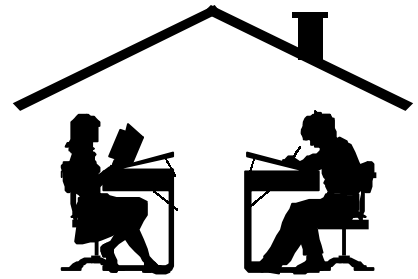


ROOF-tops

Newsletter of the Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund



Issue 10 – New Year 2000

PROVIDING EDUCATION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORPHANED YOUTH IN RUSSIA

ROOF Students pocket change at Moscow's 'Winter Bazaar'

The Moscow orphanages where ROOF teachers work sold their wares at the 1999 International Women's Club (IWC) Winter Bazaar on December 1st. The Bazaar was an opportunity for the children to display their artwork and pick up a little pocket money. All told, 31 of 54 pieces of art were sold for prices ranging between \$1 and \$15. Every year, most of the money raised by the Moscow Winter Bazaar goes to a number of charity projects; contenders submit applications to Moscow IWC earlier in the year and several projects are picked to receive funding. Part of this year's Winter Bazaar proceeds will go to a ROOF project to build children's libraries in orphanages in Pereslav-Zaleskii. In April, Moscow IWC will have another bazaar at which orphanages can sell their artwork and handicrafts – having seen how much their friends successfully earned in December, we expect many more of our students will provide entries at the April sale! **RT**



ROOF psychologist for Orphanage No. 50, Galina Alexandrovna, preparing handicrafts for the Winter Bazaar with students

IB Students do Community Service through ROOF



Football with the English Club

Teenagers at Moscow's Anglo-American School are dabbling in a new kind of community service to fulfil their International Baccalaureate community service requirement – they are participants in ROOF's 'English Club' at Orphanage No. 1843. Twenty-one eleventh graders from the Anglo-American school and about 25 orphanage teens have

signed up to participate in the club, which meets every Tuesday night at Orphanage No. 1843. The idea is to throw students of the same age, yet from very different backgrounds, together. Sarah Robinson and Olga Yurikova, ROOF teachers and the Club's organisers, strive to make the Tuesday evening meetings a time when everybody can have fun and relax whilst:

- 1) the Russian students get a chance to practise what they are learning in English class and
- 2) the students from the Anglo-American School broaden their horizons, give something back to the community and learn valuable interpersonal skills.

The assignment is not easy; Sarah and Olga have decided that for the children's current level of English, games are the best tool both for breaking down the social barriers and for practising language. By building micro-environments inside which a limited number of English phrases need to be used to

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*Happy New Year
2000!!*

achieve effect, Sarah and Olga are trying to get the Russian students to realise that foreign language is more than an academic exercise. They demonstrate that English can be used to communicate information, heard and actually understood! In fact, in many cases it is also the only means by which to get closer to the English-speaking children that participate in the Club. If at first the children are shy, they

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will get to know each other over a couple of months of participating in group games and their natural curiosity will be sparked, causing an increase in desire for individual interaction.

It is inevitable that Sarah and Olga have to allow some 'cheating' (use of Russian) as the children are just getting to know each other, although they do their best to make sure everything is repeated in English. At the first meeting of the Club a roll of toilet paper was passed around the entire group and each was told to tear off as many sheets as he wished. Afterwards, the children were informed that they had to give one fact about themselves for each sheet that was taken. Then each of the children submitted a paragraph on 'what I want the English Club to be like.' Olga and Sarah are doing their best to build the club's structure around the requests of the children. Olga's additional weekly English language lessons are brought to life by the activities of the English Club. Recently, the children have got together in smaller groups to show each other photographs, enjoyed football matches and participated in a series of mini-competitions – always learning new English phrases and expanding their scope for more relaxed interaction with each other. The Christmas party and the exchange of Christmas cards they have made will be the climax of this year.

After the club has been running smoothly for a number of months, ROOF staff intend to invite children from the other Moscow orphanages where we teach English classes. **RT**

What the Students are saying about Programmes at the Post-Orphanage Education Centre

"The Centre helps give us strength and increase our confidence in ourselves and determine our goals for the future. I wait for Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to come around because I like going into the Centre. Our teachers listen to us and give us their full attention. The Centre has

helped me a lot because it has given me a push forward and encouraged me not to wait around." – Zhana Shabaikina



Alexander Peskov

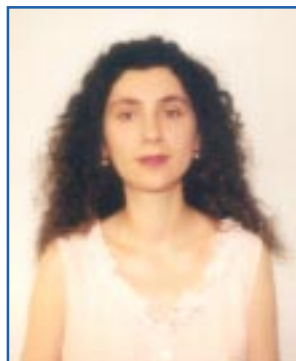
"I'll write the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I like how the teachers at the Centre teach and I like the fact that they maintain solidarity amongst themselves, which helps build a friendly atmosphere. We seem to be doing a lot more than just going through the motions here. To be honest, I am extremely happy although I know I don't always show it because I am a bit shy."

– Alexander Peskov

Tough Times at Orphanage No.50

In Moscow Orphanage No. 50 ROOF teachers are having the battle of their lives against an administration that seems to exist only for its own sake, without taking very much notice of the 50 children who live in the building.

