

The Promise Post 2014



The Promise 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 the work, please visit our website: www.thepromise.org.uk**

Dear Friends,

First of all, thank you for all your continuing support for our vital work. Thanks to your help, we have survived a very difficult fundraising climate and have managed to achieve some wonderful successes in our programmes!

Our star fundraiser has to be **Hamish Fell**, who you can read more about in a special interview over the page!



Walkers ready to go in Richmond Park Hamish Fell far right

His electric wheelchair was the envy of many of the families, and dogs, who marched their way round Richmond Park in February through floods and mud! But it was his fundraising skills that left us utterly speechless, when he quietly presented us with an envelope a few weeks later. Thank you Hamish – you are a true star!

We had a wonderful celebration of our 10th birthday last summer. I can't believe it is nearly a year since I was able to announce the fantastic news confirming that the Department of Social Protection had agreed to fund the last remaining Portage workers at the orphanage for older disabled children in Yelatma. This was an astonishing accomplishment. At last we had achieved what we had set out to do – to convince the Russian authorities that all children, no matter what their ability, have a right to achieve their potential and to receive love and one to one attention. The programme in **Yelatma** is now entirely funded by the local government and local Russian charities. We continue to provide training, advice and supervision to the team to ensure continuity of the high standards we have set.

Very excitingly we have been able to respond to some of the many requests to develop Portage services in other areas of the country. After Jo's successful trip to **Taganrog** in February we are delighted that families are starting to receive the gift of Portage and look forward to supporting them in developing and growing their service.



Taganrog Portage Team

Our team of Portage trainers is in great demand and one of our focuses for the coming years, with your continued help, will be to support more new Portage services for families in needy areas of Russia.

I hope you enjoy the rest of this newsletter and look forward to seeing many of you at the various **events** we are planning next year.

A huge thanks again, on behalf of all the Russian team and children, for your on-going support.

Jo



Programme update

We are very happy to share the success story of a new **Portage Service** that is now up and running. Led by Senior Portage Worker, Diana who is the mother of a disabled child, a small team of Portage workers are visiting a number of families weekly in the southern Russian town of **Taganrog**. They are providing Portage and other support to previously isolated families facing the challenges of raising a child with special needs. We hope to organise a full **Portage Workshop** in Taganrog later in the year so that Diana can expand her team and visit more families.

The Portage Service in **Ryazan** continues with the community team as busy as ever. Sadly we said goodbye to Senior Portage Worker **Natasha** but are very happy to welcome **Oksana**. There are also two services running in Moscow at **Yasenovo** and **Golden Ray** Children's Centres.

Turn over to read the fantastic story of Anya, who has made amazing progress whilst receiving Portage in Ryazan

Red Article

Did you see our very own Jo and her family in the May edition of Red Magazine?

It is their wonderful story of how they adopted Marina from the Ryazan Baby Home in 2010 after Jo met her while working there for The Promise.

You can find the full article on our website in the Resources Section or by using the link.



<http://www.thepromise.org.uk/index.php/resources-2/press/>

Top Fundraiser of 2014 Hamish Fell

Hamish, 27, has been a supporter of ThePromise since the beginning. Hamish was just **9 years old** when he met Sarah, through his then nanny and now life-long friend June, and has always been keen to be involved.



Hamish with Sarah (left) & June (right)

Hamish has supported and joined in with many of ThePromise's past events, particularly enjoying the social occasions, such as the balls. But in 2014 when he heard that a sponsored walk around Richmond Park was planned he knew he could do a bit more. He signed himself up for the **Winter Morning Walk**, printed out a sponsorship form and started giving it to everyone he knew. By the time of the walk Hamish had collected a lot of sponsors, including many of his dad's friends and colleagues

at Helix Property Advisors, who all know Hamish well.

So on a chilly morning in February Hamish, his fully charged wheelchair and his partner in crime June arrived ready to complete the **10 mile loop** of Richmond Park.

Despite flooded paths and some tricky off-roading Hamish got to the end with a huge smile on his face and a secret! Little did Sarah and everyone at ThePromise know that just a couple of weeks after the walk they would receive Hamish's sponsorship money — a huge **£1,700!** Hamish was very pleased to see Sarah's face when she saw his amazing achievement saying "her face was a picture because of what I had done." He can't wait to do it again, but this time his aim is to raise even more. So he waits with baited breath until the next walk, and of course party, so he can get back on the fundraising trail and dance floor alike.



Thank You

We continue to be very fortunate to have such wonderful supporters and would like to extend a **massive thank you** to everyone. There have been some fantastic events held recently including Dancing at the Dogstar thanks to **Lucy & Sara**, a Talent Show at **The Russell School**, Petersham and our Winter Morning Walk. We would like to thank our corporate sponsor **Blackthorne International** and all our **Angels** who give regularly to ensure the work carries on. We have received some very generous donations from various individuals and charitable trusts, all of which go straight to developing the projects in Russia and allowing us to work with more children.

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ThePromise – for Russian Children with Special needs



Exciting Events in 2015

We are busy planning a number of wonderful events in aid of ThePromise next year. Including another **Winter Morning Walk** and a **Summer Party** so keep a look out for updates on our website. If you would like to join in or hold an event for ThePromise please contact jo.pritchard@thepromise.org.uk

Change of Address

Please note that we have a new postal address

52 Sherland Road, Twickenham, TW1 4HD

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



Anya's Story

Anya was born with cerebral palsy affected her whole body. Her mother and her were almost housebound and in desperate need of help when in 2009, at the age of 9, Anya started receiving Portage from the Ryazan Community Portage Team. After an initial visit it was clear that Anya had a lot of potential and weekly Portage visits with Natasha started.

Anya was unable to sit up or grasp objects, but quite happily talked in short phrases about her collection of dolls. She was desperate to play and enjoyed attention!

Anya's mother had only ever been told what her daughter couldn't do, so to hear what she could do was a surprising change. "I found it very soothing to talk about positive things and looked to the future for my daughter for the first time"



After just a few months of Portage Anya was sitting with minimal support, eating with a spoon and drawing.

The Portage team made her a standing frame, which strengthened her muscles and allowed Anya the freedom to use her hands.

By February 2011 Anya was able to move herself between positions with little help and control objects in her hands.

Anya had been classed as 'uneducable' but after a reassessment started home sessions with her first teacher.

In June 2011 Anya was naming shapes and everyone was commenting on Anya's remarkable progress. By October Anya's fine motor skills developed enough to turn pages in a book, she was able to name many pictures and her vocabulary had expanded a great deal. Anya now loves asking questions, speaks in full sentences and stands confidently in her standing frame discussing events of the past and describing her future plans.

Anya and her family, including her new baby brother, now leave their flat regularly, enjoying social events arranged by the Portage team, and playing with other children!