



**Speechless**  
Reconciliation



# A new beginning for a better future

Ukraine Special Camp 23 Report

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Thank you for supporting our  
efforts!

# INTRODUCTION



Speechless Reconciliation is a project that later evolved into the program founded by Matej Keka in February 2021 as a project of the Rotary Club Prague International in the Czech Republic. From early beginning the project has received tremendous amount of support from Tim Belon and Gerry Tipple.

It was created with the intention of providing youngsters from homes for youth without proper parental care with the opportunity and orphanages to meet and create their first cross border relations and in 2 years it grew into the idea of creating an online space where they will have the opportunity to use their potential to the fullest.

One of the reasons why this project is referred to as „Speechless Reconciliation“ because not all of the participants have a common language. Although translation will be available, the focus will be on 6 groups of young adults (16-21 year) from maximum 6 different countries finding common ground and comprehending each other without language in common, through body language, facial expressions, tone of voice and other cues.

We believe that an initial encounter that is coupled with a longer-term continuity of contact between several groups of these youth can be an engine that helps transform the way they live and think about each other and contribute to a better community.

Our vision is to create strong community leaders that will build a more equal and better world for others. We want to expand the project through organization of the developmental camps into other countries (first in Europe and then on a global scale) as well as onboarding of new partners on the online “opportunity matching” platform. These developmental camps are entering points into our Speechless Reconciliation community.



# PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



01

## Phase 1

A 10-day long summer camp for youngsters from max. 6 homes for youngsters without parental care in the age between 16-21 years. Through usage of a wide mix of non-formal education methods, experiential learning, discussion, and creative workshops helping youngsters to create an action plan for their future, identify their skills and talents. Main themes of the summer camp are feeling of worth, sparking the curiosity and opening up the opportunities.

02

## Phase 2

Online matching platform for the participants that will allow them to look for the right opportunities for their personal and professional development - using the leverage of global partnership between Rotary International and SOS Children's Villages International and other 3rd party partners. The platform itself serves 3 different purposes. Firstly, it is a place where community of the Speechless Reconciliation is able to gather. Secondly it is an e-learning platform for our alumni to further develop their potential. Lastly, it also serves a place where youngsters can find and apply for different work-related opportunities.

The main goal of the program is to help youngsters from homes for children without proper parental care to develop their potential by creating action plans, find their talents and identify their skills with the help of a professional trainers and mentors during the youth exchange based on the selection process that takes place before the youth exchange. This is then combined with the activities that takes place during the youth exchange.

This is followed based on the outcomes of the youth exchange with offerings for youngsters with the opportunities for their personal and professional development through usage of the online platform where our 3rd party partners will be offering possible opportunities, matching the individual needs of the youngsters.



## Preparation

Joke, Matej, and Tim visited the location where we organized the SR Ukraine Special a few times before the SR Ukraine Special took place. Matej Keka is a member of Rotary Club Prague International, and at the same time, he is also the founder & project leader of this SR program. Matej found the location we used for the SR Ukraine Special a few months ago.

The place is a beautifully renovated farm in Pisek (a city in the south of Prague). The farm is owned by Jaroslav Chronak. Jaroslav recently renovated this farm to host projects like SR, projects which contribute to society in one way or another and creates communities. The whole concept of the farm puts a lot of focus on an eco-friendly lifestyle. Waste is reduced to a minimum, and the food is mainly vegetarian.





Days before the camp started, there were still major renovation works going on. But luckily, the renovation finished just before the start of the SR Ukraine Special. We were the first to use this beautiful location, and after the whole week, we can only confirm it's an incredibly suitable location to do what we do within the SR program.

Jaroslav Chronak is also a certified coach using horses during his sessions (ref. Monday program).

The horses were some kind of 'red thread' throughout the whole week... they gave the youngsters distraction & comfort before, and after the different sessions. The horses and the youngsters really became best friends over the week. They really helped the youngsters during their moments of reflection before, in between, and after the sessions.

The usage of this type of coaching is new to the SR program. We have included it especially because horses work therapeutically, especially for youngsters with trauma.







## Saturday (22/04/2023)

18 Ukrainian youngsters arrived well from 4 different European countries where they have been displaced since the war in Ukraine started (about one year ago). All of them are accompanied by 6 team leaders, which are all professional caretakers from the SOS organization (psychologists, social workers, pedagogues,... ).

They all arrived at Prague Airport, except for Mariia. Mariia still works in Ukraine (Kiev) today. She traveled to Prague by bus for about 36 hours because she wanted to be part of this journey which we organized for 'her' youngsters.

