

A letter to Sister Mary

Raissa Keskküla, Managing Director

Dear Sister Mary,

We first met at the Embassy of Finland in Tallinn, at the celebration of the PHARE/LIEN cooperation project for associations of people with visual impairments. At the time You already lived in Estonia and were working as an English teacher in the Old Town School (CER). At that meeting You said you wanted to know what the learning opportunities were for children with visual impairments and You asked a lot of questions from Olga and myself. And since you really had a lot of questions, we decided to meet again.

We met several times and the procedure was almost always the same – You had a lot of questions and we tried to answer them, shared our experiences. We also visited Linnupesa Preschool where Olga had opened two groups for children with visual impairments. We had already met three times when You said You wanted to meet again. I was confused and I told Olga, our teacher of students with visual impairments – what more could we possibly explain, we have given Sister Mary an exhaustive overview of everything that the Estonian Support Union of the Deafblind does. What else is there to explain or share? But this time You did not have any questions. This time You told us that you had decided to support Olga's work. You had been looking at what was being done in Estonia in terms of children with blindness and visual impairments and you had chosen to support Olga because her work seemed to be very professional and sustainable.

This is how we started to work together.

You tried to find supporters who could support us financially. Our support union provided professional support and assistance to children with visual impairments and their families. The Support Union had been organising courses for families of children who are blind or visually impaired. The courses were meant for the whole families, we welcomed the parents as well as grandparents and brothers and sisters. You said You were very happy with the professional support and training that was provided at the courses. However, you were not happy with the meals. The independence of the Republic of Estonia had recently been restored and the means and resources were very limited. But You were firm – only the best for the families! The teaching is important but the food must be good! And therefore, thanks to Your help from that moment on we always had excellent food

and the last day of the course always ended with a magnificent cake.



USA HILTON/PERKINS programme in Estonia

Sister Mary, You started our cooperation with the USA HILTON/PERKINS Programme. While visiting the States You talked on a radio programme about the situation of children with visual impairments in Estonia. Dennis Lolli, the Coordinator of the HILTON/PERKINS Programme in Eastern Europe told us that it was You, Sister Mary, who managed to convince them that they need to support Estonia. They had never thought of bringing their gigantic programme into such a small country.

But they did, and they supported us for 18 years!



Sister Mary

Dennis Lolli

Together with You, Olga and I have organised an incredible amount of events, trainings and meetings. We are very grateful for all those times, we will never forget it, we cherish those times as a fond memory.



Olga Ilgina

Raissa Keskküla

The Support Union of the Deafblind was created in 1994 by a group of parents. All these years the Chairman of Board of the organisation has been a parent. Margarita Rägapart and Heidi Rannik, the former and the current Chairman of Board look back at the times of cooperation with gratitude. Margarita and Heidi send their most sincere wishes and thanks and the warmest greetings on behalf of everybody in the Support Union.



Margarita Rägapart



Heidi Rannik

Sister Mary!

*Your heart is made of gold, and you have a century's worth of wisdom and experiences.
You have done more than most people could ever dream and are such an inspiration us all!
Happy Centenary!*

Estonian Support Union of the Deafblind

