

The Promise Post



The Promise works to improve the lives of disabled children in Russia. We do this by promoting a system of support (Portage) for disabled children in partnership with families and carers and by encouraging a more positive attitude to disability. The charity was founded in 2003 in memory of Ellie Settelen. **For further details of the work, please visit our website: www.thepromise.org.uk**

Hello Everyone

This year has been one of extreme challenges for all of the staff at **The Promise**, as well as wonderful achievements to celebrate. The year kicked off with our most successful fundraising ball yet, the **Heart to Heart Ball** - thank you to all who made such astonishing contributions both before the Ball and on the night. It was followed by Wendy and I taking our patron, **Barbara Flynn**, along with one of our trustees, **Joanie Speers**, to visit the projects. The staff were thrilled to meet both members of our UK team and the children's faces in Yelatma lit up when they saw what Barbara had brought with her - a large, cardboard house that the children were able to climb inside and paint on the outside. It was messy, chaotic and fantastic fun! Thank you to **Eeny Meeny** for donating these houses. We are in the throes of putting together a short video of Barbara's trip which will go up on the website shortly.

Speaking of the website, we have been lucky enough to have had **Lance Hodgson** and **Nick Radclyffe** volunteer to redesign our logo and update our charity colours and **Thomas Schonenberger** design a new website for us. We shall be launching the new website



Barbara Flynn house building at Yelatma Orphanage in May

shortly and will let you know when it happens.

The summer was filled with challenges that kept everyone busy. The fires that rampaged through Russia dramatically affected the Ryazan region in which we work. Thankfully the projects continued but all our staff were struggling in their personal lives as well as trying to keep the children safe. Air conditioning units were installed at Yelatma funded by a donor in Moscow in a bid to keep the air as

clean as possible. At the same time we were dealing with issues concerning foreign organisations working in state run institutions. Thankfully our staff in the orphanages managed to keep the projects going, as we finalised the registration of a Russian partner organisation - **Obeshenye** (which means **The Promise** in Russian). We started the process of registration a couple of years ago, anticipating that exactly this situation would occur and we needed to safeguard our programmes. After a huge amount of work by **Armenui Gevurian** (our Russian Director) we are now finalising partnership agreements between the organisations with which we work, and the new Russian charity. It has been a complex and challenging process, but will open up all sorts of new opportunities for us.

A huge thank you for all of you who have helped steer us through this busy year, whether you are members of staff, fundraisers or volunteers. We appreciate it so much. I hope you all have a wonderful and peaceful Christmas.

Jash 

Programme Update

After a successful application to **The Fred Foundation Rediscover Your Heart Awards**, **Nina Veddell** travelled to **Moscow**, and along with **Elvira Samarina**, **Nastya Gorelova** and **Natasha Kvashenko** received the award at a beautiful ceremony in The Savoy Hotel. The award provides financial support to projects that are designed to empower and inspire, that are replicable and that will help to improve the community and/or the lives of others in the Russian Federation.

The **'APT Community Project'** proposed by **The Promise** aims to support and teach parents of disabled children in **Ryazan**, mainly those receiving Portage, to make their children much needed specialist equipment from Appropriate Paper-based Technology (APT). Working with **Nastya** and **Natasha**, **Nina** ran a 10 day course in October during which the parents were able to make a



Elvira, Nina, Natasha and Nastya with Fred Matser from The Fred Foundation, Netherlands www.rediscoveryyourheart.org

chair, corner seat or standing frame designed specifically to meet their child's needs.

The annual Portage Training was held in June this year at the **Ryazan State University**, and for the very first time it was run entirely in Russian by our Russian trainers. It was

a huge success with students attending from **Ryazan State University**, 2 care workers from **Yelatma Orphanage**, as well as people from Children's centres in nearby **Shilova** and as far afield as **Moscow**. The 3 day course was overseen by **Mollie White**, Portage Consultant, and we were again successful in recruiting new volunteer Portage workers for the **Community Project** (to replace those who have graduated this year) as well as new workers for **Yelatma**.

Due to the continued commitment from **Nastya** and the **Community Portage Team** we are delighted to welcome a number of new families into the Portage Project.

After a long, hot and difficult summer the team and families are ready to start working hard supporting these youngsters to learn, develop and achieve and we would like to wish them all the **Best of Luck!**

Volunteers' Update

This year has seen fantastic backing from volunteers both in the UK via email support as well as working in Russia with the children and staff. Advice from specialists in the fields of Portage, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Dietetics has been invaluable to our continued successes.

Gillian Slade falls into both these categories providing continued information as well as a follow-up trip to **Yelatma** in July. Gillian's assessment and nutritional prescriptions for many of the ill and underweight children means that **ThePromise** is able to provide the specialist food needed to help the children grow and develop.

