



St Gregory's Foundation

Helping vulnerable children and families in Eastern Europe



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MEET OUR NEW MOLDOVAN PARTNERS

In Moldova only 26% of the population believe that people with special needs should be included in their community. Like other ex-Soviet countries, Moldova has traditionally relied on large institutions to care for disabled children and adults. This has left communities wary of those who are different, and families with very few support services.

St Gregory's has a history of championing inclusion in this region. We look forward to working with our new partners to give families access to the kind of support which will affirm their children's value and help them reach their potential. **Find out how you can get involved on page 2.**

The Wish

The Wish (Dorintsa) is based in Călărași. They provide therapy and education for children with additional needs in this mainly rural area.

Sunny Corner

Sunny Corner (Plaiul Soarelui) runs a farm in the Moldovan countryside, where young people with disabilities can get involved in meaningful work and social activities. We are delighted to have co-sponsored a ball for their families, and young people with learning difficulties from further afield, including Ukraine. Parents talk of how the event made them feel visible, and brought great joy to their children.

Rain Kids

Rain Kids (Copiii Ploii) is based in Chișinău, the capital of Moldova. The charity provides therapy to children with special needs. Together we are tackling the skills gap by funding additional training for their therapists.



WATCH OUT FOR GIVING TUESDAY

HELP US WIN A SHARE OF \$1,200,000

This year Giving Tuesday is on 28th November. Please put this date in your diary if you'd like your donation to St Gregory's to go further.

For 24 hours from 5am on 28th November, we have an opportunity to win a share of \$1,200,000. The more donations made to St Gregory's projects via Globalgiving.org, the greater the share of this fund we will win. Last year, we raised almost £5,000 in donations and an extra £1,250 in bonus funds. Can you help us do even better this year?

The Wish cannot find the funding locally to carry on providing speech therapy, physiotherapy, play therapy and education for children with disabilities in their area. Their services are under threat and children have no other options locally. This is why we are making our main appeal this year for The Wish. Your gift can help their children maintain their progress. If we raise more than £5,000 we may even be able to help more children flourish.

Donate at <https://goto.gg/61078> on 28th November.

"SPIRIT OF FREEDOM" ONLINE ART TALK

We are honoured that Professor Alexei Leporc, Curator of Western European Art at the Hermitage, will introduce us to Ukrainian art and architecture with an online talk in aid of our work in Moldova. Professor Alexei Leporc is one of Russia's foremost experts in Architecture, Western European and Russian Art. You are all invited to join us for what will be a fascinating event.

17 th November 2023

Zoom, 6.30 pm

**Tickets £15 pp
to include a live online talk
and Q&A, access to a
recording of the event and
entry to our raffle.**



Book your ticket:

<https://www.universe.com/sgf-talk-with-alexei-leporc>



MEMORIAL TEA AND NINO'S VISIT

In recent years, coffee mornings in Ruislip organised by the late George and Shirley Guest, have raised thousands of pounds for Mkurnali to help with the rehabilitation and employment of homeless teenagers and young offenders in Tbilisi. Trips to Georgia organised by George inspired many people to support Mkurnali even more. This helped refurbish and equip Mkurnali's house.

In memory of these two remarkable supporters, a group of volunteers: Liz Parry, Cicely Draper and St Gregory's Director, Vivian Wright organised the Memorial Tea for George and Shirley on 15th October in Ruislip. The event was a great success and reunited more than 75 people, including George and Shirley's daughter Rebecca, and Sam their grandson. A very special guest, Nino Chubabria, Director of Mkurnali came from Tbilisi to pay tribute to George and Shirley on behalf of Mkurnali's young people.

The visit was very rewarding for Nino as she was able to speak about the transformation of Mkurnali's shelter, the development of the car mechanic and jewellery workshops, employment of young people at 'Berkli's social enterprise and the legal programme. Mkurnali's plans go further – to open a car wash, develop their poultry business and more.

One of Nino's priorities is education support for the children of Mkurnali's residents. At present a few families with children of school age live in the shelter and their children are falling behind significantly at school.

