

October 28, 2010

Hi everyone:

Before I tell you about our trip to St. Petersburg, Russia this year, I would like to briefly tell you about last year's trip. Last October we returned to Nizhny, Russia and worked with two new orphanages, Orphanage No. 1 for behavioral problem kids, and Orphanage No. 8 for kids with special needs. We were unable to return to Royka because of problems with the governing officials. In fact, Orphanage Nos. 1 and 8 were also instructed to not let us visit, but the directors let us come anyway. They were visited by the KGB at least once and by governing officials twice while we were there. After we departed Russia, the staff at one of the orphanages was severely disciplined for letting us visit. I was so disappointed that we couldn't return to Royka, but God was gracious and there was one child at Orphanage No. 8 that had been at Royka when we visited there in 2008. And he remembered those on the team that were repeaters! That encouraged me and lifted my spirits tremendously. It is not our intention to cause such problems for the orphanages we work with, so we decided to give Nizhny a break from the Americans and to let our local follow-up team continue to work with Royka and Orphanage Nos. 1 and 8. I am happy to report that monthly follow-up work has continued for these facilities, and we have continued to provide for Easter and Christmas celebrations plus funds for various needs that have arisen over the past year for these orphanages plus several others.

The day after I returned from Russia last year, I left for Mississippi to spend some time with my mother who was dying. I spent 4 days with her and had the pleasure of seeing her accept Christ as her personal Lord and Savior. I returned home from Mississippi, and my Mom died a week later. We went back to Mississippi for the funeral and finally returned home after another 5 days. With all of this going on, I never got around to sending out my trip report last year. I'm sure you understand.

Because of the problems with the governing officials in Nizhny, we decided to join with Orphan Outreach and travel to St. Petersburg, Russia where they have absolute fantastic programs in place for orphanages. Orphan Outreach has been in St. Pete for a little over 3 years, but its founders worked there for a great number of years with Buckner.

The team this year consisted of me and Ronnie, Denise Allen (2nd trip with me), Amy Campbell, and Patti DeLance (all from the Houston area), Mary Byrd, Judy Allen, and Shari Strout from Dallas, and Cindy Rathmann (originally from Houston but moved to Moscow Oct. 1). We left for St. Pete on October 6 and returned on October 15. We visited seven orphanages and a children's hospital with a ward for children that had been abandoned.

The orphanages we visited were nothing like the ones we work with in Nizhny. They were brightly painted, cheerful places, and well equipped. In fact, one was located in a brand new building. The children appeared to be very happy and well taken care of. It was obvious a lot of time and money had been invested in these facilities. Two contained schools on the premises and students from the community attended these schools. Several of the orphanages had rooms where the kids could learn to sew and cook, take classes in music, dance, art, and weight lifting. I told my group from Houston that this is what we are aiming for in Nizhny—to make the

orphanages we work with bright, cheerful places where the kids feel like they are in a home environment, safe and well taken of and provided for.

The theme for VBS was the hands of God. We only had a short period of time with the kids, but we made sure to get in one lesson about God's creation and that each of them were uniquely created by God. We made puppets, duct tape bracelets, salvation bracelets, and most importantly, we did our John 3:16 project. The John 3:16 project consisted of rubbing lotion on each child's hand, placing the hand on black construction paper and gently pressing down to leave an imprint in lotion, and then sprinkling baby powder over the imprint. Then we shook off the excess baby powder, leaving the child's handprint. On each sheet of construction paper was a label with John 3:16 in Russian on it. I had the privilege of filling in with the older kids for Cindy after she left to return to Moscow. We did the John 3:16 project and I got to discuss with the kids what the verse meant. Although there was some skepticism that the older kids would not want to do this project, I am happy to report that only one young girl did not want to do it and that everyone else, even the oldest teenagers, loved it. I told the team that everyone loves to be touched in a gentle way. This activity was one I had recently learned from Mary Ring, a counselor at our church who works with kids who have been adopted from other countries. She uses it in her work with the kids and family members.

At the children's hospital there were 2 babies that had cleft palates. I sang Jesus Loves Me (changing "me" to "you") to a two week old girl. She was so tiny, so adorable. As I sang, I gently stroked her back and hand. Imagine my surprise when she actually smiled once while I sang! She opened her eyes several times and looked around, but didn't move much. When I saw her smile, I choked up and could barely complete the song. It is my prayer that the name of Jesus will be so deeply implanted in her mind that in the future, when she hears the name Jesus, she will have a memory of someone singing to her about Him and that she will desire to learn more about him. I also pray that she will be adopted within the next couple of years by a loving Christian family that will teach her about this Jesus.

