

# Ecologia Trust Annual Report – 2003

**Developing the Capacity of Kitezh Children's Community: a 2-year project funded by the UK Community Fund to run from 1st April 2002 to 30th June 2004.**

As with any such project, there are several unexpected yet positive outcomes.

**The Kitezh Centre**, registered as a separate legal entity with its own charity bank account at HSBC Bank in Moscow, initiated a new income-generating programme for Kitezh. This programme, working with the Jugozapad Psychological Centre in Moscow offers parents whose natural children are experiencing psychological or behaviour difficulties the opportunity to send them to Kitezh as fee-paying students. These children are easily integrated into the group of children there, attend the Kitezh School and take part in the many varied activities that address the needs of the whole child. The therapeutic programme for orphan children's problems also applies to other children with difficulties. This programme generated \$10,000 as income for the community in its first year of operation.

**Our priority fundraising project for 2004 is to build a new house big enough to accommodate these children with Marina Maximova, a long-term resident foster parent and teacher, to support Kitezh towards self-sufficiency.**

**Fundraising activities** from within the Russian commercial sector have proved difficult. Amongst the foreign community in Moscow, HSBC Bank has taken the lead because of the interest of the Director, Richard Tickner and his partner Carrie Disney. HSBC provided Kitezh with a much-needed minibus, funds to complete the 'Pyramid House' and gave two Kitezh youngsters summer work experience jobs that were enormously beneficial. Carrie Disney is preparing a serious bid to raise funds from the foreign business community in Moscow next year, assisted by British volunteer, Dena Fisher, whose year at Kitezh gives her the understanding needed to explain this innovative model to potential funders.

**The Kitezh video** has been used successfully in Moscow and the UK to present the concept of Kitezh. Footage from it was used in a BBC News 24 programme that featured Kitezh in Autumn 2003. Other media coverage included a radio programme on BBC World by Stephen Dalziel and another on Radio Scotland.

**The Guide for Foster Families** is complete and is being translated into English by a former volunteer, Ruth Ahmedzai. 500 copies of the Guide will be printed in Russian to distribute amongst professionals in the field to test the waters.

**The vision of a network of Children's Villages** in other parts of Russia is becoming a reality sooner than anticipated. The original idea to expand Kitezh to accommodate 200 children has changed as, with experience, adults and children agree that a village with more than 70 children will become too impersonal. Now plans to build a second Kitezh are underway, spearheaded by a group of older children who have graduated from Kitezh. They have chosen relevant areas of study at University and their own experience as children in the community will serve them well when working with other orphan children. Funding to build the infrastructure of the second village has been promised once suitable land has been found nearer Moscow.

**This year Kitezh has attracted top-level government attention.** The Minister for Social Work paid a visit to Kitezh in a helicopter, much to the chagrin of the cows who were moved from their field to create a landing pad. This visit will give significant local credibility to the future development of the Kitezh model.

**Therapeutic Education Consultancy and Training programme** co-funded by Charity Know How and the Community Fund has had very beneficial results. In May Dmitry Morozov and Liza Hollingshead attended an international Conference at Stockholm University entitled 'Children and Residential Care - Strategies for a New Millennium'. Although the consensus amongst the 600 participants was clearly to move in the direction of foster family care, how to support the parents in their difficulties with psychologically damaged children was not directly addressed. The Kitezh Community model has the advantage of being able to provide this support because all adults are intimately involved in the progress of all the children. David Dean's visit in April after more than a year was well received and as always his visit made a significant impact particularly by introducing the idea of a children's council that is now fully implemented as a support group, run by the children for the children along democratic principles. David Dean arranged for Dmitry Morozov to attend the Charterhouse Group of Therapeutic Communities Conference in Britain in June. Dmitry was heartened by the interest shown by participants in the work of Kitezh. His article describing the Kitezh philosophy of raising children was published in the Charterhouse magazine. The principles held by its members are being integrated into the ethos of therapeutic education at Kitezh. It is an honour for Kitezh Children's Community to be accepted as the first international associate member of the Charterhouse Group of Therapeutic Communities.

