

# ThePromise Post



**ThePromise** has been set up primarily to help children with special needs living in Russian orphanages. Our first project is to pilot an internationally acclaimed pre-school education system called 'Portage' in one 'baby home' in Ryazan. **ThePromise** is wonderfully supported in this vision by a growing band of fundraisers called 'Ellie's Angels', named in memory of Ellie Settelen, who helped inspire the birth of **ThePromise**. For further details of our work, please visit our website:

[www.thepromise.org.uk](http://www.thepromise.org.uk)

## Hello Everyone

Welcome to the Summer 2005 edition of **ThePromise Post**. The last six months has seen an exciting shift in focus for us, as we have seen **ThePromise** move from a group of hardworking fundraisers and Trustees, to a "live" organisation with employees and a real sense that we are within grasp of our original vision.

As a result of all your fantastic fundraising efforts, Karen Edwards, our wonderful new Project Development Manager, joined us at the beginning of March 05 and, since then, has been doing an amazing job in Ryazan, bringing everything together. We are now on track to have the Portage pilot project up and running in September 2005.

None of this would have been possible without you all supporting us and having faith in us.

Thank you for coming on this journey with us and trusting that we could make this happen.

Of course, we now need your continued help to ensure that we can sustain this project into the future, so please keep your fundraising ideas rolling in! Once again, thank you all for your invaluable support and enjoy the summer!



Sasha



## Letter from Russia



Karen Edwards

Greetings from Ryazan!

I've been here since the middle of March, and it feels like home - perhaps it's the weather; one moment blazing sunshine and sunglasses, the next central heating and thermal underwear!

Before working for **ThePromise**, I spent 5 years working as a Project Manager and Trainer for community rehabilitation projects in Namibia and four years as a disability researcher with the Institute of Child Health in London running disability projects in Uganda, Sri Lanka and Rwanda. I was looking forward to working for a small developing charity like **ThePromise** and was excited, but daunted when I came out to Russia - I had nothing but a vision and a blank sheet of paper and it

was up to me to try and bring all the elements together to turn this vision into reality!

However, after a rather slow start, and an awful lot of bureaucracy, we are now making great progress. Tatiana, the baby home director is taking a keen interest and wants some of her care staff trained as Portage workers, ensuring longevity and sustainability of the project; a great idea, and one that we wouldn't have dreamt of imagining as a possibility.

Despite the general disinterest in disability issues, I am finding some wonderfully receptive people, keen to learn more about Portage. I have discovered a new organisation which supports parents and disabled children in the community, called 'Our Children'; I'm sure we can work well together. It was set up by a mum, so she really understands the problems faced by others.

Recently I spent a week at Sushki - the summer home for the older children from the Ryazan Baby Home. I witnessed first hand the extreme need that Sarah Settelen and Iona Sutherland experienced,

which led to setting up **ThePromise** 3 years ago. As with Sarah and Iona, what affected me was not the disintegrating buildings, lack of toys or crumbling playground equipment, but the lack of interest from some members of staff to spend quality one to one time with the children and the quite devastating affect this has on them.

Although I have made many visits, I have yet to spend concentrated time like this in the main baby home but am preparing myself for a similar experience there, despite the better physical living conditions.

Recruitment for the Portage workers is going well and I am now gearing up to organising the training week for them which will be run by Mollie White at the beginning of September.

In the meantime, my Russian is not improving, although I have become proficient in pointing, smiling and saying "this one" when I go shopping. Recently I bought a chair, which caused much hilarity; most of the negotiations were done by drawings, and at one point, they thought I was wanting to buy a car! I'm sure I'll master the language eventually. In the meantime, thank heavens for my wonderful team of interpreters!

"I will be posting regular updates on **ThePromise** website, so do visit and find out how we're getting on - [www.ThePromise.org.uk](http://www.ThePromise.org.uk)

Thanks again for all your support!

Best wishes,

Karen



Sergei, Karen and Nastya

## Our Team Expands

As well as our Project Development Manager, Karen Edwards, we have had several other additions to our team. We'd like to welcome Denise Weinbrand who keeps us in order as a part-time Bookkeeper, and Janet Abbott and Alison Payne as part-time fundraisers to make sure that the

funds keep rolling in. And we would like to say a special thank you to Mollie White. As you will remember, Mollie helped bring Portage to the UK from America nearly 30 years ago and she has been giving us her unstinting support and time over the past year. She has helped us design the pro-

gramme in Ryazan, recruit and support our Project Manager and she will soon be flying out to Ryazan to train the newly recruited Portage workers. Also thank you to Alexis Chapman who gives us so much time as our accountant and all round strategist! Thank you to our wonderful team!

