

Brose mentors help to integrate refugees



Coburg (28. October 2016) Brose is supporting the integration of refugees with an employee mentoring program. The project was launched at the initiative of Michael Stoschek, Chairman of the Brose Group. For a year now, the international family-owned company has been helping young refugees by offering them training, work and a new life after arriving in Germany. Focus topics include learning the language, communicating norms and values as well as career orientation. As the second phase begins, the company is satisfied with the results of the internal project thus far.

The Brose Group launched the first phase of the mentoring initiative at the three Franconian locations Coburg, Bamberg and Würzburg in January. At each location, employees of the automotive supplier volunteered to prepare ten recognized asylum seekers ages 18 to 25 for living and working in Germany. The refugees who received support came from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Armenia. In cooperation with the Bildungswerk der Bayerischen Wirtschaft (Educational Institute of the Bavarian Employers' Associations, "bbw"), they received targeted German lessons, psychosocial counseling and completed internships at different companies, institutions and organizations. Courses were held to prepare mentors for their role. Brose provided the funding for bbw's professional support services.

The program's first successes came after just a few months: the young people have significantly improved their German and have gained insight into daily working life in Germany through internships. A number of participants of the Brose employee program are now available to companies in the region as apprentices.

The refugees learned about Franconian culture and social norms by doing things together with their mentors. "I would like to thank our employees for their outstanding volunteer commitment. Their personal dedication helps to successfully integrate refugees in our region," emphasizes Michael Daniel, Manager Special Projects Human Resources Brose Group. This lays the foundation for an independent, self-reliant and content life for the mentoring program's young participants.

Many of the volunteer Brose employees continued to support their mentees after the six-month program.

“My most valuable experience was discovering the sincerity of the refugees and their desire to contribute to society,” reports Isabel Schrenk from Brose Sales in Würzburg.

Heshmat Ahmadi (20) and Hassib Shaeq (18), who now live in Coburg, add: “We want to stay in contact with our mentors after the project, too. For us, they have become a part of the family.” Brose launched the second phase of the employee program in September in Coburg, Bamberg and Würzburg with another 30 refugees. By March next year, the family-owned company’s volunteer mentors will have helped a total of 60 recognized asylum seekers to start their new lives in Germany.

Brose has also participated in the pilot model organized by the Coburg Chamber of Commerce (IHK), the only one of its kind in Germany, since the fall of this year. The “3 plus 1” program for three-year apprenticeships and the “2 plus 1” program for two-year apprenticeships is aimed at refugees. The curricula for the first year of the apprenticeship is split over 24 months to combine learning German with teaching the basic technical skills of the apprenticeship occupations. Participants receive special support at the Coburg vocational school with additional social education measures. “This model is a new challenge for us since we do not know what skills and knowledge the career starters bring with them from their home countries,” explains Michael Stammberger, Head of Apprenticeship and Training Brose Group.

Under the “3 plus 1” model, Wissam Suod Abdelatif (29) from Iraq and Mahmoud Bradeaji (27) from Yemen are training to become machine operators at the mechatronics specialist. Training for refugees ages 25 and older does not receive any government funding and so the costs are borne solely by Brose.

In addition, a coordination center for people with a migrant background was set up in Coburg with the financial backing of the family-owned company. The central information facility supports migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in finding out about different German courses or training and professional development opportunities. Multilingual counseling services help to overcome the barrier between government and institutions and make it easier to take the first steps in Germany.

Brose is also promoting integration by financing a language learning app for children. “Hallo App Deutsch” is designed to teach the basics of the German language in a fun way. The app is available for all common smartphones and can be used without an Internet connection once it has been downloaded. The app is free in Germany thanks to the Brose Group’s sponsorship.

More information is available under www.phase-6.de/hallo/.



Heshmat Ahmadi (right) and Hassib Shaeq (second from right) with their Brose mentors Bärbel Hufnagel (left) and Sabine Fischer (second from left), visiting a fair.



Michael Stammberger, Head of Apprenticeship and Training Brose Group, presents training contracts to Wissam Suod Abdelatif (center) and Mahmoud Bradeaji (right). The two apprentices will be supported by instructors Manuel Truckenbrodt (back left) and Uwe Engelhardt (back right).