The other facility that really touched my heart was the one for children with special needs. There were about 6 kids there with Downs Syndrome. Anya, about age 5, stole my heart. She had been at the orphanage for 3 weeks and had been left there because her family could no longer take care of her. Every time I entered the room and she saw me, she would run, wrap her arms around my legs, and then want me to hold her. Nothing gave me more pleasure than to pick up this always smiling girl to hold close. Anya will stay at this orphanage until she reaches 7 or 8 years of age. Several kids from this orphanage with Downs Syndrome have been adopted by Americans. It is my prayer that Anya will also have this privilege. Lesha, a young boy, couldn't talk. He had been at the orphanage for about 6 months. He basically had been raised outside and didn't know how to do anything when he arrived at the orphanage. The workers compared his condition and the way he had been raised to Mowgli, the young boy in Jungle Book. They had to teach him to walk, eat, and drink. Lesha loved to be held and would rub his chin on your arm or leg. Several of the kids couldn't see very well and wore really thick glasses. One young girl was unable to talk and would become easily agitated. All we did with these children was play with them and love on them. Unfortunately, the caretakers instructed us to not pick up the kids because it was something they would not be able to do after we left. Hard to hear, but easy to understand—too many kids, not enough arms of caretakers to go around. However, we did sneak in as many "pickups" as we could while the caretakers were out of the room or not

looking. After all, that is what we were there for. And it is something those precious children needed and wanted.

The second purpose for the trip to St. Pete was to bring Luda and Pastor Vadim from Nizhny to receive training from Orphan Outreach's local staff on various programs they have in place in St. Pete. This part of the trip far exceeded my expectations! Luda and Pastor Vadim learned about all aspects of the graduate program, which is one we want to start in Nizhny. They also learned how they conduct their follow up ministry to the orphanages. And most importantly, Olga, Orphan Outreach's local staff leader arranged for me, Luda, and Pastor Vadim to meet with the attorney/accountant (Maria) that had prepared all the paperwork to form a charitable foundation in St. Pete for Orphan Outreach to work through. Maria taught us everything we need to do to put such a foundation in place in Nizhny, thus preventing the problems we constantly encounter with the governing officials in Nizhny.

You know, God is so good, He knew our needs before we did and provided for them. Less than a week before we were to leave for St. Pete, I received a \$1,000 donation from a couple. I was totally surprised at the large donation and kept asking God what the money was for. He had already made sure the team was paid in full and that we had enough funds to take with us to meet some needs at various orphanages. But I never turn away money that comes in for our trips, because I know at some point God will reveal what it is to be used for. The attorney in St. Pete said she would prepare all the paperwork, filings, etc. for the charitable foundation to be established in Nizhny. And guess what her fee would be? That's right, \$1,000! Now if you know anything about legal fees, this is a really good price for the work she will be doing. Plus, she speaks English and will answer any questions Luda, Vadim, or I may have in the process. Now is that a God thing or what? God knew all of this in advance, He knew we would be meeting with this attorney (I had no clue), He knew what the fee would be, and He provided the exact amount that was needed. A special thanks to this couple for listening to God and being obedient in sending this amount.

The Small Stuff:

LUGGAGE: We had 3 extra bags to check for our flight to Russia. I had originally thought we would have to use part of that \$1,000 to cover the \$150 charge for the extra bags. The morning we were to leave for Russia, Orphan Outreach sent me a letter to present to Lufthansa at check-in asking that they either allow a bag for free or for a reduced amount. When we mentioned the request, we were told they didn't do that. So I asked the check-in lady to please read the letter, which she did. And they let all 3 bags go for free!

LOST CAMERA: I left my camera at the restaurant we ate at the second night we were there. The next morning on our way out, Olga had the driver stop at the restaurant so she could see if they had found it. They had my camera plus the duct tape bracelet someone else had left behind. I was so grateful to the individual who found my camera and was honest enough to turn it in. It held precious pictures from the orphanage we had worked at previously in the day.

SNOW!!! We prayed for snow and one day, about 2 hours out of St. Pete, we were having lunch at the pastor's home before we were to visit the orphanage. One of the team members looked out the window and saw snow. For about 1 and 1/2 hours, it snowed the biggest flakes I have ever

seen. We enjoyed taking pictures and throwing snowballs. Fortunately for the Russians, the snow melted by mid-afternoon. They don't like to get snow that early because they have so much of it later in the season.

I would like to thank each of you for your donation of supplies, money, and most especially for your prayers. Once again we had safe travel to and from Russia, while in the country, and no problem getting supplies through customs. God wanted those supplies to reach the children just as much as we did. God granted us such blessings—He really does care about even the smallest details!

Finally, I ask that you prayerfully consider becoming a monthly sponsor of our work in Russia through the Fory Charitable Trust. Please read the enclosed letter telling about the Trust. You can be a part of our on-going efforts to spread the Word of God to children in Nizhny and to improve the quality of life for these precious children. God instructs us in His Word to help the orphans and blesses those who do so. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like more information about our work. You are truly a blessing to us!

Sincerely,

Sue and Ronnie Marshall