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**RSJ** Foundation

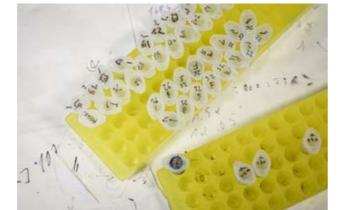
**RSJ** Foundation







Michal, p. 21







Agátka, p. 5

Darja, p. 35

Daniel, p. 49



In the people we support, and in those we work with, we see stories, and we want the world around us to see them too. Here we present but a few, stories in which gifted young individuals reveal a piece of themselves, their dreams, their desires, and the obstacles they must overcome. Together, we have an opportunity to look inside their world and see how special it is.

We help think outside the box. We are RSJ Foundation.



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"Agátka has always been a little woman with lots of big emotions inside. She was born by C-section and didn't really thrive. She did, however, know how to cry seven or eight hours a day. It was extremely difficult to manage her liveliness," recalls her mother, Jana Nevrtalová. Agátka's infancy and toddlerhood were exhausting. Jana, who had previously worked with disabled children, began to suspect her daughter may be autistic. This was never confirmed, but when Agátka came into the family, she brought with her a powerful force demanding immense energy.

As Agátka approached school age, her liveliness was augmented with an absolute need to know. Everything. She was increasingly hungry for information and wanted to understand things in depth. And that led to new difficulties.

When you speak with Agátka now, you see a wise young woman who knows how to communicate about pretty much anything and do so on a level approaching that of an educated adult. But when she was five years old, she had trouble finding her place among her peers.

Although she tried to fit in, from a young age she always felt more comfortable in the company of adults. "We accepted that. But then a time came when her powerful emotions would cause her to pass out; from one second to the next, she'd just completely shut down. She was placing ever greater demands on herself and was very unforgiving. The minute she felt she had made an error, her emotions would come flooding back in," says her mother. Like many gifted children, Agátka also had little patience for children who didn't keep their word or were unfair. On the other hand, the children around her had difficulty tolerating her adultness and radical openness.

Naturally, her parents sought the help of experts. A neurological exam revealed a fascinating disparity in the development of the hemispheres. "For the left hemisphere, where logical thinking happens, the results showed very advanced development. The doctor put the maturity of the left hemisphere at that of a 13-year-old child. But in her right hemisphere, she was still a little airl. And there was no way to fix that – she would have to persevere and work to even it out as she grew," says Agátka's mother in explaining these two conflicting constituents inside her daughter: a precocious. intelligent individual together with a child who didn't know what to make of the adult half of the brain. The child would then try to escape the pressure of these unmanageable emotions by shutting down and fainting. It was difficult for the whole family. And the situation didn't get any better when Agátka started school.

There, the little girl was breaking down again and constantly crying. And it wasn't that learning was difficult for her. Right from the start, it was clear she had a gift for languages. Today, at ten years of age, she loves not only English, which she studies together with seventh-graders to keep her from getting bored, but also French and Spanish. In order to understand her beloved K-pop, she's also teaching herself Korean.

Today, Agátka gets along well with other children, and thanks to her eagerness to fight for justice, she's also a member the school parliament, but in the second grade she was bothered by forceful, confusing emotions, and she also experienced very real bullying.

Her heightened sensitivity and contemplative nature made her appear weak and too different. And children don't forgive that.

And what's changed since then? "When Agátka started attending the programs at Explorer Academy, she met other children like her for the first time in her life. Gifted but vulnerable. We discovered an immensely strong personality in her. Although she was confused by her turbulent emotions, we were able to work with them. We gave her space to experience them and describe them and try to name what they were showing us. And because her most painful problem stemmed from the demands she was placing on herself, we focused on those. She learned to experience mistakes, and we talked about why she felt she had to be the best and what might happen if, by chance, she wasn't. Now, after three years, there's no trace left of that befuddled and frustrated Agátka," says Dana Hádková.

Agátka can now handle even the most demanding instructions and tasks. During covid, for instance, she helped create educational videos. While she hasn't lost any of her penchant for speaking up and saying what she thinks out loud, she no longer faints when she realizes she's made a mistake. And she looks forward to attending an eight-year grammar school. "I'm really looking forward to it. I enjoy a lot of things. The universe and also politics. And I participate in the school parliament," says Agátka.

"If I can't find it in a book, I look it up online or ask my mum," says Agátka, who's done a good job of learning how to vent her emotions and make the most of them, including in her hobbies. She balances the time she spends reading books with yoga or swimming, and she loves going out and having fun with her peers, even though just three years ago she was often lost and unreadable to the outside world.

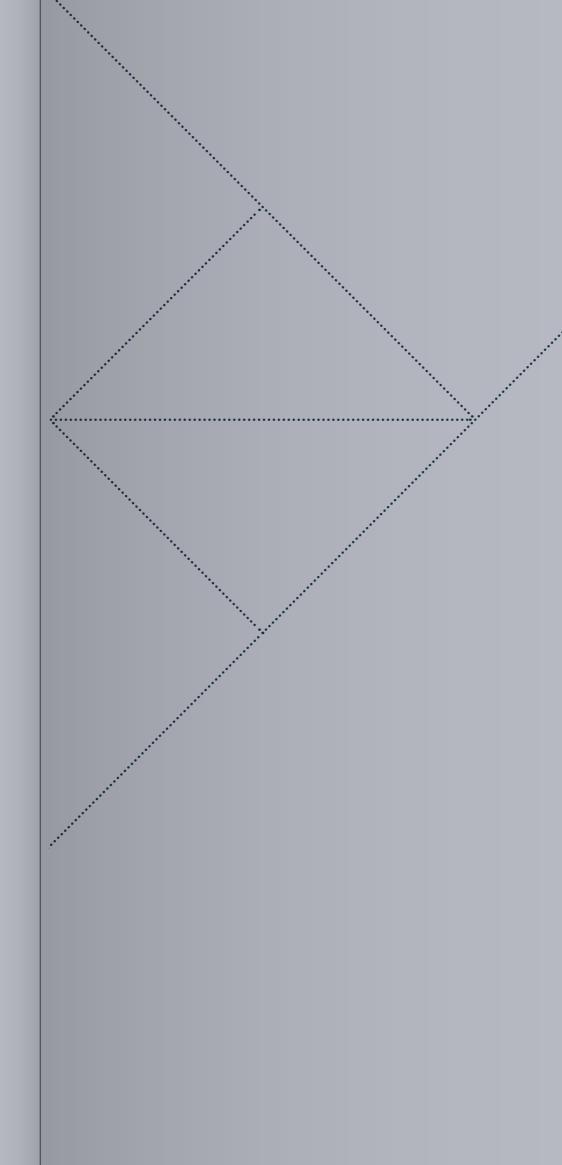
Coincidentally, Agátka has an equally gifted eight-yearold brother, Šimon. He's also quite the bookworm and is fascinated by the universe and likes to escape into his own world when he feels the one outside isn't accepting him the way he needs it to. This escape mechanism is shared by the overwhelming majority of gifted children. It helps them survive until, when they encounter the right adults, they get start living on their own terms.

"Gifted children with an extraordinary intellect are often deeply vulnerable inside. Working with them requires both patience and an understanding that they mustn't be pitied. They need encouragement and help in handling situations that hurt them for reasons that are often incomprehensible to people around them. Perhaps because exceptional giftedness often goes hand in hand with heightened sensitivity. Kindness and compassion can go a long way towards helping them make the best use of their strengths, not only to their own benefit but to the benefit of others as well."

Dana Hádková, Explorer Academy

### Agátka, age 11





## Who we are

# **Our story**

# Our philosophy

## Who we are

**Our mission is to ensure that gifted** children grow up in an environment that provides them with space, understanding, support, and inspiration in their overall personal, intellectual, and cultural development. We support education and the mental health of children and youth while advancing philanthropy.

We help think outside the box. Foundation.

