

Summer 2012

ECOLOGIA YOUTH TRUST

Enabling young people to realise their potential and support sustainability in their communities



A foster family enjoying time together at Kitezh

Celebrating The Importance Of Families

1993 was a special year for the family. The officials who founded the United Nations International Day of Families that year had no idea that, on a field in Russia, a less visible but no less dedicated group of people were embarking on a project that would change children's lives, and more than that, change people's perceptions of what a family could be.

Back then, Kitezh Children's Community was little more than an idea. On this year's International Day of Families, May 15th, there are eight families living in Kitezh and four in Orion, Kitezh's sister community.

What can be more important to a child than being part of a secure loving family? Every child needs a special person to love and be loved by. Yet, the UN estimates there are around 8 million children worldwide living in care institutions. Poverty, disease, disability, conflict, disasters and discrimination result in children being separated from their families and placed in orphanages

all around the world. Growing up in an institution, however well run by the most well meaning staff, is nevertheless an isolating, harmful experience that leaves a child with poor life skills and an inability to build trusting relationships.

But thanks to your support, in the loving environment of Kitezh, children become part of a family who care about them and understand their needs. At Kitezh, children who started out with nothing are growing, learning and thriving.

We are incredibly proud of what we've achieved since Kitezh began, 20 years ago this year. And we have learned so much. Now we need your help to take what we have learned and help children in other parts of the world, so that, in the future, there is no need for orphanages anywhere.

Liza Hollingshead, Chief Executive

Lilya's Story

When she was 10, Lilya and her siblings were taken away from their parents, who were both alcoholics. Her brother and sisters were taken to an orphanage for children with serious learning difficulties. Lilya was fortunate to come to Kitezh where she became part of a foster family. In the beginning she found it hard to adapt to her new life there. As well as having been separated from her family, shortly after arriving at Kitezh her grandmother died, the only person in Lilya's family who took care of her and loved her.

Gradually, she started to feel part of her foster family, and was particularly close to her sister, who was a year older than Lilya. Then unexpectedly, when Lilya was 14, her foster father died and the rest of the family had to return to Moscow. This was yet another tragedy for Lilya. She decided she did not want to leave Kitezh and chose to stay with her new foster mother, Marina, whose granddaughter she knew well



Lilya & Marina

and who lived with them. Lilya grew to love Marina very much.

Although she continued to visit her natural parents during her time at Kitezh, she was often deeply upset after seeing them drunk and living in appalling conditions. Her father died a year ago and Lilya visited him to the end.

At Kitezh, Lilya was given psychological support, help with her education, encouraged to make new friends and take part in the social activities in the community. She began to thrive. Now, supported by Kitezh, she is studying at university to become a social worker to help other children like herself.

She visits Kitezh often, where she looks after the young children and helps in the community's kitchen. Marina says, "Now we are like daughter and mother. We often talk on the phone and she shares all her experiences, both good and bad. I am watching her grow into a popular, intelligent and confident young woman. Her future is bright."

Ecologia wins a second round of Big Lottery funding for our Thailand Project

We are delighted to announce that, in the face of overwhelming competition, we've won a further three years funding from the Big Lottery Fund for our project in Thailand.

Building on the success of our previous project which helped to improve the lives of migrant workers and their families from Burma, this grant allows us, with our Thai partners Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF), to raise the standard of living and working conditions for migrant workers by establishing their rights to fair pay and education for their children.

Supported by



Children from the project's learning centre

Mind the Gap Youth Theatre Exchange with Kitezh – a huge success!



The cast of Gold Rush

Rebecca Gosling volunteered at Kitezh last year, and simply loved it. So much so that she wanted her own Youth Theatre Exchange group to experience it too! With our help, she designed the exchange programme and together we secured support from Youth In Action, the European Union programme for young people, to take it to Russia.

Three months of preparation, fundraising and hard work later, the group of 16 stepped onto the aeroplane bound for Moscow. In the words of Rebecca, "Our musical, Gold Rush, set in Arabia, was directed, composed, choreographed, set and costumed over a period of 8 days and performed twice, the second time to 200 people, a Russian TV crew, and British Council representatives in a Moscow Theatre!!

During the process bonds were formed that surpassed geography, culture and language, and which will last a lifetime. Thirty young people from the Kitezh-Orion Children's Community, from schools in Moscow and from the UK, lived, ate, worked and played together. The experience was deeply affecting and many said it was one of the best weeks of their life."

Our New Project in Uganda

The Sky is The Limit Children's Centre

Ecologia is pleased to be supporting a new project, the Sky is The Limit Children's Centre in Fort Portal, Western Uganda. The Centre cares for vulnerable children and orphans living with HIV/AIDS and was founded in 1996 by a group of people in the local community headed by Rose Kabasinguzi Mugenyi.

HIV and AIDS has had a devastating effect on the lives of children in Uganda, where 2.3 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Currently there are 25 children living with Rose at the Centre, which includes a school providing primary education to resident children as well as those from the local community. Alongside formal education, the school provides children with an opportunity to learn music, dance, drama and sport while agricultural activities form a key part of the education at the school. This includes learning to grow food crops, rear cows, goats, rabbits and chickens and planting trees. The food produced provides the children with a balanced diet as well as providing them with important skills for life.



Some of the children from The Sky is the Limit School

Kitezh School Director wins prestigious award in national competition

Dr Maxim Anikeev, Director of Kitezh School, was runner up in the All Russia competition for the best school Director out of 500 schools. A great achievement!

Kitezh is now officially an 'experimental' school which allows it to develop innovative school programmes and initiatives. Kitezh is planning to build an Education and Family Development Centre to expand their capacity as a leading authority on the care and education of orphan children. Ecologia will continue to help Kitezh seek support for this project.



Max receiving his award

Thank you for making Datuna's life-changing operation possible

The miracle occurred: Thanks to your support, Datuna had his spinal operation in August last year, and has recovered perfectly. He can now sit up straight in his wheelchair for the first time in his life. Living in Edinburgh, Dato as he is now known (the grown up version of his name) is chattering away in English, catching up fast with his class mates at school, and learning fencing! His natural curiosity feeds his mind like a sponge – he wants to know about simply everything!

He is a smart boy, who is flourishing in his new environment. Yet, if he returns to rural life in Georgia where there is no education available for the disabled, he will lose the opportunity and his right as a child to receive an education and fulfill his potential. This could be a devastating situation for Dato so we are doing all we can to find a way to allow him to continue his education in Scotland.



Dato well on the road to recovery

Join our GODPARENTS TOUR to KITEZH Dates: 13-29 May 2013.

We have had several requests to organise a 2-week visit to Kitezh and Orion for Godparents and other supporters who cannot afford the time to spend 2-3 months volunteering there. This is a great opportunity to travel to Russia with a small group of like-minded people, spend 2 days sightseeing in Moscow and go on meet the children at Kitezh and Orion who you have been supporting for so many years.



Group tour 2005

Please contact us if you are interested!

Please support our work and help some of the many children who have no parents to care for them

Sevenoaks School visit

This April, four pupils and two of their teachers from the well-known English school Sevenoaks, in Kent, visited Kitezh to practice their Russian language skills and get to know Russian culture. Over three days, they attended classes with the Kitezh students, took part in projects and games, learned about Kitezh's work, and concluded their visit with a lively assortment of Russian songs and games!



Kitezh and Sevenoaks say goodbye

Jon Drury, (above far right) Russian Language teacher and leader of the Sevenoaks group, was thrilled with the visit:

"I have been to Russia 18 times, and every trip is different. But honestly speaking, I have never felt such a sense of community as you have here in Kitezh. We were here only three days, but I feel as though we are old friends. And my pupils have had the rare opportunity to see how educational, psychological and sociological theory is put into practice, how a community can be built and supported with equal input from children and adults, and how love and hope can transform the lives of those to whom life has dealt a tough hand. I hope that this is the first step towards a new relationship between Kitezh and Sevenoaks."

Our Russian Volunteer Programme continues to challenge and inspire!

We have been sending volunteers to Kitezh since 1995. In fact, since then over 250 volunteers from the UK, USA and as far afield as Australia have experienced and contributed to life at Kitezh and Orion. One such volunteer, Hebe Foster, from St Paul's Girls' School in London, had this to say about her time spent volunteering.

"Although Kitezh might just seem like the ideal place to practice your Russian while also helping as a volunteer, you make much more of an emotional commitment than you expect. Learning about the way the adults organise life for the children to maximise their chances of moving on, finishing their education in Kitezh and going off to university was amazing – I had never imagined the depth to which the adults go to help the children. Their whole lives revolve around their kids, and in such a small community everyone helps everyone else. The sense of community was very strong in Kitezh, and I loved being able to feel a little of that."



A volunteer playing with younger children at Kitezh

Hebe was so inspired by her experience she successfully nominated Ecologia for "Charity of the Year" at her school, for which we are extremely grateful. Thank you Hebe and all at St Paul's Girls' School, London.

Visit our Shop

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