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AFG Helps Renovate New Youth Center

Three newly renovated rooms at a community center in Gori will help Society Biliki reach dozens more of the city's vulnerable youth, according to the NGO's director Mari Mgebrishvili.

In March 2010, Society Biliki finished renovations for a new location for their Day Center Skhivi. Society Biliki's two day centers – Biliki and Skhivi – serve children whose families are involved in the State Poverty Reduction Program.

The old Skhivi day center had only 2 small rooms serving 30 children. AFG sent \$9,500 so Biliki could move this center into the cultural center of the Kombinati Settlement.

During a presentation on April 13, the children performed a short concert for the Gori local government, local media and community representatives and the children's parents.

"I am very glad and proud that Biliki has so great friends as American Friends of Georgia," Mgebrishvili said.

This new space for the Day Center Skhivi allowed Biliki to increase the number of children from 30 to 45 a day. Rooms were

renovated and a heating system installed. Also, more children can be helped at Skhivi who are from poor families or displaced families living in two IDP collective centers in Kombinati.

Society Biliki is a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in Gori, a small city (population 6,500) in Shida Kartli, Georgia, the home to over 3000 internally displaced people from the August 2008 war.

The organization was founded by Mgebrishvili and a few friends who were dedicated to helping street children receive staples like food and clothing to survive, and necessities, like nurture and security, to flourish. The name, Biliki, means "narrow path" in Georgian – a testimony to the challenges gaining acceptance and friendship from the vulnerable children Mgebrishvili wanted to help.

AFG has been providing support for Society Biliki since 1997, when Marusya Chavchavadze met Mgebrishvili. For more information about Biliki and its programs, please check AFG's website.







AFG Cooperates with International Women's Association to Save Giorgi Mskhiladze



American Friends of Georgia (AFG) raised funds to help finance surgery for Giorgi Mskhiladze after an appeal from the International Women's Association (IWA) in Georgia.

In a letter of gratitude from IWA, Nana Dvali called AFG's response a "miracle of friendship."

"The cooperation between "American Friends of Georgia" and the "International Women's Association" can be a perfect example how the friendship and the strong will can really make a miracle," Dvali said.

"The survival of Giorgi Mskhiladze is a good example of it. IWA and AFG have done other projects together in the past. Giorgi Mskhiladze's father asked IWA for help to finance the surgery for his son with the leukemia disease, it was impossible for IWA to get enough funds for him. Therefore the request was sent to Lena Kiladze and the miracle happened for Giorgi, when AFG raised the funds for him as a part of their Leukemia Children's support program."

Giorgi was diagnosed with leukemia in his 20s but three years of chemotherapy in Tbilisi did not control the disease – and caused

damage to his digestive organs. He was taken to Israel in 2009 for an operation but the family lacked the funds for the follow up surgery.

"If not for AFG's support, the IWA would not be able to finance this project," Dvali said. "Giorgi survived finally, he was operated two weeks ago in Israel. Soon he will be back to his normal life that he missed for three years."

Today Giorgi, 25, is back home in Tbilisi and a walking "miracle" according to his sister Eka who said the doctors in Tbilisi told the family there was "no hope" for him.

"He was wheeled to the airport in a wheelchair because he couldn't walk," she said. "But he returned on his own two legs...sometimes even today I do not believe it."

"I am very thankful for AFG," Giorgi said. "Now I can live like a human being."



Giorgi Mskhiladze with his sister Eka

AFG Helps Fight Cervical Cancer

American Friends of Georgia (AFG) is pleased to announce, that after a year of coordinated efforts with the National Screening Center and support from the Ministry of Health of Georgia, an application for Merck's product Gardasil, a cervical cancer vaccine, was approved by Axios Healthcare Development and Merck & Co. Inc.

AFG with assistance from Humanity International, successfully applied to the Gardasil Access Program and as a result Georgia will receive a donation of 19,200 doses of the Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (Types 6, 11, 16 and 18) to be administered in accordance with World Health Organization guidelines to 6,400 girls ages 9-13 in Tbilisi, Georgia as an Urban Pilot Project. The donated product, valued at \$2.4 to \$3.0 million and is estimated to arrive in Georgia during the beginning of June.

Gardasil is a vaccine which helps protect against 2 types of the sexually transmitted Human Papillomavirus (HPV) that cause

about 75% of cervical cancer cases. This donation was made possible by a pledge from Merck & Co. Inc. and is administered by Axios Healthcare Development (AHD). This program will give Georgia experience in designing and implementing HPV vaccination projects and experience in developing effective operational models for adolescent immunization. Most importantly, it will lead to the decrease in morbidity from cervical cancer in Georgian women.

Until the product arrives, the Georgian Pharmaceutical Company (GPC) has volunteered to donate part of their commercial stock of Gardasil in order to expand the program and to start vaccinations prior to the donated material arriving.

We are proud that we are able to provide this donation in partnership with the National Screening Center, GPC and with the strong support of the Georgian government, all working together to start this important project and to help to improve healthcare for women in Georgia.