



COMETA: A TRAIL OF LIGHT

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Cometa is a charity based in Como, Italy that supports and fosters over 1,300 children and teenagers, offering education and providing support as they enter the world of work. Promoting the message that everyone can make a positive contribution, the pursuit of excellence for all and a European-wide outlook, Spectrum Markets has chosen to begin building a relationship with Cometa. We started small by providing gifts to 100 of the children supported by the charity last Christmas, and we're actively seeking new ways to support Cometa on a broader, ongoing basis. Here, the Cometa team gives us the story of how this unique organisation was created 37 years ago and how it has grown since.

Is there anything that can light up a life looking for a deep meaning to its existence? Sometimes, it takes an unexpected event to spark the flame. A phone call, a request to care for a child with AIDS, whose parents had passed away and who was unwanted by others. It is 1986, AIDS is a daunting illness. Deciding to take him in is frightening, but Erasmo Figini and his wife Serena have no doubts and say 'yes'. This is the beginning of a story that will involve Erasmo's brother Innocente and his wife Marina, as well as five other families, all living together in a renovated farmhouse. Over time, their community grew to a network of 60 families, all willing to share a fostering path.

This marks the birth of Cometa, the beginning of a vision that inspires people to dedicate their lives to helping those in need, those who are marginalised and cast aside by society. Thus, in Como, on the shores of the lake, a small village was born, which from meeting to meeting, grows and becomes a day care centre for 130 children of 15 nationalities, a school with 400 students, workplaces where girls and boys with disabilities are also involved in an inclusive manner, a carpentry shop, a pastry shop and a bakery with the shop 'Il Pane di Sandro', and 'Anagramma' a bar bistro in a park in Cernobbio, and a high-level catering service.

A city within a city, where a light shines that enhances the human connection between people. A place that prioritises the common good of society and provides a welcoming and loving environment where everyone feels at home, welcome and wanted because they are loved.

At the heart of Cometa lies a passion for education that sparks questions and cultivates curiosity through hands-on learning experiences. This is the approach at 'Una Casa Per Crescere', a day-care centre where each child follows a customised path that considers their family and school life, as well as any relevant specialist services. A dedicated educator, supported by experts in the field of psychology and pedagogy, works closely with the teachers and family to build a supportive network that enables each child to grow, discover their unique abilities and become their best selves.

The school courses dedicated to textiles, woodworking and bar catering develop hands-on learning by "doing for real": a didactic bar and restaurant open to the public, real orders from partner companies that students develop into prototypes and production, and company classrooms. These are examples and opportunities to learn by doing. The first 'Entrepreneurial and Artisan Design' high school in Italy, which is part of Cometa's educational offerings, is a way to keep the "made in Italy" tradition alive and give young people the tools to build creative and productive businesses that enhance Italy's artisan heritage, thus giving a future to one of the country's excellences, craftsmanship in the field of furniture, textiles and design.

Bakery, catering and carpentry are all places where excellence is sought. By accompanying young people or disabled children on paths of integration into work, to give them the possibility of a journey where, guided by teachers or educators, they can discover their talent and become a wealth for society.

That light, lit by the welcoming of a child, has generated a place, a sign for all that a more human way of living is possible: a reference point where anyone can find, even if only for a moment, a reason for hope and a new start.

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