**Further Training:** Later in the year Sergey Khlopenov, Head of Kitezh Council, visited Charterhouse Group members, the Mulberry Bush School and the Cotswold Community. He was deeply impressed by the level of commitment and professionalism in both and much of what he learned will be adapted and implemented in Kitezh. Concurrently, Julya Khlopenova spent week in an intensive Art Therapy Training in Scotland and Marina Maximova took part in a Findhorn Foundation Experience Week followed by a valuable week with Moray Educational Psychology Service, shadowing their psychologists in schools and with foster families. They all spent a day at Camphill School in Aberdeen, and completed their training with an Introduction to Life Story Work with Dena Domminney. The debriefing for the training with David Dean at his home in Nethybridge revealed the depth and breadth of their learning during this period and they left Britain filled with new ideas to take back with them.

**Training plans for 2004** include opportunities for two Kitezh youngsters to travel to Britain: one to take part in an Ecovillage Training at Findhorn and the other to attend a high school in Macclesfield, hosted by Dena Fisher's family. Dena Domminney will teach the families at Kitezh how to work with their children to create Life Story Books, and David Dean will pay another consultancy visit to further develop the basis for good practice in therapeutic education at Kitezh. In addition, there will be input from Thailand, by Pracha Hutauwatr whose experience working with grassroots organisations in Participatory Needs Assessment and Visioning will be of value to the adults in the community.

**Building work accomplished in 2003:**

The Pyramid House was at last completed. Building started in 1999 and it has taken all the community's resources to complete, thanks to the generosity of several foreign funders. In November the Khlopenov family moved in along with computers and art materials for the classrooms that are integrated into the family home. The house is filled with children from early morning till late at night. For the first time in their lives their foster daughters Masha and Natasha have bedrooms all to themselves. What a luxury!

**Funders who Contributed to build the Pyramid House - Thank you!**

The Allen & Neste Trust  
The Paget Trust  
William A. Cadbury Trust  
Robert Sandell England

Polly MacLean, The Build Trust  
The Ryklow Trust  
HSBC Bank, Moscow  
Elizabeth Haigh England

The Marr-Munning Trust  
The Souter Trust  
Hilda Winkeler Belgium  
Laura Ciocco Switzerland

**Godparents gave £2,615 to Kitezh children this year.** Letters, gifts and emails flow freely in both directions, bringing love and interest to the children and to the Godparents and their families. It is a successful and satisfying aspect of our work with Kitezh. The 10 orphan children who arrived in Kitezh this year are looking forward to having Godparents.

**Volunteers** have become an important and natural part of the society of Kitezh. They manage to adapt to rural village life and Russian customs remarkably well, and the children's fluency in English is growing. In particular the improvement in the standard of English can be attributed to the dedication of two yearlong volunteers Geoff Mitchell and Dena Fisher. A production of My Fair Lady in English was a triumphal testament to their hard work. We wish to encourage more professional English teachers to play their part in the education of the children and the advancement of English there. Those volunteers who want to improve their Russian language are satisfied to leave speaking quite fluently. There is no better language school than to live and converse with native speakers, especially children. In addition, a student group from Concordia University, Minnesota, USA made their mark for a second time. Kitezh requested us to actively seek out more such groups as they enjoy hosting groups of students, and the students obviously enjoyed themselves enormously.

Last but by no means least –

**Rosie Swale Pope's Run around the World for Kitezh**

This extraordinary woman started her journey in October 2003 and aims to reach Russia early in 2004. Ecologia Trust is very much engaged in supporting her along her way and seeking sponsorship for her efforts that will benefit the children at Kitezh. She aims to be in Kitezh in March 2004 where she will receive a warm, if mystified, welcome. After that, she will run to Siberia before the next winter season sets in.

**Our heartfelt thanks to all our donors, large and small who continue to support Ecologia Trust's work with Kitezh Children's Community. Please continue!**

Liza Hollingshead  
Executive Director  
Ecologia Trust