

# ThePromise Post



**ThePromise** has been set up primarily to support the needs of children with disabilities living in Russian orphanages. Our first project is to pilot an internationally acclaimed pre-school education system called 'Portage' to 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 the work, please visit our website: [www.thepromise.org.uk](http://www.thepromise.org.uk)

## Hello Everyone

Welcome to the Christmas 2005 edition of **ThePromise Post**. Well, we've done it! This has been our most exciting six months yet. Thanks to your generosity and support, there is now a little band of Russian children in the Ryazan baby home whose lives are being transformed as a result of their sessions with their Portage workers. Six portage workers have been recruited, four of whom are also care staff from the baby home, which is a real bonus because it means they can share their enthusiasm about the results they are witnessing with the other members of staff. Mollie White, who introduced Portage to the UK 30 years ago, went out to Ryazan in

September to train the new team.

It has been fantastic to read Karen's monthly reports on the website, as she charts the progress of the children and the growing relationship they have with their portage workers. Amazing progress is being made and many children are starting to walk, feed themselves and laugh, all because of their Portage sessions.

Since the project started, it has been creating ripples all through the local community, with people clamouring to have Portage available to other children: from directors of other orphanages and parents through to educationalists and medical profes-

sionals. We always believed that once people started to see the difference that Portage makes, they would embrace it - but we are overwhelmed by how many people, and how fast!

Meanwhile, our steady band of supporters here have been beavering away in order to raise the funds to make it all possible. We can't thank you all enough. If you feel able to support our Christmas appeal over the page, please help us to give our children the Christmas presents they so desperately need for their development. And in return, what better Christmas present could we possibly give you than this wonderful picture of

Sveta with Olga, her portage worker. Her face says it all!

**Thank you and  
Happy Christmas!**



**Sveta with Olga**

## Letter from Russia

### Hello from Ryazan!

Winter has arrived in Ryazan, the fur coats are out in force and snow isn't far off! Thank goodness for central heating in my flat...many Russians don't have that luxury.

For those of you who don't know, the project started in September and we now have a fabulous team of women, all now fully trained and working with 24 of the disabled children on the pilot project. It's going incredibly well, and the children are astonishing the baby home staff with the amount of progress they have all made. I thought that in this and future newsletters you may like to hear about a specific Portage worker and her children, so here goes.

I'm starting with Inga, a lovely lady with a very calm and gentle personality; she seems to radiate peace.



Children were selected for the Portage workers randomly, but it strikes me that Inga has four very challenging children.

**Katya** has developmental delay. When she first started Portage sessions Katya was withdrawn, tearful and disinterested in toys and games. Now however she is a lively little girl with a good sense of humour and a naughty streak! She learned to play peek-a-boo with Inga first of all by having her face covered with a scarf; it has now developed into a full game of 'hide and seek' with Katya

initiating the game by hiding behind some of the enormous toy animals in the baby home's music room. Most recently she has learned to



enjoy looking through a book, 'Goldilocks and the three bears' is a favourite, and helping to turn pages.

**Pascha** is a lively little boy with Downs Syndrome who needs careful handling as he has a tendency to stop eating but is progressing well and is now putting on weight. Pascha takes a great interest in people and is starting to play with and explore toys which he did not do before

Portage. He is enjoying looking at his reflection in a mirror and is starting to push up on his hands when lying on his tummy lifting one hand to



wave at Inga. He has a lovely personality and never stops smiling.

**Vallia** is a very active little girl with an abundance of energy. Inga has a very calming effect on her, enabling her to concentrate well during her Portage sessions. Vallia is smiling

**Cont..**

## Letter from Russia continued

and cooing at her reflection in a mirror and likes to play peek-a-boo



with Inga. She can stand holding one hand and walks and even climbs stairs with minimal help. She's a real character and many people are obviously surprised at how much she has improved since she began her Portage sessions.

**Dascha** is a timid little girl with enormous beautiful eyes and lashes to

die for! She took time to build up trust, and at first howled every time Inga went near her, however she now starting to be braver and enjoys being in Inga's company. She too has been affected by foetal alcohol syndrome and is delayed in her development. She is starting to enjoy being bounced on Inga's knee and



enjoys watching her reflection in the mirror. She is enjoying exploring

noisy toys and is currently learning to stand.