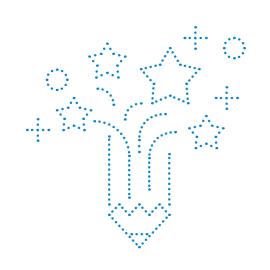


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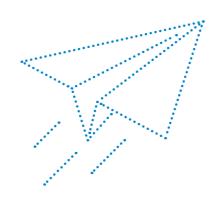


### How we work



### We create

We prepare and implement our own new projects and help others get theirs up and running.



### We inspire

We develop new ideas and look for partners who can help us bring them to life.



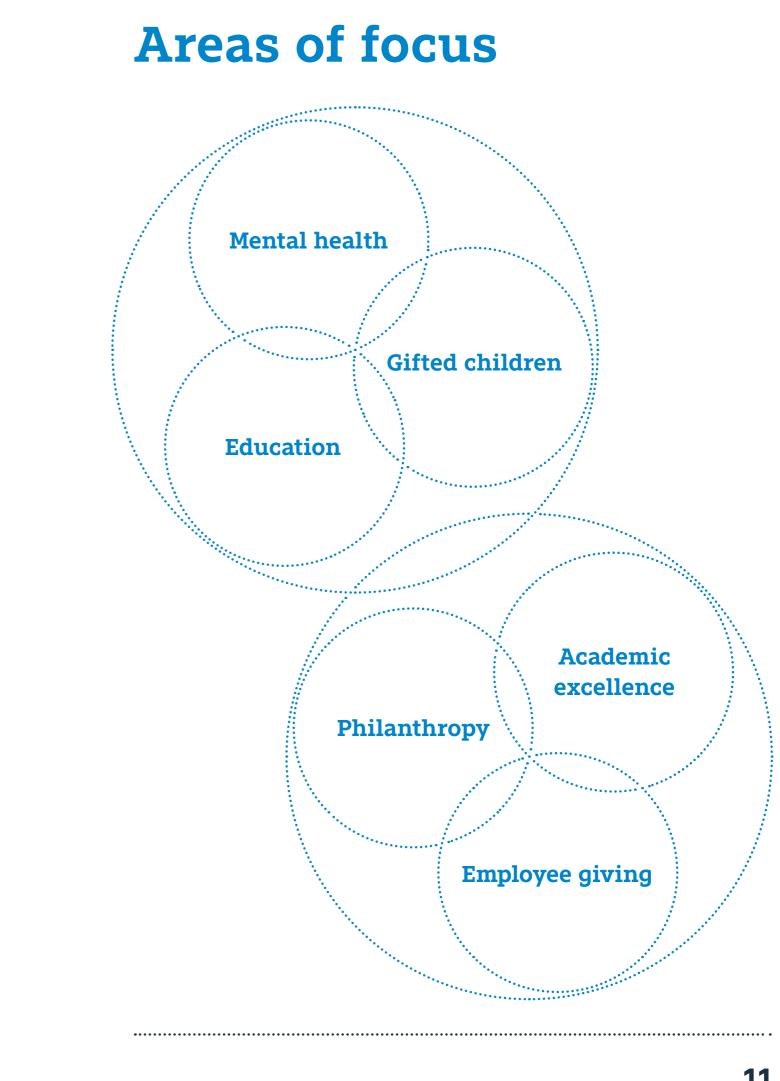
### We support

We support organizations and projects that bring about social change.



### We respond

The world is in motion, so we respond to actual needs around us.



## **Our story**

We're keenly aware of the responsibility we share for the society in which we live. Therefore, we want to help society cultivate and support young people as they grow and educate themselves, so that one day they can take over from us.

RSJ Foundation was established in December of 2014 by ten shareholders of RSJ Group with a common desire to advance philanthropy in the Czech Republic and invest a portion of their wealth and knowhow back into society.

Outwardly, RSJ Foundation presents itself as a corporate foundation and bears the company's name in its title.

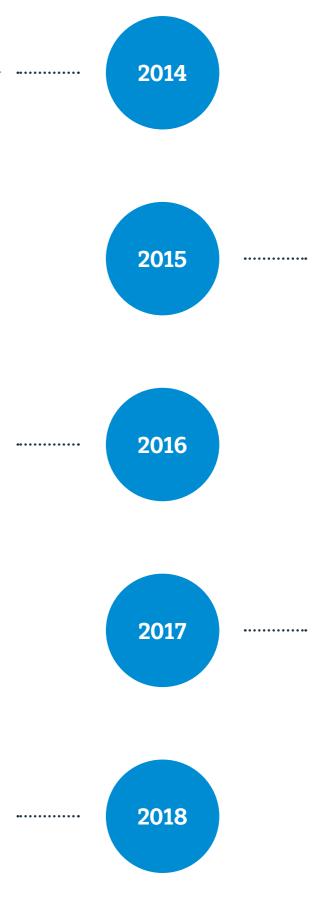
### **RSJ Foundation in years**

Ten shareholders of RSJ Group establish RSJ Foundation on 17 December. Its mission is to support education, science and research, healthy living, and the arts.

The Foundation strengthens the pillar of education and academic excellence. It also supports science and develops a program of employee giving.

The Foundation's portfolio is expanded with programs and organizations focused on the mental health of children and youth. The Foundation continues to advance the topic of gifted children.

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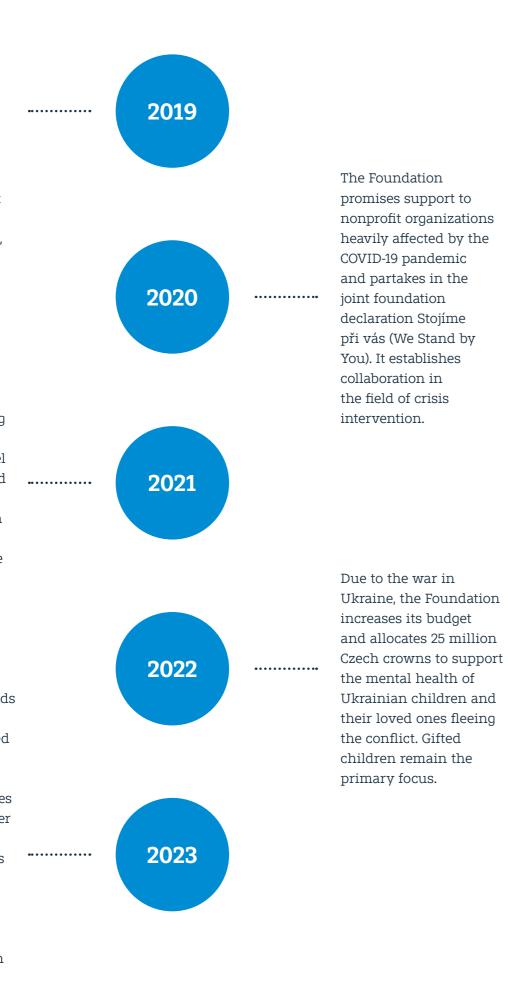


The first 10 million goes primarily towards healthy living, science and research, academic excellence, and employee giving. The Foundation enables the creation of new organizations in the field of healthy living and motivates them to collaborate using multisource financing.

In the field of education, the Foundation devotes special attention to gifted children, whose specific needs are often overlooked by society. To destigmatize, it calls them 'contemplative'. Projects in healthy living become independent, and support for them concludes at the end of the year. The entire year is marked by an open challenge in the area of gifted children. An important role is played by an advisory group comprising experts in the orbit of RSJ Foundation. The Foundation's aim is to create an environment in schools where children can feel good, thrive, and develop their potential.

The Foundation commits to long-term philanthropy. The commitment is set in stone upon the signing of a memorandum of cooperation with Učitel naživo (Teach Live) and promises support for 10 years. Together with RSJ, the Foundation organizes an employee crisis collection for Moravia following devastation caused by a tornado.

The Foundation expands its program focusing on contemplative, gifted children, stimulates the creation of new projects, and establishes collaboration with other key institutions and experts. It also inspires new philanthropic projects and, together with partners, shapes the endowment landscape in the Czech Republic.

