

AN EDUCATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FILM

THE SECRET
INGREDIENT:

Love

● REC



Whose hands raised you?

- ✓ Who helped you up when you fell?
- ✓ Who hugged you when you were grieving?
- ✓ Who patted you on the shoulder when you succeeded?
- ✓ Who is that special person who left an indelible mark on your life, whom you always remember fondly and to whom you are endlessly grateful?





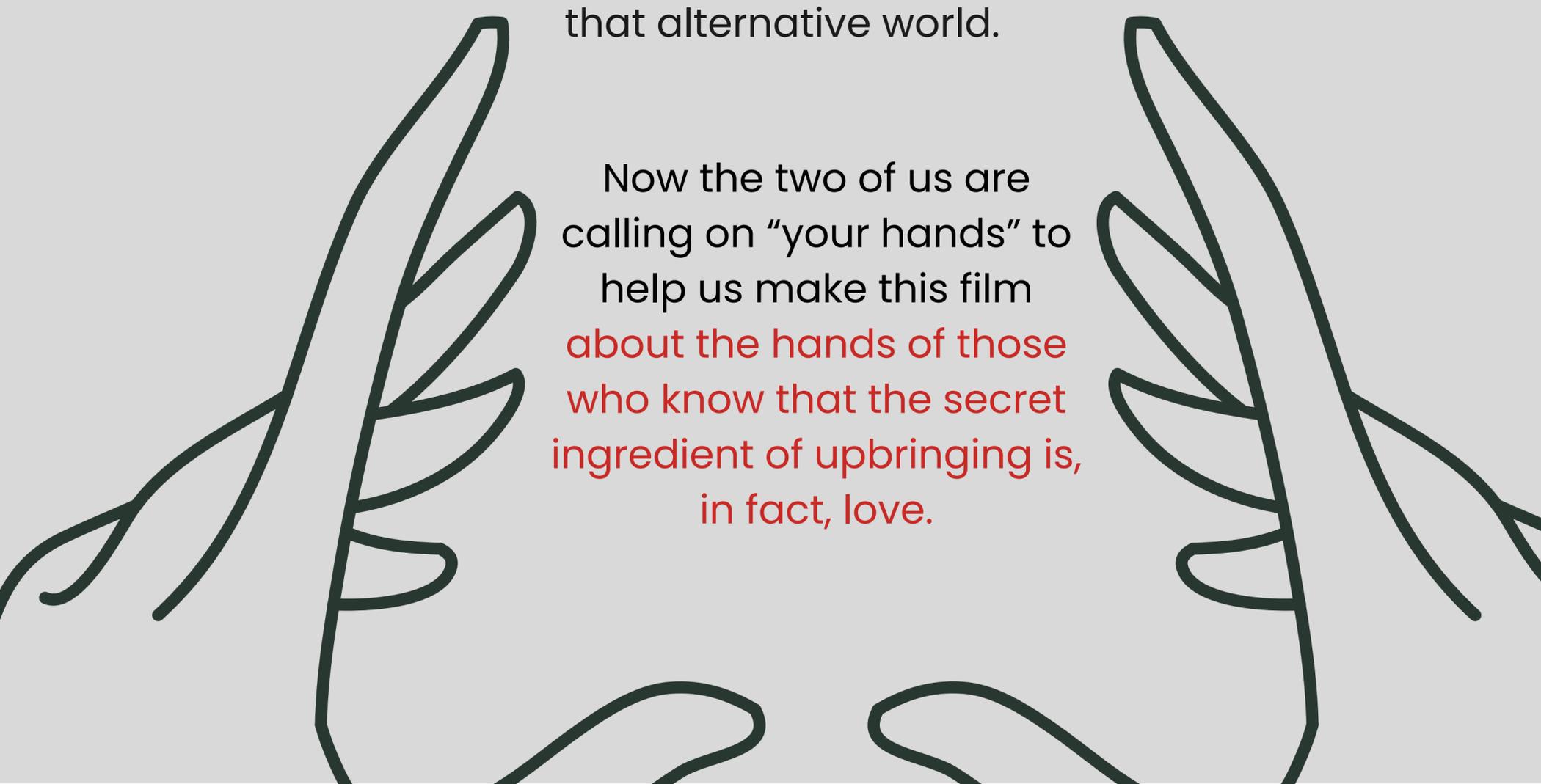
We Are Calling on Your Hands!

