

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

Hello Everyone

The winter snows are already starting to fall in some parts of Russia, but as I write this at the end of October, it still seems a bit early to be talking of Christmas. But we know how organised some of you are and wanted to give you an opportunity of ordering our wonderful **Christmas cards**, designed by the two winners of our competition, **Gabriella Brown** and **Karina Wilson** – thanks to both of you for two beautiful cards! Please see overleaf for more details.

So much has happened since our last newsletter - not least that we have increased the size of our **Portage** team in **Ryazan** by almost a third. We now have a team of 31 workers who are not only changing the lives of the children with whom they work, but also the attitudes of the other carers alongside whom they work. The latter, of course, is vital for the long term success of the project.

This is an extraordinary achievement since the end of our 6 month pilot project only 18 months ago, when we had only 4 Portage workers.

Christmas is always a contemplative time. But it is particularly so for those who work with children for whom Christmas passes by as just another day, lying in their cots, staring at the same cracks in the wall, feeling the same weight of their solitude. But to many this year, for the first time, **ThePromise** is able to give the gift of Portage and the gift of loving arms around them. Perhaps not presents wrapped in paper, but certainly "presence" enveloped in care and compassion. This present will be with them for the rest of their lives.

We can only give them this most precious gift because of the unswerving support and shared vision of our donors.



Senior Portage Worker, Olga, enjoying time with Nastya

Thank you so much for continuing to walk this path with us. We couldn't do it without you.

Dash 

Yelatma

As many of you are aware, we have been busy raising funds this year for our programme in **Yelatma**. Yelatma is a rural village, 3 hours drive from Ryazan. A rich benefactor founded the first orphanage in the 19th century and, since then, other orphanages have sprung up in the village. **ThePromise** first started to work in one of these orphanages in May 2006, thanks to the support of Love Russia, another British charity that had been running summer camps there. This orphanage houses 130 children aged 4-18 years old.

were receiving no Portage and no individual attention of any kind as they are labelled as 'ineducable'. They have been confined to their beds all day, even fed in bed, and have never seen the outdoors. They certainly were never held by an adult, except to have medication administered. It was hugely distressing for us to see that some of the children, who had progressed so well at the Baby Home, had regressed in a matter of months after arrival at Yelatma. Some of the children had also developed disturbing self stimulation behaviours as a result of this total confinement to their cots.

The results of the research conducted on the original 9 children receiving Portage showed that, over a 6 month period, their average rate of development increased by over 8 times. This was a statistic that was impossible for us to ignore.

In view of this, we were determined, when putting plans together for this year, that every child who arrived at Yelatma, and was destined to be bed-bound, would get Portage. Not only would these children be acquiring new skills, but they would spend time out of their cots in an interest-



Ksusha having Portage

ing new environment with one to one loving attention from an adult. As we prepared for the expansion of our Portage team at Yelatma, **Jo Wooster**, our volunteer physiotherapist, arrived at the orphanage to work with the children. From June to September this year, Jo worked with all the cot bound children in the orphanage. Their progress has been simply amazing – the children are rolling, sitting up and some are even taking steps. Jo held her daily sessions in an outdoor shelter where the children could feel the sun on their face and hear birds. She was also joined for 3 weeks by her colleague **Naomi Jannetta**, an Occupational Therapist.

Naomi encouraged the children to sit up, aided by improvised seats and supports, so that they were in a better position for feeding or simply to enjoy the world around them. Some children even started eating at tables with cutlery rather than being fed lying down in their cots.

Jo's work made us even more determined to make sure that when she left, all these children would continue to get this one to one attention, permanently. In September **Mollie White**, our Portage consultant, trained 7 more Portage workers for Yelatma (as well as 5 more for the community team). We now have 10 Portage workers in Yelatma, working with all 35 children currently in the unit. Each Portage worker looks after 3 children and they are already developing close relationships with 'their' children – enriching their lives and ensuring they reach their full potential.

Based on our experiences so far, we expect to be able to bring you many stories of the astonishing progress of these children in our next newsletter.

Thank you for helping us to make this happen!



For the last year and a half, our team of 3 workers has been delivering Portage to nine of the younger cot-bound children. However, the remaining 26 cot-bound children

Welcome to our new Patron!

We're thrilled that the talented actress **Barbara Flynn** has agreed to become one of our **Patrons**.

Barbara learnt about the work of **ThePromise** when she kindly agreed to do the voice-over for our DVD "**Promising Children a Future**" and has followed our progress closely ever since. Barbara has starred in numerous TV dramas, films and theatre productions over the years, and recently played the part of **Beatrix Potter's mother** in **Miss Potter**. Keep your eyes peeled for her latest role in **Cranford** for the **BBC** being screened very shortly.

Huge thanks to you, Barbara, for agreeing to help our work.



Barbara Flynn

A VERY SPECIAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

Some of you may remember earlier in the year that our Founder, **Sarah Settelen**, was the runner up in the **Clarins "Most Dynamisante Woman of the Year"** competition. To mark this, Clarins have produced a special promotional bottle of their **Eau Dynamisante** which will be available from **November** at Clarins counters in department stores. For every bottle sold, Clarins will donate **£1** to **ThePromise**. There are **10,000 bottles** out there available for purchase. So, if you're stuck for an idea, perhaps this will help! **Clearly, it would be wonderful if all of them were sold!** Thank you **Clarins** for giving us this wonderful opportunity.