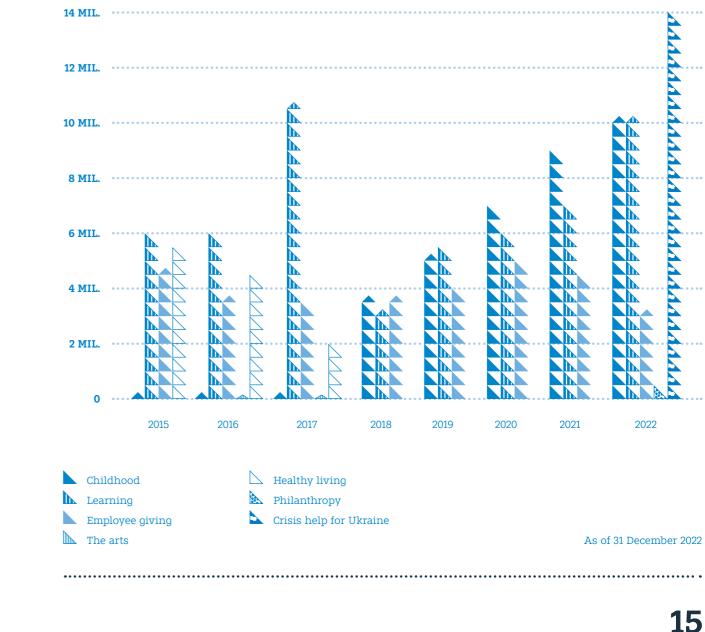


### **Our approach** and focus

We seek out socially neglected topics that at first glance have no clear and easy answers. We work on systemic changes, and those take time. We don't expect immediate results. We're not afraid to tackle obstacles, and we know our journey may not be easy. In our portfolio, we have projects that can, over a longer period of time, bring about significant societal changes.

### **Foundation contributions in years** by area of focus

\_\_\_\_\_



### People are our greatest asset

Mutual trust, openness, space for discussion, diversity in thinking, and collaboration are the pillars on which we build our relationships. We believe that the greatest wealth of any society is its people. We understand the importance of supporting people with a genuine passion for what they do.



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# **Our philosophy**

We support organizations and projects with a focus on contemplative, gifted children, on mental health in children and youth, on transforming education, and on promoting philanthropy. We build our relationships on mutual trust, openness, a steadfast **commitment**, and sustainability.

### **Our val**ues:

- → Accountability
- Freedom
- → Trust
- Wisdom

### **Our principles**

### **Partnerships**

We treat supported nonprofit organizations like equal partners.

### Education and mentoring

We care about the long-term success of the organizations we support. Thus skills development and mentoring go hand in hand with financial support.

### Independence, accountability, trust

If our relationships are to reach their full potential, we must trust one another, respect one another, and be open with one another.

### Individual approach

Each of our partners is unique and special to us.

### Creative thinking

We believe there is beauty in diversity. Diversity enriches us, so we provide space in which to engage in creative thinking and break down stereotypes.

### Sustainability and lasting impact

We want our work to have a lasting impact, so we seek paths to sustainability and viability for our partners' projects.

### **Our support**

We typically support organizations for five years so they can gather momentum and stand on their own two feet. We value their independence, development, and gradual financial self-sufficiency. We understand it's not easy. For key and strategic partners working to bring about systemic change, support can be extended to a maximum of ten years. We recognize that changing society and established rules doesn't happen overnight.

#### **PROJECT PROFILE:**

- $\rightarrow$  Inspiring and innovative
- Open to new perspectives  $\rightarrow$
- Development of new teaching methods  $\rightarrow$
- Nationwide or transferable between regions  $\rightarrow$

#### **APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS:**

- $\rightarrow$  Must have clear project goals, plan, and budget
- $\rightarrow$  Project must be long-term, not a one-off event
- $\rightarrow$  Applicant must be an established organization or a new initiative with a clear vision and a desire to effect change
- Must have appropriate resources and established contacts  $\rightarrow$
- Must have a functioning team and processes in place  $\rightarrow$







## **Michal**

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At first glance, Michal Stefanov appears to be a perfectly normal adolescent, in the best sense of the word. However, when you listen to him and his mother, you'll find that it's not quite so. Michal is a typical example of so-called dual exceptionality. On one hand, he has to cope with dyslexia, dysorthography, and dysgraphia in written expression, and developmental dysphasia, which hinders his verbal communication. He also has a mild form of attention deficit disorder. On the other hand, he has a high intellect and says it enables him to balance his learning disorders. His exceptional skills in computer science are only mentioned in passing, as if they were a mere footnote.

"Since preschool age, I've taken Michal to speech therapy. When I heard him speak, I knew we had to. I also knocked on the door of a special education teacher who teaches psychology at the education faculty. She had him clap his hands and say 'our cat Mourek,' which he had some trouble with. Then she talked with him, and finally she said: 'Take him to Dyscentrum'," recounts Michal's mother, Iva Stefanová, with speech and specific learning disorders.

Thus Michal began visiting special educators, who deferred his entry to school and instead had him attend a preschool class. When did begin school. the anticipated difficulties with reading and writing soon appeared. "The teacher was great, but what wasn't great was the genetic reading method. At the time, I didn't know how unsuitable it was for dyslexic children. Learning Czech with Michal's diagnoses is almost like learning a foreign language. On the other hand, the Hejný mathematics method, which works with logic, was a good match for Michal," explains Iva, who, when Michal was in third grade, took him to see a colleague at an educational-psychological counseling center and heard: "Do you know you have a talented son?" She didn't. As a parent, she had been focusing Michal's problems and the areas he needed support in. And this is a common occurrence in cases of dual exceptionality, because it's easy not to see the positive aspects, the talent and contemplative nature.

Nonetheless, this did little to improve the situation Michal and his mother. The school, psychologists, speech therapists, and special educators - everyone had instructions for them on what to practice. Everyone said ten minutes a day was enough, but no one saw how it added up. Against all this stood Michal's fatigue and resistance. School was hard work. He understood, perceived, comprehended, and knew. But he couldn't express quickly and appropriately the things that understood. And more hard work awaited him when he got home. If he had to read for ten minutes a day, even if he had only one last sentence left in the book, as soon as he reached his limit, that was it, he couldn't finish it. He budgeted his energy right down the disorder, they're likely dealing with dual to the very last second and then shut down.

When in the fourth grade a new teacher emphasized a performance-oriented approach, such as timed competitions, Michal gave up. His mother repeatedly spoke with the teacher, but she, like other educators, didn't see a problem. Michal was doing well. He was earning good marks, "nice 2's", as they called them. "But no one seemed to understand that he was getting

those marks because of his intellect and all the hard work he had do to compensate for his dysproblems," adds Iva. She and Michal both were frustrated. Before the end of the fourth grade, they decided to commute, and Michal transferred from his local school to Prague.

At the new school, Michal was finally able to breathe. As far as other children were concerned, he was closer to those he knew from the original school and from the voluntary firefighter club, which he still attends. But when it comes to school, he now had greater support from his class teacher and in the intermediate level there were other educators who accepted his individual plan. Thanks to this, his passion for computer science could fully develop. Biology? Boring. Geography? Boring. Languages? Sheer hell. But in computer science, he was fortunate to have a teacher who worked with him beyond the regular lessons.

Despite everything he had to juggle in the school system, he doesn't actually consider himself to be gifted. This is another characteristic of people with dual exceptionality. "I don't know any other condition, any who, as a psychologist, knew what to expect for a child other configuration than the one I've had since birth. I've never lived anything else, so I have nothing to compare it with. I remember what I remember. I can do what I can do. Perhaps, thanks to my intellect, I can make good arguments as to why some things are so challenging for me. Sure, I can see that some things are a lot easier for others, but other than that?", shrugs Michal.

