

Newsletter

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FONDACIJA
HASTOR

Higher Scholarships for Hastor Foundation scholarship holders: Agreements signed across Bosnia and Herzegovina on scholarship for students for the 2026/2027 school year

The new school year for the Hastor Foundation also means a new beginning for almost 2,000 scholarship recipients across Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the past period, scholarship agreements for the 2026/2027 school and academic year were signed across the country, continuing the journey with the Foundation for existing scholarship recipients, while we welcomed new scholarship recipients into our community.

This year, the beginning of the new scholarship cycle also brings an important improvement to the program – **scholarship amounts have been increased by 20 percent in all categories.**

Starting from the 2026/2027 school/academic year, the scholarship for elementary school students is **120 KM per month**, for high school students **180 KM per month**, while university students receive **300 KM per month** during all 12 months of the year.

The increase in scholarships is part of the Hastor Foundation's continuous effort to provide young people with quality and long-term support during their education. This decision was also made symbolically, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Hastor Foundation, with the intention of marking this important anniversary with additional investment in young people and their education.

However, the support of the Hastor Foundation does not end with the monthly scholarship. The Hastor Foundation program is based on two connected parts – scholarships and mentorship. Financial support helps scholarship recipients with the costs of education and everyday needs, while the mentorship program provides space for personal development, gaining new knowledge and skills, exchanging experiences, and developing their own potential.

It is exactly the connection between financial and mentorship support that makes the scholarship program a broader educational experience. Hastor Foundation scholarship recipients are not only users of financial support – they become part of a community in which they have the opportunity to learn, develop responsibility toward themselves and others, meet new people, and actively take part in different programs and activities of the Foundation.

The signing of agreements across Bosnia and Herzegovina therefore represents much more than the formal beginning of a new school and academic year. For scholarship recipients who continue their education with the support of the Foundation, it represents a confirmation of the continuity of their journey. For almost 2,000 scholarship recipients, and especially for those who joined the program for the first time this year, it is the beginning of another important chapter.

The Hastor Foundation remains by the side of its scholarship recipients in this school year as well – as support for their education, development, and path toward the future, with the hope that this year will also be filled with learning, new experiences, personal growth, and opportunities to reach their potential.

OBJECTIVE: Signing of the scholarship agreement

From Scholarship Recipient to Friend of New Generations: Nadira Berbić Shares the Magic of SFF

For some people, the Sarajevo Film Festival is not just a film festival. It is part of their most beautiful memories, a place of meetings, friendships, new experiences, and moments that stay in their memory long after the last festival screening ends. For one former scholarship recipient of the Hastor Foundation, SFF is exactly that – a memory of student days, Sarajevo, volunteering, friendships, and the feeling that someone opened the door to a completely new world for her. Today, almost 15 years after she first experienced the magic of the Sarajevo Film Festival as a student and scholarship recipient, she decided to give part of that experience to a new generation of Hastor Foundation scholarship recipients. While studying in Sarajevo, she dedicated most of her time to studying and volunteering. It was the Hastor Foundation that gave her the opportunity to discover a different side of the city, its festival side. Thanks to the Hastor Foundation and ASA Group, she had the opportunity to volunteer at the Sarajevo Film Festival, watch great films, and feel the special atmosphere that takes over Sarajevo during the festival days. She especially remembers the screening of the black-and-white silent film *Blancanieves*, directed by Pablo Berger, during the 19th Sarajevo Film Festival in 2013.

She still clearly remembers the large ASA Group promotional posters with the message: “We bring you the stars.” Those were days filled with laughter, work in the office and at the festival, and meeting new people. Today, she has not lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina for several years and does not have the opportunity to visit the Sarajevo Film Festival. The memories have remained, and with them, gratitude. That is why she wanted to prepare a surprise for the current Hastor Foundation scholarship recipients, similar to the one that once brought a smile to her face. She clearly remembers how happy the scholarship recipients were when they received information that tickets for SFF were available, but also that they could be guests at special receptions organized by ASA Group and the Hastor Foundation.

For her, these were never just film tickets. They were an opportunity to experience something new. To meet new people. To be part of one big story. And, at least for a few hours, to escape everyday life.