Whilst Director Yelena Vladimirovna seems mired in her own personal problems and health difficulties, staff turnover has been appalling. Most of the new staff brought in last for less than a month and an authoritative history teacher hired at the beginning of the year to take command of the academic programme was



Lena Stafyeva, one of ROOF's Russian teachers at Orphanage No.50, reports significant hardships

recently dismissed on grounds of indecent behaviour toward many of the children! The children, aged 7 to 15, are trying to grow up in this environment.

No. 50 is an internat, which means that the majority of the children living there attend school inside the building – only there hasn't even been a Russian language teacher on staff for a couple of months now. Two ROOF Russian teachers have been working with the children, but the total social breakdown inside the orphanage means that many of the children no longer feel that they need to attend classes at specific times. In a word, anarchy.

The ROOF psychologist who is working in No. 50, Galina Lebedyeva, believes that one of the reasons the snowball of anarchy is gaining speed is that staff teachers have become obsessed by the 'pedagogy of relationship' and have made it their main job to correct the way the children relate to each other and to their elders, to the exclusion of their subject areas. In such an environment, the children are constantly receiving the message that something is wrong with them.

The children depend desperately upon the role models that ROOF sends in to help with academics; one of the Russian language teachers, Lena Stafyeva, tells of how it is often necessary to gather children for classes by 'warming them up' with 15 minutes of quality social time before easing into studies. This requires an imaginative teacher, but it would be very wrong to deprive these children of social interaction with normal, friendly adults. Proper sentence construction will be meaningless if these children grow up with various, more insidious forms of pathological behaviour.

The road is very rocky and the way can be discouraging. Lena and Misha, ROOF's two Russian language teachers in No. 50, agree that out of 20 children with whom they are currently working, less than five seem interested in making progress of any sort.

But there are also some success stories. Olga Shalayeva, who teaches music for ROOF at No. 50, felt that she made a real breakthrough on the social level, as the children were having a rehearsal for their New Year play, two days before the show. No one would behave – people were throwing props around the room and generally behaving like monkeys. Olga broke down in tears and left the orphanage. The next day, when she returned for dress rehearsal, the room was perfectly quiet other than the odd whisper between the children. The rehearsal went beautifully. Afterwards one of the teenage girls asked Olga how it could be that she had acted so 'like a child' rather than like a teacher? This resulted in a discussion of how we are all exactly the same inside and can get hurt feelings, children and adults alike, orphans and non-orphans alike. Olga explained that



Zhana Shabaikina

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Orphanage No.50, continued...

when one friend insults another, pain naturally results for any of us.

The New Year play went very well – we only regret that there aren't any pictures to put in this newsletter! Olga feels a new respect from many of the children which will hopefully lead to more productively spent time in future music lessons as well as a lot of emotional growth (for ROOF teachers, too!) Respect for the teacher is always a precursor to respect for and interest in the subject. Slowly, we continue to clear one stone after another off the path-way. **RT**

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Having some Fun at the End of a Long Year – Pictures from the ROOF New Year 2000 Party



ROOF teachers Alyona Desyatnik and Sasha Shein as Tsar and Tsarevna in the New Year skit



After the pie eating contest...



Ballerinas from Orphanage No.26 charm everyone



One of the ballerinas from No.26 and a toddler from Bykovo heading for the food!

What the Students say, continued...

“When Anna Vladimirovna, one of the ROOF teachers, first suggested that I come to the Centre to study, I was so nervous that I almost didn't come along because I was so ashamed that I am twenty and still not very literate. When they tested me I understood that I was not alone, and everything became a little easier. The great thing about the Centre is that it helps us to fill in the gaps in the knowledge we should have at our age. My favourite thing is that the teachers here are young and energetic. I really want to finish high school. I haven't missed a single class here and I hope to keep it up to the end.”

– Natal'ya Khaidarova

“I want to take my hat off to the people who thought up this experiment and to those who make it happen in real life. I'm receiving enormous enjoyment from my studies at the Centre, despite the fact that they are also so good for my brains and my soul! I have to say that I was sceptical of this experiment at the beginning — after all, I've already tried to start studies in 3 institutes and haven't been able to keep up. I have been pleasantly surprised by the level of the teaching at the centre and understand that I came to the right place. I really hope that here I will be able to build the knowledge base that will help me to *finish* my higher education — not just start it!”

– Pavel Ignatov

“I really like the way the teachers are very warm toward the students as if they were their own children. I like the atmosphere in the Centre which is a lot like a home. That helps us grow as individuals...This is the first time I have met such a caring and non-indifferent group of people.”

– Anonymous

“I like it here; thank you to all the teachers and to the benefactors of the fund. What I really like about the Centre is that we can arrange to have extra help from the teachers outside of class time...I also like the group of students.”

– Vyacheslav Pobedonostsev

“I am glad that I came across the Centre rather than trying to get into evening school right away. The teachers here are extremely attentive — they give you the opportunity to receive an education and to learn more about yourself and who you are. Knowing who you are helps you to figure out what sort of job you might want to pursue. The teachers here are ready to work extra hours with us individually, and they like to joke around...”

– Gregory Ragozhkin



Pavel Ignatov