

The night is young



- and more safe after 10 years with the Nightravens.

Today it is a natural thing to see the Nightravens in the townscape all over Denmark. But 10 years ago the idea was new and untraditional, so it did take a lot of effort to pass on the message to the authorities and the Danes that we are all responsible for creating a safe society. The message of the Nightravens is that the society is not the one to blame when young people become violent. The important part is the parents. They are to take responsibility for their children, be present as role models with values as responsibility and care.

The first Nightravens joined the night life in Elsinore on 6th March 1998. Over time the unique idea got a foothold and within short the Nightravens managed to turn scepticism into support and now, 10 years later, the organization counts more than 16000 active volunteers. Today there are 200 Nightraven units and about 7000 active volunteers a year.

"Being an employee at the National Secretariat of the Nightravens means in practice that you are active 24 hours a day. So it takes a special spirit to be employed here. It is a tremendous responsibility to be employed and a volunteer in this way – but it is the personally most giving and developing job I ever had."

*Erik Thorsted, Secretary General,
National Secretariat of the Nightravens.*

A simple idea that grew into something big

The target set by the Nightravens is simple – safety, happiness and integration. The means are equally simple. It is a question of creating a safe and balanced townscape by adults 'taking a walk' at the time of the night where the youngsters normally are by themselves. Because, if the youngsters have the public space to themselves, conflicts and uncertainty may easily occur, because they have to 'show who they are', they are bored and want to set limits.

Several thousands of voluntary Nightravens walking about in their local areas following a defined plan do make

"The street scene needs Nightravens. Denmark needs people taking responsibility. Thank you for the efforts shown during the first 10 years. And all the best."

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Prime Minister

"The Nightravens create safety for the youngsters so that they can have fun. I feel that the good thing about the Nightravens is that we are not a corps of watchmen or an index finger pointing at them – we are just there. The youngsters contact us, and they are very positive."

*Torben Frederiksen, 67 years,
Nightraven in Holstebro since 1999*

a difference and create a more kind and caring society with less trouble and vandalism.

Concept of the Nightravens

The Nightravens are just ordinary adults taking a walk in small groups of 3 men/women in their own town or residential area at times when most adults relax in their homes. The Nightravens note, listen and talk to the youngsters and help whenever needed.

"Most of the time we offer a shoulder to the youngsters, who talk with us about their pleasures, problems and worries; we can comfort them or give a piece of advice – in confidence", is what a Nightraven is likely to say. But our job could also be to help, if they have had too much to drink or are injured. If needed, the Nightravens can call friends, parents, a taxi, an ambulance or, very rarely, the police.

The Nightravens work in accordance with a specific concept that has been made by a professional and paid National Secretariat assisting new associations getting started and taking care of their training, equipment and material during their active period.

Each unit is locally based and organized as voluntary social units with their own board. However, all local units have the same rules and obey to the same rules of behaviour

"The youngsters tell us that it is just great that we are there. And when I have been in a situation where the help of the Nightravens was needed, I always think that it was a good thing that we were here. So that is the reason why I am a Nightraven.

*Carsten Oxenbøll, 42years,
Nightraven in Græsted-Gilleleje since 2002*

and ethics when wearing the yellow jackets that are only to be used for the activities of the Nightravens.

The support of the police, the SSP's and the politicians

An important element of the success of the Nightravens is a good cooperation with the local police and SSP. SSP is a compulsory cooperation in each municipality between the schools, the social authorities and the police.

One person from SSP is connected to each Nightraven unit, which person can take over if the youngsters need professional help that goes beyond the formal powers of the Nightravens as normal citizens.

In connection with the establishment of a new Nightraven unit the police will participate and inform about the work and responsibilities of the police and they will tell about their rights and duties as citizens – and give good advice, which is very important. SSP also informs about the preventive work made by the municipality

Both on a municipality level and from the Danish Parliament the Nightravens are supported by all political parties.

