

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', named 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

Hello Everyone

It doesn't feel like 4 years ago that Sarah and Iona first visited the baby home in Ryazan and **ThePromise** was born. The work of **ThePromise** is spreading across Ryazan like ripples across a lake. We have achieved so much.

Now, it is not only the children in the baby home that are benefiting; we now have a team of trained Russian Portage workers in the community, helping parents who have decided to keep their disabled children at home. This kind of support is vitally important in helping them to help their children reach their potential and the lack of it is one of the reasons that so many of these children end up in orphanages.

We also have a small team of Portage workers in the closed orphanage at **Yelatma**, helping some of the most disadvantaged disabled children in Russia. Up until recently, few people from 'outside' had seen how these children lived, but since seeing the effects of Portage in the baby home, Yelatma's director invited us in, and we have started work with some of the children. For the children who benefit from Portage, wherever

they receive it, the results continue to be phenomenal and for many, totally life changing.

Angelina, one of our first 'portage children', a child who rocked and moaned continuously, blossomed into a lively, laughing little girl and is now



living with her new adoptive family, something that would have been unthinkable at the start of the project. **Sveta**, has made such remarkable progress that she, too, has been adopted.

For **Vallia**, a little girl with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, being on the Portage Programme has meant that instead of moving on to an orphanage where there was no education or therapy, she has moved to a smaller home that has a lovely atmosphere and where she will receive an education. For all the children on the project, their lives have changed in so many ways.

Our special thanks go to Karen, our Project Development Manager, who is working so hard to manage such a successful programme expansion.

And of course, none of this would have been possible without your support. We continue to be amazed and humbled by your generosity. It is making a real difference to real children and we thank you all. **ThePromise** set out 4 years ago to give these children a future through the Portage system and we really feel we are now achieving that. Thank you!



Letter from Russia

Hello from hot and sunny Ryazan; I find it hard to believe that this is the same place that was almost minus 40°C only a few months ago. Now it's almost 30°C and summer flowers are everywhere and the exodus of Russians to their dachas (country homes) has begun for the annual gathering of wild mushrooms, strawberries etc.

I'd like to share the wonderful changes that are happening at Yelatma closed home where one of our new Portage projects is taking place. Yelatma is the sort of place where the children who are deemed "ineducable" end up. Before **ThePromise** arrived, the children who couldn't walk stayed in bed all day with no toys, no stimulation and no therapy. The portage project only began in May but already I see a huge difference in the children and in the attitude of staff towards them. Our senior Portage worker Maria has

always had a great empathy for the children but until she was introduced to Portage she felt at a loss as to how to help. Now she is fired up with enthusiasm and it's catching!

The children all look brighter and more alert - even those who aren't part of our project seem to be benefiting. Maria and her two other Portage workers Anya and Nina are so motivated that the other staff members are showing an interest too and of course the children are responding. We now have 11 children in the project, but I've picked out 3 to tell you about.

Nastya (No 1) is 9 years and 5 months and has cerebral palsy and a learning disability. She's a pretty girl who used to lie in bed all day, unable to do anything and had no stimulation. Now she can sit independently for short periods and can stand holding onto the side of the



play-pen, so she can watch what's going on in the room. Nastya is enjoying exploring toys, and particularly likes anything that makes a noise; her favourite is a bell bracelet which she likes to hear jingle. She is now feeding herself with her fingers and drinking from a cup, holding it with both her hands. The best thing of all is that she has learned to smile.

Masha is 6 years and 5 months and has Downs syndrome. Masha is responding well to attention from adults and has become quite a giggler who smiles frequently. Pre-



viously she lay in bed all day staring blankly at nothing in particular. She can hold her bottle independently to drink. She is playing peek-a-boo, hiding under a shawl. She can stand with support e.g. holding

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Letter from Russia *continued*

onto the side of the ball-pool and enjoys nothing better than to pick out a ball and throw it back into the pool.

Nastya (No. 2) is 5 years 2 months. She has cardiac problems, a learning disability, an abnormal skull and paralysis of her lower limbs. Nastya is shy but now she's smiling at familiar people and voices. She is exploring people's faces e.g. pulling at their noses and likes exploring different textures. Nastya can stand for short periods with some help or



against a wall for support and can bounce up and down on her bed holding **Maria's** hands. She is learning to feed herself cake and biscuits with her fingers and can drink from a cup using both hands with help.

