



The Christ for Humanity Newslet THECFHCHRONICLES

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The Sad Plight of Russian Children in Hospital

by Stephen Gregg/CF

Summer in Russia is the best time for children because young people from nearly every segment of society have the opportunity to leave the confinement of the city and go to camp in the country. During the summer months, Christ for Humanity staff members work at many of these summer camps. In late August and early September our work year closes for staff vacations. When school resumes in the fall, Christ for Humanity/Russia's work year truly begins.

During the past 10 years, I have discovered that God allows changes and challenges within the ministry, particularly in dealing with children. I have also learned that change and challenges offer many opportunities to share the Gospel. Therefore, the start of each new school year is an exciting time for CFH/Russia.

This year was no different from any other. First, God blessed our ministry staff with two new team members. Two individuals worked with us during 2001 summer camp. As we lost two team members in the spring, the new members became the perfect replacements. CFH/Russia again is fully staffed with 5 dedicated Christians. How good is God!

Now, to our first challenge of the year. The director of an orphanage in which we ministered last year informed us that we were not welcome to return. Someone had reported our activities to the city's Education Department and it is now illegal to present religious ideas in a "public" orphanage. Fearing for her job, the director ended our ministry. But when God closes one door, He opens another – in this case, three. During the 2001 – 2002 work year, we have been busy meeting the needs of many children at three new orphanages.

I would like to center this report on our outreaches at a particularly troubling Russian facility – Hospital #15. (totally outside the parameters of public schools or orphanages) is designated for street children, deserted and abandoned children who have been removed from abusive families by city services. Many residents of Hospital #15 have severe social problems – drug addiction, alcoholism, illiteracy, criminal records, and involvement in the criminal justice system. Hospital #15 also houses mentally and physically handicapped babies, deserted by their mothers at birth or given up by parents. One child (18 months old) was abandoned at the train station. Another normal baby was beaten blind by her drunken mother. Many babies in this facility are victims of their mothers' drug and alcohol addictions during pregnancy.

Every child in Hospital #15 is a sad story. Most of the older children have spent time on the street and are in various stages of physical and mental problems. Many run away from the hospital before they can be placed in orphanages, taking whatever they can to sell once they are back on the streets. Often the babies suffer from severe diaper rash. There are no cr

available to heal or prevent the problem and little money to pay medical personnel or permanent staff to get changed often enough. Disposable diapers are rare to non-existent, and because the facility is funded district budget rather than from the general fund, there would be no money for such a luxury anyway. Children between 30 and 90 days at Hospital #15 before being placed in an orphanage or another hospital. Very few go to a family environment. How difficult it is for our staff to visit here every week because life within it is so depressing and the future for these children as adults is bleak.

At our weekly outreach, the CFH team presents skits that explain Bible scriptures, sing songs, tell the children of Jesus and His love for them, and give as much individual attention to children as possible. After ministering to the children, we go to the nursery and help feed, change, bathe, and rock the babies. We pray for everyone in this hopeless place, including the overworked staff. CFH/Russia provides needed supplies whenever possible to mobilize several area churches to adopt Hospital #15 for volunteer service to the Lord.

Our team has seen a tremendous change in the attitude of hospital personnel toward our ministry. At first, the staff did not want us to preach the Gospel. Yet, they tolerated the Message to receive the humanitarian aid we brought. Two of the women on our team and one church volunteer are so dedicated to helping these children that their efforts caught the notice of the hospital staff. These Christian women reflect Christ's love to all, and God is softening hearts. Recently, three or four of the nurses began attending the Gospel message portion of our outreach and now are asking questions about salvation. Praise God for the seeds being planted by Word and deed at Hospital #15. We are praying and expect to receive an abundant harvest for *His Kingdom*.

Looks Trashy

An estate sale was in progress. Among the deceased widow's effects was a plain wooden box containing costume jewelry.

"My mother used to wear the most gaudy stuff," said the young man. "Look at this cubic zirconium ring. It's huge! Obviously mother wouldn't be wearing a real diamond of that size. This ring just looks like trash."

Later, the elder brother arrived in town. While in the house, he asked the young man where the jewelry box was.

"I just sold it."

"Where is her ring?" the older brother insisted.

"There were lots of rings and bracelets in the box. Nothing of any value, so I sold the whole box."

"Including her ring."

"What ring!?"

"I guess she never told you about her diamond."

"Well, when I was real little, I remember her telling someone that huge chunk of glass was real. Of course she was exaggerating."

"Look, Mom was pretty quiet about it, but in 1966 she and Dad were on a cruise ship, and Mom saved a little girl floating in the pool face down. She just jumped in the water and saved the girl's life. The girl's father was the owner of a diamond mine in South Africa. He was so grateful to Mom that he gave her a *five-carat* diamond!"

"You mean that trashy looking ring was real? What have I done! I just sold the whole box of diamonds for \$10 to somebody I'll never see again! I am an idiot. I'll never live this mistake down. How could I have been so foolish? I just gave away a huge inheritance!"

In the same way, people who dismiss the Gospel because it seems too good to be true will ultimately discover that salvation through Christ is the real thing. Please don't wait until it is too late to understand that when our sins are forgiven, we inherit *Heaven* itself!