



Update Newsletter

N 16: February 2017

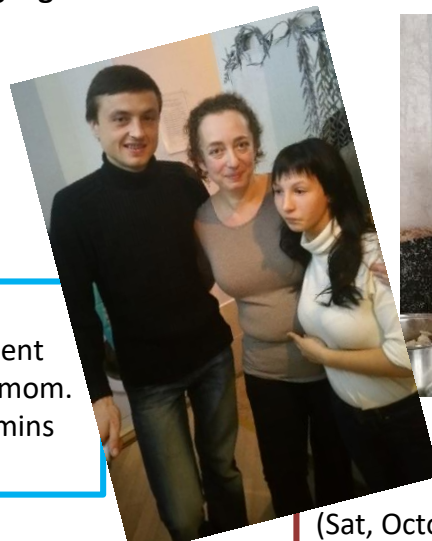


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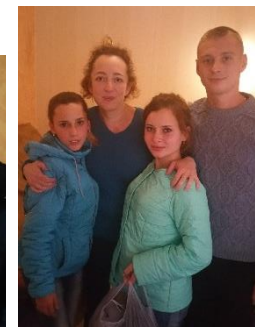
Marina's Trip to Ukraine, Fall 2016



This Newsletter is several months overdue, my trip to Ukraine took place at the end of October, early November of 2016. This was a shorter trip than usual, but still very productive. Highlights are in this newsletter...



I flew to Ukraine by myself, and as always, on the day of the arrival, spent some time with Stas and his foster mom. We had dinner, and I gave Stas vitamins from US, he get sick often.



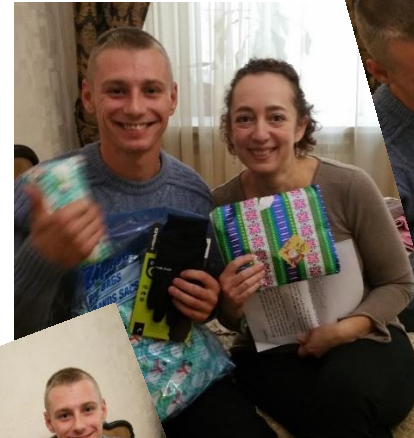
An over night train got me to Odessa at 6am the next morning (Sat, October 28th). I was met at the train station by Kirill, as well as Galya and Sergey. The latter two was a surprise. These are the aged out orphans from our transition home in Izmail. Now they live and work in Odessa. From the train station we headed to a rental apartment. Little by little they started arriving and gathering lots of aged out orphans that Marina's Kids has been working with over the years. Over the following 2 days and one night we had 22 visitors! Some stayed for few hours, some, the whole time! The girls prepared meals. We all ate together, played games, watched TV, and I had a lot of one-on-one time with them in turn. One boy, Kostia, brought me flowers to thank me for everything I have done for him and his girlfriend☺ Some kids came from pretty far away, just to spend some time with me.

Local Hospital for Kids

Sunday, 30th: After saying bye to the kids in Odessa, we visited the cardiac department of the children's hospital. We met with the head doctor that we partner up with to help kids with heart surgeries and other health problems. One of the visitors in the Odessa apartment was a young girl, 17 yrs. of age, Olia T. She came with her grandmother, whom she lives with. It is just the 2 of them. Marina's kids sponsored Olia's heart surgery this summer. The two of them came to meet me and to thank me in person for saving Olia's life.



While Kirill and I took the train to Izmail, Olga Pogorealya took Olia and Kolya back to their orphanage. On the way they stopped at the supermarket to get needed supplies for the orphanage. It was late and dark when they got in, so there are no other pictures kids receiving the packages. But believe me, everyone was very thankful the next day ☺



