

An Orphan's Bright Star

November 2006 Newsletter

Greetings fellow OBS members! This is the November newsletter to inform everyone of the excellent progress we are making within our organization. This is the first issue in the monthly newsletter. There is a lot of information packed into this issue, as we have been up and running several months. First off let me remind you exactly what OBS stands for. An Orphans Bright Star was started by families & friends who have been affected by Ukrainian adoption. Most of us here are adoptive parents and have been to Ukraine and witnessed firsthand what our children lived. We all come back with stories of what it was really like, and how these wonderful people in this amazing country have touched our hearts and changed our lives forever. I, like many other parents, wished with all my soul I could bring every child home in my daughters orphanage. Unfortunately this is not possible. So we left with the promise that we would do what we could to help those still waiting for their forever families. Alone we can only reach a small population, sending clothes and small donations when we can. However together we can make a true difference in the quality of the lives of these children. The truly generous ladies that began OBS realized this, have pooled their resources, and invited all of us to help as well. Hence, An Orphans Bright Star was born. No one here is paid for what we do, but we do profit. We profit by seeing these children have better living conditions, stable food & nutrition, education, warm clothes. We profit in smiles and in love. I want to take this time to thank you on behalf of all of our staff here for your time, consideration, dedication, and love for our children and their home country to continue to help where it is honestly needed and greatly appreciated. In this issue you will learn about our current and upcoming projects, links, current fundraisers, orphanages we support, and contact information. If you have any news, questions, comments, or wish to be removed from this newsletter mailing please feel free to email me at ambuer@orphansbrightstar.org

Current Projects:

Our only current project is Kremenchuk laundry. This is such a huge and important project that we really need to throw all of our efforts to make this happen. This baby house is in severe need of a functional facility to be able to process all the laundry that 150 children can produce. Those of us moms with just one child knows how daunting laundry can be, so imagine the pile up of clothing for 150 children!

We currently have made arrangements for someone to visit the Kremenchuk baby house to gather all the details and make an itemized list of the equipment, supplies and labor we will need to make this project happen. As soon as we have the findings we will let you know. As of November of 2006 we have raised over

\$1000.00 through generous donations as well as our fundraising programs. Keep up the excellent work! This will make the biggest amount of difference in these children's lives!

Vika and Pascal visited Kremenchuk Baby House in September. They discovered that the ventilation in the laundry building is completely non-operational at this time. Conditions are thus very harsh with temperatures reaching 90+ and humidity at 100%. Nearly impossible to hang and dry clothes. So, this project is going to be broken down into phases with Phase I being replacing the ventilation system. We have raised over \$1000 toward this portion of the project which is almost 50% of the total needed. Please donate to this project this month if you are able so we can begin...\$10 or \$20 will help us get started ! They also visited Zhitomir Internat and Baby House. See the reports Section for a complete report on their visit. Also, thank you to all who have supported this project to date.

Current Fundraisers:

Christmas cards are here! Just wanted everyone to know that we are now officially taking orders for the Christmas cards. The cards feature artwork done by orphans in Ukraine. Despite their bleak situation, they still created some beautiful drawings for the cards. Check out each card design and place your orders at:

http://www.orphansbrightstar.org/cards_fundraiser.html

This is a great way to spread the word about OBS and also to show your support for the kids. All proceeds from this fundraiser will go toward the work needed at the Kremenchuk laundry. The cards make great gifts for teachers and anyone that is hard to shop for....buy a couple extra sets in case you need a last minute gift !! Order yours today !! Once they sell out, we won't be getting anymore until next year ! There are 12 cards per package with envelopes and they will be blank inside....we have so many members from all around the world, there was just not enough room to print a message in so many languages. They are \$13.00 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling. Buy 2 sets and the second set ships free!! These are great Christmas cards as well as note/thank you cards for all your needs. These cards make great gifts for teacher gifts too. All proceeds from the sale of the cards will be used for the Kremenchuk Laundry project.

Thank you to Pascal and svieta.org for collaborating with us on this project !

