



## Friends-program in Finland

Friends-program is created by professor Paula Barrett. In Finland the Friends-program is run by Children of the Station (Aseman Lapset ry) and has been used here since 2006. At the moment Friends for children (since 2006) and Friends for youth (since 2008) are used. Friends for children is available also in Swedish and our goal is to have all the programs available both in Finnish and Swedish. More than 17 000 children and youth have taken part in the program since 2006 and Children of the Station has trained more than 1 800 facilitators to run the program. Friends is mainly used in schools, but we are looking for possibilities to expand using it for example in the health setting. We endeavour to implement also Fun Friends-program and Adult resilience program in Finland in the near future.

Paula Barrett visited Finland in august 2011. She gave a keynote speech in the 10<sup>th</sup> Nordic Public Health Conference on 25.8. and on the same day she took part in the Friends-workshop organized by National Institute of Health and Welfare and Children of the Station. On 23.8. she gave a lecture about building resilience in a training event organized by the Department of Education of Helsinki city. On 26.8. Children of the Station organized a Friends trainer workshop, where Paula Barrett gave a speech.

We collected feedback from the participants of the trainer workshop and many of them mentioned Paula Barrett. The feedback included for example:

- she made me more motivated to continue with the program and to think about the program's contents more deeply
- she was passionate and inspiring and it was great to really meet her
- I like the new contents Paula has added in the program
- she made me think about how it would be possible to involve parents more in the Finnish school system. Here it is difficult for parents to come to the class on schooldays because of working. That is a challenge also for the parental involvement in the Friends-program.

Having Paula Barrett in Finland was a unique chance for the Finnish Friends-team and everyone interested to learn more about mental welfare, resilience and the Friends-program. Here are some things the team especially learned from meeting Paula Barrett:

- motivation and deeper understanding of the program and of the new version (5<sup>th</sup> edition) of the program
- more content for the trainings for facilitators