

ThePromise Post 2016

ThePromise works to improve the lives of disabled children in Russia. We do this by promoting a system of support (Portage) for disabled children in partnership with families and carers and by encouraging a more positive attitude to disability. The charity was founded in 2003 in memory of Ellie Settelen. **For further details of our work, please visit our website: www.thepromise.org.uk**

Dear Friends,

I'm writing this at a very exciting time for ThePromise. A time for change, for growth and, sadly, for goodbyes to familiar faces, but also for new opportunities.

The first goodbye was at the end of February when our amazing Director, **Wendy Tabuteau**, moved on to pastures new. Wendy has been the driving force behind ThePromise for the past 9 years and I would like to **thank her** for everything she has helped us achieve. Wendy has moved on to lead another international children's charity and I know we all wish her the very best.



Wendy and Board of Trustees

I am delighted to say that **Jo Pritchard** has been promoted to the position of UK Director. As a qualified Physiotherapist Jo brings many years of experience, both of working with children and of our work in Russia and I know she has many new ideas and lots of enthusiasm to continue to move ThePromise forward. I am also very pleased to welcome **Nina Veddell** as our new Programme Assistant. Nina was our first Community Senior Portage worker in Ryazan and has continued to help us since moving to the UK as well as gaining further qualifications in childcare and education.

Thanks to the success of our work in Ryazan, which, at the end of March 2016 will see a fully established **Community Portage Service** led by the Ryazan University team, we are now in a position to move forward with our vision of disseminating Portage throughout Russia and maybe beyond! Our original vision back in 2003 was that we would set up **sustainable models of good practice** that would eventually be financed and managed by Russians in Russia. All three models – in the Ryazan Baby Home, in Yelatma orphanage, and the community team – will now be run by Russians and funded from within Russia!

Thank you for all you have done to help us achieve this vision!

Our focus is now on **disseminating** our robust model of supporting the set-up of new Portage services, enabling us to bring the amazing gift of Portage to many more children and their families. As **Kirill's story**, over the page, illustrates, receiving Portage can literally change lives and we want to facilitate a growing number of new services to provide this opportunity. ThePromise will provide Portage training and practical support to dedicated teams of people who want to set-up and run their own Portage service allowing us to increase the **number of children** who benefit from Portage every day.

Of course none of this would be possible without our valued supporters; you have enabled us to come this far, and for this I would like to express my **heartfelt thanks**. I do hope you join me in wishing the new team well and we are really looking forward to sharing news of new projects, and seeing some of you at the exciting events we have planned this year to raise funds to make these services a reality.

Jash 

Voronezh APT Workshop

One of the most recently established Portage services based in Voronezh (you may have heard of it from the recent adaptation of War & Peace) continues to thrive, providing weekly Portage sessions to **28 children**. We were very excited when they approached us to support their Portage workers in making **specialist equipment** for some of their children and, thanks to Nina, the course that was run in November was a huge success. A chair, two standing frames and a balance board have been completed so far.



Voronezh Team with some of the APT items they made

#GIVING TUESDAY

As many of you will know we joined in with the global **#GivingTuesday** fundraising campaign in December. Thanks to a fantastic response and the generosity of our match funding donors we raised a wonderful

£3,100

We were overwhelmed by your support and would like to **thank you** all for making it such a huge success. This has already enabled us to run a Portage Workshop in **Voronezh** in **February** seeing 40 participants gain their certificates and will fund the upcoming workshop in **Ryazan** in **April** training the community team of the future.

Kirill's Story

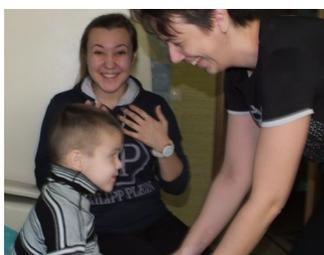
Kirill is an energetic, loving 5 year old boy, with a huge smile and who is always on the move. He enjoys communicating with his parents, reading books and playing with new friends.



