improve the difficult life of visually impaired children in Austria.

Numerous celebrities from the areas of politics, art, sciences, and business supported the charity activities of the private clinic ZIRM. The Vienna archbishop Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, chancellor Dr. Alfred Gusenbauer, and ministers Dr. Schmied and Dr. Kdolsky, among others, have assumed patronage for this campaign.

The campaign is motivated by emotionally stressful situations where ophthalmologists encounter the current limits of treatability of severe visual impairments. Some foresight is therefore of eminent importance and promises a better future for these children and youths. The research report of the University Eye Clinic Tübingen from March 2007 is a key event as it reported of the clinic's first successful implantation of a retina chip worldwide that allows blind people to have some resemblance of sight.

This significant event is probably comparable with the world's first successful corneal transplant more than 100 years ago by the Austrian Dr. Eduard Zirm, the grandfather of Prof. Dr. Mathias Zirm, who realized that transplanting tissue and organs is only possible if the donors are human. (www.drzirm.org)

Project **moments of hope** was launched with a gala evening at the Swarovski Crystal Worlds in Wattens/Tyrol featuring high profile guests. A painting by the German-Italian modern painter Hanns Schwarzmaier acquired by the private clinic ZIRM was signed on the frame by the star of the evening, opera singer and honorary member of the Vienna State Opera, Leo Nucci. After the dazzling climax of these festivities, other famous artists of the Vienna State Opera will also sign the painting at Aki Nuredini's Ristorante Sole downtown Vienna, a popular meeting point of artists in Vienna. The painting will then be auctioned off within the scope of LICHT INS DUNKEL.

The spontaneous donations and support by many people is especially remarkable. Among them is Peter Gastberger, manager of the event hotel Scalaria located along the Wolfgangsee. The international air show "Air Challenge" will be held near the hotel from 13 to 15 July, an event that promises to be star-studded as well. A share of the profits from the air show will be donated to **moments of hope**.

Even before the official start of the project, well-known actress Michaela Merten and bestseller author, actor and director Pierre Franckh, as well as Iren Dornier, offspring of the famous German aircraft manufacturing dynasty, have declared that they wish to sponsor a celebrity-filled benefit in the fall of this year for **moments of hope**.

With such high caliber sponsors, the project is sure to be a success. Efforts are now directed towards building on these first successes. Donations by the general public are welcome as well.

Account for donations: BTV 100482800

Additional information and photos are available at www.augenblickederhoffnung.org and can be requested from info@augenblickederhoffnung.org.