

# ThePromise Post



**ThePromise** was set up to support the needs of disabled children in Russia: those living in orphanages and those living in the community. Our first project was to pilot an internationally acclaimed pre-school education system called 'Portage' to one baby home in Ryazan. This has been an enormous success and our work has now expanded to take Portage to many more disabled children in the Ryazan region. **ThePromise** is wonderfully supported in this vision by a growing band of fundraisers called 'Ellie's Angels', so called in memory of Ellie Settelen, who helped inspire the birth of **ThePromise**.

For further details of the work, please visit our website: [www.thepromise.org.uk](http://www.thepromise.org.uk)

## Hello Everyone

Welcome to our summer edition of **ThePromise Post**. I hope you enjoy reading about the many exciting developments in the past 6 months.

Our team in Russia continue their wonderful work. Two of our Senior Portage Workers have presented our work at an international conference for psychologists and they have received an invitation to present at another conference in St Petersburg later in the year. We are also now working very closely with a local Russian charity in Ryazan which may open up all sorts of new opportunities for us both.

Our new Director, Wendy, brings her huge knowledge and breathtaking organisational skills to our enthusiastic team and has fitted in so well it's hard to imagine how we managed without her! And Mollie White is continuing to work hard supporting the Russian Portage team and preparing another training programme in September 07, to train up more Portage workers and to start the important process of training up Russian Portage trainers who will one day be able to deliver their own training workshops.

And then there are the children....for so many of

them, their daily portage session is the one chance in the day when they can focus on something other than the ceiling over their cot. They continue to amaze, delight and inspire us with their enthusiasm and their courage to cling on to hope when so little around them seems to give them cause to do so.

And to you, who are part of our growing team of people who are giving hope to these children, thank you so much, on their behalf.

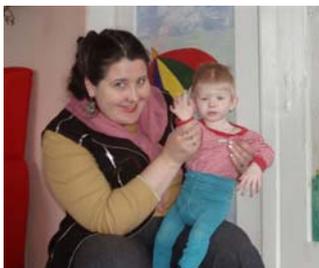
Enjoy the rest of the summer

## Letters from Russia

### Letter from Olga

Hello. My name is **Olga**, and I am the Senior Portage Worker in **Ryazan Baby Home**. We now have 10 part time Portage workers working with all the children with disabilities in the baby home. These children have many different disabilities including foetal alcohol syndrome, cerebral palsy and Downs Syndrome.

**Katya**, has really benefited from her Portage sessions. She is 1 year 7 months old and she has foetal alcohol syndrome. Before receiving Portage she had difficulty picking up and playing with toys, but after only two months **Katya** now reaches out for me, feeds herself with her fingers and laughs, chuckles and squeals



Olga and Katya

aloud in play. She is a very clever little girl.

I also work with **Sergei**, who is 1 year old and has Downs Syndrome. He started Portage sessions at 7 months old, when he would just watch me and smile. Now he can reach and hold his bottle, roll over, and remove toys from a container. He is now learning how to say his first words and sit up. The younger we can start working with these children the better - and Sergei is a good example of this.

### Letter from Nina

Hi. My name is **Nina**, and I am the Senior Portage Worker for the community project in Ryazan. We work with mothers who have decided to keep their disabled children at home with them rather than send them to an orphanage, despite the lack of support that they receive. There are 7 part time community Portage workers now, and we look after 15 families, helping them to help their children.

**Lera** is a very active girl aged 5 and very sociable. She needs to go to school soon, but the principal of the local school, hearing "invalid" (this is the official title for disabled children in Russia), is wary of taking her on board, saying that Lera would not be able to learn her letters and numbers. What he didn't understand is



Nina and Lera

that with Portage you never know until you try! The result is that now she can do all these things, and many more, having had help from me and her mother and her grandfather. What I would dearly like in future is to go with her to "preparation" group classes and work together with teachers there, so that Lera can continue to feel my support.

I am excited that we have recruited 10 more students from the University to work with the community Portage project in September.

### Letter from Maria

My name is **Maria**, and I am the Senior Portage Worker in the orphanage at **Yelatma**. We look after children from the age of 4 to 18, all of whom are disabled. There are 3 Portage workers here, and at the moment we are only working with

nine children. Since we have started Portage with the children, we have noticed many changes, and not just to the lucky few who we work with.

Now it is the summer here, children who are able to do so walk outside, and are beginning to live as children usually do. This photo shows me and **Ksenya**, who is 6 years old. She has been learning to drink from a cup, to feed and to dress herself. She can even pull her shoes off with help,



Maria and Ksenya

and open her arms to say she is 'this big!' She can also now walk with minimum aid. It is wonderful to see her learning these independence skills. We look forward to being able to offer Portage to all the children in **Yelatma** one day.



## Jo Wooster



Jo and Masha

We are enormously grateful that **Jo Wooster**, a physiotherapist from London, has offered to work voluntarily for **ThePromise** for a few months. She is spending time with all our Portage workers and children. These children are in desperate need of physiotherapy, and we are delighted that Jo is able to share her skills. She has also run a physiotherapy training session for some of the Portage workers.

**She writes:** "Having worked with the

children in **Yelatma** for a little over a week I can't believe my own eyes seeing the progress some of them have made already! I have been working with 28 of the 30 bed-bound children in the orphanage and in that time the change in their interaction, interest in toys and attempts to move are fantastic.

Walking into the dormitory and seeing **Alyosha**, for example, on his tummy for the first time having rolled there himself, made me grateful I had the stand-by tissue I have learnt to carry with me! Imagine what he may be doing in 2 months time!"

