

The Camphill Movement was founded in 1939 by Austrian pediatrician Dr. Karl König (1902-1966) in Scotland. He and his colleagues established the first Camphill school for children with special needs, basing their work on the insights of Anthroposophy (literally “wisdom of the human being”) which was developed by philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Anthroposophy has sparked innovations in many areas of life, and has given rise not only to Camphill communities, but to the worldwide movements of Waldorf education and bio-dynamic agriculture, new forms of medicine, therapies, and the arts.

Dr Karl Koenig and his colleagues built up a number of intentional communities in which people with special needs were able to find acceptance, acknowledgement and recognition as human beings.

Camphill believes that each human being is made up of a body, soul, and spirit, and each of these aspects has the capacity to grow, develop and learn. We recognize that each person is on an inner journey, and we can actively support each other by the ways we live, learn, and work together.

Camphill focuses on the abilities of each person, not the disabilities. In Camphill individuals with intellectual disabilities (having many other abilities, though) live and work together with career volunteers in extended family settings. Members of house communities learn from each other in a process of mutual interaction. Each individual is encouraged to contribute his or her own special gifts and talents. Camphill communities welcome people of any religious, ethnic or racial background. The Camphill movement also fosters exchanges for intellectually disabled adults and enables young volunteers to have a unique work experience in a foreign country or at home.

Today there are about 100 Camphill communities throughout the world. Some are schools for children, some have vocational training and others are “village” communities for adults. Camphill communities are autonomous entities responsible for their own finances and development. They support each other through meetings, conferences and interest in each other.

Camphill co-workers traditionally do not receive wages. Like all members of the community they relate their individual expenses to a budget agreed upon within their place of residence. All Camphill communities share a common dream of social, cultural, and economic renewal.

*‘The well-being of a community of people working together will be the greater, the less the individual claims for himself the proceeds of his work. The more of these proceeds he makes over to his fellow-workers, the more his own needs are satisfied, not out of his own work but out of the work done by others’. (Rudolf Steiner)*