That is why, with the help of the Hastor Foundation office, she sent an invitation to scholarship recipients to express their interest in gift tickets for screenings at this year's Sarajevo Film Festival in Sarajevo and Tuzla. Through an online form, scholarship recipients were asked to state the film they wanted to watch, the time and location, as well as an alternative choice in case the tickets for their first choice were sold out. A total of 15 applications were received from scholarship recipients from different cities. And that is how one small but special festival story began. All scholarship recipients who applied received tickets for the films they chose. Since there were enough funds for a total of 19 screenings, some of them also received tickets for the alternative films they listed in their applications.

This year's SFF will therefore be an opportunity for them to watch very interesting films in Sarajevo and Tuzla. Among the most popular choices were *The Widower*, *No Man's Land*, and *Welcome to Sarajevo*, which will be shown at the Coca-Cola Open Air Cinema. The scholarship recipients will also watch the films *The Birthday Party*, *Saccharine*, *Palestine 36*, *Francophonie*, *No Good Men*, *The Virus of Pathological Kindness*, and *Bruca Braca Bruda Brada - Zombie Apocalypse*. Their film evenings will take place at different festival locations in open-air cinemas: UniCredit Summer Screen, UNIQA Open Air Stari Grad, Open Air Safet Zajko, and Bingo Summer Cinema Tuzla, but also in indoor cinemas BKC, Meeting Point, and Cineplexx.

She made others happy. And that is exactly where the special beauty of this story lies. Because the kindness a person receives does not have to end with them. It can be passed on. It can become a gift. It can become a new memory. It can become a new opportunity for someone else. Her story with the Sarajevo Film Festival does not end here. She plans, if it is possible to buy tickets online, to also support SFF screenings in Visoko, Zenica, and Jajce. In the long term, she would like to support scholarship recipients in attending theatre plays, screenings of Bosnian-Herzegovinian films in cinemas, conferences, and other important cultural and social events. Because her experience showed her how much one opportunity can mean. The Hastor Foundation opened the door to the world of film for her as a young student.



It gave her the opportunity to volunteer at SFF, meet new people, watch great films, and feel the magic of Sarajevo during the festival days. Today, almost 15 years later, she wants to keep that door open for new scholarship recipients as well. And maybe that is the most beautiful continuation of one special story. Once, she was a young scholarship recipient waiting for someone to give her an opportunity. Today, she is the person giving that opportunity to others. Once, she watched a film under the stars with hundreds of other people. Today, she wants new scholarship recipients to experience the same feeling. Once, the Hastor Foundation gave her a ticket into a new world. Today, she gives tickets to new generations. Because some stories do not end when the film ends. They continue through people. Through friendships. Through gratitude. Through small gestures that can mean a lot to someone. And some tickets are not just tickets. They are an invitation to experience something new. To be part of something bigger. To forget everyday life for a few hours. And, just as it once did for her, maybe one film evening under the Sarajevo stars will stay in the memories of this year's scholarship recipients for their whole lives. Because when the lights go out, the film begins. And when beautiful experiences are shared with others, a new story begins.

Prepared by: Lamija Sejdić

Davud Alijagić – A Fourteen-Year-Old Champion Who Turns Kilometers into Dreams

Some boys remember their childhood through playing, carefree days, and long school holidays, while some already at that age find something that teaches them that the most beautiful victories do not come easily. Davud Alijagić, a fourteen-year-old ninth-grade student at “Safvet-beg Bašagić” Elementary School in Visoko, found his path on two wheels. He loved cycling from an early age, but only after joining a cycling club did he realize that this love could become something much bigger: *From an early age, I have loved riding a bicycle. When I joined the cycling club, I realized that I wanted to actively dedicate myself to cycling and achieve good results,* says Davud. Today, his day begins with training, which lasts two to three hours, and after a short break, school responsibilities and another training session follow. Weekends are often reserved for competitions, travelling, and meeting new people, but also for spending time with friends. Still, through all of this, the most important thing remains – a boy who loves nature, cycling, and the feeling of freedom that his bicycle gives him.

He points out that he loves natural surroundings and riding on difficult trails the most, as if his whole world could fit into that simple sentence. Behind the medals he proudly wears today are hours of hard work, forest trails, gravel roads, long distances, and strength and endurance training. Davud trains almost every day, and every training session brings a new challenge. Not every moment is easy, but this is exactly how the character of an athlete is built. That effort has already brought results that are extremely impressive for a fourteen-year-old. A special place in his heart belongs to the Balkan Championship in Čapljina in 2026, where he won first place in his category, while at the National Championship in Trebinje, he became the champion in the XCO competition. He says he will remember Trebinje for a long time. The trail was difficult because of the steep climb and high temperatures, while the strong competition also brought some nervousness before the start. Still, when the race began, only the most important thing remained – to give his best.