The success of the Memorial Tea gives us a great opportunity to contribute towards these plans. We thank everyone who made a donation, with special thanks to Greatdays travel agency which paid for the hire of the hall (£120) – the overall amount raised is £1500 and counting!

To build on George's idea of fundraising trips, we're planning a trip to Georgia in May 2024 and if you're feeling inspired, do get in touch – **all the details are on page 6.**



HOW A-TECH HAS HELPED SASHA



Our partners, Communication Space Centre in Moscow, support children and young people who do not communicate verbally. We support their Alternative Technology programme, using hi- and low-tech means to make communication possible.

We are delighted that they have been able to move to bigger and better premises recently.

Sasha is one of thirty children and teenagers that Communication Space help with regular one-to-one and group activities funded by St Gregory's Foundation. Sasha is 14. Like all Communication Space's young people he does not communicate verbally. He also has learning, emotional and behavioural problems. In just six months, Communication Space have helped him make great progress.

To make things easier, Sasha's parents are highly motivated and had already been using a communication book with him. He was able to choose from a number of options, such as choosing what he wanted to eat, but he could

only use it in a limited range of scenarios.

Communication Space made Sasha a new communication book with the symbols arranged in a way that was more accessible for him. Because Sasha finds it difficult to lift his arm a great deal, we laid the book out horizontally so that it is physically easier to use. This has made Sasha more willing to use it.

Sasha has increased his vocabulary of symbols so that he can tell people what he wants to do in a wider range of situations. His new book also allows him to ask questions as well as answer. They also made him a smaller book for taking out and about. His mother says that they use the books a lot at home.

Sasha is very sensitive to sound and would react strongly if a noise (such as the food processor in a cooking session) bothered him. He now has noise cancelling headphones, which help a great deal. He's finding it much easier now to be with the others in the group and join in the activities.

The new Centre is yet to be equipped fully, and Communication Space continues to raise funds to help more young people like Sasha.

SUMMER CAMPS: KARELIA AND KOMAROVO

Disabled children and teenagers grow up with enormous challenges in particular in small and remote towns like Kondopoga. Many of them are house-bound, living in cramped accommodation with little social contact.

Over the few last years Father Lev, Mother Julia and their helpers have been inviting a group of disabled children to join in activities at the parish house throughout the summer holidays. This type of inclusive group is difficult to find locally, so was a lifeline to parents and a joy to the children.

This year the Parish hosted 15 children, aged 6 to 15, with learning disabilities, autism, cerebral palsy, eyesight problems and other health conditions and 4 children from poor families. They were looked after by 5 volunteers, one of whom came from 'Zabota' (Care) social Centre.

Every day was organised differently, with different activities such as sewing, drawing, clay modelling, theatre performances and outdoor games. Parents benefited from consultations with specialists and volunteers. Most importantly the Parish provided moral support.

Apart from summer activities and food parcels paid for by St Gregory's, the Parish provided school supplies for the new term. This became a great boost to the families' budget.



Six families with children aged 5 to 11 took part in Sunflower's summer camp this year. The venue this year was different: they stayed at a centre in Komarovo beside the Finnish Gulf as the log cabin (the dacha) required some repair and later a dramatic fire happened at the site (read below).

A new location offered lots of scope for outdoor fun and games, and as usual special training was organised for both parents and children. Many of the activities related to the levels of freedom and responsibility that the parents give their children as they grow and establishing an appropriate balance. The children were able to explore the theme too through a fairy story, 'Dwarf Long-nose' in which a little boy has to cope with a magical transformation so complete that his parents don't recognise him.

FIRE AT DOLBENIKI



This is the scene in Dolbeniki at the dacha used by Sunflower for their summer camps. A serious accident at a local electrical substation led to a power surge and a wave of fires hit the area.

The free-standing dining room caught fire immediately, destroying the building, the furniture and also the kitchen equipment, which was stored there. Fortunately, no-one was hurt. The fire brigade arrived swiftly and the fire was extinguished. It did not spread to any of the other buildings used during the summer camps.