The cards were made and printed in Ukraine...now how cool is that !?!?! Keep an eye out on the OBS website for the specifics!

Joan Stout is heading up the “Boxtops for Education” and “Campbell’s Soup Labels” fundraiser. Check this website to see the products that earn money.
<http://www.boxtops4education.com/AboutBoxTops/Products.aspx#>

The following message is from Joan’s post about this:

I would like everyone to start saving their Campbell soup labels {front panel only} and the Box Tops for Education labels squares found on General Mills products, **NOT** Betty Crocker points that are usually next to these. The soup labels can be redeemed for play and educational toys while the box tops are worth 10 cents each. I personally have \$52.00 of box tops at my house now that I will be using to start OBS fundraising goals. If every member in our group saved just 5 of these box tops per week in 1 year we would have \$1300. not bad for products that we are using anyway. I also plan to put collection boxes out at churches , our local senior citizens center and some lunchrooms at some of our local workplaces, anything to get the word out that we are saving these. Please feel free to do the same. I don't know how much \$\$ will be raised but I just know that this group will amaze all of us, because every member has a passion for the orphan children in the Ukraine. Some have adopted and seen the needs first hand while others have a caring heart, whatever group that you are in please remember that every dollar counts and we don't realize what a difference our donation makes in the lives of the children and the caregivers at our orphanages. Enough of my ramblings please send the labels and box tops to me. If you have question PLEASE just ask and I will try to answer them .

Joan Stout

725 130th ave

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The Entertainment books are here! Each book offers hundreds of dollars in savings. They are available for nearly every county in the U.S., and an excellent stocking stuffer!

Log onto <http://www.entertainment.com/discount/home.shtml> to purchase one for your area.

Some easy ways to help raise funds are through the following websites.

www.goodsearch.com This is a wonderful search engine powered by Yahoo. Just go to the web address, and in the box that asks who you are searching for enter “An Orphans Bright Star” it is based in Texas. It will bring it up, press the verify button and then search. It is super easy and it earns us 1 cent for every search. You can also add a goodsearch toolbar to your screen to help remind you. I use it every time I need to perform a search. So far our members have raised us over \$12.30 for just searching!

You can also do your shopping online from the convenience of home, and no lines! And by doing so through these online merchants, OBS will earn a percentage of every sale which will automatically go to OBS. Please be sure to enter "An Orphans Bright Star" in for the charity. I personally love these sites, because with a three year old in tow it is just so much easier to do my shopping while she is happily playing. Also don't forget magazine subscriptions for everyone on your list! I bought my parents a subscription to "Grandparents Magazine" on my daughters 1 year gotcha day. I bought my grandmother, who loves to cook, a subscription to "Cooking Magazine", and my daughter anticipates her "Princess Magazine". They are fun, cheap, and a great gift that keeps on giving! So please give these sites a try, and happy shopping!

www.igive.com

www.amazon.com

www.buyforcharity.com

<http://www.littletikes.com/> Little Tikes Giving Program

**[http://www.randalls.com/randalls/tom thumb good neighbor program](http://www.randalls.com/randalls/tomthumbgoodneighborprogram)
(account #11507)**

**<http://www.magfundraising.com/orphansbrightstar> Magazine
Fundraiser**

You can also make a donation to OBS in the following ways:

mail a donation check to:

an orphan's bright star
431 biscayne boulevard
el lago, texas 77586

or through paypal by following this link:

<http://www.orphansbrightstar.org/donations.html>

Upcoming Projects:

We are currently in the research and discussion phase of a cookbook project. We are focusing all of our resources on the current fundraisers right now, but probably before Christmas we will begin the cookbook project. I just want to give a heads up so when you are making all the yummy holiday treats you can stick some notable recipes aside to be considered for the cookbook. I believe we will be doing a Ukrainian/American cookbook. Showcasing our favorite recipes from Ukraine, and our childrens new favorite American recipes. So just keep it in the back of your mind as you are starting Holiday festivities!