“The strong competition made me a little nervous, but I gave my best and finished the race in first place.” And perhaps it is in this sentence that we get to know Davud best, not as a boy for whom everything is always easy, but as a young athlete who learns to overcome his own nervousness when it matters most.



But no path to the top is made only of victories. Davud has felt the bitterness of defeat many times, disappointment after a race, and the realization that he did not do something the way he wanted. Still, every time, he came back. That is exactly why, as he admits himself, his position on the podium is not the most important thing to him. In a world where success is often measured only by first place, his words remind us that real victory is much more than a medal. It can be seen in safely reaching the finish line, in completing a difficult trail, in a mistake from which something is learned, and in the decision to get back on the bicycle again tomorrow.

And beside such determination stands his greatest strength – his family. His parents, extended family, friends, and coach are with him every day, while Davud is especially grateful to his coach. From him, he learned everything that has led him to the titles and medals he wins. For him, effort, persistence, talent, and discipline are equally important for success, and in himself, he recognizes persistence and talent the most.

Perhaps the most beautiful part of this whole story is that behind the national champion and Balkan medal winner there is still a fourteen-year-old boy who is only beginning to discover how far he can go. His role model is the young American cyclist Bjorn Riley, who, besides sports, is also involved in art, drawing, and creating works of art. Davud does not see only medals in cycling, just as he does not see only medals in life.



He sees nature, new places, people he meets, challenging trails, and experiences that stay with him. He is very proud of his results and is aware that every second he spent was worth it. And maybe that is the best description of his journey so far – every second of training, every difficult climb, every defeat, and every kilometre today has its place in the stories of his victories. There are still many trails ahead of Davud, many climbs, and many starting lines. But, judging by the boy who first loved cycling simply because he enjoyed it and earned his victories through persistence, the most beautiful part of his story is yet to be written. Because champions do not become great only when they stand on the highest step of the podium. They become great when they learn to stand up again after every fall, turn the pedals, and keep moving forward.



Prepared by: Sanita Fuško

Alumna Aida Gradašćević – How to Best Prepare for the Start of the New School Year?



1. To begin with, could you introduce yourself and tell us a little more about yourself, your work so far, and the path that led you to becoming a teacher?

My name is Aida Gradašćević. I live and work with my family in Ilijaš as a teacher. From an early age, I knew what I wanted to be. I remember the wartime period; I was in the second grade, and for days I played “teacher” with my cousins. I insisted on playing that game. Becoming a teacher is the fulfilment of my childhood dream. My teachers Dubravka and Luca had a special influence on me. I remember them fondly and am immensely grateful to them for remaining professional, optimistic, approachable, and empathetic even in the midst of the war. Throughout my schooling and further education, I dedicated myself to becoming like them.

2. The beginning of a new school year is a special period for both teachers and students. How do you prepare for the start of a new school year, and what is most important for you to prepare before the students arrive?

This year, I am taking on first-graders again, and I am especially looking forward to it. First grade means a new beginning for a teacher – a new group of little people whom we will get to know, teach, and watch over the coming years as they grow from uncertain first-graders into independent students. Before the start of the new school year and before the students arrive, the most important thing for me is to get a good rest, so that I can enter the new school year feeling relaxed, full of enthusiasm, and ready for all the games and jokes that are an integral part of every teacher’s day. When it comes to preparation at school, I like everything to be ready on time, for the classroom to be tidy and decorated, and for the environment to be adapted to learning and growth. Especially when first-graders are arriving, I want them to be welcomed by a beautiful, cheerful, and child-friendly space. The environment is very important to me, but I believe it is much more important to plan in advance how and through which techniques I will build our small classroom community from the very first day.

3. First grade is a major change in every child’s life. How can future first-graders best be prepared for starting school and helped to overcome any possible fear or nervousness?

First and foremost, school should be presented to them as a beautiful and safe place, but we should not create an unrealistic picture that school is only about play and fun. At school, we will play, socialise, laugh, and create beautiful memories, but we will also learn, complete tasks, listen to one another, and follow rules. I always advise parents not to burden their child with questions about whether they know how to read, write, or do maths before starting school. It is much more important to me that a child can put on their jacket by themselves, pack their things, go to the toilet, open their snack, listen to a simple instruction, wait their turn, and try to finish what they have started. And one more very important thing – a child should never be frightened with school or the teacher. Sentences such as, “Just wait until you start school,” can cause much more harm than adults realise. A teacher is not someone a child should be afraid of. I want my students to respect me, but I do not want them to be afraid of me.

