

Annual Report 2009

The year of the economic downturn has proved to be a year of high activity for Ecologia and our projects in Russia, Georgia and Thailand. In this newsletter we offer you a taste of some of the wonderful things that have taken place this year under the Ecologia umbrella, to inspire you as they do us.

Ecologia Youth Trust started up 14 years ago in response to a need from our friends in Russia to open the doors to the West and looking back, we realise that we have achieved many small miracles during that time. With no initial experience of fundraising or running projects abroad, Ecologia has grown in capacity to become a solid, successful small charity with a turnover of £300,000 this year. We have built two foster family villages in Russia, run a successful volunteering programme at Kitezh, received Big Lottery funding three times for projects in Russia and Thailand, and organised two wonderful youth exchanges. We introduced therapeutic work with children to Kitezh, putting it on the cutting edge of therapeutic childcare in Russia, and now are supporting the same at Temi Community in Georgia. In addition, we are working with human rights and youth empowerment in Thailand. These three countries are linked by the people who have come to know each other through Ecologia.

We also enjoyed welcoming Rosie Swale Pope back to Britain at the end of her five-year run around the world in support of Kitezh and cancer care. You can buy her book on our new online shop along with gifts, cards and crafts from Kitezh.

Our private donor base has increased this year, contrary to all predictions. But income from trusts has decreased. One trust that has faithfully supported us explained that their funds had been frozen by their bank making them unable to fund us this year. Hopefully, as the economy starts to recover, we will again benefit from their generosity. In the meantime, as always, we thank you, our donors and volunteers for your support, and encourage you to continue. Your donations are so valuable and are always used to benefit children who otherwise would not have the support to fulfil their real potential.

News from Kitezh:

This year's big event was the Findhorn-Kitezh Youth Exchange that took place in July and October, a life changing experience for the 30 young people who took part. They also appeared in an excellent television programme about Kitezh on Russia Today, a Russian TV channel, filmed while the Scottish youngsters were there. Dimitry Morozov's book



launch in the UK brought many positive results, including articles in British professional magazines and The Scotsman newspaper and a generous donation to install gas boilers at Kitezh. Eight new children have been welcomed at Kitezh and Orion while three young adults are starting at university. The current graduates are doing well. Vasily Burdin and Valya Kanukhina are exceptionally well-adjusted, living on their own in Moscow and achieving good grades. We are very grateful to Baker Botts Moscow for supporting them in their studies and offering work experience to Vasily, an aspiring lawyer.

The farm at Kitezh is underway, with three large, pregnant cows and plans for growing crops and fodder for future self-sufficiency. The farm is largely funded by a grant from the Russian government which is a first! It shows how much credibility Kitezh has achieved in Russia. From small beginnings it has become a substantial well-organised therapeutic community that is making a real impact on society.

Orion is Growing Fast

A new foster family home is being built in memory of Teresa O'Neill who made a significant contribution to the therapeutic work at Kitezh at the very beginning. We are grateful to her family for making this generous donation to celebrate her life. Another two-family house is planned for next year. Orion has welcomed two new families this year and eight new children and the population has grown to 25, with 15 children and ten adults. They grow their own vegetables in the new winter greenhouse, have planted a fruit orchard and raise chickens and goats. They plan to start their own farm this year with a barn, a tractor, a cow, sheep and bee hives. Funds in the region of £37,000 are required for this purpose.

Our other projects

In Georgia: Madge Bray's untiring efforts for the Georgian boy, Datuna, have paid off and we are thrilled to learn that he can receive the medical care he needs. At least £10,000 is needed for his major operation. The Georgian connection is growing in strength and one day we hope that the members of Temi and Kitezh Children's Communities will meet—probably in Scotland. Our first European Voluntary Service volunteers spent a rich month at Temi, and benefitted enormously from the experience. We will continue to send young people with fewer opportunities from Scotland to Georgia as these young people returned with new confidence and understanding of how they can contribute and make a difference in their world.

In Thailand, the work of our dedicated project team is making a real difference to the lives of the migrant workers from Burma, empowering the youth, overcoming barriers between Thai and Burmese, training the grassroots community leaders and improving the human rights of migrants, the most disempowered section of the population. We are seeking matched funds of £25,000 to cover the exchange rate loss resulting from the fall in the value of Sterling.

