



St Gregory's Foundation

Helping vulnerable children and families in Eastern Europe



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ADELINA'S STORY

Adelina is 9 years old and has Down Syndrome. She struggles with language and communication, but these difficulties don't stop her from being eager to express herself and trying to make herself understood. She loves music and will arrange the other children in a circle while she pretends to play the guitar or claps along with her favourite songs. The children watch her and even applaud at the end of the song.

Adelina grew up in Sipoteni village in the Calarasi district of Moldova, one of the poorest countries of Europe. She lives with her mother, Natalia, who is her round-the-clock carer, and her sister, Bianca. Adelina's father had to seek work abroad as the family was struggling financially, and the money he sends home is a critical source of household income. (see p. 2)



Can you help?

£5,000 will pay a speech therapist and a special needs teacher at the Centre in Calarasi for a whole year. Your gift today can help us continue these vital services so that children like Adelina can make more progress. **Donate online at stgregorysfoundation.org.uk or send a cheque (see page 7).**





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Natalia worked hard to give Adelina a home education and help her daughter's development, but she also had great fears that Adelina wouldn't be able to fully integrate into a mainstream kindergarten and later a public school. She learned about the Wish Centre in Calarasi by word of mouth and Adelina started attending the Centre.

Now Adelina comes to the centre twice a week. Our colleagues at the Centre have helped her improve her understanding and her speech. She can now greet people with "hello" and respond with "yes" or "no" to simple questions. She can also follow simple instructions. Just as importantly, she and her family have a safe space where they are valued, and where Adelina can express herself, make friends, and grow in confidence.

Adelina successfully enrolled in the public school in her native village and is now a 2nd-grade student. She has enormous help from her older sister, Bianca, as well as encouragement from her parents and grandparents.



“I am very satisfied with the centre's services. Whenever I call for advice, the specialists are willing to give me solutions. Adelina attends the centre's activities with great pleasure. I am interested and trying to do everything possible for Adelina to be involved as much as possible in educational activities in order to obtain as many results as possible. ”

- One of four children in Moldova grows up in poverty, with children born in rural areas more likely to experience absolute poverty.
- **12,000** children with disabilities are registered in the health system.
- Of the children with disabilities: only **27%** receive their first diagnosis before 2 years of age.
- **40%** have severe disabilities
- Only **10%** benefit from early intervention services
- Only **11%** attend preschool

Unicef study 'Making a difference in the lives of children in Moldova', 2023-2027



SUNFLOWER: LICENSED TO TRAIN

QUALITY RECOGNISED

Our partners Sunflower have come a long way since we helped them get started 17 years ago. For some years we have been helping fund them to run training courses for social workers and psychologists. Now the quality of these courses has been recognised. They have received a licence as a training organisation and are able to issue certificates for the courses they offer on effectively supporting orphanage-leavers and foster or adoptive families. Their teaching is helping to raise the level of care across St Petersburg, the Leningrad region and beyond.

SUMMER CAMPS REVIVED

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our appeal to restore the Sunflower summer camp. Their dining area is now usable again after being destroyed by fire in 2023.

The summer camps are held in a very special place and Sunflower use their surroundings well. A walk through the forest to the local sand quarry is a highlight of both summer camps, for young families and for the teenagers.

Our colleagues say this about the children's experience this year:

“It was important for each child to reach the quarry, and to collect beautiful gifts of the forest for the evening workshop (flowers, pebbles, cones). These actions helped to expand their sensory experience - the smells and sounds of the forest and field, sliding down a sand hill, getting to know insects, new visual images, and gaining experience in overcoming obstacles.”

For the teenagers the walk to the quarry is an opportunity to practice making decisions together: they plan the outing together and negotiate which route to take.

On the way, they collected leaves. These were rolled into “shoots” and charged with good wishes for each other - to be brave, to believe in themselves. Together they then planted the “shoots” in the ground. This simple ritual helped affirm their wishes to develop themselves as individuals. After five days together, the group went home with a renewed understanding of their own story, and greater confidence in the future.

St Gregory's plans to support Sunflower's summer camps in 2025.