4. The first months of school are often challenging. Based on your experience, what is most important in helping a child adapt as easily as possible to the new environment, responsibilities, and school routines?

Love and consistency. Children are very good at sensing a teacher's love, empathy, and care. This is "fertile ground" for their growth and learning. When I say love in this context, I mean mutual appreciation and respect between students and their teacher. Children also accept routines very quickly when the rules are clear and when adults do not change them from day to day. First-graders need time to learn to sit for a certain period, listen to instructions, wait their turn, prepare their school supplies, complete a task, and take care of their belongings. We cannot expect them to know all of this on the first day. That is precisely why the first months are not a time for learning letters and numbers, but a time of intensive learning of school habits. I believe that all children can do much more than adults sometimes allow them to. Therefore, I believe that we should not give up on some of the expectations we set for a child as soon as they say they cannot do something. In such situations, we should offer partial help, show them once again, encourage the child, and give them time to try and, ultimately, do it themselves.

5. How important is cooperation between teachers, parents, and students in creating a positive attitude towards school and learning?

It is extremely important, if not the most important thing. A child very quickly senses when a parent and a teacher are sending different messages. We do not always have to agree on everything, but it is important that there is mutual trust and open communication. Both the parent and the teacher have the same goal – the child's well-being. I consider it particularly important that adults resolve any disagreements between themselves, in separate rooms intended for parent-teacher meetings, without involving the child in the conflict. A parent's authority should not be undermined in front of the teacher, just as a teacher's authority should not be undermined in front of the child. When a child sees that the adults who care for them cooperate and respect one another, they also feel safer.

6. Do you have any special advice or a little "secret" from your experience that could help parents and children start the school year with more confidence, motivation, and joy?

My little "secret" is actually very simple. Since children are still young, I tell them to let themselves enjoy learning, and I tell parents to let teachers do their job. They know exactly when they can do something on their own and when they need you. Do not seek perfection; set small goals that are easily achievable, put in the effort, and expect progress.



A child who knows that they are allowed to make a mistake finds it easier to dare to try again. But equally, a child needs to learn that "I don't know" is not the end of an attempt and that you do not give up on a responsibility as soon as it becomes difficult. Praise the effort: "I can see that you tried," "You did this better today than yesterday," "It wasn't easy, but you didn't give up." Such sentences build much healthier self-confidence than constantly convincing a child that they are the best at everything.

7. Finally, what message would you send to all students, especially first-graders, who are taking their first big step into school life this September?

Dear first-graders, a completely new chapter is ahead of you. At school, you will learn many things – new letters, numbers, words, stories, and interesting things about the world around you. But you will also learn some much bigger things: how to be a good friend, how to help someone, how to admit a mistake, how to try again when something does not work out, and how to be proud of what you have achieved through your own effort. You do not have to know everything on the first day. In fact, you are coming to school precisely because there is still so much you do not know. Ask when something is not clear to you. Be curious. Take care of your friends. Listen to your teachers and parents, but gradually learn to take care of your own responsibilities as well. And we adults have one important task – to help you become, one day, not only successful students, but above all good, independent, and responsible people.

Good luck, first-graders! May your first steps at school be the beginning of a beautiful journey.

Prepared by: Adina Jusufspahić

Fragments of Volunteer Stories

During August, the volunteer activities of the Hastor Foundation continued across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The summer period brought a somewhat different rhythm, but there was no lack of ideas and activities that brought our volunteers together. Below, we bring an overview of the most interesting activities that marked this month.

At the NUR Islamic Educational Center in **Gornji Vakuf**, mentors **Esmin Prijić** and **Nedžma Hajdarević** carried out the activity "Our City Through the Eyes of Young People," aimed at developing a sense of belonging to the local community through getting to know the place where the students live. The students talked about what their city or town means to them, which locations they consider important, and what they are especially proud of. They then explored historically important buildings and sites, cultural customs and traditions, natural beauty, and the everyday life of young people in the local community. Special attention was given to collecting old photographs and stories in order to compare what the place and life looked like in the past and today. In this way, the students got to know the history, culture, and everyday life of their town better, connected the experiences of older generations with their own view of modern life, and developed awareness that their voice and involvement can also be important for the community.