## Thank You!

Once again, our special thanks go to **The Barbara Ward Foundation** for their generosity and support. Having awarded us a grant last summer, they have now also given us a grant to fund the salaries of the portage workers over the next 3 years. It is an overwhelming endorsement of our ability to deliver on our vision. A huge thank you to them!

Also thanks to the **Kathleen Lawson Trust** and Circuit Vision for their wonderful donations.

Our individual donors continue to amaze us! Such as **Patrick and Maria-Jose Collins**, who asked their family to make a donation to **ThePromise** rather than give them gifts on the occasion of their Ruby Wedding Anniversary – this raised £155! Thank you so much and "HAPPY ANNIVERSARY"!

Our thanks also to the children of **The White House School** who raised £70 on their mufti day and had great fun in the process.



Also, Sophie Nash raised £54.86 in a spelling competition. Good work Sophie!

And thanks too to Ben Ash at Candle Music. Ben's football team

have just held a charity football match in aid of **ThePromise**. We will let you know in the next newsletter how much they raised, other than their temperatures!

And a big thank you to all our other supporters - we couldn't do this without you.



Sophie Nash

## A Special Thank you...

.....must go to our amazing, and thankfully growing group of donors who support us via a standing order each month. Many of you came on board right at the very start, when the project was no more than a dream. Your support in this way is invaluable as we are able to plan for the future with greater financial security. Thank you to all of you. If anyone else would like to support us in this way, please visit our website at [www.thepromise.org.uk](http://www.thepromise.org.uk) and click on "How to Help".

## Calling all Budding Ball Organisers

After the resounding success of our inaugural Ball, we are hoping to hold our next one in March 2006. We are looking for people to help on the Ball Committee - you don't need to have any experience at this sort of thing - just a bit of time and a good dollop of enthusiasm. If you are interested please contact [post@thepromise.org.uk](mailto:post@thepromise.org.uk). If you don't have the time to be on a committee, but could help in other ways, such as finding raffle and auction prizes for us or selling tickets, please let us know!

## Did you know...

That in the time it takes to do your weekly shopping, a 4 year old child in a Russian orphanage will be assessed in order to determine his or her future.

According the Human Rights Watch, "the evaluation performed at four years of age marks a point of no return. A diagnosis of serious *oligophrenia* (small brained)... will condemn the child to life in a psy-

choneurological internat, where his or her rights to education,



Nastya

health care, and protection from harm will be permanently denied. Based on independent investigations.....30 to 60 percent of orphans diagnosed as oligophrenic may be wrongly ascribed. ....It is difficult to overstate the significance of this examination, which for some children is a matter of life and death".....

(Human Rights Watch Report 1998)

## WRISTBANDS



Our very own wristbands are now available and proving very popular. They can be bought in packs of 10 or more, with a recommended selling price of £3 each.

Limited numbers are available, so please phone us or e-mail us [post@thepromise.org.uk](mailto:post@thepromise.org.uk) for your packs as soon as possible... **Don't leave it too long!**

## Do you ever shop online?

If so, you will be amazed at how many retailers participate in the UshopUgive scheme - and it is so EASY! Simply log into their website - [www.UshopUgive.com](http://www.UshopUgive.com), choose the charity you wish to donate to - type in "Promise", choose your retailer, and you are automatically connected to your retailers website.. For every purchase you make, the store donates a % to us. This varies but can be as much as 20%. The list is endless..... AA, Halfords, RAC, BOL, Boden, Amazon, Boots, Dixons,, Doring Kindersley, Early Learning, Gadget Shop, Harrods, John Lewis, Tesco, Woolworths. So, before you reach for that mouse, be it for food, clothes, airline tickets, car hire, travel insurance... **please remember us!**

## ThePromise Story Video

can now be downloaded from our website as well as being available on request for any fundraising events either as a DVD or VHS Video.

## Christmas Cards

We know that Christmas is still a long way off, but when you start thinking about buying up Christmas cards in October, DON'T! This year we plan to have our own Card to raise further funds, We will let you know about it in the next newsletter that will get to you at the start of November.