

How an article in the NST a year ago, inspired me to develop...

Ready...Steady...Bern!

It was almost a year ago that I was eagerly reading my copy of the April 2006 *New Stork Times*. I came across an article about *Ready...Steady...Zurich!*, a half-day seminar run by two entrepreneurial women who had successfully settled in Zurich with their families. This seminar was designed to equip newly arrived families with all the essential information and tools that they needed to make their lives in Zurich so much easier – as quickly as possible. My first thought was what a great idea! My second thought was how useful this would have been for me when I moved to Bern 6 years ago. My third thought was someone should do the same thing in Bern. My final thought was that someone should be me!

Successful transition

After five years in Switzerland, I had acquired a lot of information and experience that one needs to settle in a new country and city, and I had more than just survived it all, I had actually enjoyed it. I had made many new friends, acquaintances, and contacts. I had also built a comfortable and optimistic outlook on life in Bern. There were of course some very challenging times too, but overall we have settled successfully here in Bern.

As I settled here, I always enjoyed meeting new people and hearing their stories about how they came to be in Switzerland. I often tried to help others in little ways, if I could, to be happy here too. I also began to think about what I could reasonably and effectively do in terms of working again, now with two small children in our family to consider. Developing my own business to help others settle successfully in and around Bern with assistance and mentorship seemed like a perfect opportunity.

Personal support

So, I sent an email declaring my interest in developing a working relationship with *Ready...Steady...Zurich!* to run a similar program in Bern. I then met with Tracey Keenan and Kirstie McLellan, founders of *Ready...Steady...Zurich!*. Tracey said, "It was always my vision that if we got it right in Zurich, we would roll it out elsewhere!" We were all enthusiastic about working together and set about developing a plan for *Ready...Steady...Bern!* Isn't it wonderful how all it takes is an email to get started! Since then, I have been working on developing the Bern program, based on templates and checklists that were provided to me by *Ready...Steady...Zurich!*

What impressed me most about the *Ready...Steady...Zurich!* seminar was the extensive content and useful format of the seminar and the seminar materials. With a focus on childcare, schooling, healthcare, family activities, shopping, language schools, and day to day life, participants really do get lots of

useful and important information both in the seminar and to take home. I was also impressed by the fact that participants get a month's free helpline (by phone or email) following the seminar date. This results in less pressure for the participants to unravel everything in one Saturday morning seminar, and more comfort from support that is ongoing.

Like Tracey and Kirstie who founded *Ready...Steady...Zurich!*, I also know first-hand that friendships are essential to really feeling at home in your new country. Bringing newcomers together gives people the opportunity to meet others in the same position and gives participants the opportunity to develop those all-important first friendships. So, while there is lots of good information out there to help one settle successfully, this seminar pulls much of it together in one place, offers personal support and attention, and can help participants build that all-important social network. As a package, I am confident that it will be helpful for many families from around the world who find themselves making Zurich or Bern their home.

A range of services

Now that *Ready...Steady...Zurich!* has been successfully running for just over a year, Tracey Keenan is now developing the business further and offering topical seminars such as *Ready...Steady...Snow!* which provides families with all the key information they need to enjoy the Winter here as well as a *Ready...Steady...Summer!* seminar to be held in April and May. These programs will also be rolled out in Bern. We are also offering private consultations of *Ready...Steady...Zurich!* and *Ready...Steady...Bern!* for those families who prefer to have the information exchange in the comfort of their own home and who want to get the critical information as soon as they arrive, without waiting for the next seminar date. Finally, we are developing partnerships with locally-based international schools and businesses to provide in-house seminars. ■

For more information including next seminar dates and customer feedback, please visit www.readysteadyrelocate.com

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