My name is Sunčana. I am a social worker, and for the past 20 years I have been providing support to children and young people from alternative care, as well as to their caregivers.

My name is Lidija. I am a documentary film director, and through my films I consistently give a voice to those who are usually unheard.

In addition, we have been friends since our high school days, and we have a strong desire to make an educational documentary film—to tell the story of caregivers who have that “something,” that secret ingredient which children and young people recognize and cherish for a lifetime.

We want to open the door to this alternative world just a little, so that you can meet people who grew up in care and their exceptional caregivers. We want caregivers to know how important they are; we want those who will become caregivers in the future to learn from positive role-models; and we want all of you to finally hear positive stories about the key ingredients of that alternative world.



Now the two of us are calling on “your hands” to help us make this film about the hands of those who know that the secret ingredient of upbringing is, in fact, love.

Alternative care

- Every child has the right to live with their family. However, in certain circumstances—when all other protective interventions that can be applied within the child’s natural environment have been exhausted—competent authorities may determine that separation from the family is necessary in order to protect the child’s best interests. Such circumstances may include abuse or neglect by parents, harmful environmental influences, or other specific situations that endanger the child’s life, well-being, or development. In such cases, the child is provided with placement as **an alternative to the family**, in order to ensure the fulfillment of basic living needs as well as needs related to upbringing and education.

Caregivers are professionals from various fields (early childhood educators, teachers, social workers, psychologists, educational rehabilitators/special educators, social pedagogues, speech and language therapists, etc.) employed in the role of caregivers. Their role is extremely demanding and, at the same time, crucial for creating a safe and supportive environment for children. However, developing a high-quality relationship with children and young people who have had negative relational experiences and who view the world with distrust is an exceptionally complex process that requires great commitment, knowledge, and a willingness to be vulnerable.



“Because she never watched the clock to see when her shift would end. She often stayed longer at work. She rejoiced with us, cried with us. On her free weekends, she took us to her home and showed us what Love and Family mean. I remember her strong hugs, her words, her love...”

“He always found ways to make us laugh—and he always succeeded. Along with constant jokes, there were also words of praise and motivation. Those words make you feel important and ready to face life’s next obstacles. He passed on a positive energy that cannot be put into words—you have to feel it. Although Mr. Marinko no longer works with here, the memories remain, along with that smile and the warm feeling in your heart when you think of him.”

The Caregiver’s Hands

Their courage and determination to confront all the wounds and injuries that children and young people in care have experienced—and the uniqueness of the way they apply balm to those wounds—is something that deserves to be recorded and shared with everyone who is willing to listen with an open heart.



Need



Affirmation of the work of caregivers whom children and young people with experience of care recognize as significant figures in their lives.

Care experienced children and young people (children's homes and residential care institutions) encounter numerous adverse, stressful, and/or traumatic situations before, during, and after leaving care. A warm and fulfilling relationship with a caregiver can act as a balm for wounds from early childhood, help restore trust in people, and enhance the competencies needed to develop close relationships with others (peers, partners, employers, children, etc.).

The general public knows very little about the importance of the caregiver's role, and even the professional community is not sufficiently familiar with the complexity of this relationship.

Our Response

> Affirmation & Visibility

To affirm the important yet often invisible role of caregivers within the care system.

> Questioning the Philosophy of Care

To encourage both the professional and wider public to re-examine values and practices in work with children and young people in alternative care.

> Empowerment

To empower caregivers and care experienced young people by acknowledging their importance and contribution.



The educational documentary film "The Secret Ingredient: Love" is being created precisely to explore and portray the complex yet invaluable relationship between caregivers and children/young people in care.

Through real-life stories, encounters, and personal testimonies, the film will show what it means to be a good caregiver, the ways in which they provide support, and how their warmth, empathy, and presence can change a person's life.



Film Concept

The backbone of the film will consist of caregivers who have received the “Zvone” Award and the children and young people who nominated them. The “Zvone” Award is presented to caregivers within the alternative care system for children as a sign of gratitude, recognition, and appreciation of their exceptional contribution to the lives of children and young people with experience of living in alternative care.