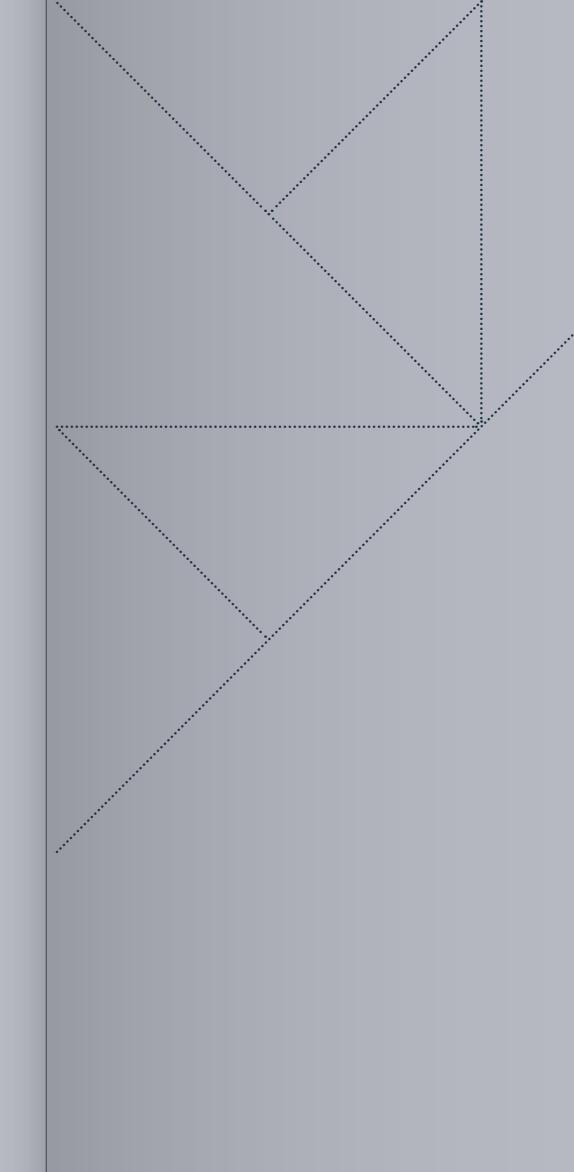
> Among other things, he is responsible, disciplined, and meticulous. Distance learning during the pandemic suited him perfectly because he could work at his own pace. "Otherwise, he has highly developed logical thinking and memory," says Markéta Kůtková, a special educator who has worked with Michal in recent years. "I knew that his IQ was high according to tests, and together we found a system to strengthen it the areas where there weaknesses due to his dys-diagnoses," she adds, noting that Michal feels good when he can give structure to things.

> Once he finishes ninth grade this year, Michal would like to continue his studies at an industrial school. With great rationality, he rejects trends that his classmates succumb to, such as social networks and skipping school. And with that same rationality, he and his mother are prepared for the possibility that, due to a strong graduating class, secondary school may not become a reality. And so it is for those living with dual exceptionality: in time you must get used to being ready for whatever comes your way.

"When a teacher encounters a child with a dysdiagnosis, including attention deficit disorders like ADHD or ADD, and the child is doing well despite exceptionality. There are only a handful of educators who can spot it. The child's remarkable intellect ensures their problem stays hidden from sight, and that can quickly give the impression of mediocrity. We have to ensure children with dual exceptionality are given an individual approach. Of course, the Czech school system isn't always ready."

Markéta Kůtková, special educator

### Michal, age 16



## Michal

## **Gifted children**

# Mental health

# Education

# **Gifted children**

**Our mission is to ensure that gifted** children grow up in an environment that provides them with space, understanding, support, and inspiration in their overall personal, intellectual, and cultural development. We want them to be able to cope with problems and find help in times of crisis.

Gifted children think differently. And they think all the time. They are imaginative, curious, logical thinkers who can also be stubborn, overly critical, and hypersensitive. Some create ex sentence structures, while others speak little for fear of expressing themselves poorly. They soon become interested in letters, numbers, the universe, electricity, and the meaning of life. They have highly developed intellectual abilities and imagination.

## How we recognize gifted children

### How you typically imagine them

- $\rightarrow$  They perceive the world in unusual depth
- They soon realize the complexity and intricacy of problems around them  $\rightarrow$
- They are creative and quickly see relationships between known facts  $\rightarrow$
- They can immerse themselves in topics that interest them and explore them extensively  $\rightarrow$
- Their memory and imagination are excellent, and they soon begin thinking in abstract terms They are oblivious to their surroundings when they concentrate  $\rightarrow$

### What you might not realize

- $\rightarrow$  They are interested in unusual topics and explore them in great detail
- They perceive the world with heightened intensity due to their heightened sensitivity
- They may express themselves in ways that others mistake for misbehavior  $\rightarrow$
- They often neglect simple everyday tasks when deep in concentration  $\rightarrow$
- Their perfectionism may cause considerable inner tension and even social maladjustment  $\rightarrow$ They retreat into isolation and are alone and misunderstood by peers, teachers, and loved ones
- $\rightarrow$

### What you may not have encountered yet

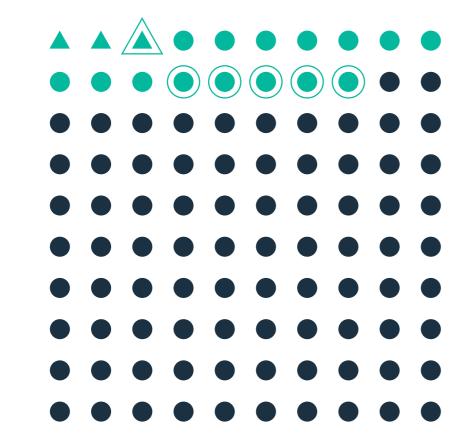
- $\rightarrow$  They may have unusually developed moral reasoning
- $\rightarrow$  They may engage in play that is complex and even incomprehensible
- Their intellect may be more developed than their ability to manage their emotions  $\rightarrow$
- They may struggle under the weight of the insolvability of contemporary world problems
- They may hide their abilities in order to fit in among their peers  $\rightarrow$
- $\rightarrow$  They may have disorders that hinder the discovery of their extraordinary talents

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## **Gifted children in numbers**

EXTRAORDINARILY **GIFTED CHILDREN** (IQ > 130) It is estimated that extraordinarily gifted children account for 2-3% of the population. A Only **0.08%** of those children are identified in Czech elementary schools.

**GIFTED CHILDREN** (IQ > 120) It is estimated that gifted children account for 10-15% of the population. Only **5%** of those children are identified in Czech elementary schools.



### On average, there are three gifted children in every classroom.\*

### There is at least one extraordinarily gifted child in every second classroom.\*

\* Classroom with an average of 25 children. Source: Czech School Inspectorate

We want gifted children to grow into well-adjusted individuals. That's why we create a space for them in which we can recognize them and give them the support they need. We help them overcome life obstacles, find balance, and discover their own place in society.

### Our vision

- with the gifted.
- → School psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, and pediatricians know how to prevent problems and help in times of crisis.
- $\rightarrow$
- Identifying gifted children is a regular part of the educational process.  $\rightarrow$

### **•** What we're doing to achieve it

- $\rightarrow$  We initiate the establishment of institutions that will play a crucial role in supporting giftedness in the future.
- $\rightarrow$  We conduct research in the Czech Republic and adapt foreign research to the Czech milieu.

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- We debunk myths about gifted children and raise awareness about the topic.  $\rightarrow$
- We support organizations dedicated to gifted children on a long-term basis.

"In the Czech Republic, there's a prevailing myth that gifted children don't need any support because they're smart. This is definitely not so. A well-designed system for supporting giftedness should be firmly rooted in that understanding."

 $\rightarrow$  Parents, teachers, and other caring adults have the information and skills they need to work

- A long-term concept in the Czech Republic for supporting giftedness.
- Society and the state know how to meaningfully collect and use data about the gifted.

