



Marina Kuzina, First Deputy Director General of the Museum of Fine Arts, organised a tour for the protégés of the Fund.

Students of the Topsoe, Tolstoy and Sokol Charity Fund visited the museum and the exotarium

Larisa Timofeyeva.
Photos: Alexey Pirayzev.

“In order to trust in the good, you need to start doing it,” our famous compatriot Leo Tolstoy once wrote. Five years ago, three families, the Topsoes, Tolstoys, and Sokols, united to create a support fund for gifted children. To date, the fund has taken 25 kids from the Tula Region under its wing. A lot has already been done, and the Fund has a new idea for 2019 — they want the students to visit our region’s landmarks which grow prettier every year.

On Saturday, 26 January, children together with Natalia Pilyus, deputy of the Russian State Duma and member of the Board of Trustees of the Topsoe, Tolstoy and Sokol Charity Fund, paid a visit to the Tula Regional Museum of Fine Arts and the Exotarium. It was the kids’ first time here and they absolutely loved it.



Natalia Pilyus

“These days, our country provides support on the federal level for talented kids,” said **Natalia Pilyus**. “President Vladimir Putin signed a Decree declaring

2018–2027 the Decade of Childhood. Among the key educational goals, the Decree lists forming an efficient support and growth system for talented children and teens. We are proud to say that our Fund satisfies this concept. Governor Alexei Duymin takes the matter of supporting talented children in the region very seriously. He initiated the construction of two support centres for gifted children in the Tula Region. Private investments from benefactors also played a huge role in it. Shchekinoazot has created one of the most famous support foundations in the region. Five years ago, three families joined forces to help talented children in difficult life situations. The



You can find animals from five continents at the Exotarium!

Topsoe, Tolstoy, and Sokol families are the founders. The goal of our fund is to help kids grow in harmony. I recently attended the opening ceremony for the GITIS student scene, where Vladimir Andreev, People’s Artist of the USSR, gave a speech. He said how important it is for young people to develop culturally — to visit galleries, concerts, museums. Our region offers a lot in this respect.

This year, we decided to introduce our students to the gems of Tula Region.

Today we are planning a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and our wonderful Exotarium.”

The museum collection is rich in famous names and works. The list of exhibits includes works by Russian and western European masters of painting, sculpture, and old interior items. Kids saw the works of the great Italian artist Luca Giordano, seascape painters Ivan Aivazovsky and Alexei Bogolyubov, the grandiose canvas Radiant Phoebus by Valentin Serov, paintings by Kustodiev, Korovin, and many others. As you know, our museum is one of the biggest in Russia, after the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg.



Varvara Vnukova: “I hope I’ll be able to take videos of all these funny animals!”

The tour came to an end but the kids continued to excitedly share their impressions from what they had seen until they reached the new building of the Exotarium in the Central Park. Some of them loved the paintings, others preferred the stunning porcelain dishes, and some were fascinated by carved wooden furniture. However, one thing was clear — none of them were indifferent.

At the Exotarium, the kids were greeted by the sounds of the jungle, waterfalls, wild pigeons flying above their heads and numerous animals, from tiny turtles to giant pythons, from the funny tamarin to a calm capibara. The animals enchanted the kids who excitedly watched them, living in conditions nearly identical to the wild. Meerkats, raccoons, fennecs, lemurs, mongooses, a crocodile, iguanas, snakes — there were animals from five continents!



Alina Zeynalova

for about 2 years.

“I am grateful to the Fund for this tour. I loved the Museum of Fine Arts! I especially liked the paintings

by the Italian and Dutch artists, still-lifes, and the Radiant Phoebus by Serov.” At the Exotarium, the Caiman crocodile was the biggest star. Thanks to the Fund, we often visit different places. The tour at Oktava and the trip to Polenovo were among the most memorable. We also went to Moscow to visit Haldor Topse, a partner of Shchekinoazot. The Fund helps me explore the world and is lots of fun.”



Anton Stekolnikov

ping turtle was the cutest one at the Exotarium! I’d like to thank the Fund for the opportunity to see all of this. I mean, the Fund always helps us learn something new, and finances travel and costumes for my dancing performances. By the way, I participated in contests in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Veliky Ustyug, and Yefremov — all with the Fund’s support.”



Varvara Vnukova

Anton Stekolnikov, 14, dancer, 5 years in the Fund.

“I loved all of the paintings and furniture at the museum, like the carved hunting cabinet. The snap-

Varvara Vnukova, 15, dancer, 5 years in the fund.

“I liked the Italian paintings; the biggest paintings were very impressive. The animals at the Exotarium

are very cute and funny. My favourite were the tamarin monkeys — I could spend hours watching them!”

The Topsoe, Tolstoy and Sokol Charity Fund is planning to organise similar trips for students at least once a month. That means a minimum of 12 exciting tours in Tula Region for kids this year.

“We have already planned a visit to the Bogoroditsky Palace-Museum, Kulikovo field, Polenovo, Yasnaya Polyana,” said Natalia Pilyus. “The Tolstoy family are among the Fund’s founders and we would like our children to grow up in the Tolstoy traditions, to have unlimited opportunities in life. This is only possible when children receive a well-rounded education.

We are proud of our students and alumni. During these years, the kids have achieved impressive results. Roman Ryakhovsky is the Russian champion in throwing sports. Last year he matched the record from the year before last. His dad is his coach, and their whole family is made up of athletes. Varvara Vnukova, student of the Natalia Mikhno’s Elegy dance theatre, has won many national and international contests. Our alumnus Vladimir Indus is a member of Russia’s track and field team.

Last year, the Fund took five more children under its wing. They are now here, a full-fledged part of the team.

All of them represent Tula Region at the highest levels of contests and competitions.

We at the Fund believe that no matter what area of arts or sports the children select for themselves, they need to be well-rounded personalities, and the region plays an important role in this.”