What makes the “Zvone” Award truly unique is the fact that it is in the hands of young people with care experience—it is they who manage the Award, nominate caregivers, carry out the selection process, and make the final decision on which caregiver receives the recognition.



www.priznanjezvone.com

Protagonists & Content

✓ People with care experience

Interviews with people who have experience of living in care and who have already left the care system, describing— from a more mature, adult perspective—those caregivers who had a positive and significant impact on their lives.

✓ Caregivers

Interviews with caregivers whom children and young people identify as having had a positive and significant influence on their lives. Some are also recipients of the Zvone Award.

✓ Experts

Interviews with professionals who explain the role of caregivers from a theoretical perspective.

✓ Creative Materials

Creative materials (poems, drawings, essays, etc.) created by children and young people about caregivers when nominating them for the Zvone Award, as well as excerpts from the play *Domaši* by Ana Marija Veselčić.

Activity Plan

1

Pre-production

January /
February 2026

2

Production

February / June 2026

3

Post-production

July / September 2026

4

Promotion and distribution

October / December
2026

How Can You Get Involved?

By covering specific costs for:

- Production costs: €8,000
 - Cinematography and filming equipment: €3,000
 - Directing costs: €5,000
- Post-production costs: €8,000
 - Sound design and audio processing: €2,500
 - Editing costs: €4,500
 - Transcript preparation: €500
 - English subtitle creation: €500
- Travel expenses for filming (fuel, tolls, accommodation, per diem) for filming in 6 cities for 3 people (producer, director, cinematographer): €1,500

We offer sponsors visibility through:

- Displaying their logo in the film credits
- Promotion on official promotional materials and social media
- Participation in the premiere and public screenings
- Media visibility as part of the film's promotional campaign

Your support for the film is possible through **sponsorship or donation.**

You can cover specific film costs by directly paying an invoice for a particular item or by making a donation for the needs of the film to the bank account of the MoSt association.

More about us

Our initiative has also been supported by the MoSt Association, a non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit organization that for more than 25 years has been implementing projects and programs aimed at improving the lives of children, youth, people living in poverty, and homeless persons, as well as combating social exclusion, poverty, and homelessness.

Through its support center for children and youth, specifically the POST program, the MoSt Association has for many years provided support to young people who have left the alternative care system and cooperates with social welfare institutions.

Contact

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PhD Sunčana Kusturin, Univ. Spec. in Supervision in Psychosocial Work

Sunčana Kusturin is a social worker, youth work trainer, university specialist in supervision in psychosocial work, and holds a PhD in social work and social policy. Her doctoral research, entitled "Quality of Life After the Experience of Institutional Care," focused on life trajectories and the current quality of life of young adults aged 24 to 30 who have experience of living in institutional care. In particular, she examined how they retrospectively perceive their time spent in care and how that experience influences their present lives.

Throughout her career, she has led a civil society organization, designed and coordinated several projects, and simultaneously worked directly with children, young people, parents, teachers, caregivers, volunteers, and professionals in the field of youth work.

She currently works as an independent professional through her business SUKUS.

www.sukus.hr



Lidija Špegar, MA in Film and Television Directing

Lidija Špegar graduated in Journalism and Film and Television Directing from the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb. She works as a director, editor, and researcher for various film and TV productions and is a member of the Croatian Film Directors' Guild. She has directed several notable and award-winning documentary films that address sensitive topics:

- The documentary film "Some Things Should Not Be Hidden" (2014), about Dr. Jagodić, recipient of the Righteous Among the Nations award granted by the State of Israel to individuals who saved Jews during World War II.
- The educational documentary "The Taste of Care," which addresses life in care and young people's transition out of the care system and is used for educational purposes.
- "Where Are We Going" (2017), premiered at ZagrebDox, tells the story of a Zagreb taxi driver and, among other themes, addresses the latest wave of emigration from Croatia.
- The feature-length documentary "Underground Top List" (2025), which explores our relationship with death through music.

Through her work, Lidija strives to tell stories about real people and topics that are often left untold, yet clearly deserve to be shared.

<https://factum.com.hr/hr/autor/lidija-spegar>