The idea of avoiding violence by means of prevention

The insurance company Skandia systematized the idea in the Nordic countries. It started in Sweden in 1987, in Norway by the daughter company Vesta in 1995 and in Denmark in connection with the change of name of the daughter company Kgl. Brand in 1998.

At the time it was something quite new that a private

1 out of 3 Danes is a volunteer

The Danes are very much engaged in voluntary jobs. 30 % are already volunteers and 30% would like to be so if they were asked.

company took a social responsibility, particularly in this way. Since then the notion CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility, has gained ground.

The philosophy was that of course it is fine to receive compensation for damages. But to a person having experienced violence or vandalism, money cannot compensate the feeling of uncertainty. Consequently, the ultimate safety must be to prevent violence and vandalism from occurring in the society.

Skandia chose to show its social responsibility under the heading 'Safety for Generations', based on the following three points:

- 1) A non-profit foundation having an external, professional board for supporting fiery souls working on a voluntary basis with children and young people in danger.
- 2) Inviting employees to take part in voluntary social work.
- 3) Support or establish preventive concepts instead of traditional sponsorships.

Based on point 3 the Danish Nightraven concept was established by Kgl. Brand, as a modern version of the Swedish and Norwegian Nightravens. Initially, the idea was to give the concept to a Non Governmental Organization, but nobody seemed interested and so the idea was first anchored in the communication department of Skandia and was later implemented in an independent CSR Company, Skandia Ideas for Life.

"Through the years, the Nightravens have shown that they play an important part as being an essential factor for local safety."

*Anna Karina Nickelsen, Secretariat Director and Vice
Commissioner, the Crime Prevention Council*

Today the Nightravens is an independent, non-profit Non Governmental Organization

Since the start in 1998 the Nightravens have been developed and run by Erik Thorsted in head of three employees. He used to be a Managing Director in Skandia Ideas for Life and together with the chairman of the board of the Ideas for Life foundation, Stig Kjerulf, he took on the task of introducing the Nightravens in Denmark in a very serious manner.

However, by the end of 2003 Skandia wanted to stop the financing of the Nightravens and as per 1.1.2004 the

Foundation for Social Responsibility took over all responsibility and duties. This foundation was established for the occasion with just the necessary initial capital and with almost the same professional board as the foundation Ideas for Life.

In connection with the changes in 2003 Erik Thorsted left Skandia, and Stig Kjerulf decided to leave the foundation Ideas for Life to become chairman of the board of the new foundation. The foundation for Social Social Responsibility hired Erik Thorsted (as a Secretary General) and his three employees in the national secretariat of the Nightravens in order to pursue and develop the concept in Denmark and other places around the world.

A Nightraven is ...

... an adult behaving as a responsible model for the youngsters, irrespective of age, sex, religion and colour of the skin. You only have to be a person wanting to take responsibility of the youngsters and of the safety in your own local area. So being a mature person with life experience is an important quality.

Since then the Nightravens have been run through the national secretariat being supported as to management and financing by a wide group of socially responsible companies and foundations, among which the most important ones TrygFonden, Falck and Carlsberg, are represented in the board of the Foundation for Social Responsibility.

So the Nightravens are one of the few – maybe the only voluntary social organization in Denmark that is not almost 100% financed by public means from the state and the municipalities.

”The youngsters know that when we are wearing the yellow jacket, they have full confidentiality and trust. I have three children myself, aged 10, 12, and 14, and I think that it is important to show interest to the youngsters and show them that the adults are there to support and help them.

*Rikke Nielsen, 42 years
Nightraven in Aakirkeby since 2005*

The number of young Danes committing crime is still decreasing

According to the analysis 'The youngsters' (2006) almost 40 % of the 14 to 15 years old youngsters have never done anything criminal – in 1989 the number was 25 %.

Sweets for contact

The Nightraven sweets represent an easy way to get contact. And often, this relaxed contact leads to a confidential talk, where the youngsters open up about their problems.

The Future

The ”five golden rules” are an important part of the success of the Nightravens, because they make sure that the Nightravens are the same all over the country and are thus clearly known to the youngsters as being a safety creating

5 golden rules.

