

## From conductor to the foster mother of cadets

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**Nelly Ruuge, 39**, who has kept her eye on tens of intern cadets during her years of police service, is now leading her second life.

Life episode no.1. The doctor glances at the papers, then looks at Nelly who has problems with her vocal chords and says in the end: "If you stay at school for another two years, you will lose your ability to speak altogether." For a woman with a music teacher's training it was a heavy diagnosis. What to do now?

Life episode no. 2. Nelly, Internship Coordinator at Southern Police Prefecture, is packing up her things to start work in the capital city. Her position at Estonian Police Board will be leading police inspector at the Personnel Division of Service Department. Her aim? To make the arrangements for the internship of cadets even smoother. So that there would be such people working at the police who dare to undertake even the most dangerous tasks together.

### A teacher becomes a student again

Nelly had been giving singing classes for children at a school at a little place in Estonia called Kambja for ten years. However, when her health deteriorated-she had to resign. Idle Nelly was urged by her acquaintances who earned their living doing police work. "We are in need of a juvenile police inspector and you have the school experience," they persuaded her. "Go to the Police School." The woman thought for a while and decided to do it. She finished her studies with honours and worked as a juvenile police officer and later as a regional constable.

A little time had gone by when they started selecting instructors for a new competence-based educational internship. Nelly was also invited to an interview and she turned out to be a suitable candidate for the instructor's job. What followed was a study visit to Dutch colleagues of which Nelly still has vivid memories. In the land of tulips the competence-based study system has already been rooted and is to some extent different from the way matters were handled in Estonia then.

Coming back to the home country, it was time to put what she had seen into practice. Nelly became both the instructor of cadets and the coordinator – a person who makes it their business to follow the course of the internship of the cadets of the whole group, demands reports from them and gives advice when necessary.

### The foster mother was brought a black-and-white cow as a gift

Nelly started working in the capital last May. When the invitation came, she did not hesitate for long. In Tallinn she had the chance to go on working as a coordinator but to do it even better and with more people.

Let it be said that Nelly is not sitting alone in her office in Police Board. At an honorary place on the shelf there stands a black-and-white ceramic cow with "For someone special" written on it. Under the

dedication there are names. The proud animal is a gift from the cadets of a study group who did their internship at Southern Police Prefecture. Nelly, who was always willing to help the cadets and listen to their problems, got a nickname "Foster mother". Even now she is remembered with warm words. "Nelly is a person who does her work whole-heartedly – a good organiser and forthright in manner," a constable characterises the former foster mother. "Nelly is precise and she demanded the same from the cadets. She listened to the problems of cadets and helped them all the time." The clay cow is guarding the two cups won at the Police Board shooting competition of the service weapon – a proof of Nelly's sharp eye and steady hands.

### **Recreation provided by nature and Mozart**

At home place Kambja Nelly is an authority. Although the role of cadets' foster mother ruled out the position of the regional constable that Nelly used to have, the local people still often come knocking on her door, when they are in trouble. "I can go in slippers and jeans to tell a person to let their family members live in peace," said Nelly. "That person accepts my words." Problem solved.

It is at home in Kambja that Nelly steals some time for herself as well. The local women keep inviting her back to folk dance training, where she used to be the assistant instructor. But even Nelly cannot make it everywhere. At home she enjoys dozing off in front of TV or taking a walk in nature with a friend, sometimes she even has a camera with her. And when the neighbour on the upper floor is listening very loudly to Mozart's Requiem, Nelly grabs the sheet music from the drawer and sings along with her heart in it. "45 minutes to enjoy," Nelly smiles her peaceful smile, thoughts wandering in memories of the time spent as the member of the mixed choir of Estonian Mixed Choir Union.

Still, the teacher's soul longs to be back at school – this time as a student of vocational pedagogy at Tallinn University. "I don't know how it will work out," says Nelly, "but it would be a follow-up to what I've been doing little by little at the police and what I want to do in future as well – improve the vocational education."

### **Nelly is simply super!**

*Reelika Paomees*

*Constable at the Constable Station of Valga Police Station  
one of Nelly's first "foster children"*

As an instructor-coordinator and simply as a person Nelly is downright super! When someone is doing their work with as much enthusiasm and commitment as Nelly, you can say that she is an activist.

Based on my internship experience I know that Nelly does everything in her power to make things work. We, cadets, were like foster children to her and she was a foster mother to us – this is how we used to call her – jokingly. Nelly accomplished a great deal as the coordinator of our internship: we were her first "babies" and she had to start from scratch. Even after the official working hours were over she would deal with cadets' problems.

Nelly assured us, cadets, that everything would be just fine and thus gave us a boost of confidence. She would visit the cadets doing their internship in different regions. This made me feel that someone really cared about what I was doing. At the same time she demanded weekly reports from us on our activities.

Nelly was always thoroughly prepared and in my opinion the internship coordinator system started to function thanks to her. Other internship coordinators learned from her. She was irreplaceable during the

internship. During my first internship I had a problem with my instructor. When I turned to her for help in writing she went into action: she showed up and explained the new internship system to the instructor. Eventually the issue was settled.

One could tell Nelly about everything – she always came up with a solution. Before the exams she helped us a lot, for example organised different pre-exam lectures/training courses or study days. This gave us a lot of confidence to succeed in exams.

Nelly is a person from whom one can learn persistence, integrity, practicality, diligence, and cheerfulness. Only positive words can be used to characterize her, because this is what she is like. For her to lash out, which she did once in a blue moon, there had to be a valid reason.