These are big steps forward for children who were thought to have no potential. Maria and her team are doing an amazing job and your continued support is changing lives.

Thank you.

Karen

Calling all budding Artists!

Following the success of our Christmas cards last year, designed by Holly Brown, we will be holding a competition for all budding Artists under 10 to design our Card for Christmas 2006. All you need to do is send your design to our address by the end of September, and the winner will win a fantastic prize - get drawing kids!!

The Red Hot Russian Ball

The hottest event in town this year so far was undoubtedly the **Red Hot Russian Ball** held at Twickenham Rugby Ground on March 11th.



Guests were treated to a sizzling evening with delicious food, wine and vodka in a room bathed in red lights and flickering flames.

Our special guest of the evening was **Bobby Davro** who entertained, inspired and motivated



us all. During the reception, the international duo, **Mazaika**, played traditional Russian folk music on the accordion and the violin. A sultry ballet was performed to music by Rimsky Korsakov that had been specifically choreographed by a supporter of **The Promise**, **Victoria Edgar**, and danced by **Beatriz Pascual** and **Simon Cooper**.

Later, the **Volkovtsi Cossacks** dazzled us with their breathtaking and exuberant dancing. It was a wonderful evening, not least, because the generosity of our guests helped to raise over



£20,000 and we made many new friends and supporters for **The Promise**. Thank you to everyone who helped to make it such a roaring success!

Charity challenge

For the intrepid amongst you, can we guide you to www.charitychallenge.com the UK's leading adventure travel company. With more than 100 inspirational challenges each year for around 2,000 participants, they have so far helped to raise around £15million for over 750 charities. Expeditions include treks, mountain bike rides, mountain climbs, white water rafting, sailing, horse riding & Community Challenges and take place all over the world, with four different ability levels. We are now registered as one of their charities, so if you, or anyone you know is interested, please have a look at the website - sounds great for 'gap years' and those who just need to do something completely different. If that all sounds a bit scary what about....

Stamp collecting?

The Stamp Exchange - www.stampexchange.org.uk - will pay us £2 for every kilo of stamps received. If you don't have as much as a kilo, they will just add it to our account anyway. Postage is refunded if you post over 1kg. Send to: Stamp Exchange, Northfield Farm, Barmby Moor, York, YO42 4DG. Include your name and address on the envelope and "**The Promise**", so that they know which account to add it to. Maybe you could encourage your school or office to take part. Happy collecting!

Thank you!

Huge thanks to **Alison Payne** for running the Geneva half marathon, clocking up £255 for **The Promise**, and to **David Findlay** for cycling around The Cape in South Africa and raising £600. Also thank you to Holy Trinity Primary School in Wimbledon for raising £520 in their Lent Appeal and to **Mr and Mrs Ibbotson** for asking that instead of presents for their Golden anniversary donations be made to **The Promise**.

Thank you also to **CIBC World Markets** who have chosen us as one of their beneficiary charities for their annual 'Miracle Day', when all trading profits on that day go to their selected charities. Our thanks also to the **Goldman Sachs Change for Charity** programme, **The Kathleen Lawson Charitable Trust**, **The Fulmer Charitable Trust**, and the **Allen and Nesta Ferguson Trust**, all of whom have made generous donations.

Not forgetting our **fundraising team** who have worked so hard to bring our work to the attention of the trusts and companies that support us - well done! And once again our thanks to **Mollie White**, who, having helped set up the Portage system here in the UK, is still tirelessly helping us with training, evaluation and programme support as we expand in Russia.

Natasha

Natasha is 18 years old and has cerebral palsy. She was abandoned at birth because of her disabilities and most of her life has been spent in bed, with the result that she has severe deformities and is malnourished.



She lives in Yelatma, the orphanage for older children with disabilities. Now **The Promise** is working in this orphanage, we hope that, with your help, no child need ever lead a life so devoid of hope and joy.

Sharegift

is a **charity share donation scheme**, which makes it easy for people to give any number of shares to charity. They specialise in accepting small holdings of shares, particularly those which are not worth selling, because that would cost more than they are worth.

They also help people with larger gifts of shares for their favourite charities. For details go to: www.sharegift.org

We can't nominate ourselves, but anyone who donates shares in this way can say which organisation they want the money to go to.