Kirill enjoying a story with his mother

When Kirill joined the **Ryazan Community Portage** service just over a year ago the picture was very different. His parents told his new home visitor, **Anastasia**, that Kirill could not sit still, he was always running, jumping, throwing or chewing things; they didn't know what he wanted or how to help him. Kirill has autism and the whole family were finding it **very difficult** to understand how to help Kirill make sense of the world, and to develop skills he needs to be able to join in with his peers and enjoy life. Anastasia worked with the family to get to know Kirill, establish what he **could do** and agree on areas of development to focus on, particularly Kirill's ability to **communicate** what he wanted, how he felt and also his self-help skills. Through regular visits, positive interactions and perseverance Anastasia developed a relationship with Kirill and he soon started to **show progress in his skills**.

His family saw these changes and were very **motivated** to continue working through the activities set each week with Anastasia. Kirill started responding to his name, wave bye-bye and was soon potty trained. His parents couldn't believe it 'In just one month our son has changed so much, he actually sits and plays for a few minutes now, **it is wonderful**.' After one year of Portage Kirill is now beginning to use recognisable sounds to communicate his wants and needs, calling for his Mum and Dad and asking for his favourite toys. He is able to eat independently and loves meeting new people.



Kirill laughing during his Portage session with Anastasia (Portage Worker) and his mother

'His **family treat him completely differently** now; they moved from just feeding and walking him to communicating with him and bringing him up.' Anastasia's comments about the progress over the last year are heart-warming, knowing that Kirill is now **part of the family** and his parents can enjoy spending time with their son is a true testament to the strength of Portage and the wonderful work of the Portage Team in Ryazan.

Please use your **envelope** to recycle print cartridges to raise money for ThePromise. If you would like some more just drop Jo an email.



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ThePromise – for Russian Children with Special Needs

Follow us on Twitter



@thepromise4kids

Spring Morning Walk

ThePromise's annual **sponsored walk** will be in Richmond Park on what we hope will be a bright Spring morning on

Sunday 3rd April at 10am

The 8 mile loop, starting at Roehampton Gate café, is suitable for all the family and is wheelchair accessible. So bring the kids, the dogs and anyone else who would like to join us! Whether you want a gentle stroll or a brisk march we would love to see you. Please contact jo.pritchard@thepromise.org.uk for further details and to register.

easyfundraising

.org.uk

Don't forget to log-in every time you shop online and the retailer will donate a % (free of charge) to ThePromise. Using easysearch.org.uk as your search engine will raise money every time you click!

ThePromise has already received over £650 - Thank you!

New Portage Services – Russia & Beyond

We are extremely excited to tell you how we have already started the **spread of Portage** through training and supporting new services.

As some of you may remember from our #GivingTuesday campaign we have been asked to work with staff at **Baby Home No 8** in Moscow to support them in providing Portage to some of the children and families there. Jo will be visiting Russia at the beginning of **April** to meet with the team and assist them to move forward with their plans. Jo will also be visiting the very successful **Yasenovo Portage Service** in Moscow, as well as seeing their Senior Portage worker, Katya, in action training a new group of Portage workers at the **Portage Workshop** being held in Ryazan. We are hoping our trainers of tomorrow will be starting their **apprentice programme** at this workshop, a vital part of ensuring the sustainability of our dissemination plan in Russia.

You may remember reading of Jo's trip to **Bulgaria** last year. We are very pleased to say that the Portage Team has started work with **14 children** in Sofia and they are committed to conducting the first Pilot Portage Project in Bulgaria.



Sofia Portage Team with Jo, Elvira and Katya

ThePromise remains **committed to disseminating Portage** throughout Russia but in the current political climate and after hearing of the need in neighbouring countries, such as Bulgaria and Ukraine, we feel we have a duty to consider each case presented to us. We hope, as our **valued supporters**, you agree with us and if you would like to discuss this, or anything else further, please do not hesitate to **contact Jo**.