

# Sunflowers Chernobyl Appeal Children's Charity

A voluntary charity helping Chernobyl children



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## Sunflowers Chernobyl Appeal Annual Report 2014-2015

### Directors Appointed AGM - 09-02-2016

-	Pat Dillon Aughrim Ballinasloe Co Galway	CEO/ Chairperson
-	Ita Byrnes 12 Hazelwood Loughrea Co Galway	Treasurer/Secretary
-	Brendan Fallon Aughrim Ballinasloe Co Galway	Child Protection Officer/Governance

Dear friends,

We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers, host families, supporters and friends for your generosity and support throughout this year. Your generosity has enabled us to carry out our projects on behalf of the children in what are very hard economic circumstances for everyone. We thank all people who gave up their time to take part in fundraising and to all our donors who contributed financially or by providing wheelchairs, medical aid, medicines, knitting items, clothing, footwear, services for the children or other essential humanitarian aid. And to all the hard working volunteers who travel to work with us in Belarus.

We help many children who spend their lives in orphanages and state institutions, sick children in the home and the children who are in need of assistance in the community. Our voluntary workers travel to Belarus to take part in our projects, to improve the conditions of the Chernobyl Children and to deliver or source aid and materials in Belarus. We try to source as much material as possible in Belarus to keep down transportation costs thus freeing up the finance to be spent on children's facilities or much needed equipment. To date we have built three Sunflowers Homes for Independent living at Boguskeusk Orphanage.

We believe that our efforts to provide day care facilities and sensory rooms are of major importance as they will help families in many communities to keep their children at home and out of the orphanages and provide focal point for them to eventually develop their own supports for their children with our assistance. We also carry out work on providing homes for independent living for special needs orphans who would otherwise have been sent to an adult mental institution from the orphanage on reaching adulthood and have provided them with a chance to live independently after a period of training in the orphanages before moving into the house where they are trained to be self-sufficient.

As a result of this on-going project they live in the community, have a number of farm animals, producing their own milk, meat, eggs and cultivate their own garden using grow houses to produce enough vegetables for use in their own homes. They sell the surplus products to the orphanage where they once lived and a number of them also have part time jobs in the orphanage helping the children they once lived with. As they progress in the homes for independent living and are deemed capable they are able to get their own accommodation making room in the homes for other children from the orphanage to take their place.

We also work with children in the orphanage who are acutely mentally and physically disabled providing better living conditions and sensory/therapy facilities along with humanitarian aid.

The Sunflowers Chernobyl Appeal has no paid staff, we are all volunteers, but we do engage the services of specialists in Belarus for physical rehabilitation and development training of special needs children. We rely on voluntary workers and voluntary host families in Ireland to keep our projects alive.

## **GOOD GOVERNANCE CODE**

We have adopted and comply with the principles of Good Governance in accordance with the Governance Code and have completed the Governance Code Principles Statement which is displayed on our website and annual report.

We confirm that our organisation complies with the code for the community, voluntary and charitable sector in Ireland.

## **DAY CARE CENTRE**

We handed over our Day Care Centre in Mikashevichi to the Social Services – Health Authorities in Lunninets District, Belarus. The building which was built by the charity is located in the town on a site of about 1 ½ acres. Over a period of 3 years work was completed on renovating the shell of a wreck providing a two storey state of the art Day Care Centre which was created by groups of voluntary workers from Ireland who rebuilt everything from scratch, installing sewerage, heating, electrical wiring, fitted kitchen, electrical appliances, two toilets, showers, office, day rooms, computer room, rooms upstairs for various arts, crafts and sewing classes for special needs children.

The building was supplied with kitchen, office furniture, computers for training courses, sewing machines, a sensory therapy room with water bed, projectors, sound and sensory equipment was also installed in one of the rooms in the centre to provide respite and therapy for special needs children. The grounds outside had paving installed and a storage shed along with a boiler house was also provided. The site was also fenced with gates erected after the site was levelled and landscaped by volunteers.

After running and supporting the centre for a number of years, the charity decided that it was now time for the local authorities to take it over to provide essential services in the area. We reached an agreement that the centre would be used solely for the purpose that it was initially set up for. The centre was used by special needs people and had provided many children and families in need of assistance, medical aid, food, clothing, help with assistance to access medical professions along with financial assistance for various problems encountered by children and families in bad circumstances.

We were also able to assist children in Lunninets Orphanage by improving their facilities and providing humanitarian aid. We had the opportunity to organise the people from the area to carry out many activities at the centre and organised many projects in the district providing essential facilities for children in 6 schools along with supporting families who fostered children.

To date we have taken over 700 children to Ireland for recuperation breaks from the area.

This project has been a huge success and the local authorities we hope will continue with it, the indications so far are promising. There are 17 Social Workers working on Social Services in the area, they have started a club for young disabled people themselves the most active participants, adaptive and dance gymnastics, a circle of computer literacy arts and crafts and they have created a programme of activities for elderly people in the centre. The Sensory Therapy room is a great asset to those who use it and they intend to have more healthcare professionals involved over time. We have been invited to return to the centre at any time to see how it is progressing and even though they have taken over, they hope for future co-operation.

The local authorities held a ceremony on March 17<sup>th</sup> when we handed over the Day Care Centre after an agreement was reached on the proper use of the centre for social services. The children and local people, the head of social services and the mayor thanked all the volunteers and generous supporters for the centre and the assistance given to the people of Mikashevichi and Luinninets district over the years and hoped for further future co-operation.

### **SUMMER RECUPERATION**

We had a total of 19 children and adults staying in Dublin and Galway among them special needs orphans, a paediatric doctor, 2 interpreters and a nurse who looked after the children who stayed in two houses while the rest of the children stayed with Voluntary Host families.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone at the Dublin Outreach group who held a most successful Strictly Come Dancing fundraiser and Andrew McCann author of 'Know your rights' who so kindly gave proceeds of the royalty sales to The Sunflowers. We also thank Caroline Dunne, her family, friends and supporters, committee for all their great work. We are very grateful to the host families in Dublin and Galway who took care of the children and looked after them in every way. We thank the people who so kindly donated the use of a house in Galway and Dublin for special needs orphans and their carers. We also thank everyone who organised events or supported the children in any way, especially the Doctors, Dentists and Opticians, Local shops, Butchers and Vegetable suppliers who gave so generously. Many of the children had very successful medical, dental and optical treatment that has made a huge difference to the quality of their lives.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

We plan to continue work on the 3 Sunflowers Houses for independent Living as funds become available after the success of this project so far we would like to bring it to a conclusion.

### **HUMANITARIAN AID**

We will continue to provide Humanitarian Aid and Financial assistance to children and families in bad circumstances with a special focus on providing medical equipment educational therapy toys for special need children at the orphanages.

## **COT CHILDREN PROJECT**

We plan to improve, renovate living areas and Day Rooms for the most vulnerable Special Needs children at Boguskevsk Orphanage. We will purchase new cots for the cot bound children who spend their lives in the cots, furniture, and medical equipment and will install Sensory Therapy rooms to give the cot bound children some respite from their cots. Volunteers will travel to Belarus to carry out the work.

## **CHILDRENS RECUPERATION PROGRAMME**

We are planning to take groups of special needs children and vulnerable children from the wider communities in Belarus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Once again we thank all our volunteers and donors or anyone who assisted us in any way possible organising events for the children or organising fundraising events.