



ROOF

Равные возможности для сирот
Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund

“This Christmas, let’s show that ROOF’s foreign donors care enough to get a few more of the forgotten children from Belskoye-Ustye Orphanage into a loving Russian home.”

– ROOF’s 2012 international Christmas Appeal

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Dear Loyal Friends of ROOF!!

Many of you have probably heard the breaking news from Moscow in the last week: both houses of the Russian Duma have passed legislation banning the adoption of *any* Russian child by U.S. citizens as of the 1st of January, 2013.

Yes – politically motivated legislation is poised to deprive many of Russia’s *most* disadvantaged children of the opportunity to be adopted into American families who are already waiting for them. And the Duma decision was followed by an equally depressing press conference last Thursday, during which President Putin made it quite clear that his support of the ban has to do with wounded national pride.

For 15 years ROOF has been a cross-cultural, grassroots initiative providing educational and transition opportunities to Russia’s orphans, so we have naturally been fielding an increasing number of questions about the potential impact of the new law.

In fact, the Russian public’s criticism of the new legislation has been most heartening; I’ve now had several petitions against the law come across my desk – from very different grassroots sources. So a positive effect of the new legislation may be a certain galvanizing of Russian citizens who care and are ready to act. Important Church spokesmen, too, are showing real moral fiber in opposing the ban: Bishop Panteleimon (Arkady Shatov), Chairman of the Department of Charity and Social Work of the Russian Orthodox Church, gave an interview in which he stated that it is simply “unacceptable to make a decision regarding children based on the state of political affairs. All laws which are passed by the state must proceed from the interests of the people.”

All of these machinations are at the top of my mind as I write ROOF’s 2012 Christmas appeal letter, and I’ll return to that thought shortly in considering what we at ROOF can do...

2012 has been a big year of growth and change for ROOF, with the following as undoubted highlights:

- Strong and steady growth of our **committed, cross-cultural volunteer base** (who now work in 4 Moscow orphanages as well as at Belskoye-Ustye psycho-neurological orphanage in Pskov Oblast);
- The opening of a **second ROOF summer camp** for the children of Tuchkovo Orphanage, outside Moscow;
- Due to unprecedented cooperation with the administration of Belskoye-Ustye psycho-neurological orphanage, ROOF has begun to expand **its Abilitation Center/Social Hotel program to take in younger children** – getting some children out of the orphanage years earlier than was previously possible!

In terms of our 2012 Christmas appeal, I’d like to focus your attention on that final bullet point.

ROOF’s Abilitation Center program is a real “life-line” – offering kids who would otherwise go on to the living hell of an adult institution a chance to get out of the system and into a family. Until ROOF first opened the doors of its Abilitation Center/Social Hotel program in 2001, the adult institution, with its daily staple of tranquilizing drugs and a severely curtailed life-expectancy, was the fate of nearly every Belskoye-Ustye “graduate”. Now, house-parents Sergei & Nadezhda take personal responsibility for advocating that the State

allocate permanent housing in the name of each Abilitation Center resident. They are wonderful, too, at establishing the personal and professional relationships that carry each resident safely into young adulthood. Sergei & Nadezhda are on the frontline of deinstitutionalization work – forging new territory on a case by case basis.

And now we are beginning a new phase of the Abilitation Center project: ROOF has been invited by the orphanage administration to get more kids out of Belskoye-Ustye at a younger age. Lyosha and Ilya – two boys in their mid-teens – are already living at ROOF’s primary Abilitation Center location 4 days per week. And ROOF has verbal agreement that Ilya’s little brother Sasha, who is only 12 years old, may come to the Abilitation Center. But further expansion of our program capacity to include Sasha and other youngsters is dependent upon ROOF having basic financial support in place...

Meanwhile, volunteers living at ROOF’s Baranovo Volunteer House near the orphanage are beginning to dream of extending the Abilitation Center’s residential program to that location, also. And this will actually happen if just a couple more like-minded people can be found – people who want to give their lives to the children of Belskoye-Ustye. The orphanage director is completely supportive and urging us on.

And while the new residential location at Baranovo is still only a dream in the offing, the extension of Sergei & Nadezhda’s Abilitation Center program to a number of younger children – including Ilya’s 12-year-old brother Sasha – is the first step toward that dream. And this first step is well within reach.