Sunflower are assessing the damage and the cost of creating a new eating area so that they can run summer camps there again. Meanwhile, volunteers have started to clear the site already, although the weather will soon force a break in the work. Serious work will start in spring 2024, when we hope to be able to help Sunflower recover.

NEWS IN BRIEF

YOUR CHANCE TO VISIT GEORGIA AND MKURNALI IN TBILISI



Julia Ashmore is planning to take a trip to Georgia in May 2024. In Tbilisi we will be revisiting Mkurnali -meeting up with young people and families. We will explore the vibrant capital of Tbilisi and travel north to the ancient fortress Ananuri and mountain ski resort of Gudauri, then to the mountain region of Kazbegi, and on to the famous wine region of Kakheti, with stops in Signagi, a romantic city with spectacular views of the Alazani valley, the motherland of wine. Wine tasting, baking Georgian bread and making delicious churchkhela sweets are included! We will travel to Borjomi to see exceptionally diverse nature and taste unique mineral water, visit the old capital, Mtskheta, and other UNESCO sites and enjoy the unforgettable view of the confluence of the Mktvaria and Aragvi rivers. Finally we'll enjoy a free day in Tbilisi. 8 days/7 nights.

Included: flights, transfers, accommodation, meals, all excursions and entrance fees, transport, English speaking driver and guide, donation to Mkurnali.

Until we have a better idea of the number of people in the party (maximum 15 people) it is difficult to give an exact price but our provisional price is £1600 (tbc), single occupancy. Dates: 16-24 May (tbc). **If you would like more details please email Julia - julia@stgregorysfoundation.org.uk**

RETIREMENT OF SGF DIRECTOR

Hamish McArthur, our long-standing Director will be stepping down at the end of 2023. Hamish's invaluable expertise as a Financial advisor helped the charity to successfully manage its finances and investments. Recently-appointed Director, Simon Jennings will be taking over this role in 2024. We wish Hamish the best of luck in his future work and career and thank him for all the help he has given to SGF.

ENGLISH LESSONS FOR SUNFLOWER'S CHILDREN

The children at Sunflower were full of excitement when they met Holly and Rita from Owl Tutors for their first English class on Zoom. The majority of these children are behind at school, in particular with learning languages. Their parents, who grew up in orphanages, find it difficult to help with the children's study, given their own poor education in the past. We are now providing two English tutors from the UK - our wonderful volunteer teachers Holly and Rita, helping teach 8 children, aged 8 to 10, to prevent them from falling further behind at school. Free online classes were organised by Owl Tutors, the company which has helped St Gregory's in the past by teaching children from Kondopoga.

LEGACY BRINGS LIFE SUPPORT

Your legacy gift can be a life-line to our projects. We have been extremely fortunate to have had three big legacies in the past that bought a shelter for Mkurnali and built a Training Centre for disabled teenagers in St Petersburg. This year three amazing legacy gifts from the late Joan Bray, Sally Day and Christa Studd helped fund therapy, outdoor activities and accessible education for disabled and autistic children in Kondopoga, Moscow, Rezina and Chişinău and our programme of support for orphanage-leavers in St Petersburg. We are most grateful.

Giving a legacy to our charity is a simple and tax efficient way of making a difference. As a registered charity, we do not pay tax on your gift, and leaving a legacy to us may benefit your estate by reducing the amount liable for inheritance tax.

It's really straightforward to leave a gift in your will. All you have to do is to give your solicitor our charity number and registered address: The St Gregory's Foundation, no. 1002469, 8 Biddulph Road, London, W9 1JB. Your solicitor will do the rest. If you want to leave a gift to St Gregory's but have already made a Will, it's not a problem. One way is to write a new Will. Another is to add a codicil to your existing Will.

