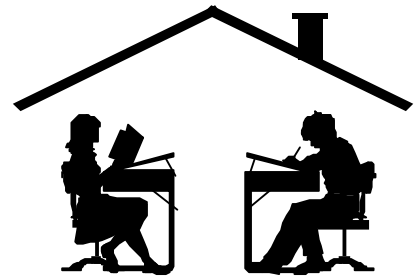


ROOF-tops



Newsletter of the Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund

Issue 12 – January 2001

PROVIDING EDUCATION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORPHANED YOUTH IN RUSSIA

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Grandfather Frost Joins ROOF for Holiday Festivities

It's been a month full of holiday celebrations and here at ROOF is no exception. On 13th January (the New Year as counted by the old Russian calendar) we had our own show and banquet at ROOF's Post-Orphanage Education Centre.

The show included some comedy acts, a few short skits, dancing, singing, competitions and lots of enthusiasm. Grandfather Frost attended, along with other fairy-tale stars like the infamous witch Baba Yaga, to help entertain us all. After the variety show everyone enjoyed a delicious banquet followed by a disco. Overall, the evening seemed to be a big hit.

ROOF would like to thank all the people who gave their time to make this holiday an exciting one for our kids. We look forward to many more celebrations in the future, with Valentine's Day right around the corner. **RT**

ROOF Contact Information

If you would like to speak personally with ROOF staff, or to suggest articles for the next Newsletter, please use the e-mail address or telephone/fax number below.

tel/fax: (095) 229-5100
e-mail: roof@roofnet.org

Post-Orphanage Education Centre Finds a New Home

Due to success and fast growth, the Post-Orphanage Education Centre (ROST) has found a new home near Metro Sukarevskaya. ROST is settling into the new space, which it moved into a little over two months ago. ROST shares the building with the Post-Internat Adaptation Centre of the city of Moscow.

Even though the building is only a temporary home until ROOF finds its own building (and a sponsor to pay for it!), our teachers and students are happy to have more space and larger rooms in the new building. We still have much to do in order to make the rooms cosy and comfortable, but it's great to see that our ROST programme has grown out of its old location in only a little over a year.

We also look forward to making ROST more effective by introducing a multi-level structure. Any student newly enrolled at ROST will begin *only* with intensive tutorials in Russian, Maths, ROOF's 'My Compass' programme, and Thinking-Skills Development. As part of the 'My Compass' curriculum, the young adults will create applications for entering ROST's second level – ROOF's Post-Orphanage 'College.' At the College, students will work according to their 'personal plans' with whichever subject teachers they need to achieve their educational and professional goals. Applications to the Post-

Orphanage College will be reviewed quarterly and include essays, recommendations, a clear statement of direction, and other elements common to college applications in the west. The first application review will take place on 13th February 2001. ROOF's goal in introducing the application process is to focus students on the responsibility that goes along with the verbal commitment to study.

In the past, many of our post-orphanage students have seen ROST as just another free service to which they are entitled. Our hope is that the application process will also add prestige to the privilege of being able to study with ROOF, thereby encouraging students toward the final step of finishing high school and getting into a university, whilst preparing them far better for the responsibilities that go along with independent study. **RT**



A class at the old Post-Orphanage Education Centre which has since been transplanted to Metro Sukarevskaya.

If you would like to use the postal service. . . .

In the USA:

Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund
5200 Wind Point Drive
Racine, WI 53402
USA

In Europe:

Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund
P.O. Box 1648,
Cannock, Staffs, UK
WS11 1YB



Orphans from Belskoye-Ustye during last year's summer camp.

A Glance Ahead to Summer 2001

The New Year has started off already and with it are hopes and plans for ROOF's upcoming programmes. This spring will bring our third academic year to a close, and looking ahead we begin to plan new and exciting things.

During the upcoming summer we will return to the camp we spent time at last year in [Belskoye-Ustye \(Porkhov\)](#). Last year's trip was a success and we have been working to continue our work there throughout this year, expanding from what started as a summer camp option to one of our year-round projects. We currently teach a variety of crafts there to the "mentally handicapped" children

who perhaps under different circumstances would not have been so labelled. We are sure this summer will be as excellent as last.

We are also investigating some other ideas for exchanges like the ones we have done in the past between orphanages in Moscow and Pereslavl-Zaleskii (near Yaroslavl). The kids enjoyed the switch and we're certain we can come up with more ideas that are just as creative and cost effective. If you would like to participate in one of ROOF's summer programmes please do not hesitate to call, email, or write to us! **RT**

Recent Action in Belskoye-Ustye

There is much to add as an update to our work in [Belskoye-Ustye \(Porkhov\)](#). For the past 2 months, thanks to funding from the **Friends House/Quakers** we have had several local trade and crafts workers coming to the orphanage to teach classes. These include weaving, basket making, macrame and cooking (among others). The classes are giving these kids skills and hope in an otherwise very bleak situation.

In other good news pertaining to Belskoye-Ustye, through the work of ROOF volunteers, two of the children from this orphanage have been accepted to a new, privately funded group-home community that is being built near St. Petersburg. Although the legal details remain to be worked out, this is an excellent option for two children who were formerly on a track that immediately placed them in an institution for the elderly upon reaching the age of 18.

The flip side of the coin is what has just happened to Natasha Kolesova, a completely normal, bright 16-year-old girl who ended up in

Belskoye-Ustye because of 'behaviour problems.' Natasha was orphaned at 6 and after a brief period in an orphanage, was adopted. At 14, her adoptive parents had their parental rights taken away from them and Natasha, who had previously been studying very successfully at a special music school for bright pupils, was sent to an orphanage school. She hated it at the orphanage school, wanted to go back to her old life, and developed what was diagnosed as 'aggressive behaviour.'

It was for this 'aggressive behaviour' that she was soon sent to Belskoye-Ustye. The administration of the Belskoye-Ustye orphanage recently sent Natasha to a mental hospital (although we spent many long hours talking with her at the time of our [summer camp](#) last year, and know her to be a frustrated but mentally normal and very bright teenager).

We at ROOF know that we have to do something to help this poor girl get out of the mental institution but we don't know exactly what to do so as to not ruin our chances of being able to help

other children in Belskoye-Ustye and elsewhere in the Pskovskaya Oblast'. Please write or call us if you have any useful suggestions. **RT**



Natasha Kolesova from Belskoye-Ustye

Building a Closer Team at ROOF

ROOF has been looking at how to strengthen individual programmes while keeping teachers and administrative staff as close-knit a group as possible. How can we best understand the ways to make our classes better without both the details of each project and a broader view? We need our employees to act as a team which can help its members through the problems and failures that each individual experiences. On the up-swing, this team will be able to celebrate each success with the understanding that in some way they helped accomplish it.

One way of starting to improve this situation might be through the weekly teachers' club which has just started. The idea of the club is to exchange ideas, teaching strategies, and general concerns with one another every week. Based on the theory that two (or ten or twenty) heads are better

than one, the group should be able to help provide new ideas for ways to tackle any situation. Surely each member sharing his or her vast personal experience and education will help our team.

Approaching the team-building task from another angle, Antigone Karapetsa from Pecan Ltd. in London is coming to lead excellence-in-teaching workshops in February. Through this series of short courses, our pro-active thinking and team development will improve and as a result our problem solving and effectiveness will also improve. We need to be able to approach the problems that face us with as much creativity and open-mindedness as possible and building on one another's skills as a team can only be helpful. Antigone helps people achieve this goal professionally and will certainly be a help to us. **RT**

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