As a volunteer, **Jo** is raising the funds to support her trip. If you feel able to support her, please visit <http://www.justgiving.com/jowooster>

## Letter from Wendy



Wendy and Danila

It's difficult to believe that I've only been working for **ThePromise** for 6 months. The welcome I've received from 'ThePromise Family' both in the UK and in Russia has been amazing and the work that the team in Russia are doing is truly inspirational.

What I have particularly noticed is the joy on the children's faces when they know it is time for their Portage session. Our children are now becoming so vocal in **Yelatma** that the orphanage has had to spread them out around the dormitories as they were becoming too noisy in one group! In addition, some of the children who are on our 'waiting list' for Portage are now copying the activities of the children who are currently receiving Portage. **Galia**, for example, has learnt to pull herself up to standing in her cot so she can see what is going on during the Portage sessions for the other children.

I have been amazed by the time so many people put into the organisation voluntarily: fundraisers, Portage workers, specialist advisors and now a physiotherapist, **Jo Wooster**. If it wasn't for this voluntary support, we would not be able to deliver so much on such a small budget.

The whole team both in Russia and the UK is an inspiring group of people! Thank you to all of them, and to all you wonderful donors, without whom we couldn't do this vital work.

## Barbara Ward Children's Foundation



Barbara with the Children



We were delighted that **Barbara Ward** and **Chris Banks** from the **Barbara Ward Children's Foundation** were able to visit **Ryazan** earlier this year to see the fantastic effect that their generous donations have had on the lives of the children that they have been helping. We are profoundly grateful for their support over the past 3 years and the interest and commitment that they have shown **ThePromise**.

**Our Thanks** .....to the **Ian Mactaggart Trust** and the **Barbara Ward Children's Foundation** for their ongoing support, and to **CIBC** for choosing us for the second year running as one of their beneficiary charities from their **Miracle Day** in December, when their trading profits are donated to charity. This year, we were presented with a wonderful cheque from their efforts in December 06. **Katie Moore-Gillon** was challenged by her school in the **USA** to pass on her good fortune to someone else (what a fantastic idea!) so she made and sold dog biscuits and her brother did some gardening, and they raised £50. **Sarah Bernstone** raised £100 from an Easter egg hunt for her



Katie Moore-Gillon

children and their friends, and **St Edwards Brotherhood** has sent us another generous donation. **Dave Findlay** has been on his bike again for **ThePromise** and raised a further £150, and **Peppers Delicatessen** has been sending regular cheques from donations into **ThePromise** collecting tin in their shop. **Dalneigh and Bona Parish Church** raised nearly £500 from their Prayer Partner Fund, and from the congregation foregoing sending each other Christmas Cards - signing a big one instead and donating to **ThePromise!** **Hair Disciples** Organic Hair Salon in Richmond organised a photographic exhibition which raised over £650. Our thanks also go to **Jill and George Rodriguez**, who have donated \$1,000 towards equipping a multi sensory room in **Yelatma** orphanage, and to one of our Angels, **Catharine Eaton**, who held a dinner party for 20 couples who paid to attend (wow - another great idea!), and raised £510. We thank you all, and are continually amazed by your wonderful generosity, and by the ingenious fundraising ideas you have!

## Our Woman of the Year

We are proud and delighted to announce that this year our Founder, **Sarah Settelen** has been chosen as runner-up in the Mail on Sunday/Clarins 'Miss Dynamiste' Woman of the Year competition.

Of course, those of us who know her know that she deserves this and many more accolades. The way in which she has turned the tragic loss of her daughter Ellie, and her wholehearted, passionate conviction that every disabled child has the right to a life with a future, into the vision and then reality of **ThePromise** leaves us humbled.

We at **ThePromise** feel that she personally deserves the recognition that this gives of her achievements. Watch this space for an added bonus to this award later in the year...our lips are sealed!



Get your Dresses, Diamonds and Diaries out and make sure this Date is in.....  
**THEPROMISE CRYSTAL BALL**  
Invincible Suite  
Twickenham Rugby Ground  
Saturday March 8th 2008

If you speak to anyone who has been to our previous balls you will know that a good time is guaranteed! If you can donate a raffle or auction prize (eg holiday homes, "experience days") or would like to reserve a table, please contact :

Janet Abbott

[janet.abbott@thepromise.org.uk](mailto:janet.abbott@thepromise.org.uk)

or call her on 020 8769 3378



## Christmas Cards



Following the success of our Christmas card sales, we have decided to hold 2 competitions this year, one for children aged up to 11, and one for 11-18s. So, if you are aged up to 11, and at a loss for something to do during the summer holidays then get out your paints, crayons etc and create a colourful, festive picture that can be printed onto A7 cards. For the 11-18 category, the winning design will be printed onto A6 size cards. Feel free to use your computer graphic, photographic, drawing or painting skills. Please send your design to our address at the foot of this page by **September 31st**, and the winners will receive Argos or HMV vouchers.

Be sure to include your name, age and address.



## Russian Cycle Ride



Are there any keen cyclists out there who would like to take up the challenge to cycle 500km from **St. Petersburg to Moscow** through a rural Russia rarely seen by foreigners to raise funds for **ThePromise**? The trip is from **5th -14th September 2008**. Why not ask some of your cycling mates to come along, pay your registration fee and get fundraising for the ride of your life. Contact [kylie@classictours.co.uk](mailto:kylie@classictours.co.uk) or [janet.abbott@thepromise.org.uk](mailto:janet.abbott@thepromise.org.uk) for more details.



We were delighted to be the beneficiary charity of the **Raven Fox Ball**, supported by **Duty Free News International** in February this year. The fantastic total raised will help to fund the expansion of our work in **Yelatma** and in the community. Thank you to everyone involved at **DFNI** for such a wonderful evening and for all their hard work.