

ROOF-tops



Newsletter of the Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund

Issue 4, March 1999

In This Issue

- ◆ *Art competition*
- ◆ *Work with the Moscow Centre for Adaptation*
- ◆ *Fund raising in the US*
- ◆ *ROOF's New Executive Committee*
- ◆ *"The Young Reporter" at Detskii Dom №6*

Art Competition – to decorate the office

Those of you who have been into the ROOF office know that the room could benefit from a little 'remont'. As part of that effort, our teachers are running an art competition in the orphanages where we work. The best pictures will be chosen to decorate our walls and the winning pupils (and their friends) will receive free tickets to the next 'Music at St. Andrew's' concert at St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Moscow. When the children come to the concert they will also have a chance to visit the ROOF office and see their framed pictures hanging on the wall.



A concert at Detskii Dom №6

New Classes Started in March

ROOF teachers have taken on a new group of students that were referred to us by the Moscow Centre for Adaptation. The Centre is a resource that can be used by older teenagers (mostly 16 and 17 years old) who have left orphanages and need help making the transition to adult life outside the institution. The 5 students referred to ROOF are quite bright and have decided that they should take entrance exams for various institutes in the autumn, but need to complete a solid secondary school education before they can sit the exams. These teenagers are very serious about their work because they themselves have felt the urgency of their situation. The students would like to study various Humanities subjects or Law; with ROOF teachers they study History, Russian Language, and English, 6 days a week at the ROOF offices.

Results of the US Trip

Our February trip to the United States was very fruitful from both a fund-raising perspective and as a chance to spread the word about what we are doing. The immediate financial result of the trip was a net gain of \$21000 towards our 1999 budget, but we also compiled a list of grant applications that will be completed over the spring, and set in motion several mailings that may result in further funds. Although we are by no means fully funded for this year, we feel that we have made a good start towards meeting our 1999 fund-raising aims, which will allow us to run educational programmes in twelve orphanages this year.

New Executive Committee Elected

ROOF welcomes the new Executive Committee for the year February 1999 to February 2000. On 23rd February, the general membership of ROOF elected the following individuals to the Executive Committee: The Rev'd Canon Chad Coussmaker OBE (Chairman), Pat Szymczak (Vice-chairman), Catrin Jones (Secretary), Andrew Williams (Treasurer), Nicolette Kirk, and Kathleen Kelly.

ROOF Contact Information

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

tel/fax: (095) 229-5100
e-mail: roof@glasnet.ru



You can find the ROOF web site at
<http://www.glasnet.ru/~roof/>

Thanks to ...

the International Women's Club (Moscow), who have promised a generous donation of US\$3000 for our general office expenses.

We are looking for ...

a car – to help us get around to the orphanages in which we work, and to help us transport donated items.

art supplies, requested by Detskii Dom №6 where there are several talented artists without materials. notebooks and stationery supplies.

New addresses

ROOF has new Post Office Box addresses in the UK and the US to be used for sending donations by cheque (made out to "Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund"). General correspondence should still be sent to our Post International Moscow addresses (but we are not allowed to receive cheques this way).

In the USA:

Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund (ROOF),
Box 2279,
Peter Stuyvesant Station,
432 East 14 St.,
New York, NY 10009

In Europe:

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

"The Young Reporter" by Dasha Strakhova

I've been teaching a children's journalism class at Detskii Dom №6, in Moscow, since the beginning of last November. Almost all of the children at the Detskii Dom have horrific family situations in their recent backgrounds. Their parents drink (as a rule), and many take narcotics on a regular basis. Many of the children also come from highly abusive homes. As daily observers of this kind of nightmare, the children often lose any kind of respect for themselves. A lot of my new friends have also spent years on the street and missed up to several years of school.



Dasha Strakhova

One of the most unexpected things to me was how quickly they get tired from even moderate mental stimulation, because of their imperfect psychological health and tendency toward nervousness. Many have difficulty concentrating on anything for more than five minutes! The first thing I realised was that my teaching here was going to be very distinct in style from any I had done before – the typical goals I would set for a single class period would have to be rearranged. The pace of things has to be fairly fast moving and each child has to have something completely his own on which to work.

Some time has gone by now, and various talents have sprung up in our class – we have journalists, photographers and ... of course ... the ones who correct everybody else, the editors. As a group, the children's favourite activity is interviewing; they are discovering that this is fun and interesting way to speak to other children outside of their immediate 'clique.' Our press club has been growing in popularity, especially since word got around that there are sweets and tea to be had at our meetings.

In January Detskii Dom №6 published the first number of our newspaper "The Young Reporter"

In January we published the first number of our newspaper "The Young Reporter". Practically all the work was done by the children alone. Through their articles the children are able to share their news, problems and personal concerns (about whatever they like). In the past, these children have not necessarily had a formalised way to share their concerns with each other, and this has proved

healthy. The children also have a fiction section in their newspaper – last month we had a wonderful story about a lion.

In my work, I try to set a balance between keeping the children actively thinking about interests they already have, and introducing them to new interests. I feel that it is really important that somehow, through our work, we can help the children understand that they each have unique, valuable and unrepeatable personalities that can and will be used to achieve what each child sets out to achieve in his own mind.

Story from "The Young Reporter" at Detskii Dom №6

Once upon a time, in the bright African jungle, lived a lion. Now this lion had a very long, excellent bamboo whistle. He was very proud of the whistle and never missed an opportunity to brag about the fact that such a whistle belonged to him.

One day our King of the Beasts was frolicking in a forest thicket when his toy broke in half. A mink was passing on a nearby path and found half of the bamboo whistle. He put it in his hair thinking it might come in handy for something or other.

The lion, upon realising his loss, was very upset and decided to call a council of all the animals. The

King of the Beasts told all the animals about his sad plight. Unexpectedly, he spotted the mink in the crowd fingering the other half of his beloved toy! All at once the jungle came alive, roaring and trampling, furious at the small mink. The poor mink nearly lost his head in the mess, but he hid behind his fur and sat still.

The lion, roaring and trampling, screamed, 'Mink! Why did you steal my whistle?'

'But I didn't know that it was yours!' answered the frightened mink. He immediately decided to tell the King of the Jungle everything that had happened.

The lion's heart was softened when he heard the story, and he asked, 'what exactly did you do with my half a whistle while you had it?' The mink answered that he had merely put it in his hair for decoration. The lion smiled, and said, 'well, mink, here is the other half. They aren't very much use to us like this — what should we do with them?'

From the two long halves of the whistle the new friends decided to make a catamaran boat; they took it down to the river and gave it a try. That is what became of our two new friends.