

ThePromise Post 2017

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 do hope your year has started with as much excitement and positivity as ours here at ThePromise. As you will see from this action packed newsletter we have been extremely busy working toward the aims of our **new strategy**. The dissemination of Portage to new areas of Russia is a difficult but hugely rewarding task as you will see from Ruslan's short story over the page.

When I think back to my original vision of ThePromise and **my dream** to introduce Portage to the children of Ryazan I always hoped it would be the start of something bigger. I am so excited that this powerful tool is spreading far and wide and that this dream is now becoming reality for so many people throughout Russia.

In a time of change and unrest we find our work to be even more **valuable** for the families and professionals we work with. Many of them are struggling to make ends meet and with the ever present social pressures of having a child with a disability the support and kindness they receive from a Portage Worker is the hope they need for a better future.

As Jo says our focus now has to be on developing and providing a robust process of **training and support** for new Portage

Teams to ensure they can establish a strong team of caring professionals to work with children and families most in need.

As I'm sure you are aware this will not be possible without people like you. Knowing we have so many **supporters** out there donating funds, expertise and of course time to make our work possible is truly wonderful.

I would particularly like to thank our **amazing pledgers** who generously matched all the donations received for our **#GivingTuesday** campaign, which was a huge success again this year raising over **£3,260**.

It is so **heart-warming** to witness the continued support from trusts, foundations and our corporate sponsor, Blackthorne. And we are, as always, so grateful for the consistent support of our **Angels**. You are all enabling us to give the wonderful gift of Portage to children who really need it.

Thank you again and I know that with the continued determination of the teams both here in the UK and in Russia we can bring Portage to many more children and their families so desperately in need.

Dash 

One participant wrote:
"I like Portage. If it was available in our region, it would improve lives of many families and children with disabilities"



Participants discussing practical tasks of the workshop

We are very pleased to say that at the end of the workshop a team of 6 Portage workers was created to start a pilot project as the **Volkhov Portage Service**.

Hello,

I am extremely pleased to be writing this after nearly a year as Director of ThePromise, and what an amazing year! Working with the trustees on the new strategy was a perfect opportunity to focus on how we can best **spread the gift of Portage** to many more families and professionals. As you know the Ryazan and Yelatma Portage Teams are running independently and we are now using these experiences to develop a package of support for **new Portage Teams** to ensure they have everything needed to be effective and independent within 6-9 months of forming.

As you will see this has started extremely well and I am very happy to say that we are currently supporting **four** new Portage Services, bringing Portage to over **40 new children**.

Last year I had the privilege of visiting the team in **Voronezh**, meeting some of the new Portage workers in **Moscow** and working very closely with our colleagues at Diema's Dream Fund (exciting news on this over the page) and I look forward to an equally busy and **progressive year**.

Jo 

They will work with **10 children** from the centre holding weekly Portage sessions with the families to support and promote the child's development and access to services.

We will continue to support the Volkhov Team by enabling experienced Portage workers and other professionals to share their knowledge and skills with the Portage Workers. Where possible we will **fund professionals** from within Russia to visit the team however at times the skills needed can still only be found outside of Russia requiring **international volunteers** to spend time with the team.

We are so glad that we can bring the **gift of Portage** to both the professionals and families of Volkhov and look forward to sharing the successes of this team and others as they grow and develop.

The Promise in 2017

Plans for this year are already well under way with a **Train the Trainer** course being held in Voronezh in April followed by a **Basic Portage Workshop** for the new trainers to practice their skills. As well as expanding our training team, new Portage Workers will be trained to expand the **Voronezh** team enabling them to work with more children and become a centre of excellence in Portage. We also hope that individuals from local centres will attend the workshop with the view to starting new **Pilot Portage Services**.

Supporting these new Portage Services costs just **£500** for the expert advice and initial support the new teams need over the first **6 months** in order to ensure high quality Portage practice. The money our supporters help us raise goes

directly to ensuring these new teams receive what they need to provide as many children as possible with the **gift of Portage**.

Planning for our next **fundraising event** is underway - dates and details coming soon!

To ensure the sustainability and high quality of Portage in Russia we are working closely with our Russian colleagues to establish a **Russian Portage Association**. This is a complicated and lengthy process but we look forward to bringing you more news later in the year.

Volunteers Needed

We would love to hear from experienced Portage Workers, teachers with special needs experience and paediatric therapists who would like to **help support** the new Portage Teams. Please email jo.pritchard@thepromise.org.uk

Ruslan's Story

Ruslan is 11 years old and is the first child in the Veronika Centre to benefit from Portage. Ruslan has developmental delay which combined with very difficult family circumstances means he is unable to receive any educational intervention. The professionals at the Veronika Centre are the only people in his life who provide any kind of support or education for him.

Portage will be his lifeline and it is hoped that when his Mother sees her son developing new skills she may feel able to take part in the Portage process. Ruslan still relies on nappies, as there is currently no system providing guidance on toilet training available at the centre.

His carers were very keen on supporting Ruslan to use a toilet, as he is very heavy for them to move and change. After the workshop the trainers spent time with Ruslan and his carers developing a step by step plan of how they can help him to develop new skills and provide him with more independence. The Activity Chart developed by his Portage worker will remain in his room, so everyone knows what to do and how to do it.

A recent update from Ruslan's carers is very positive; he is using the toilet during the day and is very much enjoying time with his Portage Worker. We can't wait to hear how Ruslan gets on and bring you news of the other children benefitting from Portage in Volkhov.



Thanks to our amazing pledgers and wonderful donors our campaign was a huge success raising **over £3,260!**

This will go straight to supporting the **new pilot Portage Teams** to ensure they succeed in bringing Portage to many more children throughout Russia.

Spring Morning Walk

You are invited to join us on our annual **sponsored walk** in Richmond Park on

Sunday 2nd April at 10am

The 8 mile accessible loop starting at Pembroke Lodge is suitable for **all the family**. 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.

Expanding Portage in Moscow

We are very excited to tell you that we have recently signed a **Partnership Agreement** with our long-standing colleagues at the Russian Foundation **Diema's Dream**. This agreement outlines how we plan to work together to bring Portage Services to more organisations within the Moscow Region.



Russian Team

Katya, Maria, Jo, Helena, Armenui, Svetlana

To launch our collaboration a **conference** was held in Moscow last October where Portage was the main focus. Jo delivered a presentation "**A Global Model of Portage Practice**" on behalf of Mollie White, which generated a lot of interest in starting pilot projects and training professionals to use Portage. Participants also attended **seminars** including Postural Management, Working with the Severely Disabled Child and Communication. Over **80 people** attended throughout the 2 days and 6 applications were received asking for support to start Pilot Portage Projects. The Promise and Diema's Dream are **committed to working together** to support the new teams, provide organisations with information and to actively promote the **power of Portage** to local ministers and officials.



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

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

The Promise has already received over £900 Thank you!