COMMUNICATION SPACE HELPS ILYA

Ilya is 27 years old. Since birth, he has suffered from profound intellectual, visual, and motor impairments. He was also diagnosed with autism. Ilya is one of 20 children and young people who benefit from personalised help at the Communication Space Centre, which assists with their communication and independent living.

Due to his severe impairments, Ilya is unable to use communication books and pictures, relying only on natural gestures and pointing to objects. He fears and avoids unfamiliar public places, which can often lead to epileptic seizures. Ilya lives with his mother, Irina, and needs constant care and support from adults.

Last year the Centre's specialists helped Ilya to adapt better to new places. He has become particularly good at understanding the difference between a hardware store and a grocery store, and he behaves differently in them. Grocery stores are his favourite! The main positive changes in his communication are related to food—it is during meals that Ilya began to initiate contact more often. At home, he has learned to rely on the daily routine.

Both Irina and the specialists noted that his level of understanding and communication has significantly improved.

“We did not expect at all that Ilyusha would continue to develop at his age. It is amazing, and we are very happy about it. For a person with severe disabilities, this is very good progress. And, of course, I am very pleased that I can lead a normal social life with Ilyusha: go to shops, cafes.”

Over the last 20 years, Russian specialists have created many working models to help children and adults with disabilities: through supported living and inclusive programmes in centres and schools. However, the situation has dramatically changed.

The war and subsequent sanctions have greatly affected the work of charitable organisations in the country. Some NGOs have had to end their programmes due to a lack of financing. Others, who were previously helped by volunteers from Europe, have had to stop this important part of their work. Now, for obvious reasons, it is very difficult for volunteers to come to Russia. People who used to send direct donations to Russian organisations from abroad can no longer do so.

We continue helping Communication Space to remain at the forefront of work with children with disabilities and autism. Your support to families like Ilya's makes a huge difference.



NEWS FROM MOLDOVA: RAIN KIDS

Five-year-old Alex lives in Chişinău with his family. The family turned to the Rain Kids Centre when it became clear that Alex was developmentally delayed. Their ambitions are simple, and ones most of the parents share:

“ I wanted Alex to start talking, eat independently, dress and undress by himself, to be more autonomous, to socialize. ”

The staff at Rain Kids are very motivated to help the children in their care reach these goals. Last year, we helped them by providing supervision from an experienced practitioner from Romania. Now, we are funding Rain Kids' lead therapist, Ana Cislaru, to raise her qualifications so she can offer training and supervision to her 8 colleagues.

Already, this year, Rain Kids have made changes which have improved their results and how they communicate them to families. They have introduced new methods of evaluating the children's needs, so that they can produce better care plans and track progress more closely.

The supervisor was also able to introduce new ideas into the teaching itself, helping to motivate children and bringing visible progress. Having their own fully-trained supervisor will help them to be continually learning and improving.

The staff report feeling more confident in their work and so do the parents.

“ The therapy has had a significant impact on our whole family. We feel better prepared to handle difficult situations. ”



And what about Alex? He has started to say “hello”, “goodbye” and “goodnight”. He can tell people his name, ask for things without prompting and put his shoes on by himself. He has made progress across the board in his development.

NEWS IN BRIEF

KONDOPOGA SUMMER CAMP SUSPENDED



This year, the Parish in Kondopoga could not run their summer camp for disabled children. Unfortunately, Father Lev's key helpers were unable to participate due to family and health reasons. However, the Parish volunteers helped organise leisure and sports games for disabled children at the Kondopoga social centre.

Father Lev has recently confirmed that the Parish is currently unable to commit to next year's camp and accept further donations. Sadly, any further fundraising from the Chester Cathedral group will no longer be possible in 2025 due to this. Our fundraising has similarly been put on hold until further notice. We thank all the friends at the Cathedral for their long-standing support. They kindly allowed the funds raised for Kondopoga to go towards the restoration of Sunflower's camp in Dolbeniki. If you supported the Parish in the past, we would be grateful if you could do the same.

NEW TRUSTEE AND ACCOUNTANT

We welcome Jyoti Tandel in her new role as St Gregory's accountant. Jyoti joined us last October after Shiho Prevost, our former accountant, returned to her native Japan. We thank Shiho for all her help to St Gregory's and wish her the best of luck in her future career.

