

NATIONAL POLICE DEFENSE
FOUNDATION

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“OPERATION KIDS PROGRAM”

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

09:00 A.M. EDT,
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POPE FRANCIS BLESSES SEVERELY DISABLED TEENAGER FROM ITALY
AND THE NATIONAL POLICE DEFENSE FOUNDATION
ANSWERS HIS PRAYERS BY OFFERING TO HELP

MORGANVILLE, NJ, JUNE 26, 2015: Executive Director of the National Police Defense Foundation, Joseph Occhipinti announced today that he will be traveling to Italy on August 23, 2015 in order to transport 15 year old Claudia Digregorio to the United States to participate in a clinical research study run by the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland from August 31st to September 5th.

While at the NIH, Ms. Digregorio will undergo a detailed assessment led by Dr. Carsten Bonnemann and his team at the NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Neuromuscular and Neurogenetic Disorders of Childhood Section. Their goal will be to determine the underlying cause of Claudia's rare neurologic disease as well as any potential treatment for her condition.

The plight of Claudia Digregorio came to the attention of the NPDF Executive Director through a You Tube Video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtPJDzrh1-k&feature=youtu.be>) that went viral asking for international help. Claudia, who resides in Santeramo, Puglia, Italy is suffering since the age of five

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from an unidentified illness that has left her severely disabled. Doctors in Italy have not been able to provide her with a diagnosis or treatment. Pope Francis met with Claudia and said a special prayer that she gets better.

As a result, the NPDF made contact with the father who requested help through the Italian Police Defense Foundation (http://www.npdfitalia.org/it/vita_associativa/dove_siamo.htm). Mr. Digregorio sent the NPDF Claudia's medical records and for the past year, the NPDF has asked the medical community for assistance in helping to identify this rare disease.

On March 16, 2015, the NPDF received notification from Dr. Carsten Bonnemann of the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland that they would be willing to conduct a medical evaluation on Claudia pro-bono. It is hoped that Ms. Digregorio and her father will stay at the Children's Inn on the NIH campus during the duration of her assessment. The NPDF will pay for the travel, and related per-diem expenses for Claudia and her father.

The "Operation Kids" program, a congressionally recognized child safety initiative of the National Police Defense Foundation, is credited for arranging eight lifesaving operations for critically ill children worldwide. The program demonstrates law enforcements commitment to protect our children from criminal elements and life threatening illnesses.

The NPDF has created a medical fund for the child and tax deductible donations can be sent to the address below or online at <http://www.npdf.org/operation-kids-claudia-digregorio/> or by calling 877-325-KIDS. The NPDF is also accepting donated United Airlines miles to defer the high cost of air travel.

**CLAUDIA DIGREGORIO MEDICAL FUND
OPERATION KIDS
POST OFFICE BOX 318
ENGLISHTOWN, NEW JERSEY 07726**

This humanitarian mission will be funded by the Operation Kids program of the National Police Defense Foundation and coordinated with the Italian Consulate in New York City, ANPS Sector USA (National Association of State Italian Police), the Italian Police Defense Foundation, and the National Institute of Health.

For further information contact NPDF Executive Director Joseph Occhipinti at 732-617-2330 or cellular, 732-616-9600. Marian Emr, Director of Communications and Public Relations at NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke can be reached at 301-496-5924.

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