



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

September 2006 Newsletter

Hello family and friends,

September is filled with news. During the first week; Ira, my translator, Nadya, a drug educator, and I went to Marganets to visit the children at the orphanage. (You may remember my concerns about some of the children sniffing glue.) Even though we were only there for two days, we had good interaction with the children. Nadya spoke with six classes of children, 10 years old and older. First she spoke with two classes, and then a second group that was also two classes. But some of the children from the first group enjoyed her presentation so much that they joined the second group. The results were great. Some of the children interacted very openly with Nadya. Surprisingly, they spoke about things that they had never shared before.

After the presentation, the children came to Anatoliy, our liaison, and thanked him for bringing Nadya. In the children's eyes, Anatoliy is responsible for initiating everything that MUCH does at the orphanage. They are about 99% correct. They have a very good relationship with him because he is not one of the staff. The children were happy with the presentation, the manager and staff were happy with the presentation, and everyone took one giant step forward. We hope to involve someone from another church in Marganets to provide a government-funded drug education program on a daily basis. We will be working on this over the next twelve months.

During our July 2006 visit, Ira and I had found some puzzles and assembly toys for \$12, and during a conversation with the manager of the orphanage, we gave them to her and discussed additional appropriate toys for the children. We also talked about filling their government-provided new book shelves with Ukrainian language children's story books. Reading is difficult for these special children, and it's a challenge for them to take an interest in reading, but they are in great need of pleasure books to read. My goal is to take a few books and a few toys each time we visit. Gradually, the children will have more to do and will have more to challenge their minds.

We also visited Pastor Vasili at the Baptist church in Marganets near the orphanage. We took him more clothes from House of Hearts families that participate in our Massage Therapy Clinic. His church reaches out to children from the other internat (Orphanage Number Two) and a shelter for children in Marganets. They also help a children's home in a nearby village. We hope to assist his church and a Ukraine Challenge team from North Carolina in providing a camp program next summer for the children from Orphanage Number Two. We had a very enthusiastic conversation about the possibilities.

While this was going on, five of our Massage Therapy Clinic clients with disabilities and three accompanying adults enjoyed five days at the church camp in Sanzjaka outside of my hometown of Illichevsk. This was a test for the camp as well as the campers. Neither knew what to expect. But all went well, as happens when God is the director. Let me share some of the stories. Galina

has Down's Syndrome. She is in her early 20's. She is pretty much independent and very sociable, so she came without an adult. In this society, people with disabilities are not provided much opportunity for social interaction. This may have been her first camp experience in her young life. She had a great time and wants to go again next year.

Alyona is about 25. She has severe mental retardation. Her mother, who is very protective of her, came to the camp with her the first day. She wanted to be sure that this would be a positive experience for Alyona. She brought Alyona to the camp the second day and stayed for the rest of the week. Together they had very nice interaction with the other children and camp staff. Alyona seemed **extremely pleased** with the puppet show. It was a very refreshing experience. It may possibly be the first time that Alyona has been anywhere beyond her immediate neighborhood. This was a big step into the world of Illychevsk for her.

Slavik, educated at home by his grandmother, is about 22. He has Cerebral Palsy, affecting arms, legs, facial features, and speech. In spite of that, he is a talented artist with an enthusiastic personality. He spent his free time at camp drawing and painting. The week was a most inspiring time for Slavik, and a breath of "fresh air" for his kind-hearted grandmother.

Finally, Marina brought her twins, Kirill and Nikita, age 4. Kirill was highlighted in the July newsletter. It took a couple of days for Marina to adjust to her new environment. When she did, she went with her boys to the sea more often, and had a great time in general. The boys enjoyed the Bible studies and had a great time with the craft activities and puppet show.

Olga, who has a psychology background, volunteered her time to talk with the mothers. Ira had contacted a Christian puppet show in Odessa to come and perform for the children. Normally, they are booked months ahead. They made time for our children. The Illychevsk church that runs the Emmaus Food Program and the camp made every effort to serve the children with a camp program. And Irena, one of the cooks from Emmaus, cooked for the campers on her week off. The pilot program was most successful.

Gary De Velder from Wheels for the World, (our wheelchair connection), introduced me to David Bentley of Gateway to Life, International. David has been developing Ukrainian teams to work in conjunction with his teams that have been running camps for the disabled in Zhytomir for five years. We hope to link up with his organization for a camp program for our Massage Therapy Clinic clients next summer at Sanzjaka camp. And I have a few more ideas on the drawing board for future opportunities for the disabled children in Illychevsk and surrounding areas.

Blessings of love and healing,
Mark

Illichevsk Free Clinic Marganets Orphanage
Emmaus Children's Food Program

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