ThePromise has also been extremely fortunate to support **Alison Snape**, a **Physiotherapist** who gave up her job to volunteer in Russia for 3 months this summer. Alison worked tirelessly with the children and staff and overcame some of the biggest hurdles yet to be faced by a volunteer – fires, +40c and last minute working restrictions to name but a few. Despite all this, Alison achieved a huge amount, left lasting changes including **APT** and has thoroughly enhanced the work of **ThePromise**. **Jo Pritchard**

Volunteer Project Manager
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Volunteering as a Physiotherapist

Here are some excerpts from **Alison Snape's** time in Russia, which she describes as, "One of the most valuable experiences of my life".

"In my first month in **Ryazan**, I've mainly been working in the baby home but also attended a community team meeting and delivered some training for them. I've also done a bit of **APT** (making bespoke papier mache furniture)".

"It's been difficult to visit children in the community as many are away for the holidays and or left due to the heat and the fires in the surrounding countryside. I managed to see four children, three of them I gave updated physio advice to. The community visits have all been received well, by both Portage workers and parents. One Portage worker said that it's good to have the reassurance that she's doing the correct thing as well as the new advice."



Alison and Lera

"I've seen most of the Baby Home children receiving Portage and some new ones not on the list. Not all have needed physio, I worked with some a few times and have had successes in encouraging them into their next "motor milestone"!"

"The last thing I have been involved in at the baby home is the "practical" for some medical students. We had ten one week and ten the next. Olga has given me free reign to speak about physio, disabilities and children. A wide range of topics for four days! They were a bit surprised at some of the activities. I made them try to do everyday tasks without one of their limbs etc. to feel what disability is like. We spoke about disability in general and I showed a video of people overcoming disability in the UK. We talked about the UK medical system, and some specific conditions. We brought various children in from the baby home and spoke about how we could help them. I then showed them the physio we were currently doing with some of the children. The students were a bit surprised to have the children put into their laps, but by the end of the week they were working well with them and coming up with new ideas to try to help. We spoke a lot about attitudes to disability. They learned there is a different way to speak to and work with children with disabilities, even if they do think English physios are a little eccentric!"

"It's been brilliant to have support from the UK on the end of email. I'd actively encourage people like me to ask for help when needed. My social life here is busier than in the UK. People want to show me all sorts of interesting things here in Ryazan!"

"One three year old boy learned to stand up from the floor today and take a few steps, another girl learned to pull herself up at a piece of furniture and another boy learned to roll himself over." **To read more: please - visit our website.**

Christmas Cards



This year we've decided to create an **e-card** with our new logo, which again provides a personal link to our programme, as two of our children at the **Ryazan Baby Home**, **Yliana** and **Danila**, helped with the design. E-mail: alison.mccann@thepromise.org.uk who'll send you the sample card and details of how to make a donation. We hope you like the design. A fantastic (and green!) way of promoting and supporting **ThePromise**.

Heart to Heart Ball March 2010



Sarah Settelen speaking at the Heart to Heart Ball

We were delighted when the **Heart to Heart Ball** at Twickenham in March was crowned with success, raising £27,000, generously matched on the night by an anonymous donor. Guests enjoyed a new venue, transformed into a magical garden for the night, stunning entertainment from the talented students of **Italia Conti** plus dancing to a live band. **Barbara Flynn**, our **Patron**, was on hand to help **Chris Sheasby, MC**, auction Septimus Severus' Wand from the Harry Potter set amongst other fab prizes. Thanks to all guests and contributors, particularly **Italia Conti** who have continued to support us throughout the year.

Thank you

First of all, a big **THANK YOU** to everyone who has supported our work over the past year, particularly our **Angels** who provide vital regular monthly support, many over several years.

Thanks to the **American Community School** in Cobham who, for the second year, made us a charity beneficiary of their **Fashion Show**, organised by final year students, raising £1348. Also thank you **Barbara Richardson** and **Jo Chapple** who raised a staggering £3190 for the Room 4 children at **Yelatma** at their **Family Fun Day in Northwood**. A brilliant example of a well organised community event.

Sarah Finney and her team raised £520 at the **School Disco in Kingston** in May and when ravers asked for more raised another £515 at **Disco Fever** (think Abba and feather boas!). **Clothes Swap Parties** have raised over £500 for us this year – a great way to de-clutter, source new items and raise money for **ThePromise** with a drink in hand! Our 2nd **Christmas Cocktail Party** raised £500 and the **Russell School, Hertfordshire** raised £180 at their **Christmas Concert**.

Thanks also to the trusts and foundations who have continued to support and show an interest in our work during the year and to the following individuals who undertook

amazing challenges for us: **Helen Aldred, George Watson, Ed Snape** and **Vicky Foxton** raised over £500 by undertaking various cycling challenges including the **London Nightrider**, the **Northern Rock Cyclone** and **Across the Pennines!** Thanks also to **Duncan Tatton-Brown** who raised over £2,000 by completing the gruelling **Alcatraz Triathlon in San Francisco** (and coming 3rd in his category!). This is Duncan's second triathlon in aid of **ThePromise**.



Ed Snape
on his 104 mile bike ride

Thanks also to all those unsung heroes who came to our ball, sponsored their friends, bought raffle tickets or merchandise to support our work – many thanks from all the children whose lives you have made much better this year – and we hope to see you at one of our events next year.