

# BIG FAMILY

Mission to Children

May 2007

*“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*



***Above, candy donated by Just Born Inc. and ice cream cones brought out these big smiles during our recent visit with Big Family children in Russia.***

## ***Outlook for orphans: little has changed***

Everything in Russia is changing rapidly... everything, that is, except for one thing. That “one thing”—the future of Russian orphans—has changed very little in the four years we have been ministering in Russia.

“Final bell” (as Russians terms the last day of school) occurs on May 25, and hundreds of thousands of orphans will graduate with a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education and no idea of where they will go or what they will do.

Our hearts are full of anguish for these hundreds of thousands of “children at risk”, but our burden is especially heavy for the children that we have grown to know and to love. Vika, Anna, Masha, Dasha, and Kolia at Ukki. At Gatchina: Natasha and Marina. At Luga: Ira, Pasha, Sergei, Victor, and Yaraslov.

Among the few Russian orphan graduates who have been fortunate enough to find a family by the time of this 9<sup>th</sup> grade graduation are Ulia and Slaviana at Kommunar. Although Ulia and Slaviana could have continued in regular high school, they were having difficulty with their studies, and our foster family has decided that Ulia and Slaviana will continue their studies in the vocational school system.

In theory, all orphan graduates have the opportunity to go to vocational school after they graduate from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but very few are

mature enough or dedicated enough to continue their educations. Even those who enroll in vocational school are likely to drop out within a few months after starting.

Please pray much for the future of this year’s graduates. Praise God that the Russian government has begun to encourage foster families in Russia! Financial support from the government is increasing, and much publicity has been generated about foster parenting.

When we were in Russia, we learned of several families who are going through training programs with the goal of becoming foster parents. So keep on praying in earnest! Keep on praying for a family for every Russian orphan. Family is the only long-term solution for the orphans of Russia.

Although the future of our Big Family graduates may be uncertain, we are thankful to all of our Big Family Friends who have helped to plant seeds of encouragement and joy into their lives.

All of the children who are graduating at Gatchina, Luga, Ukki, and Kommunar have been given the good news that they have a heavenly Father who loves them dearly. All know about the good news that God loves them so much that He gave His only Son so that they would not have to die, but can have eternal life.

Through Big Family Mission, you have declared the good news. The seeds have been planted; we pray that the harvest will soon begin.



***During our recent visit to Russia, we celebrated birthdays of children who were born in May. Candy from America, cake, and juice were big hits with the children.***



## **Victory Day In Russia!!!**

We celebrated a different kind of “victory day” with our foster family in Russia. Through the faithful support of our Big Family Friends, Slaviana, Ulia, Tania, and Vania have escaped from the vicious cycle of Russia orphans!

It was Victory Day (World War II victory) in Russia—and while President Putin was giving a strong speech against U.S. foreign policy—we were celebrating a different kind of victory with our Kommunar foster family!

Slaviana, Ulia, Tania, and Ira (foster mother) joined us for a very special lunch (first time in a restaurant for the children) at the Mama Roma restaurant in St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, Vania and Maxim had other activities in conjunction with Victory Day and were not able to join us.

This family provides a model of what happens in the lives of orphans when they have the opportunity to join a family. The three girls at our table—and Slaviana’s brother Vania—are four of the first orphans we met in Russia.

Four years ago, these children faced the same uncertain future that most Russian orphans face. And now, thanks to God and family, four children can now plan for the future, knowing that when things don’t go the way they expect, they always have family to fall back on.

### ***Ukki children headed to Black Sea!***

For a child in St. Petersburg, Russia, going to the Black Sea is probably on the same level as for a child going to Disney World in America.

As we look back now on how it happened that 16 children at the Ukki orphanage are going to a Christian camp on the Black Sea, we must admit that we are not sure how it all happened. It had to be a God thing!

While in Russia, we were asked if we could help support sending the Ukki children to the state-run camp in July. We had to decline because, as much as we like for the children to go to camp, Big Family

does not support the children going to state camps. Through our friends in Kommunar, we had learned about a Christian camp on the Black Sea, and we suggested that as a possible alternative. At first, it seemed very impossible, but then things began falling into place... and as we write this account... it now appears that 16 orphans from Ukki will be going to the Christian camp on the Black Sea. (The train ride in itself is quite the adventure: more than two days on a train just to reach the Black Sea.) Going along with the children are two orphanage workers from Ukki. (This could be the beginning of a whole new “good news” outlook at Ukki!)

Unfortunately, there is no summer church camp that the children can attend near St. Petersburg. (Pray that this will change next year!) The Black Sea Christian camp is an “official” camp, and rather expensive. Another charity organization is paying for the train tickets for our Ukki children, but Big Family’s expenses per child will be about \$250. If you would like to support a child for this big adventure, it will be a great blessing to us and to the child!

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**Big Family Mission is an inter-denominational mission outreach involving churches and Christians from many different denominations.**