But taking on younger children costs ROOF more per month; when over-18s join the Abilitation Center program they bring with them a monthly state stipend of around \$300 – part of which contributes to household budget. Younger children contribute no such stipend – and Sergei & Nadezhda’s monthly budget has already been stretched beyond breaking point by the recent decision to welcome Lyosha and Ilya to the Abilitation Center.

So this year’s *international Christmas appeal* has the goal of raising \$12,000 toward our Abilitation Center’s annual budget for 2013, to make it financially feasible for house-parents Sergei & Nadezhda to welcome several younger children from Belskoye-Ustye to the Abilitation Center.

And so we return to the sad events of press-conferences and Duma votes from the past week. Yesterday, one of ROOF’s most active volunteers summed up the hollow feeling in my stomach with her words: “the adoption ban makes ROOF’s work MORE important than ever – but I cried over the breaking news. Sad day.”

The truth is that ROOF is in a position to counter the harmful fear and xenophobia of the recent legislation head on – so our rallying call for this Christmas appeal is:

At a time when some within Russia are fearful that foreigners want only to look down on Russia from afar, have no interest in grassroots work together with the Russian people, and even adopt Russian children out of self-interest – let’s be a living counter-example.

This Christmas, let’s show that ROOF’s foreign donors care enough to get a few more of the forgotten children from Belskoye-Ustye Orphanage into a loving Russian home.

And let’s do that through the concrete action of generating \$12K to add to the Abilitation Center’s 2013 budget – by the 1st of January 2013!

Please take the time NOW to quickly donate something to our appeal either by check or through ROOF’s website at www.roofnet.org Be sure to mark your web donation, “Working together for Russia’s children”.

Please mail checks to: ROOF, c/o Treasurer Karen Jansson, 5200 Wind Point Drive, Racine, WI 53402
(kjansson@roofnet.org).

No donation is too small, but realistically we'll need a number of you to make larger donations in order to make our \$12K goal over the course of this week. So if you are blessed to be able to give a larger amount, please consider this cause seriously. You will be saving specific lives!

And please share this appeal (Facebook, etc.) with a few select friends *by asking them to match your donation to this cross-cultural effort to get children out of Russia's orphanages – while disarming fear and xenophobia in the process.*

Together let's stop talking, assess the frenzy of fear and finger-pointing for what it is, and work together to get a few specific children out of a specific orphanage into a specific home. Now.

Thank you all so much for your unfailing support of ROOF's work. Please find a photo gallery of various highlights from the Abilitation Center in 2012 attached, below!

Yours sincerely,



Georgia J. Williams
Chairman, Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund (ROOF)

The Board of the Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund

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ABILITATION CENTER 2012 – PHOTO GALLERY!!

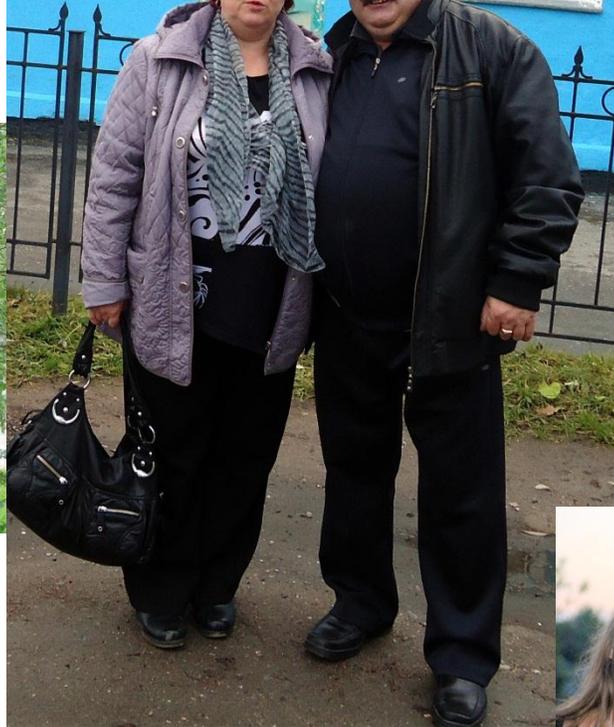


New resident Lyosha!

Sergei & Natasha >



2012 A.C.
Graduate, Kolya



2012 A.C.
Graduate, Anton



New resident Ilya!



Resident
Stas, with
volunteer
Mathilde

The orphanage at Belskoye-Ustye