ŠÁRKA PORTEŠOVÁ, MASARYK UNIVERSITY

# Mental health

Mental health is a fundamental prerequisite for a happy and rewarding life. We want children and youth to learn to take care of their mental health and know when to seek help.

We collaborate on mental health literacy programs for children and youth. We contribute to the education of students and teachers in the areas of mental health care, conflict resolution, building healthy relationships, and the ability to cope with stress. Thanks to our support, great strides have been made in raising public awareness and eliminating the social stigma associated with mental illness. Additionally, we engage in supporting crisis intervention, combating bullying, and promoting projects that address the specific needs of gifted children.

## Mental health and numbers



### 50% of mental illnesses manifest before the age of 14, and 75% before the age of 24.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health

### One in seven children and adolescents grapples with mental health issues.



### 30% of adolescent girls and 13% of boys report feeling like they've hit rock bottom more than once a week.





30% girls

13% of bovs

We support projects devoted to prevention of mental health issues in children and youth. We help raise awareness and eliminate the stigma associated with mental illnesses.

### ⊖ Our vision

- $\rightarrow$  Mental health care is a normal part of life.
- $\rightarrow$  Children, adolescents, and their parents have sufficient information about mental health.
- $\rightarrow$  Children and adolescents know how to handle the stresses and pressures of everyday life.
- $\rightarrow$  Children and adolescents are not afraid to seek help in times of crisis.

### **♥** What we're doing to achieve it

- → We support organizations that provide preventive programs for children from preschool age to adolescence.
- → We support organizations that implement mental health programs for teachers and other professionals working with children and youth.
- $\rightarrow$  We partner with organizations providing crisis assistance.
- $\rightarrow$  We help raise awareness and contribute to the destigmatization of mental illnesses.

"In the field of mental health, it's just like in other areas of medicine – if problems are not addressed, they lead to a much worse prognosis with potentially devastating consequences."

PETR WINKLER, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH









## Education

We work to ensure that children in **Czech schools feel good and c**an reach their full potential. We pay special attention to gifted children and their **unique learning and d**evelopmental needs.

We believe the key lies in the gradual transformation of the educational system and teacher training. For many years, we've stood alongside a number of strong initiatives and organizations. We partner with them and create favorable conditions for collaboration.

### Numbers in education

**EXTRAORDINARILY GIFTED CHILDREN** (IQ > 130) It is estimated that extraordinarily gifted children account for 2-3% of the population.

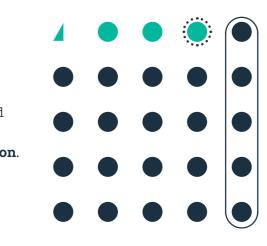
**GIFTED CHILDREN** (IO > 120)

> It is estimated that gifted children account for 10-15% of the population.

Even gifted children can have special learning needs.

landscape.

We choose projects with a broad societal impact and a systemic approach. Our focus is on children and their parents, teachers, and principals. In short, the entire education system.



There can be no more than **5 students** with special learning needs per classroom.\*

\* Classroom with an average of 25 children. Source: Czech School Inspectorate

### We want education to be viewed as a key pillar of society. Together with other donors and supported organizations, we're cultivating and transforming the Czech education

### **Our vision**

#### **TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS**

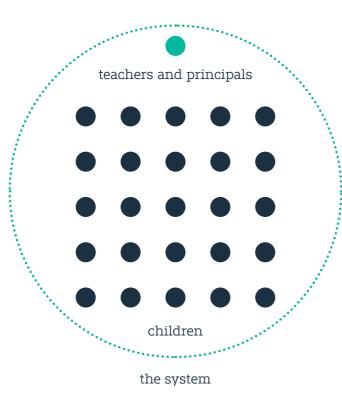
- $\rightarrow$  Student teachers receive practical training with quality mentor teachers.
- $\rightarrow$  The state supports beginning teachers and  $\rightarrow$  The state supports beginning teachers creates conditions for a good start.
- $\rightarrow$  Society's perceptions of the teaching profession improve.
- $\rightarrow$  School principals are qualified and competent leaders

#### EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND SOCIETY

- $\rightarrow$  Education is the highest value and priority for society.
- $\rightarrow$  The state has a vision and strategy for the field of education.
- $\rightarrow$  The education system is flexible and can respond to crises.
- $\rightarrow$  People in education draw on scientific findings and good practices from abroad.

#### **TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS**

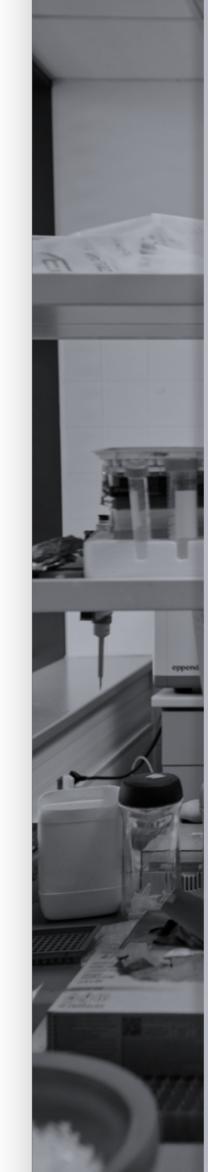
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### **⊖** What we're doing to achieve it

.....

- $\rightarrow$  We support organizations that are changing the way teachers and principals are educated.
- $\rightarrow$  We collaborate with other donors in education to ensure our funds are being put to effective and synergistic use.
- $\rightarrow$  We engage in discussions about what education in the 21st century should look like.
- $\rightarrow$  We support joint initiatives of organizations in systemic change and dialogue with the state.





### Our vision

#### TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

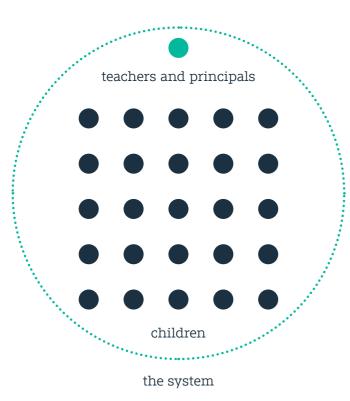
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### ⊖ What we're doing to achieve it

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- → We support organizations that are changing the way teachers and principals are educated.
- → We collaborate with other donors in education to ensure our funds are being put to effective and synergistic use.
- → We engage in discussions about what education in the 21st century should look like.
- → We support joint initiatives of organizations in systemic change and dialogue with the state.



At the age of three, she was interested in the mechanism of photosynthesis. At four, she began reading. For her fifth birthday, she wished for one thing: a real model of the human body, which still fascinates her to this day. "I learned the Latin names of bones and tried to understand diseases, but I needed to understand the world in general, including history and politics," says the newly minted eighteen-year-old Darja Klementová about her childhood, which, as an extraordinarily gifted child, she experienced in many ways differently than her peers.

She was born into a family where a different talent prevailed: music. "My parents never forced me or my brother into anything; naturally, they supported our own interests, and music was one of them. When I discovered the clarinet, I became so taken with it that in the fifth grade I applied to a secondary arts school. But the most interesting field for me was still the natural sciences," says Darja calmly and matter-of-factly.

When they realized her giftedness at home, they considered individual education. "They realized that would mean keeping me further away from the reality of the majority society. And they knew that, on the contrary, I had to learn to function in it. They also encountered people who played down my talent by saying things like "She won't be that exceptional; every parent thinks their child is special!" She enrolled in a regular elementary school. "And it wasn't fun. I was a laughingstock to my classmates, but I refused to accept the role of victim. And because I was a girl, they never dared to do anything other than attack me verbally" continues Darja with the same aplomb. In retrospect, she acknowledges that she was a puzzle for children her age. She knew a lot and needed to share her knowledge. She was active and wanted to converse, which displeased not only the children but also some of her teachers, who didn't know how to adequately respond to her. She needed space, but she didn't have it.

