

## NGO Vahtramägi



### About the Receiving Organisation

Our organization is an orphanage in Tartu, Estonia. Currently we have 23 children and young people in total, ages from 7-21. We have a family system where each "family" has about 7 children. At the second floor there is a "family" from youngest children, then we have the "family" where children are mostly 12-16 years old and the "youth family" is located on the first floor and most of them are 17 years old.

Children are taken from their real families mostly because of their parents' drinking problems or drug addictions due to the fact that they are unable to care for their offspring.

Kids are under constant supervision - there is always at least one orphanage care worker in every family. Every "family" has their own certain orphanage care workers, whose schedule is rotating with others. This way kids feel more safely and are more stable to cultivate trust with adults. Also, every kid has their own support care worker or mentor, who takes care of child's medical needs, goes to school when needed, buys clothes etc.

Staff helps children in regular everyday tasks and needs - studies, medical care, food, clothes, hygiene etc. Some children have mental but not physical disability and they go to special schools, but most of the children are healthy, stable, bright and active, as it should be. One 16 years old boy goes to a soccer training three times a week, two kids go to BMX training, one

takes dancing lessons, one 17 year old boy takes guitar lessons and one just started karate training.

Kids with more difficult background are influenced by and have more issues with controlling their emotions. But with proper care, love and attention they are sweet and wonderful kids.

## **Context**

Estonia is located in Eastern Europe. Our organization is in country's second largest town in Southern Estonia with almost 100 000 inhabitants. Tartu is a beautiful town, running along the banks of the river Emajõgi (Mother River). We have the country's oldest university and many local and international students come to study here. It is a quiet place but with enough possible activities to do. Our building is 15 minutes walking d . House is on top of the hill and is surrounded with yard. Right beside us we have a nice little park that belongs to a museum. Orphanage is surrounded with residential houses, there are grocery stores in the neighbourhood.

## **Proposed Activities for the Volunteer**

Since educators have many responsibilities, then mostly we would like the volunteer to spend time with our children. They like to spend too much time with TV, phones and computers. Of course, as normal children, they need to spend time in physical activities which they also enjoy. We would like the volunteer to play ball games with kids, to help the educators to take the kids for a swim and to help the staff to take kids outside the house to different events. Indoors it would be great if the volunteer can take time to play games with kids and help them with school lessons (English). On some weekends we would like the volunteer to organize dancing events. Once every week a volunteer should organize artistic or creative lessons for kids. At Christmas time we take part from fairs and kids will sell their self-made Christmas cards, jewelry and other goods. Sometimes we may need help with clean and running errands. At weekends we make food ourselves and it would be nice if the volunteer could cook and teach the children his or her own native food. We need a friend for our kids, somebody who kids can rely on and who is free to play and help out.

Definitely, volunteer would learn here to be very tolerant and see, that even when children have their issues, everybody needs love and attention for healing from past traumas. Every human being, even mentally disabled children can have very bright moments. Those moments multiply when someone is not judging and putting them down.

## **Profile of the Volunteer**

We are looking for somebody very active and creative and who is not too shy around some unstable children. Active male volunteer would be great, but female volunteers are also welcome. Volunteer should not be too sensitive and scared of outspoken children and youth.

We will be pleased to get applications from anyone who are:

- ready to work with children and have enough patience;
- willing to be involved in youth work and youth activities;
- ready to understand and accept that the children/youngsters often come from difficult family and social background;
- friendly and open-minded;
- aged between 18 and 30 years;
- optimistic and cheerful.