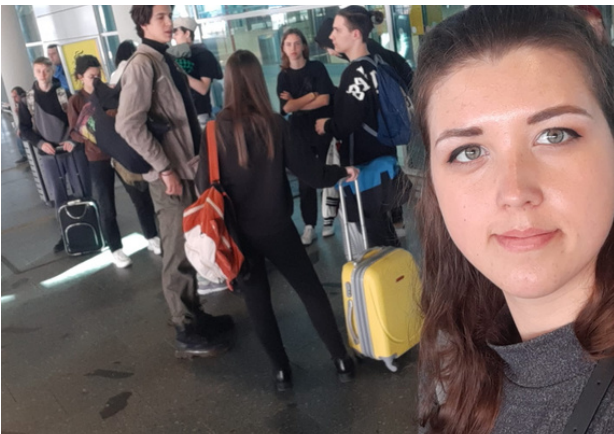
Our team transported all of the youngsters and team leaders to the farm, where we organized the camp.





Upon arrival, they all settled into their rooms. After that, we had a buffet-style dinner with pasta.

In the evening, we had a short welcome speech by Matej. The whole program was explained again to all of the participants. All partners were presented to the youngsters. We put much emphasis on the fact that this Ukraine Special was financed by RC Asheville and the Rotary District 7670.







## Sunday (23/04/2023)

After a good night's sleep, all youngsters were ready for the first day of our program. This first day was very much focused on getting to know each other, and we also stimulated (social) contact between all of them. During this day, they open up to the team and to their peers. This is extremely important to have successful workshops later in the week.

We made sure that nobody is excluded from the group; nobody should be left behind in the journey. The overall goal of this first day was that at the end of this first day, we are ready for the intense coaching & mentoring we are doing in the next days.

Our set of 'opening up exercises' was developed by Matej Keka (RCPI Rotary Member).

Opening-up exercises are important before intense coaching sessions with kids (in general) for several reasons:

- **Icebreakers:** These exercises help create a welcoming and relaxed environment, breaking the ice between kids and encouraging them to engage with one another.
- **Establish Comfort:** They help kids feel comfortable before diving into more intense activities, reducing anxiety and making them more receptive to learning.
- **Mental Warm-up:** Opening up exercises activate the brain and prepares kids mentally for the more intense coaching session ahead. These warm-up sessions are repeated daily. We start every day with these sessions, which are led by Andreas Fehrens (RCPI Rotary Member).
- **Emotional Connection:** They allow coaches to establish an emotional connection with the kids, making it easier for them to trust and follow guidance during the session.
- **Focus and Engagement:** These exercises help kids become focused and engaged, increasing their overall participation and enthusiasm in the coaching session.
- **Team Building:** Opening exercises can encourage teamwork and cooperation, fostering a sense of camaraderie among the participants.



The current group connected very well. They all originate from Ukraine; this helped a lot as well off course.

During this first day, we already noticed the high developmental level of most kids. Their situation is, as we all know, quite difficult. On top of the fact that they were already at SOS Children Village because of some issues in their families, they were also relocated to another country where they try to adapt to their new (temporary?) location.

At the end of this first day, we clearly reached our goal, all youngsters became ONE big group.

Different professional caretakers confirmed that the whole day was extremely well put together. According to them the 'opening up exercises' are a benchmark for other projects. They confirmed it is crucial to put enough time into this in order to create the required circumstances for the upcoming sessions.







At the end of this first day, Matej Keka (RCPI Rotary Member) presented his life story, a story which shows the need from programs such as the Speechless Reconciliation. We have got plenty of feedback from the different youngsters. Matej's speech was extremely inspirational for all youngsters. Even the next day, they came up with questions about the content. It triggered the youngsters to start opening up. Some opened up about their own personal story. This is very unusual for these youngsters.

Tim Belon (RCPI Rotary Member), for example, was asked to have 111 sessions with some youngsters. During these 111 sessions, one participant speaks/talks (mostly the SR youngster in our case), one participant listens (mostly mentor) and one participant observes and gives feedback at the end (mostly also a mentor). One of them was a youngster from 17 years old boy who is now relocated to Spain. He wants to start a business and was asking for help on how to set up a business plan in order to get funding for his business idea. This is a very good example of where we will be able to help these youngsters in the future (post-camp).







## Monday (24/04/2023)

On this second day, we divided the group into 2 separate groups because of the intensity of the exercises planned. Both groups got the same program (alternate).

