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Child ID: 0503741909
December 2021

Your sponsorship for Annija

Dear Friends,

Can you believe that another year has flown past so quickly and December is already here? As always, it comes with white snowflakes, tasty scent of gingerbread cookies and bright little lights in all windows. Did you write a letter to Santa Claus already? I hope you did. Because you certainly deserve the best gift in the world for being such a kind and helpful friend for the children of SOS Children's Village Valmiera! Thank you so much for your support all over the times!

In Latvia, COVID-19 is still influencing the lives of the children, young people and families whom we support. We do our very best to make sure that they stay healthy. We follow official guidelines to make sure children can continue to grow and develop, go to kindergarten, school, and take part in other activities. Everybody hopes the next year will bring 'old normal life' back. But the children are enjoying their childhood anyway – playing with friends, learning new things, smiling, celebrating birthdays – and growing up.



SOS family exploring the seaside in summer

The last summer was really sunny. Many safety restrictions were decreased. Although there were not so many opportunities for kids to go to summer camps, families often went for small trips. The children had a nice time at the seaside, too. In September, the new school year started, and everybody went to school. Children were so happy to meet their classmates! Then time-to-time and class-by-class learning could change to distant mode and back again – depending on the situation. We very much hope the schools will remain open.

And now some news from your sponsored child. Annija is 6 years old. She is going to school next year. Anyway, the girl already knows the numbers and letters, she can read simple texts in syllables. Since September Annija started trainings in a basketball team. The girl has great memories from the summer adventures. The best ones are from the family camp at the sea. 'My brother flew the kite, it was beautiful! I love swimming and splashing! I have an inflatable crocodile for swimming. I learn to swim in the swimming pool now,' the girl is excited.



The happy team of the village after the race



Trips, exploring the country

'There is no better way in teambuilding than a trip together!' says one of SOS moms. Therefore, SOS families used summer holidays to go for 2-3 days long trips around the country. The favorite route was across Latvia to Kurzeme seaside. One family had an interesting tour through historical old manors and castles. 'It is great to learn the history of our country. We know a lot about duke Jacob's time in Kurzeme now,' 15 years old Kristis and his brother Valdis are excited. Children have great emotions from their summer travels.

Outdoor activities

In September, the annual Valmiera Marathon took place. As usually, a great number of village children were eager to participate - even twenty-two! 'I cannot run the whole long marathon, but I can take part at 5 kilometers distance,' tells 13 years old Linda. 'It is great to do sports activities with friends and so many other people together,' agrees Anna who is 16.

Apart from the summer camps and family trips, children enjoyed all kinds of outdoor activities a lot. Especially the youngest liked creative games. 'Oh, the number of village houses is growing!' the village director exclaimed one morning. Yes, the kids had started construction works. They have made some tent-houses of blankets at one side of the playground. 'Children show us clearly what they need. We should consider building additional small wooden houses on the playground,' smiles the director.

Happy New Year!

I am sending you the best wishes for a healthy and prosperous new year. I want to share with you a photo and a greeting card. This year a SOS mom drew this beautiful blue bird.

On one cold and frosty day, little Roberts noticed a bird in the tree near their house. 'Mommy, does this birdy have a home? It is so cold outside. Can it stay somewhere in warmth and have a rest?' the boy asked. 'Oh, darling,' his SOS mom started explaining; 'Birds can eat and have some rest at bird feeders in the trees.'

'But we do not have one!' Roberts quickly notices. 'We should make a bird feeder and hang it at the window. Then all birds will be happy!' SOS mom is happy, too, that her little boy has such a kind heart. She remembers well that Roberts himself was like a small, scared little bird thrown out of its nest when he entered their family a few winters ago. Yes, they will make a bird feeder, so that Roberts can take care of others, as his SOS mom takes care of him.

Hope you enjoyed the letter and the stories from the village (just all names were changed for data protection reasons). Please, stay healthy and happy. Your friendship is the best gift for us! Thank you for that! With warmest regards and wishes from Latvia,

Sandra Braunere

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National Sponsorship Co-ordinator