In addition to the remarkable progress being made by the children, the project itself is generating enormous enthusiasm amongst people in Ryazan. The Director of the baby home is amazed at the progress of the children and we now have a Project Review Team (which consists of people interested in children with disability) who will work together to influence policy and advocate on behalf of the children. Influential people in Ryazan authorities have come and seen for themselves the difference we are making and the project is being seen as a model for good practice and positive attitudes. We have already been asked by these people to extend our support

within the community and in other orphanages.

So thank you so much for all your continued support. I hope you can see just what a difference you are helping to make to the lives of the children – please keep supporting us! We have so much more to do!

I try and update **ThePromise** website monthly, so please do visit to keep more up to date with our progress.

In the meantime, have a peaceful Christmas holiday,

*Karen*



## The Red Hot Russian Ball



The hottest tickets in town next year will definitely be our Red Hot Russian Ball in the Invincible Room at Twickenham Rugby Ground on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March. They are already on sale and a booking form is included with this newsletter. If you need more, please contact us, or go to our website, [ThePromise.org.uk](http://ThePromise.org.uk) Tickets are priced at £75 per person. This includes drinks on arrival, delicious food, wine with your meal, and a celebration of Russian music and dance. Plus, of course, lots of opportunities to win fantastic prizes! Last years ball was a sell out, so please book your tables now – we can accommodate groups of 10 – 12 on a table.

If any of you have anything that would make an attractive auction item, (last year we had holiday homes, catering services, restaurant meals, sculptures etc) could you let us know via our e-mail ([post@thepromise.org.uk](mailto:post@thepromise.org.uk)) and we will send you a pledge form. We also need raffle prizes, so again if you have anything suitable, please e-mail us or call us on 0208 737 2987

## ThePromise at the House

**Ann Keen MP** Patron of **ThePromise** kindly hosted a reception for supporters and MPs at the House of Commons on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Guests were inspired by presentations from Sarah and Karen who showed us just how much progress has been made by the 25 children benefiting from the Portage pilot scheme in Ryazan. To see the video footage of Lena, Sveta and Angelina before and after they had

started their Portage sessions really brought home to everyone in the room not only how much had been achieved with their help, but also how much more there is to do. Thank you, Ann, not only for arranging such a motivating event in such a prestigious venue, but also for your continuing support.

(A new video showing **ThePromise's** innovative work at Ryazan will be available Summer 2006)

## Thank you!

Enormous thanks to the **Ian Mactaggart Trust**, and **Hope for Children** for their grants, and to **Russian Gateway** for their generous donation. Also, thank you to **Ben Ash** at **Candle Music** for raising £250 at a charity football match" and to **Harriet Armfield** for nominating us as her house charity at for **Faraday House at Holy Trinity School** in Wimbledon. Also to **Charlie Major** for suggesting **ThePromise** for their Carol Singing charity event, and **Helen and John Pepper** for supporting us through "Peppers", their delicatessen in Watlington, Surrey. We would also like to thank you for supporting us by buying and wearing our wristbands, which raised £350. **There are still a few left if you thought you had missed out!**

Thank you too, to **Holly Brown** (aged 7) for the design for our gorgeous Christmas cards this year – they raised £280. We apologise if you were not able to buy any – they were so popular that we ran out in 2 weeks after 2 print runs. We will be running a competition for all budding artists under 10 for our card next year, and then printing much more, much earlier - so watch this space!

In the meantime – this is what you may have missed.....



## Christmas Presents!

Your Christmas tree might already be surrounded by presents but here at **ThePromise** we want to give the ultimate gift to the disabled children at Ryazan – their Future.



We need to raise money NOW to buy extra puzzles and shape-sorting games for the children on the Portage scheme – this is because the scheme has been so successful that we need more equipment to help more children.

Please send your **Christmas Present Donation** made payable to **ThePromise** to the address below, marking "Christmas Present" on the back of the cheque and give the best gift of all.

## for Charity

From the new year all you net traders will be able to sell items on Ebay and make a donation to **ThePromise** at the same time by nominating us as your chosen charity. Or you might have items which you could sell on our behalf on Ebay.

Either way, **ThePromise** can benefit from your on-line trading. Visit **Ebay** from **January** to find out more...