Liza Hollingshead

Russian Language Course at Orion

The first Russian Language Course at Orion was much appreciated by the four students who took part. They had four hours of lessons each day for the first month and then they all stayed on as volunteers. When not studying, they helped in the kitchen, the vegetable garden, with building work and taught English to the children who became very attached to them.

Molly Rose Avila 23, New York USA: I've loved being in this community, working and playing and learning and teaching and eating and sleeping and wondering, with all the people who make Orion the environment it is. I loved being able to watch and help the children develop and to cook food and clean up and weed trees and paint the new house. It's such a wonderful, warm, inviting environment and I've loved being a part of it.

Joshua Meyer 19, New Jersey USA: The time I spent in Orion was one of the best in my life! I already want to return and be there for longer.

Lucinda James 24, Australia: At university I wrote an Honours dissertation on Russian politics in the post-soviet era. I wanted to learn Russian so that I have the option of pursuing a doctorate in this area. It has been a great experience, I found the children absolutely wonderful and working with them was a highlight. I also really enjoyed the

practical work and I loved getting to know all the Russian volunteers.

McKenzie Penton 17, Colorado USA: I decided to come to Orion because I have seen the state of Russian orphanages (my brother and sister are adopted from Russia) and how poorly equipped to work with children they are, and I thought Orion was a very unique community because of the fact that they take children from orphanages and provide them with new opportunities. I came with a specific goal in mind but I'm going to leave here with so much more accomplished for me personally.

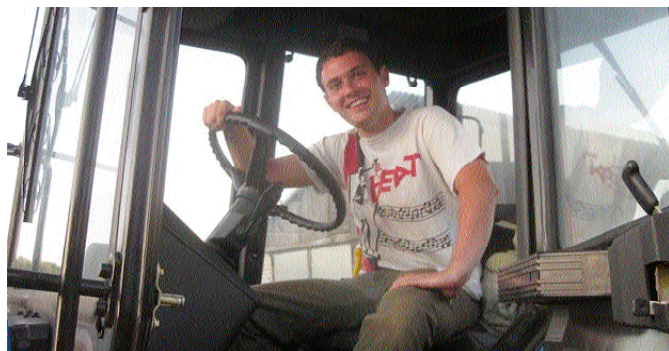


Our Volunteers have become an essential part of life at Kitezh and Orion.

Their varied talents and willingness to pitch in wherever they are most needed is very much appreciated. Thirty volunteers from Britain, Europe, Australia and the USA have visited this year.

Andrew Aikman is back for his third year as a teacher. He has raised the standard of English teaching as he helps the volunteers to get into the process of teaching and into life at Kitezh in general.

Ben Lilley and **Andy Edwards** helped on the farm every day feeding and milking the cows, keeping everything in order around the farmyard, being a real help to farmer Volodya. Ben writes, "Kitezh is an incredible place. It was better than my wildest dreams. My Russian improved immensely, but I also gained lots of other miscellaneous skills like milking cows. But most of all, I now love Russia. Before I'd ever been to Russia it scared me but now I want to go back as soon as possible."



Richard Brockbank, an outstanding carpenter from Findhorn enriched Kitezh with his beautiful benches, tables and new bridges and a sculpture of a mother and children carved from an old oak, which was placed in the centre of

the village. He says, "Whether it was a passing comment with a child, being able to ask for butter in Russian, an informal relaxed outing with Zhenya and Serge, sharing tea with other volunteers or a deeper sharing with my close friend Roma, these personal contacts are more important to me than the woodwork I did, although leaving something concrete behind does stand as a memory of my presence."

It is great to see old friends: **Ingrid Börger**, a teacher from Germany, who visited three years ago, returned with her partner Dave. She is a very good English teacher, interacts with the children very well and makes greetings cards and does other crafts with the children.

Kassie Archambault USA: Before Kitezh, I had completed two intensive language studies in Russia. While Kitezh was not my longest stay in Russia, I definitely learned and gained more there than from my two other experiences. The last time I studied in St Petersburg, and I came home unhappy and didn't want to return to Russia. Kitezh completely changed that for me and I can't wait to go back.

Liz Tuckey, Australia: Someone told me Kitezh is the 'Pearl of Russia'. What I found was a group of adults dedicated to helping children who had only known abandonment, abuse and always being hungry. Now they were in an environment in which they could succeed in rebuilding their lives. The adult's lives revolve around the children. Everyone works together in many and varied roles—administrator, foster parent, teacher, cleaner, cook, gardener, farmer, student, child. Life is busy!