Since the context of the youngsters, we have included sessions where we used horses. There are several benefits neglected children can have when working with horses:

- **Emotional support:** Horses are non-judgmental and can provide emotional support to children who may have suffered from abuse or neglect.
- **Building trust:** By working with horses, children can learn to build trust and develop a sense of responsibility towards the animal.
- **Improved communication skills:** Horses communicate through body language, and working with them can help children improve their own communication skills.
- **Increased confidence:** As children learn to work with and care for horses, their confidence can grow, which can translate to other areas of their lives.
- **Reduced stress:** Spending time with horses can be a calming and therapeutic experience, which can help reduce stress and anxiety levels in children. This is exactly why we planned this session at the beginning of the week.
- **Improved physical health:** Working with horses can involve physical activity, which can improve a child's overall health and well-being.
- **Sense of purpose:** By caring for a horse, neglected children can develop a sense of purpose and gain a sense of accomplishment.



Before the sessions with the horses, all youngsters have got some safety instructions. The horses which are used for this type of coaching are extremely calm, but still, some basic rules need to be in place to keep the risks to a minimum.

After this first safety briefing, the basics of how (and how not to) communicate with horses were explained.

Once all was explained, all youngsters received an in depth coaching sessions which were led by experienced certified coaches.



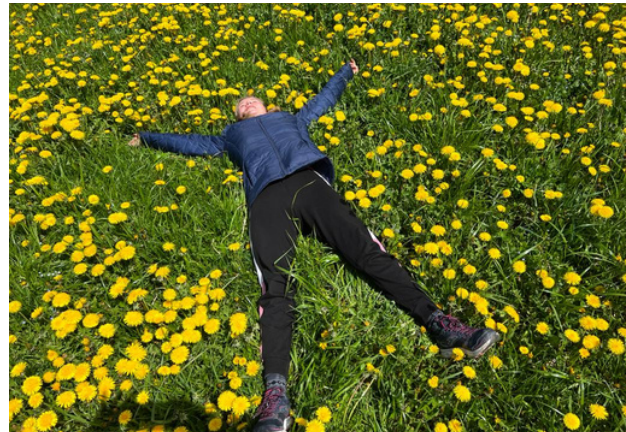


It was amazing to see how all youngsters gained confidence during this session. A few of them needed some time to get used to the horses, but all of them opened up very much.

The rest of the week, horses stayed around the youngsters all the time. Before and after all other sessions, some of them enjoyed being around horses. These moments were very powerful reflection moments where the content of each session could sink in.

The next exercise which took place during the day was "Scavenger hunt" organized by one of the members of the project team Francesc Galbany, who is also the SR platform developer. One of his goal was to invite youngsters to use the platform as much as possible.

In the evening, Jaroslav Chronak presented his life story where he put a lot of emphasis on the importance of values in life.





## Tuesday (25/04/2023)

On this third day, Valery Senichev and Matej Keka (RCPI Rotary Member) gave sessions focused on talent & skills discovery, which are important for youngsters for several reasons:

- **Self-awareness:** Identifying their talents helps youngsters better understand their strengths, skills, and innate abilities, contributing to a stronger sense of self-awareness and self-esteem.
- **Confidence building:** When youngsters recognize their talents, they tend to develop more confidence in their own abilities, which is crucial for personal and social development.
- **Future planning:** Knowing their talents enables youngsters to make informed decisions about their education and career paths by aligning their choices with their skills and interests. At the end of our sessions, all youngsters walk out with a personal development plan which they can use as guidance in the next months/years to come.
- **Engagement:** Discovering their talents can ignite a sense of passion and purpose, encouraging youngsters to engage in activities that they excel at and enjoy.
- **Personal growth:** Exploring various talents can stimulate personal growth by fostering curiosity, creativity, and adaptability in young individuals.
- **Social connections:** The process of talent discovery can facilitate connections with like-minded peers, building a supportive community that shares common interests and goals.







All these aspects are extremely important in relation to the SR Ukraine Special target group of youngsters we had in our camp this week.

The day was closed by Tim Belon (RCPI Rotary Member), who gave a presentation about his life. Tim focused very much on trying to find the passion in things we do as well as on the importance of values in the overall process of building a stable and sustainable life. The 4-way test was used as an example of how values can be translated into practice.

This moment was used to explain what Rotary stands for as an organization and why this project fits in most Rotary avenues.







Programs like 'Speechless Reconciliation' are important for Rotary because they align with the organization's goals and values. Rotary is dedicated to helping improve the lives of people in need, and by providing support to neglected children, they have the opportunity to empower them and foster their growth.

These Rotary programs can offer essential resources such as education, healthcare, and skills development, which can make a significant difference in the lives of these children. Additionally, Rotary's involvement in such programs reinforces its commitment to community service and spreading goodwill.