We also are beginning a "working vacation" project that Crystal is graciously heading up. OBS is working in collaboration with the ECO-Club of Ukraine to

sponsor a 'working vacation' at Svalyava Baby Orphanage. This trip week experience will partner skilled craftsmen from the ECO Club with volunteers to winterize, insulate and do minor repairs at Svalyava Baby House in the summer or 2007. Crystal is working out the details, dates, etc. and we will have more news next month.

Orphanage Visits:

Zhitomir Internat and Baby House- from Pascal's Email

First of all, for the not so good news:

- 1) None of the director were there when we visited both places, ZhyBH was on holidays and ZhySI was ill. But we have been welcomed by their assistants who both were friendly and helpful.
- 2) When we started showing them the list of questions you had sent me, both assistant director kindly explained us that most of the information on them cannot be disclosed to foreigners unless they have agreement from their respective Minister. We didn't insist as we didn't want them to get upset. The main thing we've got to know is that they receive enough food, medics and clothing from government to feed all children. Again, they didn't accept to disclose the amount of money per child per day they receive, they kept insisting on the fact that it's enough.

Before both visits, we took time to buy some sweets and school material we brought for kids. thank to your donation !

On October 9th, we had appointment at ZhyBH where we've been welcomed by assistant director. She took a good 4 hours to show us the whole building and mostly the brand new rehabilitation center they just had finished to build thanks to a huge American donation. ZhyBH was hosting 135 children (age 0-4) at the time of our visit while building has been conceived for 125. This place is the best Baby House we have been visiting in the last 5 years of our activities with LADS. It would stand comparison with some of the Western European orphanages I've seen. To Ukrainian standards, it can be called luxurious ! But this has its explanation: as you may know, Zhytomyr Oblast is the one where Chernobyl is located and the region got a lot of attention from int'l organizations after the nuclear plant catastrophe. Beside, there has been huge financial support after that event at the government level and some of this money (quite big amount actually) has found its way to ZhyBH and ZhySI. This allowed them to perform quite a bit of repair and largely improve infrastructure for orphans (as you will see on the pictures). But money doesn't make it all and director has been pretty wise in the way she used everything she received. For instance, ZyBH is the first Ukrainian orphanage to have set up a Montessori Groupa (LAdS

uses it as example to realize a similar project at Nikolaiev Baby House!).

And they just finished to build a complete building extension dedicated to rehabilitation center (also based on Montessori philosophy) thanks to a huge American donation. In there, they have all rooms and required material you may dream of to offer children developmental therapies like aromatherapy, sensory-therapies of all kind, aqua-therapy, music-therapy, etc... It is very pleasant to notice that once basic material needs are fulfilled, they are heading toward improving teaching methods to help children to better develop and learn. The work they did in that rehabilitation center is absolutely impressive and I really hope that pictures reflect it. The problem they are facing now is that they have problem to hire qualified and trained people to use these wonderful facilities ! Believe it or not, but after both teachers who were sent for Montessori training in Kiev, almost immediately left the Baby House to go working in private schools where the wage was much better. So at the time of our visit, ZhyBH was left without agreed Montessori teachers !!! Of course they do have some other therapists, teachers and doctors, but most of them don't know all these new techniques and tools and would badly need training! As already stated above, there are barely any needs for food or medicine which seem to be covered by government money in all Ukrainian orphanages. But they always need diapers and mostly "Pampers" like, not re-usable. They also receive enough clothes and shoes, but won't refuse more ;-) They don't have any children in medical need they cannot treat locally (free of charge), have enough bedding and towel stuff as well as TV sets and DVD players. Assistant director had never heard about OBS, LADS or Life2O (sounded a little weird to us, but...), so she was not able to tell us whether the right stuff has been shipped or not. But she prepared us a prioritized list of what they need, or would like to get:

- 1) They would like to refurbish kitchen completely (main kitchen, not babies one. See pictures on LAdS website album). They have asked for an offer and it sums up to Hrv 72'000 (~15'000 US\$) without kitchen equipment.**
- 2) 2 Groupas should be refurbished (floor, carpets, ceilings, bathroom, etc..) for Hrv 50'000 each (~10'000 USD).**
- 3) In order to complete their brand new rehabilitation building, they had to get a credit for Hrv 200'000 (~40'000 USD) and are seeking help to pay back.**
- 4) They have 12 Groupas with 7 windows in each of them. All these windows shall be replaced. Average price per window (depend on size) Hrv 1'500 (~300 USD).**
- 5) They have 2 verandas (used in winter or when there is bad weather for children to play) to refurbish. Hrv 15'000 each (~3'000 USD).**

- 6) Vitamin complexes
- 7) Strollers for twins
- 8) Pain killer and medic against temperature (she named brand "panadol")

For their staff, they would need:

- 1) Uniform and shoes (no price received)
- 2) Montessori training (400 USD per teacher + trip and accommodations)
- 3) 'Voïta' therapy training course (held in Germany) for doctors (2 to 3'000 USD each)
- 4) They would like to build their own testing laboratory unit for blood and urine analysis. (no price received)

On the next day, we went to visit **ZhySI** where unfortunately, director was ill and couldn't advise us to postpone visit. O we were welcomed by his assistant who unfortunately was a little bit in a hurry and couldn't dedicate as much time as we had wished to discuss all matters. **There were 240 children (aged 4-16)** at the time of our visit in this very large school internat composed of 4 main buildings connected together through endless hallways. ZhySI territory is a huge square which share one side with ZhyBH territory. Buildings are sitting in the middle of a forest. We were pleased to hear that one of the recurrent problem found in Ukrainian orphanages, clean water supply 24 hours a day, has been elegantly solved by building a clear water drill shared by both ZhySI and ZhyBH. This way they both solved their problem and shed building costs. Assistant director had never heard about OBS, LADS or Life2O (sounded even more weird to us, but...). But here, she even insisted on the fact that she never had seen any delivery of parcels or donated goods from abroad... We received the same kind of answer regarding detailed questions from your list (maybe they phoned each other between our visits ?) but assistant director was more helpful in answering the 8 questions from your email in order ;-)

1) **They have TV sets, VCRs and DVD players, but need 4 TV sets more and would happily accept more DVD (preferred) and VCR players.**

2) See above

3a) **They would like to change all seats in their auditorium (or concert hall as you prefer) as well as repainting walls and ceiling. You'll get pictures of it or you may already go and see some on LAdS website -> Albums section. Estimated cost: Hrv 90'000 (~18'000 USD)**

3b) **There are a little more than 100 windows to change on all 4 buildings. Average price per window (depend on size) Hrv 1'500 (~300 USD).**

3c) **New furniture for their dining room (or canteen if you prefer), 15 tables and 30 chairs for ~Hrv 5'000 (~1'000 USD).**

3d) **New furniture for classrooms (no price received).**

3e) **New wardrobes for bedrooms (no price received).**

- 4) Staff has no special needs!
 - 5) No medics are needed, not even vitamins (?). They have their own dentist office and it's brand new. The only thing they need are **bactericide lamps (2 fixed and 1 mobile) ~Hrv 1200 (~240 USD)**
 - 6) They don't have any children in medical need they cannot treat locally (free of charge)
 - 7) **Yes, bedding and towels are needed. Ideally, send plain cotton bed sheets and they can cut and sew to accommodate any size. For towels, kids and adult size are fine.**
 - 8) No strollers needed here, but **they badly need sport shoes kids size. They will also be very happy to receive clothes.**
 - 9) **There is always a big need for school stuff like pencils, pens, paper blocks, notebooks, etc**
- Kitchen (completely refurbished 3 years ago) and laundry are in perfect state (though we haven't been invited to visit them) and playgrounds are very good and modern.
- General impression of the place is that it's very clean and well maintained. There was "funny" smell (ammoniac like ;-) only in toilets, but not in bedrooms like it's usually the case in school internat's. Kids were friendly and some even told us a few words in English.

I won't terminate without thanking you very much having passed so many happy adopting families news, it really helped us out to get in contact.

Kind regards and thank you for trusting us

Pascal

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