Thankyou

We'd like to thank **Clare McKeown** for asking her birthday guests to give donations to **ThePromise** instead of gifts. And to **Claire and Simon McGonigle** who asked for donations to **ThePromise** instead of presents for their daughter **Phoebe's** naming ceremony. Also, to the **Emmanuel Network Church in New Southgate** for sponsoring Occupational Therapist **Naomi Jannetta** to visit **Ryazan** and work with our children. Our thanks go once again to **The Barbara Ward Children's Foundation** for all their support.

Thank you, too, to the charity **Love Russia**, who have provided a walking frame for **Dasha**, which means she will now go to an orphanage where she will get a better education.

Thanks also to **BA** for their help in transporting toys and equipment for us. We would also like to thank our growing band of supporters in the **US** who have discovered us through our website - it's fantastic to know that we are spreading

ThePromise message so far around the world!



Dasha gets a Walking Frame



Russian Cycle Ride



How do you fancy blowing away the cobwebs and getting up close and personal to some beautiful Russian scenery? If you do, and you have a pair of reasonably fit cycling legs, can we interest you in a sponsored cycle ride from **St Petersburg to Moscow**? On this **500km** journey, starting in beautiful **St Petersburg**, you will witness a rural Russia rarely seen by foreigners, experience the thrill of off-road cycling, camp on the banks of the mighty **River Volga**, enjoy traditional Russian hospitality and finish beneath **St Basil's Cathedral** in **Moscow's historic Red Square**. **The dates are 5th - 14th September 2008** and the ride is being organised by **Classic Tours**, who organise many charity challenges. We really hope it inspires a few of you to commit to it! If enough of our supporters sign up, we would like to be able to add on some extra days at the end for you to come and visit our projects if you would like to.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact us
(you can e-mail Janet Abbott at janet.abbott@thepromise.org.uk)

Go on.....why not get a group of your friends together to take the challenge...and make a huge difference to the lives of disabled children at the same time.

From our Volunteer Project Manager...

We are delighted to welcome **Julia Recht** to our team. She joined **ThePromise** in September and will be with us until December on a short term volunteer placement as **Project Manager in Ryazan**. She brings a wealth of experience in funding, sustainable development and programme management to our work in Russia.

She says about her first weeks in Ryazan...

'At first, I was nervous about meeting the children and seeing the conditions they are living in, and especially about what I would find at **Yelatma**. But I now know how rewarding it is to spend time with them. They love any attention you can give and I am constantly amazed at their resilience and spirit despite their confinement to the four walls of the orphanage. It is wonderful to see the new **Portage** team working with them. The place is now bustling with activity and the children are all out of bed for at least one hour every day, receiving loving attention and having **Portage**.

"I had the privilege of attending the first team meeting at **Yelatma** and listened to the staff speak about

their worries and the challenges of working with such disabled children with great enthusiasm. They had spent the first two weeks of employment with **ThePromise** just getting to know the children. One of them said something that will remain with me for a long time. She was talking about **Maxim**, a boy who has profound disabilities. He can't walk, talk, feed himself or sit up, but the worker said that what she had discovered about **Maxim** was "the thing he likes to do best is smile".



Julia with Galia and Tanya

The longer I spend here the more I realize how complex the task is of improving the situation for disabled children, yet how vital it is.'



Christmas Cards

Thank you to all of you who took part in our Christmas card competition this year. We received some wonderful entries, but can now announce our winners, and give you details of how to purchase them. The larger **A6** card design has been won by **Gabriella Brown**, aged 15, and the smaller **A7** card design has been won by **Karina Wilson**, aged 6. Huge congratulations to both of you for your wonderful creativity and we hope you enjoy your gift vouchers!

You can order your cards
by e-mailing:

clarenash@privatemail.me.uk

or by post to:

Clare Nash
ThePromise
Southfield Farmhouse
17, Pulham Lane,
Wetwang, Drifffield,
East Yorkshire YO25 9XT



A6 card



A7 card

£4 per pack of 10 £3 per pack of 10

Please include your full name and contact details, (including a phone number if possible) details of quantity and size and post your payment, including £2.50 p&p.

Tickets are now on sale for the eagerly awaited **ThePromise Crystal Ball** ...and if you speak to anyone who has attended any of our previous Balls, you will know that they are gathering quite a reputation, not just for their great atmosphere, but also for their creativity and imagination. So, get your dresses, diamonds and diaries out and make it a date to remember!

The Promise Crystal Ball

Saturday March 8th 2008

At Twickenham Rugby Stadium

For further information or if you would like to reserve a table
please contact:

Janet Abbott : janet.abbott@thepromise.org.uk
or 020 8769 3378

As well as being a great evening, the ball is also a vital part of our fund-raising, so if you are able to donate a raffle or auction item (holiday homes, golfing days, restaurant meals, artwork etc), please call Janet on the number above. Thank you and we look forward to seeing you there!