## Wednesday (26 / 04 / 2023)

We opened the day again with very active energizers led by Andreas. After breakfast, rather intense sessions of Jaroslav Chroňák started. Jaroslav focused on teamwork among the kids and on the importance of knowledge of customer needs.

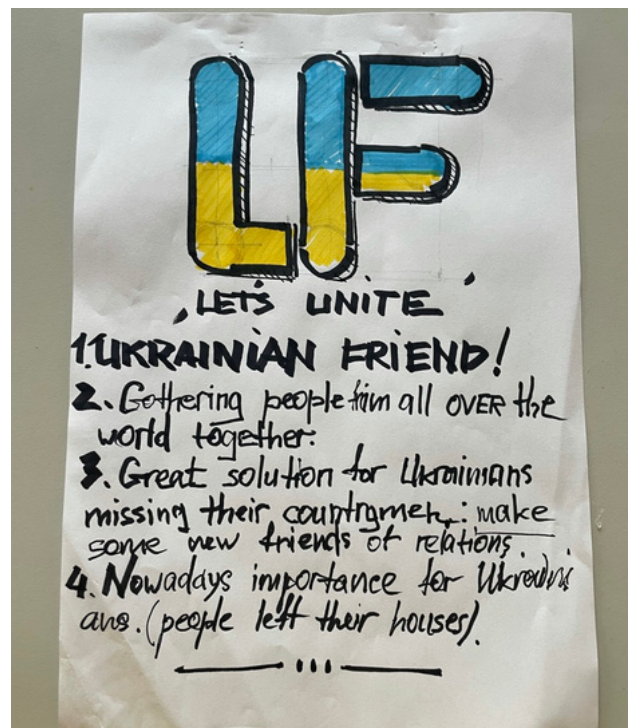
The knowledge of customer needs is crucial in setting up a company for several reasons:

- **Product or service development:** Understanding customer needs allows you to create products or services that effectively address those specific requirements. This increases the likelihood of your offerings being successful and well-received by your target market.
- **Competitive advantage:** Knowing your customers' needs and preferences helps you differentiate your company from competitors. By addressing gaps in the market or offering unique solutions, your business can stand out and attract a loyal customer base.
- **Customer satisfaction and loyalty:** When you meet or exceed customer expectations, you build trust and rapport. This can lead to repeat business, positive word-of-mouth, and referrals, which are vital for long-term success and growth.
- **Marketing and communication strategy:** Understanding customer needs allows you to tailor your marketing messages and effectively communicate the benefits of your products or services. This ensures that you reach the right audience and resonate with their values and motivations.
- **Decision-making and prioritizing resources:** By knowing your customers' needs, you can prioritize your company's resources and efforts toward the most valuable areas. This enables you to allocate time and funds efficiently, maximizing your return on investment.
- **Continuous improvement:** Being aware of customers' needs allows you to identify areas for improvement and innovation. This helps you optimize your offerings, stay ahead of industry trends, and adapt to any changes in customer preferences. This agility is vital for long-term success and growth.



The youngsters were divided into different groups, and all worked together to create a business model for a product or service they could select themselves. At the end of the day, all groups presented the result of their work.

During his sessions, Jaroslav also hammered on the importance of values in the creation of a sustainable business model.







In the evening, plenty of youngsters asked for 111 sessions with all Rotarians and other team members. During these moments, they came up with different types of questions they have related to their future (personal and professional).

We closed the evening with a presentation of Miky Skoda, Miky has taken the youngsters on a very adventurous journey, the journey of his life.

Miky, who also in a fact just became a Rotarian, lead the coaching sessions during the next day as well.





## Thursday (27/04/2023)

The day after the business planning with Jaroslav Chroňák, we welcomed Miky Škoda. He led the finalization of the business planning and pitching preparation sessions. Miky started with a feedback session, where the teams received constructive criticism and suggestions to improve their business models. The feedback helped the teams refine their ideas and prepare for the pitching session the next day.

During the day, the youngsters also had the opportunity to participate in coaching sessions with Miky Škoda. Miky shared his experiences and insights on personal and professional development, inspiring youngsters to pursue their goals and dreams.

Among the things youngsters had the opportunity to learn were

- Valuable insights and skills in entrepreneurship, teamwork, communication, and personal development
- Understanding the importance of customer needs in creating a successful business
- Refining business ideas based on constructive feedback and suggestions
- Inspiration to pursue personal and professional goals and dreams
- Gratitude for the opportunity to learn from experts and mentors
- Creation of meaningful connections and friendships with peers
- Renewed sense of purpose and commitment to making a positive impact on the world





The day concluded with a reflection session, where the youngsters shared their learnings and experiences from the program. They expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn from experts and mentors and for the friendships and connections they had made with their peers.

