



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

August 2008 Newsletter

Hello family and friends,

Greetings, from the extremely hot city of Illichevsk Ukraine. This August has been awfully hot. Normally, I'm not as aware of the weather. Looking out across my narrow balcony, I can see if it is raining or the sun is shining. But until I get out in the street, I really don't realize the true weather.

As you know, four years ago MUCH began a massage clinic for children with Cerebral Palsy. We started it because of my own amazing results after three months of massage. I have continued to receive massage treatments, but not as often as I should have. Last summer I made a commitment to receive treatments every other month for a year. I wanted to see what results I could experience over a twelve month period.

For the past twelve weekdays, I have been going to the clinic for a forty minute therapeutic massage to reduce stress and to alter my muscle imbalance in my left side. Each day I would work up a sweat during my 20 minute walk to and from the clinic. My time to go was 1:00 p.m. It was hot! After a year of treatments, my therapist evaluated my progress. She was happy to see the results, but expected better results had I been faithful with exercise.

My question for the last six years has been, "So God, what am I supposed to learn from this?" He opened my eyes to the children who come to the clinic for twenty days every other month. I see the hardship of the parents who bring their children, committing to a particular time every day for a month. And then, repeating this every other month. In all kinds of weather, mother, father, or grandmother will bring their child. Most come by foot, carrying their child or pushing the child in a stroller. When I meet the parents, I become most aware of how grateful they are. I learn what it means to them to have the clinic in operation. I see hope in their eyes.

Not long ago, I talked with Vika D.'s mother. I asked about Vika's progress, knowing that her diagnosis was severe. She said that people who have not seen Vika in a long time say that she has made good progress. Often it is difficult to see progress when you are with the child day in and day out. But the therapists and visitors see the progress the best. I hope to continue to improve the services that we provide. Please pray that the city of Illichevsk government will continue to help the children through the new center as a priority for their people.

Ira's Insights

It is August outside and is a reminder to us that very soon students will return to their schools, colleges and universities. In our area August is very hot this year. And it doesn't let us feel that very soon autumn with its grey and rainy days will come. But actually, in less than two weeks the school season will start.

This time God has put on my heart a desire to tell you about two people whom MUCH has been helping in a specific area for one year. It's the scholarship program. When this program was started or just spoken about, I didn't understand very well how many opportunities it could bring in the lives of these two girls. I know both of them well enough.

One of them is Kristina. She was a participant of the Emmaus program for many years. When she was a child, her father left her and her mother. Four or five years ago her mother died from brain cancer. She lives with her grandmother in the village nearby Illichevsk. Last year Kristina entered the university. In the future, she hopes to be a lawyer.

Another girl is Viktoria K. Her story is sad also. At the age of 7, she was taken from mother who was an alcoholic. She still lives with the family that saved her from great doom. She also attended "Emmaus club" for some time. Last year she entered the Teacher's University.

I speak to these girls often when I see them in the local Baptist church. Both girls had some difficulties in their first year studying at their universities. In spite of difficulties, both have a great desire to continue their education to get professions and break their circle of poverty. They say that God has given them a great opportunity with this scholarship program.

Only this year, after interactions with both of them, I realized that this program is more than a help with transportation expenses for them. It gives them a feeling of protection. It reminds them that somebody takes care of them! For me, it's like a parents' love. These girls didn't experience sincere parents' love in their childhood. I think that now they have the opportunity to experience this love of parents' care of them. I am sure that even in many years they will remember this great help in their lives and will know the real love of mother and father. In my eyes, MUCH is creating a great history when it helps such children as Kristina and Viktoria. It helps to change the stories of these girls' lives....I have a great hope that in some years we will hear about a very experienced lawyer and a very experienced teacher!

Until next time,

Ira

In the September newsletter, I will outline our goals for the '08, '09 school year and beyond. I hope that my newsletter and Ira's insights are helping you to understand more clearly the needs of the children, their progress, and the political environment of this country that is emerging into democracy. One of the city officials tells me, "Yes, we have many laws to protect the children. But here in Ukraine few laws are enforced unless there is a good reason." Let's help MUCH express those *good reasons* as many children's lives are being changed. Please continue to pray for the work that God is doing through MUCH.

Blessings of love and healing,

Mark

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

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