



She will never give up the children

The passionate leader of the children's home in Uummannaq,
Ann Andreassen, **really makes a difference to the world**

TEXT: **Trine Juncher Jørgensen**



In 2015 she received the Gernes Foundation's honorary award for her ability to integrate music, art, film and culture at the children's home in such a way that it strengthened

and inspired the children. This is not the first time Ann Andreassen has been recognised for her work with vulnerable children which takes place 500km north of the Arctic Circle on the rocky island of Uummannaq. In fact, the awards have rained down on the 56-year old social worker for her work as leader of the children's home for 26 years. And she has earned it, say colleagues and friends.

– Ann sees opportunities for the children. She can see that they need recognition and she is good at finding the things that let the children experience success and that help

them to become part of a positive community, says writer and teacher Erik Thom, who has known Ann Andreassen for more than 10 years.

The vulnerable children

Ann was born on the Faroe Islands but moved to Albertslund in Denmark when she was 12 years old to live with her aunt and un-

with the Bedouins in the Sinai Desert. Later, she studied to be a social worker at college in Copenhagen while working at the Kennedy Centre in Glostrup, which takes care of children born with rare illnesses. When she qualified as a social worker at the age of 25 she moved to North Greenland to work at the Children's Home in Uummannaq, where she since became leader.

“In challenging situations she has a remarkable ability to see what the children need.”

— **Mike Madigson**

cle. When she was young she went to Israel where she lived in a kibbutz for some years, working with Israeli children who were descendants of prisoners from concentration camps. Afterwards she lived for two periods

– I thrive with chaos and I am very spontaneous. I did not have a set plan for my life, it was more random. For example, I did not know much about Greenland when I applied for the job in Uummannaq, but my

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[DK] Musikken spiller en central rolle på børnehjemmet. Her spiller de for et fornemt par: FN-generalsekretær Ban Ki-moon og tidligere statsminister Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

[GB] Music is vital in the children's home. They are playing here for a distinguished couple: Former secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon and former premier Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

parents and siblings had been to Greenland and I wanted to go too. I thought it could be an exciting job considering my experience working in Israel with children who carried a heavy social inheritance from their parents and working with the children at the Kennedy Centre, who battled physical and mental challenges. But in retrospect, I can see that vulnerable children have been the focus of my life. But that was never a conscious choice on my part. I think I like children to experience successes and to see how they can surprise the world by doing something that is not expected of them. It is about supporting the children, so they see new paths and new opportunities in their lives, so that they can shuffle the deck in new ways, says Ann Andreasen, who for almost 20 years has been partner to globetrotter Ole Jørgen Hamme-ken, with whom she has daughter Pipaluk and Ludvig, Ole's son.

Prominent guests

Throughout time, many prominent people have visited the children's home in Uummannaq, e.g. former secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, former premier, Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Queen

Margrethe. In addition, the children have had the opportunity to perform in front of thousands of people in concert halls all over the world. It is not because money and opportunities fall down from heaven over the world's northernmost children's home. According to her close colleagues, Ann works just about around the clock.

– She is probably the person I know who works most and hardest. She is on the go from 7 in the morning to late at night. When she travels with the children, she manages everything on the journey and still spends every free moment networking, when she sees an opportunity, for the benefit of the children's home. She is so impressive and I am deeply fascinated by her power and presence, says the French film producer Marc Burriot, who has worked closely with Ann on several film projects.

A third way

Ann has the ability to be there for the children as a safe, solid haven. She is the person who can comfort, guide and scold when required.

– In challenging situations she has a remarkable ability to see what the children need. She never gives up on a child, regardless of how hard it is. She sees new ways the rest of us do not think about and she is good at predicting and planning, so projects and activities always take place on the children's terms and in the children's best interest, says Mike Madigson. He has known Ann for many years and he wrote the manuscript for the film "Inuk". The film was shot in Uummannaq with children from the children's home in the lead roles and it was a huge success around most of the world, winning 20 international awards, including 3 awards at the Savannah Film Festival in the USA.

"Inuk" is not the only film, which Ann Andreasen has been involved in. In 2008, she produced the short film "Silent Snow".

And this autumn a new documentary called "Call of the Ice" is coming out, which was also filmed in Uummannaq. In addition to this, there are books, music and the artistic productions which she has been, and still is, part of.

Ann Andreasen often mentions that she cannot play, sing or be creative. But she can do something else. She can gather people around her, who can integrate music, art, film and culture in the daily lives of the children and spark a curiosity about the world.

The children are my success

In 2009, Ann Andreasen received the parochial kindergarten's Gerda award. In 2011, she was honoured locally by Uummannaq with the local Nersornaat award. In 2013, she received first the great Greenlandic honorary award Nersornaat in silver. Later the same year she was awarded one of the finest and most prestigious Danish culture awards: the Ebbe Munch Award.

– It still makes me happy, proud and thankful when I am honoured for the work we do here at Uummannaq. But the greatest prize for me is when an educational project succeeds and the children do well. One of my girls has just received a prize for diligence at school. She gets 'A's all the time and she is the best in her class. I also have four children who have just finished 10th grade with good results. And one of my former boys has finished his apprenticeship. That makes me happy – really happy and proud! I follow the children for a long while after they leave the children's home. I so want them to do well as adults. Furthermore, I would like to mention that the children's successes and experiences rub off on their families. When the children do well, the entire family grows. They may not have had the same opportunities their children had. In this way, we are helping to break the social heritage, says Ann Andreasen. ✨



[KAL] Ann Andreasen ilaangippat Inuk-filme- qarnaviangilaq. Filmilialu iluatsilluartorujussuaq. Filmi matumani Uummannaq eqqaani ilulissamut seqersillugu isiginnaartinneqarpoq.

[DK] Uden Ann Andreasen ingen Inuk-film. En kæmpesucces. Her vises filmen på et isbjerg ved Uummannaq.

[GB] Without Ann Andreasen, there would be no Inuk film. It was a huge success. Here is the film being shown on an iceberg in Uummannaq.