



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

September 2007 Newsletter

Hello family and friends,

Fall brings the beginning of school, a season of holidays that unite family and friends, and here in Illichevsk, hope for many of our children and young adults. Five years ago, while in "missionary school," I was seeking God's direction for the boundaries of my mission. Each year the boundaries expand in some manor. This year was the second year for our September camp for children and young adults with disabilities. A missionary team of two from HandiVangelism (An American organization with a base in Kiev) joined us to share their program with our campers. Ira will tell more in Ira's Insights.

Ira's Insights

In September of this year we had another camp for people with disabilities. The director of this camp was God Himself. When I remember how it was organized I think that only God could put all things together so quickly and so perfectly. In the camp there were 16 people, 8 of them were people with disabilities. Some of these people used wheel chairs. All of them enjoyed the days spent in the camp. They had great food and great rest too. The weather was so good that these people were at the beach every day. Every evening all campers gathered together by the camp fire and sang Christian songs with Monika, the person who came from Kiev to lead the camp. This person is the director of a camp for the disabled in the Kiev area. She and her friend gave some Bible lessons to the campers; sharing about God's love with these people.

One of the campers was a girl whose name is Aliona K. She was with her mother. The girl is mentally weak and can't walk or eat without some assistance. She always needs the help of her mother. The mother and her daughter live in the centre of Illichevsk. She never takes her out in to the community beyond her immediate neighborhood. Last year when we had our first camp this mother and her daughter participated. But last time the mother didn't feel comfortable because of her daughter's disability. On the first day she came to the camp alone without her daughter. She just wanted to look round. When I asked her to bring her daughter she looked at me and told: "I don't know; she is so different." I comforted her and told her that it is the best place to have rest for her and her daughter. Next day she brought Aliona. They were in the camp the last four days but every night the mother returned home with her daughter. Probably she didn't feel comfortable. This year the mother was more relaxed. They came to the first day of the camp and stayed there for five days without going home for the night. Every day they went to the beach. The mother attended the Bible lessons and liked them very much. In the end of the camp she came up to me and said, "It was so good for me and Aliona to be here. I feel very comfortable here. My dream is to come back to this camp with my daughter next year."

*Until next time,
Ira*

We have been talking about a transportation scholarship program for children from Emmaus who qualify for government funded trade school, college, or university. Even with tuition funded by the government, transportation to and from Odessa each day remains an expense that is out of reach for these children. Our goal is to break the cycle of poverty in the families of the children who attend the Emmaus food program. Their day has come. We will sponsor two girls with the transportation scholarship. MUCH will fund the first year. To continue the program, we are seeking 10 sponsors to commit to \$10 a month over 12 months each year. At this point, both girls have enrolled in a four or five year University program. Please pray about this. If God is calling you to help one of these girls, your ministry to her will change her life. Please take a moment to read Vika's. Kristina's story will appear in the October newsletter.

Vika: A Success story in the Making

This is the story of Vika K. She was born in the Odessa region of Ukraine on November 6, 1989. Ukraine declared independence on December 26, 1991, twenty four days after the break up of the Soviet Union. Vika's early days are somewhat of a blur. We have a few details of her first seven years. At age 3, Vika's mother and her current boyfriend in Odessa left her with her grandmother one evening and went out to drink the night away. With this regular behavior of her mother, it was just a matter of time before Vika was removed from her mother's custody and placed in a shelter. Her mother's boyfriend was quite attached to little Vika. In no time, he stole Vika from the shelter and took her back to her mother. In spite of his feelings for Vika, his own health was in jeopardy. He died not long after.

To avoid the authorities, Vika and her mother moved to the village of Big Valley, about 20 kilometers southwest of Odessa. Her mother soon found another guy to be her drinking buddy. There were a number of alcoholics who gathered in a house that became the "home" of Vika and her mother. This house, as you can guess, was not in very good condition at all. But for a child, much less a preschool child, it was just not acceptable. The house had no windows to keep the cold out in the winter. There was no way to heat the house either. There were no kitchen or bathroom facilities. It was a place to hide from life, but certainly not a place to live. For Vika, it was very dangerous, even life threatening.

By the time that Vika had reached age 7, the people in the community were talking about her. They were talking about her living among alcoholics. It was 1996. Life in Ukraine was still very difficult. Rebuilding a country after 70 some years of oppression left everyone looking out for themselves. People could talk and talk, but what could they do. Who could afford to add one mouth to feed at their table? Who had enough compassion to take this child into their home? There was such a man. His name was Victor K. He went to this house one day and took Vika away from this terrible environment. He brought her into his home to live with his family; his wife, two daughters, and two sons. Vika's mother didn't put up a fight. She didn't even object.

As time went along, Victor invited the mother to visit Vika at his house whenever she wanted. It was seldom that she came. She truly had no interest in her daughter. She was controlled by the bottle. Not long after, the house where the mother and her friends drank together burned down. Had Victor not taken Vika, she surely would have died.

There was a building, maybe a house, on Victor's farm land. The mother and her boyfriend asked if they could live in this building. He allowed this. Also, he gave them work to take care of the cattle. He would pay them in food and clothing only. They were content with this arrangement. It continued for 8 years. During this time Vika's mother, although she was living so close, showed no interest in her daughter.

Vika attended school in the village. After school each day, she would come home and get a snack. Then immediately she would go with her brothers to the field to herd the cattle. Her life was not an easy life. Life in Ukraine was not easy. But Vika had an opportunity to live a "normal life" in the village. But her past would haunt her yet. She had no documentation as to who she was. This meant that she could not move forward with her education. She could not even get a job without documents. She baby-sits for income. What else can she do?

Finally, in 2007, Vika's documents were found after an exhaustive search through the public records in Odessa. Vika is now "in the system." She has a chance to make a life for herself. Unfortunately, she still needs help. She has found friends and spiritual guidance in the Illichevsk Baptist church. About two or three years ago she made a commitment to Christ. She has become very involved in the church activities. She sings in the choir. She has a very strong and beautiful voice.

Vika has the desire to improve her life. Through the kindness of others, she has made it this far in life. Now it is up to her to go the next step. She has taken the examinations for University. She passed the exams and has been accepted into the program. Now she will need funding. She cannot raise enough money working to pay her own way. How will she go to the next step in her success story?



Blessings of love and healing,

Mark

**Illichevsk Massage Therapy Clinic Marganets Orphanage
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