But Darja was fortunate to have a supportive family who accepted her giftedness. Often, the absence of acceptance within the closest circles of family and friends can have a dramatic effect on the lifelong success or failure of such children.

Then, in the fourth grade, she went to see the morning classes at Masaryk Junior University in Brno. And a flyer offering talent testing led her to Šárka Portešová, who specializes in recognizing and working with gifted children. "Darja's performance was excellent in most subtests," says Šárka. The success of the then ten-year-old girl ranged between the 90th and 99th percentile. She shone in quantitative thinking, and in memory she even reached the 100th percentile. It was confirmation of her extraordinary talent.

"Sure, I knew I was smart, I just might not have known how smart," says Darja. But the testing and the people who entered her life afterwards were crucial. "When Darja and I reminisced about that period, she told me: "Every day, I realized I'd be bored at school again, and that my classmates would mock me again'," says Šárka. But everything was to soon change for the better. Among other things, Darja enrolled at the Pavel Křížkovský high school in Brno-Komín, where, thanks to the willingness of chemistry teacher Milada Kapičková, she was able to immerse herself in science.

"At first, I annoyed my classmates again with my need to share knowledge. But what practically no one had accepted in elementary school gradually gained acceptance in high school. I also started working on myself, realizing that often it was enough to simply say things differently or at a different time," says Darja in a moment of self-reflection. She also joined a more stimulating environment, a course for high school students organized by the Bioskop science learning center at Masaryk University.

"I chose the DNA club, which focused on molecular biology and was normally open to children from age 16. I managed to get in at the age of 13," she explains with pride. And this is where she feels her life really started to get interesting; she could do real research under the guidance of Marek Šebesta. "He told me he liked how I think about scientific questions and started teaching me the basics not only of molecular biology but also of scientific thinking," Darja continues. "And when I was 15 and could try real professional work, he brought me to the laboratory of Vítězslav Bryja, which specializes in communication at the level of animal cells." What in early childhood had looked merely like an interest in nature was now getting a real scientific footing, with space for research and the very real possibility of making an important discovery.

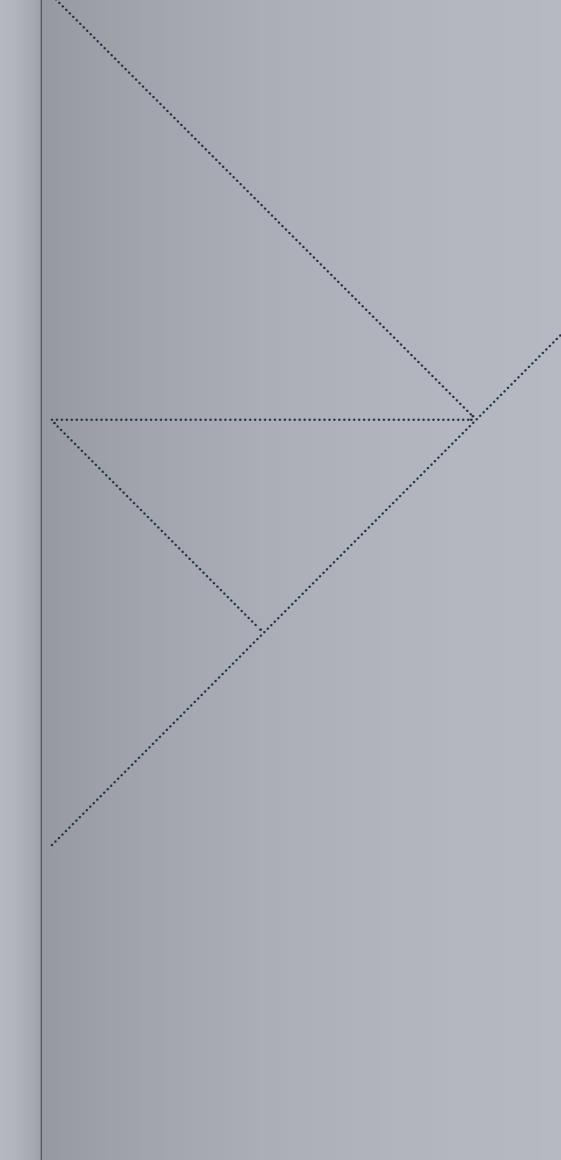
Next year, Darja will officially enroll at university to major in experimental molecular biology. Although she is a member of research teams, she still has to finish high school, where she has an individual study plan to accommodate her research activities. "I'm still going through adolescence. That's why my most important task now is to find balance. Between school, the laboratory, and everyday human relationships," she concludes. She only just turned 18. The way she pursues her goal is very inspiring. Judging not only by the Česká hlavička (Czech Brain) award she won in the fall of 2022 for her results in DNA and leukemia research, it's clear that she already part of group who will change the world.

"Unfortunately, as adults, we tend to think that if a child is truly gifted, they must be capable of caring for themselves perfectly in every way. In reality, however, children like that sometimes need advocates, and, particularly in the early years, those advocates should be the parents and the teachers. Above all, parents should patiently and clearly explain to them why others perceive them as different and sometimes have trouble understanding their behavior. And gradually teach them how to fend for themselves but how to ask for help. I feel this approach is critical for the prosperous development of every gifted child. Not letting them stay in an unfavorable situation for a long time, explaining, asking, seeking solutions."

Assoc. Prof. Šárka Portešová, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno

### Darja, age 18





## Philanthropy

# Employee giving

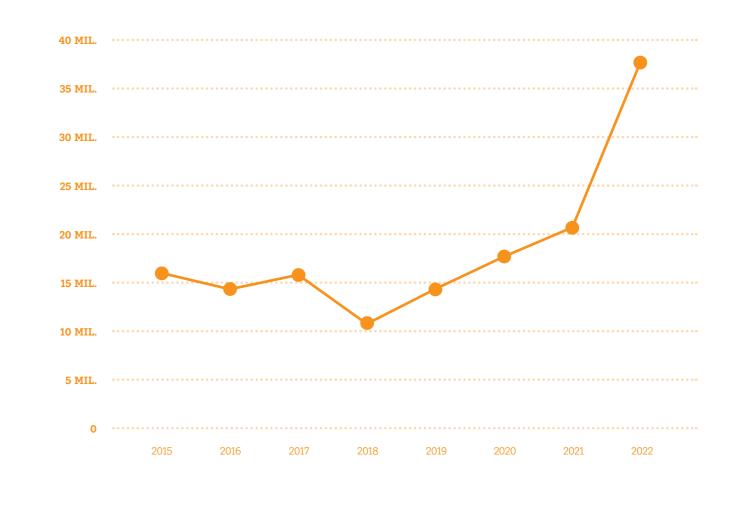
## Academic excellence

# Philanthropy

We support the growth of philanthropy and philanthropists both within RSJ Group and in the Czech Republic as a whole. We want to lead by example, so we place emphasis on longevity, efficiency, and sustainability. We draw inspiration from our founders, who give back to society a portion of their wealth and knowhow.

We want to ensure that giving and philanthropy thrive in the Czech Republic. We believe in charting a course for others to follow. That's why we work to imprint our values of sustainability, longevity, and collaboration on society. We seek out topics that don't receive as much attention and struggle to attract long-term donors. Often, we are the first donor or initiator for a project, assisting in its creation and growth.

### Foundation contributions in years



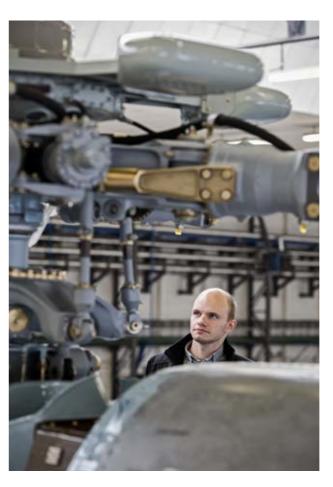
As of 31 December 2022

### **⊖** Our vision

- $\rightarrow$  Foundations and endowment funds have a strong voice in society and are a respected partner for the state.
- → Donors collaborate and share their knowhow, pursue philanthropic activities together, and increase the impact and stability of supported organizations.
- $\rightarrow$  Foundations and endowment funds adhere to a code of ethics and have a platform that supports their needs.
- $\rightarrow$  Overlooked topics find donors thanks to collaboration between foundations and philanthropists.