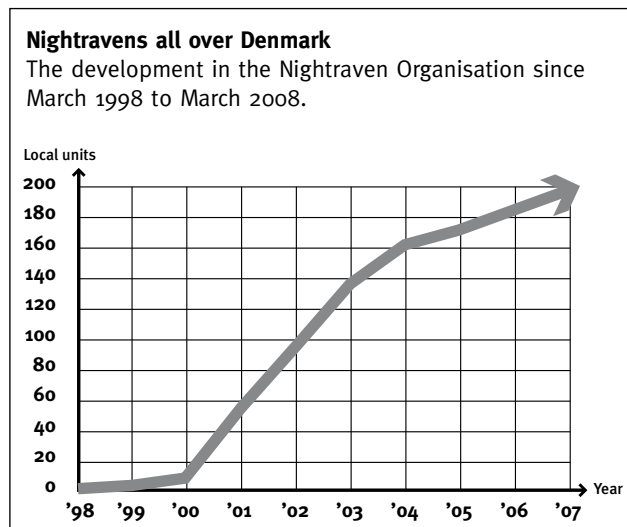
- The Nightravens are visible and keep their eyes open, but they never intervene physically in disturbances etc., but call professional help if necessary.
- The Nightravens always walk around in groups of three, wearing their characteristic yellow jackets.
- The Nightravens are always outdoors. They never enter clubs, pubs, discotheques etc.
- The Nightravens are always ready to listen and talk to the youngsters at their initiative. We always give advice within the frame of reason. In case of serious problems we refer the youngsters to their parents or to professional people such as SSP, anonymous advice or things like that.
- The Nightravens help lost children and youngsters. A Nightraven never gives loans and does not take anybody home by itself.

factor. But it is still important to adapt the Nightravens to the development of the society.

The first units had very much focus on creating safety and reducing vandalism by drunken youngsters of the age of 16 to 18. Today the Nightravens take more and more care of infants down to about 10 years walking around alone in the public room late in the evening and in the nights, often intoxicated. In certain areas it has also proved to be of value to have the Nightravens in the streets during the day and in the evenings on normal working days.

There are strong indications to the effect that the Nightravens is a strong network capable of promoting the interest of voluntary, social work among Danes of different ethnic backgrounds. Still more people, with other than Danish ethnic backgrounds, take part in the voluntary work.

However, a success in the future will also be conditioned by a continued intake of volunteers, since you normally work only a couple of years, 5 to 10 times a year for 3 to 4 hours. And also a continued income of private means that



More than 200 local units have been established counting about 7000 active participants. Since the beginning more than 16000 volunteers have been active.

The Mission and Target of the Nightravens

The Nightravens are voluntary adults having been instructed as to target and basic rules. They walk around in their yellow Nightraven jackets where youngsters are alone in the public room. The target is to create safety and to avoid violence and vandalism. The idea is simple: Just by being there, have a dialogue with the youngsters and call for help if necessary. The Nightravens are based on a close cooperation with public authorities, the police, SSP and the local trade and industry.

are needed in order to make ends meet and keep the focus of the organization and avoid bureaucracy. In this connection a continued interest from private sponsors, CSR-companies, political parties and the press are important factors.

Status 10 years after

The Nightravens have developed fast over the last years. The Nightravens establish and train about 20 new organizations a year, and apart from Denmark the National Secretariat covers the Faeroe Islands, Greenland, Lithuania and Northern Germany.

But, no need to worry; we are far from being 'sold out'. As long as the Nightravens are needed, the National Secretariat will be there to help new areas being covered.

Nightravens all over the world

Volunteers all over the world are awake to the good target and results of the Nightravens. Right now there are Nightravens in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Faeroe Islands, Greenland, Lithuania, Germany, Spain and Slovakia.

More countries all over the world have shown interest in introducing Nightravens – such as the Netherlands, Great Britain, Ireland, USA, South Africa and China.