



*"...serve one another in love." Galatians 5:13*

## **December 2006 Newsletter**

Hello family and friends,

I want to wish each of you a blessed Christmas season. We end each year with the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child. What a wonderful way to complete a year. May we all remember the reason for the season. May God's blessings fill your lives and flow into the coming year.

The **"Give a Child a Gift"** Christmas benefit is a success!! We have enough money to buy each child at the orphanage in Marganets a cuddly stuffed animal for Christmas. Anatoliy is at work shopping as I write. This may be the first Christmas that any of the children have received a real Christmas present. Thanks to all who are making this Christmas special for our children.

In November, Nadya, our drug and alcohol education specialist, made her second visit to the children at the orphanage to talk with them about drug and alcohol abuse. We haven't received her report yet, but Anatoliy indicated that she was once again well received and appreciated. They wanted her to stay, but she had many children waiting for her in the villages surrounding Illichevsk. Ira and I will visit Marganets on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> to talk with the children and give them their Christmas presents.

In the October Newsletter I mentioned the park beside the Baptist church. We finally raked up 99% of the leaves for the season. Before I had the opportunity to begin my winter creative planning for the park, I was invited to the "Day for the Disabled" celebration. Marina, from the Children's Services department of the city, directs this event every year. We had met in October to discuss my ideas for the park. She was very enthusiastic about the ideas but didn't know how this would develop. As I arrived at the celebration, Marina immediately introduced me to Vladimir. He is the director of the newly developed Department of Sports for Illichevsk. Previously he was a high level official in the city overseeing education.

After introducing myself, Vladimir told me many things about himself and his plans for the city. After Ira had translated everything, it was my turn to say something. I asked if Marina had talked with him about the park project. He looked at me with an empty expression and said, "No." I smiled and briefly told him that I wanted to develop the park by the church to be used by the children and adults with disabilities. When he heard the translation, a big smile came to his face and he gave me a big thumbs up.

Thinking "strike while the iron is hot," I asked him if I could meet with Marina and him to discuss the park project some more. He gave me an emphatic "Yes." Immediately he and Ira began talking without translating for me. Then they called Marina over and talked some more. They agreed to meet at the park the following day, Saturday. The four of us met with Victor, from the church. After looking around the physical location of the park, we went inside to talk. We had a very good meeting and everything sounded very positive.

This week while Ira was in the city building, she stopped in to talk with Vladimir. He only had a minute to talk with her but gave her some very good news. His department had some money available to spend on the park. Even more exciting, the city approved this money to be spent on the park to make it available to the disabled. Six months ago I had no idea why I was directed to work in the park. Now I know!

Here is a story about one of the children who will benefit from the park. About 2 1/2 years ago, while the massage clinic was just starting to become a reality, I was invited to visit a mother and child with our massage therapist. As I walked into the little apartment, there was Ann S. and her mother. Ann was 1 year old. It was explained to me that she had no muscle control in her neck, could not hold her head up, and that she could not manipulate her arms or legs. It was estimated that her body was 80% spastic. Along with her physical limitations, I was told that she had mental retardation. She had no visual attention and could not smile. She had no hand eye coordination. After her Dec. 2004 20-day massage, the specialists in L'Vov reported seeing progress. After a year of treatment her spasticity has been reduced to 30%. By the next set of treatments, she was saying some words, able to smile, and could stand with some assistance. At the celebration mention above, Ira told me of Ann's latest progress report after her November 20-day massage treatment. With her mother holding her under her arms, she is beginning to walk. God is doing amazing things through our therapists. Even they are amazed.

Our teams here in Ukraine, the parents, and all of the children wish you a Very Merry Christmas!!

Blessings of love and healing,  
*Mark*

**Illichevsk Massage Therapy Clinic    Marganets Orphanage  
Emmaus Children's Food Program**

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