At night the youngsters reflected on their experiences and write farewell messages to each other. The atmosphere was cozy and relaxed, with everyone gathered around the fire. The youngsters shared their thoughts and feelings about the program, expressing gratitude for the knowledge, skills, and connections they had gained.





The activity provided a space for the youngsters to bond and create meaningful connections with each other, forging new friendships that would last beyond the program. As the night wore on, the fire dwindled, and the youngsters bid each other farewell with a renewed sense of purpose and a shared commitment to making a positive impact in the world.

The highlight of the day was the fact that participants were working on their projects until 5 am. Their dedication was something that really impressed us, and we are so happy to see this personal trait of hard work and dedication so common among our participants.





## Friday (29/04/2023)

The day started with the highly anticipated pitching session, where the teams presented their business models and ideas to a panel of judges consisting of Rotarians from the RCPI. The youngsters demonstrated their creativity, innovation, and teamwork, impressing the judges with their well-thought-out concepts and strategies. The judges provided feedback and asked questions, helping the teams to refine their ideas further. The pitching session was a culmination of the program, showcasing the valuable skills and insights that the youngsters had acquired over the week.

Following the pitching session, the youngsters participated in a guided tour of Písek, a historic town known for its picturesque architecture and cultural heritage. The tour was also a competition among the groups, adding an exciting element of friendly rivalry to the activity. The youngsters worked together to answer questions and complete challenges through an online web application which was developed by local high school students. The activity was fostering teamwork and camaraderie.





The day concluded with a farewell party, where the youngsters were awarded certificates and travel patches to commemorate the life-changing week they had just experienced. The party was a celebration of the friendships and connections that had been forged and a recognition of the hard work and dedication that the youngsters had demonstrated throughout the program. The farewell party provided a final opportunity for the youngsters to reflect on their experiences, share their learnings, and say goodbye to their new friends and mentors, but as it goes, usually in the Speechless Reconciliation program. The camp is just the beginning, and we are extremely happy to welcome 18 more alumni group members!





## Conclusions

Based on the result of the evaluation sessions we have done (one with the teamleaders/caretakers and one with the youngsters), we are happy to be able to confirm that we have succeeded to achieve all objectives of this Ukraine Special Project.

The main elements which came up during these evaluation sessions were:

- **Extremely well organized camp in general, 'a true benchmark' within Europe** (quote Olda Valeček - caretaker CZ: 'you guys are not only the best... you are on another planet when it comes to professionalism & impact on this type of youngsters. I thought I could not be impressed any more, but this week I have been blown away. Thank you in the name of all youngsters');
- **High quality sessions by experienced experts with a major impact on the subject target group;**
- Most youngsters confirmed this was **the best week in the whole of their lives**. Caretakers said that it was the first time they saw a smile on the faces of the youngsters since the start of the war, now more than one year ago.
- The bond which was created among all present is so strong that all are convinced it will be the bases for long term friendships & camaraderie.
- The youngsters and their caretakers invited all stakeholders (also RC Prague International, RC Asheville and members of Rotary District 7670) to a celebration in Ukraine once the war has come to an end. In this way they would like to show their gratitude and deep respect for all who made this possible.
- Some of the youngsters stated their interest in working with the project team on further development of the Speechless Reconciliation program





All of these 18 kids will now have access to our SR Alumni network. A network of SR youngsters which are connected through our (safe) SR platform. We offer mentorships, coaching, training,... for all of these Alumni. We also facilitate workshops related to different topics like culture & traveling, art,... . In partnership with all of our SR partners (such as Rotary clubs) we guide them towards a successful independent life. Every 2 years we organize a reunion, where they can meet-up again. This strengthens the relationship among them, this also helps to build a sustainable community of SR youngsters all over Europe and the rest of the world. A community of SR youngsters with a similar background which help & support each other on the long run. Some of our SR Alumni now even start to become member of our SR organization team.

Thank you all. This project is a beautiful example of the impact Rotary can have on society. We truly had a major impact on the young lives of 18 youngsters (and 6 of their caretakers) this week.



A heartfelt thank you to all our incredible sponsors and partners for their unwavering support in our program! Your generosity and commitment have made a tremendous impact on our success. We are truly grateful for your contributions and belief in our mission. Together, we are creating a brighter future.



**Speechless**  
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