

ROOF-tops



Newsletter of the Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund

Issue 9, October 1999

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Please Note!
**ROOF has a new mailing
address in the USA:**

R.O.O.F.
3234 SW Parsons Court
Portland, OR 97219
USA

Skewed Priorities?

In the last month, we have seen at least one clear case of municipal authorities putting the needs of businessmen's wallets over the needs of underprivileged children. The Moscow (Novo Kazino) charity 'My Family' (a soup kitchen and safe haven for children in very unstable family situations) has now been stripped of its property and its director fined and threatened with criminal proceedings if the charity does not immediately vacate the premises. City inspectors say that 'My Family' does not meet the necessary sanitary conditions, although aid workers know of plans to put a furniture store in the premises they currently occupy.

This seems to be a growing trend in Moscow. Under the previous system, many comparatively nice properties were allocated to children's homes, schools, and other government budget institutions. Now the pendulum has begun to swing back in the other direction. Amongst the favoured are not government institutions, but profit making businesses that will generate money to pay taxes, either officially or unofficially.

One of the orphanages where ROOF works (No. 1843 – Nadezhda) is located in an old, stately building very near the centre of Moscow and nearly on the river front. Not surprisingly, despite Herculean feats by Director Vyacheslav Yurevich Romaikin to make his orphanage one of the warmest and most homelike in Moscow, city inspectors have recently decided to close down that orphanage's primary school. But Vyacheslav Yurevich takes in young children who have often spent one or more years living on the street, and maintains that they need special adaptive help before they can be expected to behave in a school environment and relate normally to their peers. The Nadezhda children *do* attend city schools as soon as Romaikin and his staff deem them ready; and all of Romaikin's over-10s are already in city schools. Naturally, the city's desire to close Nadezhda's primary school has put Romaikin and his staff on edge. They too, are beginning to suspect that the real estate they occupy may be too valuable to hold on to much longer.

Support ROOF with your Christmas Cards!

This Christmas, ROOF is proposing a unique gift idea. Give your friends the gift of having supplied a certain number of teaching hours for one of the young people with whom we work. For *all* gifts, your friends will receive a Christmas card from you informing them of their donation along with material explaining ROOF's work. Each Christmas card recipient will be added to our mailing list and receive monthly newsletters. For gifts of more than 10 teaching hours (\$40/£25) your friend or family member will receive a picture of the student they are sponsoring, along with a short history and description of the future goals of that student. Please feel free to write or send e-mail and ask for updates at any time.

It is easy to give your friends and family the gift of supporting ROOF's work. Order your Christmas cards by filling in the enclosed form and sending a cheque for the total cost of the teaching hours your friends will be sponsoring to:



In the USA:

Russian Orphan Opportunity Fund
3234 SW Parsons Court
Portland, OR 97219
USA

In Europe:

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

Remember, one teaching hour costs \$4.00 or £2.50. If you wish to sign each of the Christmas cards we can send them to you so that you can sign and send them off. Alternately, we are very happy to send each of the cards to its destination address. Either way, please do not forget to include your friends' addresses on the form so that we can put them on our mailing list for monthly newsletters. Thank you so much for your help; together we are making the future brighter for some of the children in Russian orphanages.

Post-Orphanage Education Centre...

Opens

Half a month has passed since the beginning of our experiment with the Post-Orphanage Education Centre (ROST). ROST is an evening programme designed to help young adults finish their high school education and find work or

places in institutes. The last few weeks have certainly been the noisiest yet here at our office. Every weekday evening from 6pm to 9:30pm, as well as Saturday morning, we have a rambunctious group of young adults stampeding in and out of our four classrooms. Our 43 students are divided into 6 groups; the vast majority of the 17 to 22-year-olds are on a 5th to 7th grade level. We kicked off the year with an assembly of all the students and teachers on 14 October. At the assembly, each of the smaller groups met for the first time, thought of a theme for this year of study, made posters reflecting that theme and presented this to the large group.

The young people, most of whom (so far) seem to believe that it is their God-given right to receive free education from us in *only* the subject areas they fancy, have a long road ahead of them. The last couple of weeks have been rocky as the students came to realise that this business of receiving an education would also require some effort on their parts, as well as by the teachers. But there has been some very positive feedback: problems with attendance could be much worse than they are and (incredibly) we have had very little trouble getting students to complete homework assignments. But most of all, the students seem to

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Образование



like their classes. Many have commented that studying with our teachers is very different from studying in a regular school setting. Our classes are small but, more importantly, we are trying to choose active, less-traditional teaching methodologies that almost shock the young people out of their dislike for school whilst simultaneously building in them a high regard for learning. The Russian Academy of Natural Sciences is helping us to implement teaching methods that involve all of the children's senses; we work on awakening the creative process in our students, no matter what discipline they are studying. This methodology seeks to get the right side of the brain (creative, artistic impulses) to work with the left half (logic, traditional teaching methods). This sort of thing has long been available in the US, but is very new here. There is much evidence that children who have been vastly under-stimulated in early childhood can realise their potential much more quickly with the help of such methods. We've already seen some

marked results in last

year's students.

Particularly interesting is the speed with which attention span problems are simply erased with this approach. We hope these methods will also help performing quickly and

these us get the ROST students to high standards.

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