If you consider including St Gregory's Foundation in your Will or need further information, please contact Julia Ashmore julia@stgregorysfoundation.org.uk tel. 02033724992 (Mon-Fri, 9.00 -17.00)

HOW YOUR DONATIONS HELP

£9 will feed a homeless teenager in Tbilisi a balanced diet for 2 days

£16 will pay a psychologist/teacher for an afternoon session with disabled children in rural Moldova

£25 will buy a food parcel to last one month for a child living in poverty in Karelia

£75 will provide life-changing support and two months counselling to one teenager about to leave a children's home in St Petersburg.

MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION

Donate online at

StGregorysFoundation.org.uk

or

send a cheque payable to St Gregory's Foundation to:
Vivian Wright, Acting Treasurer
62 Butler Road,
Harrow HA1 4DR.

MAKE A REGULAR DONATION

Donate online at

StGregorysFoundation.org.uk

or

return this standing order form to SGF

To the manager of bank

Bank address:

.....

.....

Account name:

Account No.

Sort Code:

Please pay into the account of the St Gregory's Foundation, Royal Bank of Scotland

Acc. 12348109 Sort Code: 16-12-53

the sum of £..... starting on (date)

and continuing on the same day

monthly/quarterly/annually* until further

notice. This replaces any existing order in

favour of St Gregory's Foundation.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

KEEP IN TOUCH

- ☐ I wish to become a member of St Gregory's Foundation and enclose my annual subscription of £30 (waged)/£20 (unwaged).
- ☐ I wish to receive the newsletter by post
- ☐ I wish to receive news by e-mail

MY DETAILS AND CONSENT

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Phone:

E-mail:

Signature:

PLEASE *giftaid* YOUR DONATION

- ☐ I wish to gift aid my donation of £..... to St Gregory's Foundation (single donation)
- ☐ I wish to gift aid my donation of £....., and donations I make in the future and any donations I have made in the past 4 years to St Gregory's Foundation (multiple donations)

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the gift aid claimed on all my donations in any tax year, it is my responsibility to pay the difference.

What do we do?

St Gregory's Foundation supports local charities in Eastern Europe to tackle poverty and social insecurity facing children, teenagers, parents and carers. Our projects address the root causes of disadvantage by putting families before institutions, strengthening a sense of responsibility and providing opportunities for vulnerable people to fulfil their potential. Our work encourages local initiatives and makes our beneficiaries active participants in improving their own lives.

Call for a new Director

We are a unique and small charity. We value the strong personal connections we develop with our partners. We are governed by a small board of trustees who are passionate about St Gregory's and the good work we do. We're currently looking for a volunteer Director. Do you know a suitable candidate or perhaps you would like to step in? The current vacancy is listed on our website:

stgregorysfoundation.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-trustee/

CONTACTS

Please send donations to:

Vivian Wright, Acting Treasurer
62 Butler Road,
Harrow HA1 4DR.

For info and volunteering:

Julia Ashmore, Executive Secretary
Tel: 0203372 4992
julia@stgregorysfoundation.org.uk

Online shop queries?


shop@stgregorysfoundation.org.uk

SGF Directors:

- Nicholas Kolarz, Chair
- Vivian Wright, Acting Treasurer
- Tania Illingworth
- Hamish McArthur
- Jane Jones
- Luke Montague OBE
- Simon Jennings

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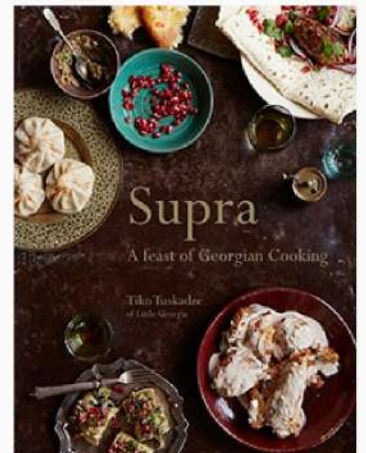
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GIFTS & CARDS FOR CHRISTMAS



Visit our online shop for cards, Christmas decorations, books, jewellery made by Mkurnali residents and more gift ideas. All proceeds go to helping vulnerable children and families.

shop.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk