



Ecologia News

SCOTTISH CHARITY SCO 23976

JANUARY 2005

A Great Start to 2005: the Means to Expand

December 2004 brought the best news of all—our application to the Big Lottery Fund for a further three years funding to develop the Kitezh Network of fostering villages for orphans was successful.

It is gratifying that the Big Lottery Fund has recognised the value of our work and it is quite remarkable to be one of only seven grant recipients in the international category. We all worked so hard to make the first project a success, and in spite of myriad obstacles, we accomplished miracles.

With this funding we aim to achieve a great deal:

- Establish a solid, permanent fundraising base in Moscow.
- Organise a conference at Kitezh for child care practitioners from all over Russia.
- Publish and distribute 5,000 copies of the *Guide for Foster Families*.
- Convince the authorities that caring fostering villages can replace inhumane orphanages.
- Continue professional training for families and teachers.
- Recruit and train new foster families for Orion.
- Run camps for 180 orphans at Kitezh over three years.
- Set up income generating activities for future sustainability.
- Design and build Reedbed wastewater systems in both villages to demonstrate ecological living.
- Build an entirely new village for orphans, their foster families and teachers.

We need to raise an additional £170,000 to fulfil the conditions of this grant, so we have our work cut out for us over the next three years.

The next foster family village, Orion, is already a reality with the first house almost complete. Youngsters who have grown up in Kitezh are studying hard to prepare themselves to live and work in Orion when they graduate from university.

Orion will build fairy tale houses with turrets and circular rooms on the top of a hill, protected by birch trees and looking out on an open vista. The road is almost finished, electricity and gas supplies yet to come, a second house to be built in the Spring, new families to recruit and train. Plenty to do and more than enough inspiration to do it. Your support is needed now more than ever.

When children leave an orphanage at the age of 18, the state takes no further responsibility for them. They have no life skills, no experience of forming close family relationships, and very often nowhere to live. Their prospects of going into higher education are minimal and according to official statistics, 40% will end up in prison, 50% homeless or jobless. The worst is that 10% will commit suicide within three years of leaving an orphanage. That means 15,000 young people each year take their own lives in despair.

The results for the first group of children who have passed through Kitezh are encouraging: they have jobs, are creating their own families and are fully engaged in their studies. Their years in Kitezh have given them the courage and the ability to find themselves and their place in society. Of the 26 Kitezh youngsters now over 18, five are married, two with their own babies, 14 successfully support themselves, two have returned to work in Kitezh, and ten are studying in higher education. None are in prison or dead.

Today overwhelming numbers of children are suffering as a result of wars, earthquakes and floods. We are privileged, together with our worldwide circle of supporters, to be able to make a positive difference to the lives of a growing number of orphans in Russia. Thank you for participating in building a life for these children and the many more to come as the Kitezh-Orion network grows to its full potential.

Liza Hollingshead



The first house built in Orion

Our very best wishes to you all for this New Year from all at Ecologia Trust in Scotland and Kitezh-Orion Communities, Russia.

Students are the Future of Kitezh

Students are people too! And not just people, but the main creative energy reserve of Kitezh. Graduates of our school, spent part of the summer in Kitezh running role-playing games for the children and the other part in Moscow on placements at HSBC Bank and working at the enrolment centre at the university. Now they're back at their studies in Moscow, but whenever they have time to return, they do. And if there isn't enough time to make the trip to Kitezh (six hours or so in a bus one-way)



From left: Stas, Alexander, Sasha, Alexandra, Zhenya, Yegor

they're saved by Orion which is located much closer to Moscow and allows them to feel the Kitezh atmosphere whilst helping to build the first house. On the 4th September, we had a party to celebrate their return so that our big, friendly company, or team as we like to call it, could gather together again.

Our students are committed to applying their experience of growing up in Kitezh to help other disadvantaged children and they have chosen subjects that will be useful when they return to live and work in Kitezh-Orion. Maria Pichugina is studying psychology by correspondence and is preparing to become the head of Orion. Alexandra Filipenko will become a psychologist and her sister Zhenya will be a social worker. Yegor Lukyanov is studying public relations in order to become a fundraiser for Kitezh-Orion, and Stas Mishin is studying economics. Alexander Sarukhanyan is our future journalist and media representative.

Alexander, who worked at HSBC Bank says:

"The most valuable thing I received from my job is experience. That is important for the simple reason that you can't get experience from a book or in fact, from anywhere else. And it was a great experience because through a lucky coincidence, I was given the chance to work with people who really love their jobs and who are willing to give a hundred percent to their work."

Kitezh is committed to support our youngsters in their higher education but the cost is high. No longer is state education free, and to live and study in Moscow is expensive. It costs Kitezh about £1,000 per student per year. When asked why they deserve support from abroad, the Moscow students replied with ease: "Our parents are caring for more children in Kitezh while we are away studying. They have not enough energy to look after us as well. Because we are the future of Kitezh, we need to be prepared!"

Prince's Trust Russian Team Challenge

The Prince's Trust European programme offers young people aged 18-25 who are unemployed, homeless, lone parents, ex-offenders or those in or leaving care the opportunity to spend 2-3 weeks in a European country, building skills and confidence, earning qualifications and getting a good taste of a foreign culture. In August 2004 eight young people from Hertfordshire packed their bags and flew out to Russia for two weeks to live and work in Kitezh.

The Prince's Trust team were very much part of the community. They carried out projects such as decorating the outside of the primary school, and building a stage for the children to use in their regular theatre productions. They also helped with cooking, cleaning, harvesting the vegetables and helping the children with their English. On the last night, some visitors from the British Embassy in Moscow visited Kitezh to watch an evening of entertainment they put on with the young Kitezh children. The experience concluded in Moscow where the group had a chance to visit Red Square.

Team leader Naomi Marsh said "Going to Russia was an amazing and intense experience for all involved and I feel the results on the team have been equally dramatic."

Paul who participated in the programme said on his return that "it was the best experience of my life!"

James, 25 wrote in his diary:

"With what has happened in the past few days I can't stress enough that the 'Shire' as I call it is a great place full of love and positive vibes—I don't want to leave and return to the polluted, messed up, crack ridden dump I live in...but I must remember that it was the dump I live in that brought me here in the first place!"

The Prince's Trust team has left a brightly coloured wall as a constant reminder of their stay in Kitezh. We hope that Kitezh has left its own brightly coloured splash in their lives and that they will use this experience to continue to grow, to heal and to succeed.

This visit has been such a success that the Prince's Trust will send a second group to Kitezh in March 2005.

www.princes-trust.org.uk



Volunteers' eye view of Kitezhan life

Life in Kitezh is quite unique in many ways, below is a list of the finer points of living as a volunteer in this uncharted territory.

Morning exercises

Choose from an assortment of pre-breakfast activities. The brave of heart may opt for the Kung-fu camp training, though self-respect sometimes diminishes as you are left huffing/puffing/dragged/carried behind the herd. Others may decide to awaken their senses each morning on the Moon Field with the big cheeses of the community.

Cuisine

Thrice daily sample the tasty delights that come out of Natasha's Kitchen. Atkins diet followers beware, there is many a carb in sight. Boost your daily food intake by supplementing it with waffles (*vafly pa rooskie*) which can be found at Baryatino market. Take heed, however, volunteers have been known to experience cold turkey-like effects when without the sugary goodness for too long.

Names

Overcome the all too familiar problem of forgetting people's names by calling everybody Sasha. Probability says you will get it right. Develop the skill of mumbling the first letter of the word, which can be interpreted as Masha. Then you'll have all your bases covered.

Dandelion picking

A rather mundane task usually taking place during the months of May and June. Often resulting in a split of the community into the dandelion (*adivanchik*) hating faction, the save the *adivanchik* protesters, and those who are just plain lazy. Any opposition generally gets quashed however by the promise of a chupa-chup lollipop in exchange for a bag of their dandelion harvest. (Nonetheless, there is a strange sense of satisfaction when you look at a lawn that a local bowls club would be proud of.)

JOB OPPORTUNITY at the Kitezh Centre to represent Kitezh-Orion in Moscow: public relations with ex-pat community, fundraising, volunteer support. If you are interested, contact us.

Praznik

Some may be lucky enough to witness a legendary Kitezh *Praznik* (celebration). The most prestigious being that of Kitezh's birthday. You may wish to contribute to the numerous sketches and skits. This year the volunteers came together as a cabaret act of five escaped Kitezh-Agro potatoes. The music press rumour-mill is reporting the possibility of the group re-forming with a tour around Baikal.

Clan Sinko.

No visit to Kitezh would be complete without a run in with a member of the Sinko family. Vadim, Ksusha, Katya, Marina and Sasha all live in the Pichugina household with Tamara, her daughter Nellie and Sasha of the Moscow program. Experience Kitezh's version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs first hand when you see seven little pairs of slippers lined up at the door and seven toothbrushes at the sink.



Baryatino market

The metropolis of Baryatino is host to a market every Friday. This is an experience to savour. Browse the stalls for waffles, anti-*kamar* cream (mosquito repellent), slippers and giant sausages. Wonder at the names of aftershave at the toiletries stall: *Big Boss*, *Sniper*, *Sexy Beast* or *Despot*. And when it all gets too much, escape from the crowds and take a well deserved pit-stop at the refurbished bar, before catching the bus back to Kitezh to parade and share your new purchases.

Chimazeva lake

During the summer months, take advantage of a daily swim in Chimazeva—Kitezh's answer to Lake Baikal. Although the results are not yet back on the medicinal properties of the floating plant life, rumour has it that it is rife with anti-ageing, character-building nutrients. And then head to the....

Banya

Not only for the rich and famous, Kitezh Banya is a social hot bed of gossip and general chit chat—unrivalled for mind relaxation and body revitalisation, the perfect end to a Kitezhan week, followed by tea and a general feeling of well being.

Nightlife

On a Saturday grasp the opportunity to dance the night away to a selection of hits from the depths of DJ Stas's record vaults. Be astonished at the selection of moves incorporated into the evening—from the funky chicken to breakdancing via the odd slow waltz. Anything goes. Leave your street cred at the door.



Lois (left) and friends enjoying the night life

Feel the love.

Living in Kitezh, no matter how long for, will be an experience. Just as everybody brings their own unique talents and personality to the place, everybody will have their own unique experience there. What will be apparent is how positive a place Kitezh is for the children for whom it was created. When playing with the kids it is all too easy to forget that many of them have been through rough times. Their openness and warmth to their new families and volunteers is amazing. So if you are planning on visiting Kitezh, leave behind your pretensions, and bring a whole lotta love. And perhaps your dancing shoes.

Invented and exaggerated by Kirsty Hood and Lois Kapila, volunteers, Summer 2004.

A Kitezh Volunteers Production



Rosie in the Heart of Siberia and still going strong.

December 15 2004

We phoned Rosie at the Hotel Giza in Ulan Ude where she was enjoying washing her hair and clothes, something she has learned to regard as a luxury.

She has now embarked on the most challenging part of her journey. Eastern Siberia is very remote, very cold and very empty. Her route will take her to Chita and then northwards to Yakutsk, known to be the coldest place on earth.

She is still full of enthusiasm but seems more thoughtful as she is becoming aware of what she is up against. She spoke of the cold and how long it takes to get going in the morning. It is a struggle for survival. Even lighting her primus stove is huge undertaking. Breathing at -20°C can be painful. She is doing about 20km a day because she needs to stop early enough to set up for the night before it gets too dark and too cold.

She has been given some furlined boots for the morning. Once she gets going she can change into her running shoes. As long as she keeps moving the cold is not too bad. It's important to choose the right place to spend the night. Her life depends on it. If she gets covered by a snowdrift or simply goes to sleep for too long, she could freeze.

I asked her how she manages for food. She carries a big sack of buckwheat and some pork fat. This seems to be pretty standard Siberian fare. The pork fat goes on the face as well to protect it from the wind. Onions and garlic are also obtainable as is homemade jam from the people Rosie meets along the way. The jam is very nutritious, unlike the pallid supermarket offerings we are accustomed to. The people are wonderful, she says. They are helpful, friendly and generous. Their lives are harsh, not unlike how we lived a few centuries ago. Nevertheless they are happy, self-sufficient, work hard and don't complain.

She has a satellite phone as a safety measure but it has its own dangers. It is the one thing she is carrying that can excite

envy, so she uses it furtively in case someone sees it and tries to steal it. She has been held at knife point once but managed to escape. She instinctively pushed the knife aside. The attacker was so surprised that he ran off.

After Omsk she was hit by a bus. The bus driver, she says was wonderful. He took her to the hospital where she had some stitches and got a thorough checkup. She was pronounced healthy and amazingly fit except that she had pneumonia which was treated. The doctor suggested that she no longer wash her hair in the rivers.

Rosie is missing her friends and family and is now eager to get home but there is still a long way to go. The next six months will be the hardest, especially the mountainous road to Yakutsk.

One advantage to the winter is that the bears are all hibernating so she doesn't have to worry about dangerous wildlife. The wild mice though are her constant companions. They have no fear of humans and try to come into her tent. Rosie shares her crumbs with them. She sees them as the landlord to whom she must pay rent.

Siberia is her favourite country in the whole world, apart from Wales, with its unspoiled beauty and wonderful, resilient people. This has been a profound experience for Rosie, living so near the edge of life and death and finding a deep appreciation of the simple things that are so easily taken for granted—warmth, cleanliness and the company of friends.

Rosie is an extraordinarily courageous woman who has undertaken a seemingly impossible feat of human endurance. She is doing it for Kitezh and others. Please continue to support her



Coming into Ulan Ude

Rhiannon Hanfman

You can now make secure credit card donations to Ecologia Trust through our website.

Look for this logo on the Kitezh 'How Can You Help' page.

GiveNow

Ecologia Trust
the Park, Forres IV36 3TZ
Scotland
Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1309 690995
email: all @ecologia.org.uk
www.ecologia.org.uk

Spirit of Russia Tour

27 April – 7 May, 2005

Come and enjoy the hospitality and warmth that awaits you at Kitezh. Relax in the sauna, walk in the beautiful Russian countryside, take part in community activities, and interact with the children. Paint with the resident artist, make traditional Russian crafts and share your musical talents.

This is a unique opportunity to connect in a personal way with the spirit of Russia through her people and to participate in a close group experience with others of like mind. We are in Russia as the guests of friends, so you will be very much 'inside' Russian life. We particularly encourage Godparents to come and meet their godchildren

Before going to Kitezh we will spend two days exploring Moscow and there will be an opportunity of four optional days in St. Petersburg from 8 – 11 May.

Cost: £1,320 (all inclusive)

Booking deadline: 1 March