### **●** What we're doing to achieve it

- $\rightarrow$  We initiated the creation of a Czech foundation code and foundation platform.
- → We work with other foundations and endowment funds to promote unity and collaboration in cultivating the philanthropic landscape.
- $\rightarrow$  We bring unconventional and overlooked topics to the forefront and seek funding synergies for them.
- $\rightarrow$  We collaborate on projects that develop the art of giving and raise awareness of the need for giving in Czech society.



"I'm convinced that the majority of people involved have philanthropy in them. Everyone can give as their circumstances allow. An account balance should never be the sole impulse for giving."

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LIBOR WINKLER, RSJ

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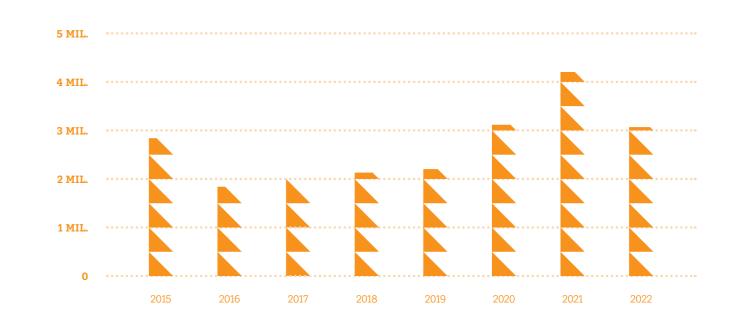


# Employee giving

Employee giving and the development of philanthropy are integral parts of the corporate culture at RSJ Group. We want to lead by example, and in our giving, we emphasize a lasting impact, effectiveness, and sustainability.

Our employees regularly donate money to several nonprofit organizations. RSJ Group has long supported a culture of giving and works to foster philanthropy among our employees. For every crown they donate, RSJ donates three. Employee giving has been ingrained in the company's DNA for many years now. The desire to donate a portion of one's earnings to those in need continues to grow each year among our colleagues at RSJ.

### **Employee giving in years**



Our colleagues support charitable organizations that they select by means of democratic voting. To their selection, the Foundation has added a number of other verified organizations in the field of mental health.

### **Our vision**

- RSJ employees engage in giving or volunteering.  $\rightarrow$
- New philanthropists emerge among RSJ employees and feel a sense of coresponsibility for  $\rightarrow$ societal issues.
- $\rightarrow$  Colleagues consider giving with regard to the sustainability of supported projects and donate on a long-term basis.
- Colleagues see giving as an essential part of the corporate culture and set an example for  $\rightarrow$ one other.

### Solution What we're doing to achieve it

- We incorporate foundation topics and visions into the company.  $\rightarrow$
- We organize meetings with representatives of supported organizations, during which RSJ  $\rightarrow$ employees learn more about their operations.
- $\rightarrow$  We keep employees informed about events in the foundation and activities of organizations they support.
- In the event of unexpected crises, we support colleagues in giving initiatives.  $\rightarrow$

"Employee giving plays an important role in the RSJ corporate culture. The shareholders themselves motivate employees with their conduct and actions, encouraging them to share responsibility for the world in which they live."

ROMANA HYNEŠOVÁ, RSJ

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### **Crisis support**

the HR department.

**COVID - COLLECTION FOR HEALTHCARE** WORKERS

Employees responded to the global covid pandemic, which affected every one of us. We organized a collection to purchase respirators for healthcare workers and hospitals.

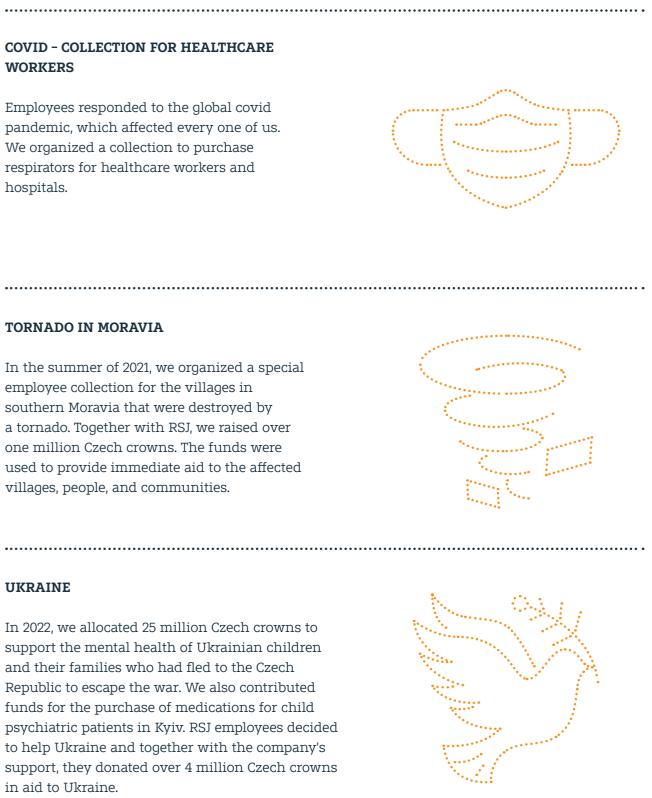
#### TORNADO IN MORAVIA

employee collection for the villages in southern Moravia that were destroyed by a tornado. Together with RSJ, we raised over one million Czech crowns. The funds were used to provide immediate aid to the affected villages, people, and communities.

#### UKRAINE

In 2022, we allocated 25 million Czech crowns to support the mental health of Ukrainian children and their families who had fled to the Czech Republic to escape the war. We also contributed funds for the purchase of medications for child to help Ukraine and together with the company's in aid to Ukraine.

The solidarity of RSJ employees is evident not only within the proven system of employee giving but also during extraordinary events and crisis situations. In these cases, we work closely with



## Academic excellence

We push the boundaries of human knowledge by elevating the prestige of science and its significance for society. We value what we learned during our studies, so we want to support the advancement of leading academic institutions. We see our support for the academic sphere as a token of gratitude to our alma mater. Our studies enabled us to develop our business and contributed to our success, so we feel we have a duty to give back a portion of our earnings.

We contribute to collaboration between educational and scientific institutions and the business sphere. We assist educational institutions and organizations focused on mathematics, computer science, logic, and economics. We build on long-term cooperation between RSJ and the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, which we strengthened in 2018 with the adoption of a Declaration of Cooperation.

Improved conditions for study

and student development thanks to investments from the business sector.



### Our vision

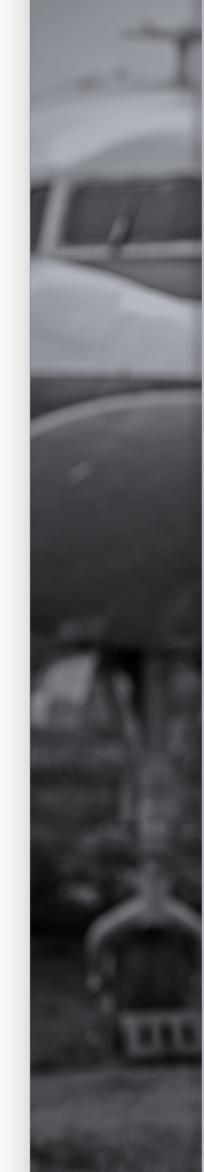
- $\rightarrow$  A quality education is considered the key to a meaningful future.
- $\rightarrow$  Society perceives the importance of science and its daily impact on our lives.
- $\rightarrow$  Science plays a fundamental role in solving societal problems.
- $\rightarrow$  Collaboration between scientific institutions and the business sphere is seen as a prerequisite for future development.