At the Ficibajr picnic area in **Brčko**, **Adelisa Okanović** and **Almina Vejzović** carried out the activity "Mosaic of Friendship – Together We Create Something That Remains," whose goal was to develop togetherness, creativity, cooperation, and mutual respect. The students talked about friendship, helping others, respect, and togetherness, and then created their own symbols representing something beautiful they wanted to share with others. Using cardboard, paper, small stones, sticks, and other available materials, they made individual parts of a mosaic, which were then joined into one large shared piece of work. The students came up with a name for the work together and explained what it represented. They also made small friendship cards, which they exchanged with one another as a sign of gratitude and a pleasant time spent together.





At the Women's Association "Most" in **Jablanica**, mentor **Begović Ehlimana** carried out the workshop "Learn the Basics of Canva, Be Your Own Master," aimed at gaining basic digital and creative skills. The participants learned about the basic functions of the *Canva* tool and ways of using it to create content for social media, presentations, promotional materials, products, and services. Through practical work, they learned how to register and log in to the platform, start a new project, and use text, photographs, colors, shapes, and ready-made templates. They independently created simple graphic materials, while volunteers provided support with technical difficulties and following the tasks.



Čoralić Haris and Imamović Segmedina in Sarajevo planned a volunteer activity dedicated to reusing plastic materials and developing creativity through making useful and educational toys. The activity included collecting plastic bottles, bottle caps, and other clean plastic packaging, sorting them, and preparing them for creative workshops. The participants would use the collected materials to make simple toys, such as cars, animals, board games, and decorative items, while also talking about the importance of recycling, environmental protection, and possibilities for reusing waste.

After making the items, a small exhibition was planned, while some of the toys were intended to be given to a kindergarten, school, or children from the local community. The activity was designed as a way to develop a responsible attitude toward waste, creativity, and awareness of the importance of protecting the environment.

In **Tuzla**, mentors **Mia Markelić** and **Harun Zulčić** carried out the activity "The Voice of Young People on the City Walls," aimed at civic activity, creative expression, and teamwork among students. After an introductory motivational discussion, the students chose topics they considered important for their community, such as environmental protection, peer violence, care for animals, the importance of reading, and healthy habits. Divided into teams, they researched basic information, created messages and visual ideas, and then made educational posters from different materials. After presenting their work, the students, accompanied by their mentors, went into the local community, where they placed the posters in designated advertising areas and talked with passers-by about the topics they had worked on.



This month as well, Hastor Foundation scholarship recipients showed that volunteering can take different forms, from creative work and education to providing support to others and caring for the environment. Through working together, they developed new skills, strengthened team spirit, and learned how their involvement can contribute to the community. The variety of activities once again showed that young people can be active participants in positive change and that even small initiatives, when guided by the wish to contribute, can have an important impact on the community in which they live.

Prepared by: Aida Suljić

Letter of the Month

There are moments in life when we stop and look back at the path we have travelled. Only then do we realise that success does not come overnight and that behind it are people who gave us support, believed in us, and were there when we needed them the most. That is precisely why I feel the need to thank the Hastor Foundation, which was a part of my academic journey.

My story begins back in primary school. As a child from the countryside, I did all kinds of work to make things easier for my parents. My first meeting with teacher Ramo did not take place at home, but in a meadow, two kilometres from home, where I was looking after sheep. That was my everyday life.

I later learned that this gesture had particularly impressed them, as had my modesty and desire to help my parents. This encouraged me to show who I was and where I came from. From that moment on, the Foundation became much more than financial assistance. It became support, motivation, and a wind at my back when I needed it most. Support that gave me the strength to continue pursuing my goals and not give up.

Today, having completed my studies and achieved one of my greatest dreams, I can freely say that the Foundation was a major factor in that success. I extend my gratitude to the Director, the administration, the coordinators, and all the employees of the Hastor Foundation. Thank you all for every conversation, piece of advice, and kind, warm word. I believe that the Foundation has changed many people's lives, and I am certain that it will continue to do so in the future.

Thanks to the Foundation, I met new colleagues and formed new friendships. My story began in a meadow and ends at a university with a master's degree. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for everything, thank you for being a part of my growth and education, and I am proud to be a part of this great family.

Uzeir Tihak

We invite you to join our mission and contribute to fulfilling the dreams of promising students and young people who need our help!

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If you would like to support the work of the Hastor Foundation, you can make a donation to one of the transaction accounts.

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