

BIG FAMILY

Mission to Children

May 2006

“Worship that is pure and unblemished in the sight of God the father is this: to visit and help and care for the widows and orphans in their affliction and need....” James 1:27 (AMP)



Two boys at Luga are enjoying their chocolate-covered Peeps™ (marshmallow Easter candy). Our luggage was filled to the brim with Peeps™ and chocolate-covered Peeps™ donated by JustBorn Inc... The Peeps™ were a big hit; the children had never tasted marshmallow before.

Another blessed trip to Russia!

Preparing a newsletter shortly after we return from a trip to Russia is always difficult. There are so many thoughts and emotions that we are still trying to digest and organize. Let us share with you in chronological order some of the highlights of our recent visit:

Thursday: Eighteen hours after we left home, we landed in St. Petersburg, went through passport control, and rejoiced that our four large stuffed pieces of luggage arrived safely. We were absolutely delighted when we wheeled our luggage through customs and out into the “welcome area” to see Slaviana (from the orphanage in Kommunar) had come along with Eva (our Russian coordinator) to greet us. (More about Slaviana later.) Pastor Ura (our driver for the day), Eva, Slaviana, Ken, and Dianne and four large pieces of luggage managed to fit into Ura’s small car, and we were off to the hotel. After checking into the hotel, our friends depart, and it is time for us to rest and adjust to the time that is 8 hours later than our time at home.

Friday: We had originally planned to go to Kommunar on Friday morning, but about a week before we left for Russia, we changed our plans and decided to go to Vsevolosk to visit with widow Sveta and her four children. After spending some planning time with Eva and Misha at their apartment in Vsevolosk, we went on a shopping spree at the local market to buy food for Sveta and special treats for the children. On the way to Sveta’s flat, Eva received a call from Sveta on her cell phone. Sveta called to say that she had just received word that her sister (mother of three of the children in Sveta’s care) had

been killed in an automobile accident. Then, at that moment, we knew why our plans had been changed, and we were going to see Sveta. It was a time when Sveta needed friends close by her side. It is difficult to understand the emotions that Sveta must have experienced. Her sister had been absent from Sveta’s life for most of their adult life (on drugs and often in prison). Her sister’s children don’t know their mother, and they could not comprehend that their mother had just been killed. Yes, God’s timing was perfect for our visit with Sveta and the children.

After visiting with Sveta we headed for Kommunar to have dinner with Kommunar Internat and Orphanage Director Tatiana and her husband. We had decided to take Tatiana and husband out to dinner to say thank you for all of the work that Tatiana has done with the children at Kommunar. We had a delightful meal with our Russian friends, and as we dined, we discovered that Tatiana had never been to a restaurant before. That made our evening together even more special!

Saturday: We got an early start to Luga (about 2 and ½ hour down the pot-hole filled road). On the way to Luga, we stopped at Syverskaya orphanage to visit with the director of that orphanage, where the orphans at Kommunar will be moving when the Kommunar orphanage is closed in August. What we saw was encouraging. The director has done a lot during her two years at the orphanage to get the community involved with the orphanage and its children. Conditions at the orphanage building we visited are good, although somewhat crowded in the sleeping rooms. We were welcomed to return to visit our Kommunar children when they are living there in the fall.

Our visit at the Luga internat/orphanage was delightful. Director Sergei enjoyed taking us around to show us all of the building improvements being made at Luga:



The timing of our visit with widow Sveta was in God’s perfect plan. The children did not understand that their biological mother had just been killed in an automobile accident.

the activity room with new furniture and equipment that is nearing completion, the showers that are now about half complete and will be completed in time for beginning of school in September, new doors and windows, new paint. Following our tour, we joined the children in the lunchroom where they had been patiently waiting to have lunch with us. Our lunch (a soup followed by a plate of rice and chicken) was delicious. We don't know of course if the lunch was special because we were visiting, but we hope that it the same kind of lunch that the children normally eat. After lunch we enjoyed distributing chocolate-covered Peeps™, as well as trays of purple Peeps™. Of course the children do not store any food away for later, so they consumed a lot of chocolate and marshmallow in a short period of time. Then it was time to go outside and burn off some calories. God blessed us with wonderful weather for our visit in Russia, and the children thoroughly enjoyed this first dose of summer weather. Soon, Misha (Eva's husband) was organizing different games for the children, and the playground was alive with laughter and shouts and much running and playing. Dianne joined a "children in a circle game" that involved tagging and running in circles, and Ken showed a group of children how the Americans make paper airplanes (somewhat different from the Russian versions). The most difficult moment of the day was when we realized that it was time for the children's dinner, and also time when we must say goodbye. After several rounds of hugs and "baca" (goodbye), we reluctantly departed for the long drive back to St. Petersburg.

Sunday: As usual when we are in Russia, we journeyed to Kommunar to attend church services there. Most of the non-Orthodox churches in Russia do not have church buildings, and meet in rented facilities. The Kommunar church meets in the town hall. Pastor Andrei was in America, so the message was given by the bishop of a group of churches in the St. Petersburg area. His message centered on the importance of being in church every Sunday.

Following church, it was time for a quick lunch at with our



Misha, far right, and Eva, far left, organized games for the children at Luga. The weather and the children were beautiful.



Ken and Dianne at restaurant with Kommunar orphanage director Tatiana and her husband Ludya.

foster family in Kommunar, and then we were off to the orphanage to join the children who would be going to the circus with us.

The circus in St. Petersburg is a year-around circus in a building that is the "circus building". But the circus show we went to was special because it was a water circus. Taking almost 30 children to a circus was a real adventure. Miraculously, we all got there and got to our seats just as the circus show was beginning.

The first time we took the children on an adventure of this kind, we thought that the children were blessed with the joy of the new adventure. Now, having done this a few times, we realize that the real joy for the children is going with us, holding our hands, giving us hugs along the way, sitting beside us during the show, just sharing the fun of going as a family.

In our next newsletter, we will continue with snapshots of our latest journey to Russia.

Prayer Requests

- Large, wonderful apartment for our foster family in Kommunar.
- All the children who are graduating from orphanage school at age 15 or 16 and have no real plans for the rest of their lives.
- For guidance in developing hosting program for Russian orphans for Christmas of 2006.
- For God's guidance and direction.

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