

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,
August 18, 2015

NPDF DELEGATION TRAVELING TO ITALY FOR A PRIVATE MEETING
WITH POPE FRANCIS WHO REQUESTED INTERNATIONAL HELP FOR A
SEVERELY DISABLED TEENAGER FROM ITALY

MORGANVILLE, NJ, AUGUST 18, 2015: National Police Defense Foundation (NPDF) Executive Director, Joseph Occhipinti and NPDF Officials will be departing on August 22, 2015 from New Jersey heading to Italy for an audience with Pope Francis. This special meeting will take place on August 26, 2015 as a result of Pope Francis' prayers for 15 year old Claudia Digregorio to receive medical assistance. The NPDF Delegation, which includes NPDF Physician Dr. Dhimant Balar, will bring 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. Ms. Digregorio will be arriving at Newark, New Jersey on United Flight #41 with her parents and the NPDF Delegation on August 29, 2015 at 1:55pm.

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.

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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 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. Ms. Digregorio and her parents 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 parents.

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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