

ROOF-tops



Newsletter of the Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund

September 2008

PROVIDING SUPPORT AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORPHANED YOUTH IN RUSSIA

Thank you to Troika Dialog, Linklaters, Clifford Chance, the Mercers Company, and Children's Home Society and Family Services for your ongoing help and support!

www.roofnet.org

STARTING A NEW 2008-2009 ACADEMIC YEAR

September 19, 2008, saw the opening of a new academic year in our Education Centre. At the opening were present the students, teachers and staff of our Centre, as well as Fr. Petr of the Russian Orthodox Church and Rev. Simon of the Anglican Church in Moscow. The celebration started with a prayer, followed on by greetings from the teachers and, more notably, the graduates from the previous academic year. This has a particular significance as these graduates are a

good example for new and returning students. Polina Bykonya prepared an excellent speech. She said: "I would like to thank all teachers in this wonderful school. They helped me achieve what I was afraid even to dream of. For 4 years I studied at ROOF and this school became my true home. I know that there will be lots of obstacles ahead of me but I have made the first and the most important move. You've got to have the goal and the faith and then you will achieve everything."



Students, teachers and staff in front of St. Andrew's Church in Moscow, home to ROOF's Post-Orphanage Education Centre.

2007-2008 school year results are an immense success!

Our **RESULTS** from the 2007-2008 school year are in and we have more upper-secondary passes and more college/university entrants than in any previous year:

- **92 students** studied at our Centre in the 2007-08 school year. Some students attended too rarely to advance a full grade level, but **50 students** moved on to

the next year's curriculum;

- **3 students successfully passed year 9 exams** and received certificates for completion of their lower-secondary education;
- **6 students passed exams completing their 11th year (!)** and received certificates for completion of their upper-secondary education;

- **4 Education Centre graduates** were admitted to institutions of higher learning:

Polina Bykonya to RGSU's PR faculty,

Natasha Artyomova to the Moscow's State Linguistics University,

Aleksandr Korostelin to RGSU's IT faculty,

Sergey Smirnov to pre-school education faculty at MPGU;

- **3 Education Centre graduates** were admitted to professional colleges:

Sergey Bugaichuk to a Law school,

Natasha Zaitseva to an Accountancy college,

Nickolai Kupriyanov to a Heat and Energy college.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!!!

ROOF-TOPS

Students' personal stories

Vova Spigul. At the moment Vladimir (Vova) lives in Internat no. 30. He attends ROOF's classes and would like to go to a vocational school to become a welder.

Vova went to a special-needs (correctional) school but had great difficulty studying Russian, so the teachers didn't think long and sent him to a psycho-neurological internat. It is impossible to know now if Vova ever had a mental handicap. More likely, his

main problem was speech, brought on by a background of "social negligence". This means that Vova could have studied in a speech therapy school, but the necessary action was not taken at the right time. He grew up in the same internat as ROOF student Irina Maslova; they have been friends since that time. When he turned 18 he was assigned to an adult psycho-neurological internat.

When Vova came to ROOF in 2003, together with Mak-



sim Dorozhkin, he didn't know the alphabet, and he couldn't read. As he put it, he "knew absolutely nothing. First we studied only maths and history, and Russian and literature were studied independently". In ROOF I learned how to read, write, solve maths problems, learned about the world." Here he got help finding work (furniture removals). Vova's strong point is maths, while reading and writing remain a problem. Now Vova can read simple sentences and write simple words; it is obvious that he does his best, and will try until he gets a result. Of all the students in his group he has the highest motivation to study; he enjoys studying and never misses classes without a sound reason. After a few years in ROOF Vova says: "My memory is much better now, I can speak and express myself better, I realize my mistakes. I've learnt how to read and write, I know how to use the Internet. It's much easier for me to communicate with people now; I can make my way around the Moscow metro."

Vova stands out from the rest of the students of his group. He can always find common ground with a

person. He is conscientious, active, dependable, always trying to help.

Vova is also great at cooking. He doesn't have anywhere to practice except for his internat kitchen. Every year at Maslenitsa (pancake week before Lent) he buys necessary foods to make pancakes for ROOF. This year ROOF's international camp in Belskoye Ustye badly needed a cook and couldn't find anybody. Then they asked Vova: they remembered his wonderful pancakes and pies and the fact that he often would cook for his friends in the internat when the local

cooks didn't work. The offer to go as a volunteer to the ROOF's camp coincided with the break at his job. Vova agreed to go, and he managed very well feeding a camp of nearly 30 people their breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Everybody benefitted. "It would be a good idea to learn a little more and become a chef", says Vova.

Many people who deal with Vova notice that he has a great sense of humour — quite ironic sometimes. When interacting, Vova is diplomatic and humble. ROOF speech therapist and

teacher Liza Milyaeva says: "When I spoke to Vova long-distance by telephone recently I didn't recognize him straight away. I didn't understand what it was at first, but then I realized that Vova could speak more fluently, not only articulating, but... expressing his thoughts, as it were. It was as though he had matured noticeably. I mean, this whole month in a normal environment outside the institution (at ROOF's camp) among a diverse group of people has given him so much."



Update on ROOF programmes in the Pskov Oblast

Following ideas discussed earlier this year with our sponsor, *Children's Home Society and Family Services, Minnesota*, ROOF has decided to combine local programmes in Porkhov and Baranovo together, as a single overarching "Abiliation Centre" programme for preparing and enabling orphanage residents and graduates from Belskoye

Ustye psycho-neurological internat for life after the institution. We now serve 5 orphan grad residents — 2 living in Baranovo (Stas Kuznetsov and Sasha Efimov) and 3 in Porkhov (Anton Safronov, Kolya Kudryavstev and Misha Myshkin). ROOF intends to open youth club activities at its Centre in Porkhov, and

hopes that inviting local young people from the town of Porkhov will help promote the breakdown of prejudice against orphans and the breakdown of barriers in general between orphans and local youth from the town. Club activities will begin this autumn with a film club modelled on that at ROOF's Post-Orphanage Centre in Moscow.