We are delighted to introduce Lynne Newark, a new candidate for SGF Trustee. Lynne will attend our Board meeting on 9th December, and we will be able to introduce her in one of our monthly bulletins—stay tuned!

NICHOLAS KOLARZ VISITED COMMUNICATION SPACE CENTRE

Our Chairman, Nicholas Kolarz, recently visited the new Centre to meet families and specialists and hand over much-needed funds for personalised help, low-tech devices, and Russian language aids which help children communicate and be as independent as possible. The team at the Centre succeeded in finding local donors to support the Centre's psychological and legal programmes. However, they struggle with funding their daily work, and this is where St. Gregory's stepped in to help.



FREE DONATIONS AS YOU SHOP

If you shop online, you can help raise money for St Gregory's without spending an extra penny. Just sign up to **Give As You Live** and raise money when you shop with 6,000 online retailers. Follow the link to sign up: <https://buff.ly/48tgb00>



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HOW YOUR DONATIONS HELP

£10 will help us to repair the Mkurnali garage to turn it into a bicycle/motorbike workshop

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

£25 will adapt a toy so that it can be enjoyed by children with learning difficulties

£115 will pay for Mkurnali's lawyer to defend one vulnerable young person through an average case.

MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION

Donate online at

StGregorysFoundation.org.uk

or

send a cheque payable to

The St Gregory's Foundation to:

Julia Ashmore, SGF

c/o Flat 2, Effingham Lodge, Surbiton Crescent

Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2LN

MAKE A REGULAR DONATION

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StGregorysFoundation.org.uk

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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:

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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

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MY DETAILS AND CONSENT

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Signature:

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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.

CONTACTS

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SGF Directors:

- Nicholas Kolarz, Chair
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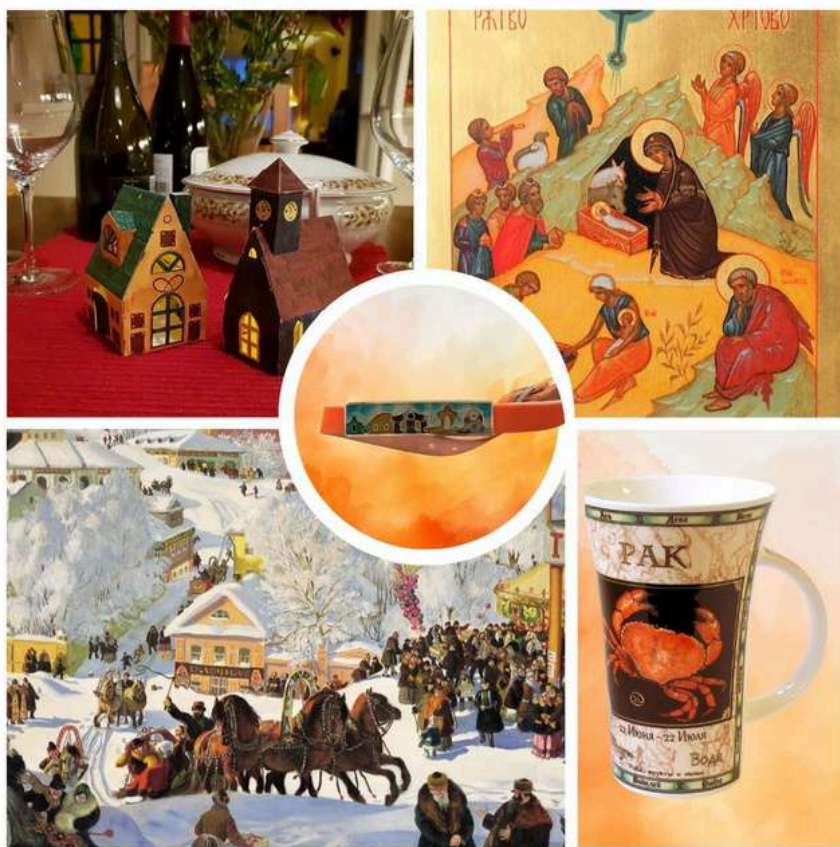
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