### **♥** What we're doing to achieve it

- → We fund projects that facilitate the development of Czech talents at home and abroad and create conditions for bringing acquired knowhow back to the Czech Republic.
- $\rightarrow$   $\;$  We recognize exceptional student works and academic achievements.
- $\rightarrow$  We help popularize mathematical disciplines and the scientific activities of young people.
- $\rightarrow$  We support competitions that help develop logical thinking and prepare students for their future studies.

"The success of RSJ is built on expertise and a unique corporate culture that unites us. It has strong roots in the academic and university milieu we grew up in."

ANTON TYUTIN, RSJ





### ⊖ Our vision

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ANTON TYUTIN, RSJ

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Daniel Demovič is one of only a handful of Czechs to have graduated from Cambridge. He returned to Prague in 2020 to pursue a doctorate in aerospace engineering at Czech Technical University. Although he would like to fulfill his childhood dream of piloting one day, at the moment, he has different goals. "I'm most drawn to the development of technologies, theories, and calculations," he says with his typical broad smile, behind which there certainly is no profound introvert, as is often assumed about the gifted and contemplative. He is full of energy, and it rubs off on anyone who gets to talk with him even for a short while.

Daniel has loved numbers, physics, and analytical thinking since childhood. He always needed to see how things worked, and both parents provided him with enough stimuli to progress. Once he could read and write, which was long before he began school, he progressed even faster. At the same time, however, he encountered what he says was an under-stimulating environment in the kindergarten he attended. "I know now that the preschool education system is not adapted to cope with children who are significantly different. But back then I'd have taken anything over spending time inside throwing Legos at each other," he explains. And actually confirms what almost all gifted people say – the Czech school system is least prepared to deal with individuality in the youngest children.

Chlupova Elementary School in Prague was something else, to a large extent because Dan was accelerated, i.e. he skipped first grade and went straight into second. While that doesn't really benefit socialization, it did benefit Dan by providing him with a more stimulating level of learning. His mother, Kateřina, who knew people who were working with gifted children, received a recommendation for this school, saying it was a regular elementary school but that it gave gifted children room to grow. *"For maths, I basically had my own program,"* says Dan, for whom the world of numbers is perfect.

"With math and physics, where math is a tool of physics, a person can give logic to the world around them," he explains enthusiastically, making you want to enter that world with him. "Mathematics is objective; at the engineering level, it has precise order. Physics can surprise you; something unexpected may happen during experiments, but it can always be explained in the end," says Dan, who has a fascination with all things objective and measurable.

High school was an even better fit for him than elementary school. It was there that he first felt he had to study, and there were more challenges to come in the form of classes at the Center for Gifted Youth. "In my second and third years of high school I completed math courses at the level of the first year of a technical university. In English no less. That really helped me get into university in Britain. When I was at Cambridge, I was able to get involved in the courses again, this time as a teacher."

He chose Cambridge as the best possible education in<br/>the field, inspired by older colleagues from high school<br/>who got there before him.The fact that society can't cope with it is bad main<br/>for society itself, because there are so few people<br/>with groundbreaking ideas who move society

"The first year, I studied general engineering, which gave me a broad overview of the field. I could try different subjects, practical exercises, and laboratories. After the second year, I chose aerospace engineering, and that led me to Cambridge," says Daniel. The difficulty of studying at Cambridge is reflected in the fact that students are not permitted to work during the trimester. You might begin discussing future cooperation, such as with Airbus, but nothing more. Dan didn't pursue such talks. He respects the balance between work and personal life and is very protective of his space.

This year, he will skip the courses for talented youth due to his workload. At CTU, he is doing his doctorate at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, giving seminars as a doctoral student. "I taught aircraft propulsion for English-speaking students, and now flight mechanics, which deals with the stability and controllability of aircraft. I also specialize in aerodynamics and thermodynamics, and a colleague and I are preparing a study on hydrogen propulsion." He emphasizes that he enjoys diversity. In elementary school, to the surprise of his non-sporting family, he chose hockey and played as a goalkeeper for many years (and did well). And even though he doesn't play hockey anymore, sports, as well as music and manual activities, continue to hold an important place in his life. And so do traveling and friends.

Dan feels best among his close friends. According to his mother, it was precisely the bonds with friends from high school that brought him back from Cambridge. On the contrary, starting a conversation with new people is not easy for him. But Dan is a team player by nature. "Even now, I'm not tempted to lock myself in the laboratory or chase a goal all on my own. That's not what the field of aerospace engineering is about, especially in design. One person working alone can't create anything, because you have to team up with different specializations. And above all, if there's going to be a breakthrough, it means a lot of small steps in the form of experiments and computational analyses," says Dan frankly. "I want to work on the steps that, when added up, move the world forward. My dream is to work with inspiring people on meaningful projects and, above all, not to immerse myself too much in that world and not to cut off my surroundings."

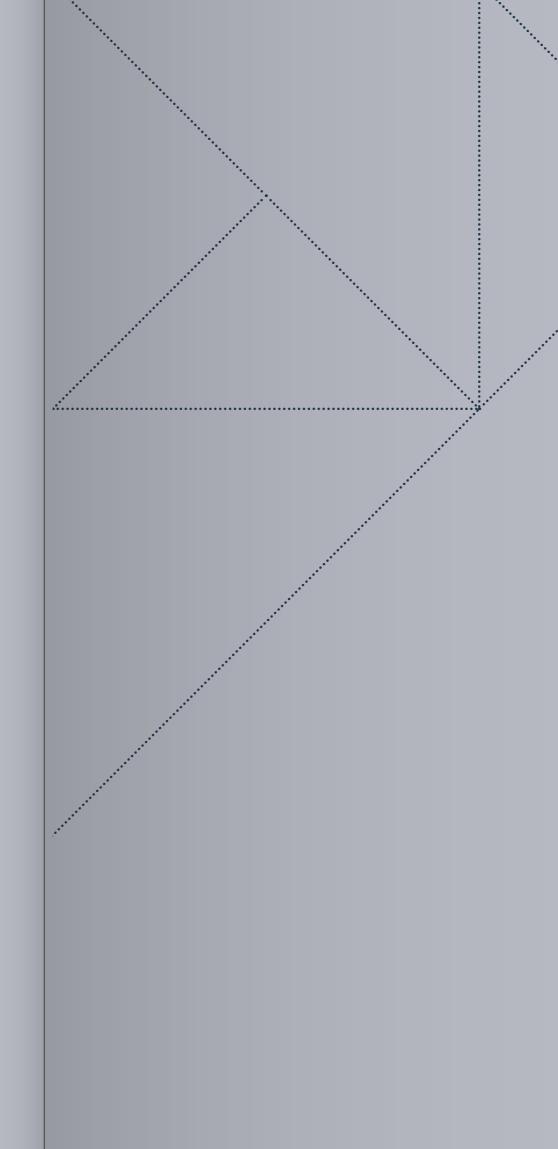
With his approach, he denies societal assumptions about what a gifted person looks like. However, for Dan, it means a lifelong search for balance, in which he is aided by his optimism and charisma.

"Without extracurricular activities, I'd definitely have more space to close myself in my own world, as sometimes happens, especially to the gifted, which is a real pity for all of us. It's desirable to look for people's potential and help them develop it instead of viewing giftedness as some sort of oddity. If a certain social distinctiveness is part of the personality, then it should be seen as a natural part of that giftedness. The fact that society can't cope with it is bad mainly for society itself, because there are so few people with groundbreaking ideas who move society forward."

Daniel Demovič

### Daniel, year 25













We believe there's a happier ending to every story. That's why we support gifted children and adolescents, many of whom may not, at first glance, appear to need our help. Society often holds the view that such children either don't need help or can help themselves. Our mission is to create an

Our mission is to create an environment in which children can grow and develop according to their needs and harness their fullest potential. A place where it's normal to accept the uniqueness of each of us so that every one of the these hidden stories can eventually find its happier ending.

### Space for your thoughts

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