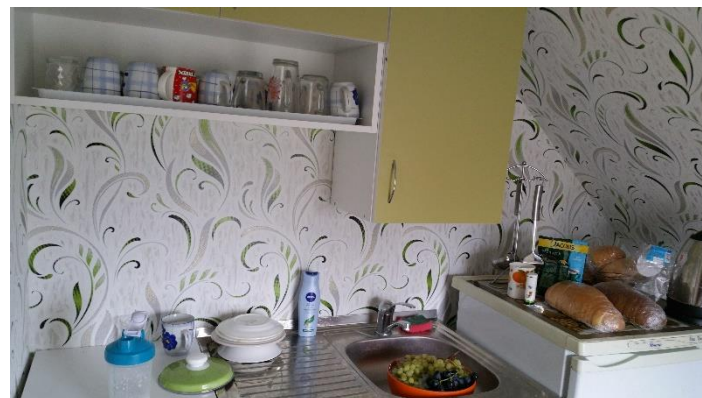
Kirill is very grateful for everyone's gifts and letters from the US that I brought for him in my suitcase ☺
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Work in Izmail continues:

In Izmail we stayed at our newly constructed second floor of the transition home. Marina D. visited us for the day with her 3 girls, we visited few orphanages in that area, got to know better the boys that live now with Anlgela and Oleg. We had many good conversations and meetings over the course of several days.





Visit to one of the Local Izmail Orphanages,

Friday, November 4th: one of the stops is a visit with kids from a local orphanage. We brought kids bananas, apples, some got clothing specially purchased for them that morning by Kirill and I (teachers gave us sizes ahead of time). I had mixed feelings over this visit: this orphanage, originally built for 300 and each time I visit has less and less kids, which is a wonderful thing. This time they are down to 12, and 6 are in the process of being adopted, including one of my favorites, Ricardo! New kids are not entering the orphanage, so it looks really good, BUT at the same time, there are still kids that have a lot worse at home than they would have in an orphanage. The problem is not going away, but being ignored. The infrastructure and support for families who previously would have had kids go into the orphanages is still not there. There are lots of kids who live with parents who drink, do not take care of them, and beat them. There are lots of hungry, cold, sick kids out there. Marina's Kids is doing its best to work with the local Ministry of Social Services to locate and help these kids. The country is changing, and we must change with it, if we want to continue our mission to underprivileged kids.

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Getting to know better one of our aged out orphans, *Pasha's Story:*

Breakfast with Pasha. I have known Pasha from my first trip, six years ago, but after the original location Marina's kids started with was closed down (about 3 years ago), Pasha has been living with his older brother. We still stayed in contact, but have not seen each other. Now a young man of 18, he graduated from 11th grade, and got into a local tech school, studying to be chef/ baker/ waiter. He never got an orphan status because he has a living mother, who is just not around. Because of that his education is not free, and he does not get government pension. Somehow this young man still managed work summers and set aside to some money to continue his education. On top of that he has wanted to be a dancer, and now has a group he gets together with, and they even have some paid gigs! He said one of the defining moment of his life was when he saw me, an adult, do a split. He, a teenager, could not stretch as far as I could. Apparently after talking with me back then, he realized not all is lost, and he still can reach his goals of a dancer, even though he would be at a great disadvantaged from the kids who had formal training from a young age. He can almost do a split now 😊 Before we parted I asked him how can I help him? Maybe school supplies, or at least money for the bus? His answer made me tear up, and validated the need of my trips. "Marina", he said, "I have not talked openly like this to anyone in several years, if ever. Just being able to spend some time with you, knowing that you care about me, is the only thing I want. Thank you for making the time for me."

I just want to take this opportunity to thank you all for supporting Marina's kids mission to change the lives of these kids for better.



August of 2012



Fall 2013



November of 2017





We visited 2 orphanages in the north part of the Odessa region with needed supplies, checked on what is needed, so we can see how we can help with projects improving kids life in the future, as well as spend time getting to know the kids.



Face painting always makes the day better



We replaced dishes...Before and After



Kids love getting gum from America





Kristina makes the best borsch!



**Refrigerator for 2 young families
brings joy to everyone!**

Helping young families:

Kristina is one of the first kids I met when I started my ministry, close to seven years ago. Now a mother to 2 beautiful kids. She is doing a great job at it! Sergey is 2 years old, and calls me “Babyfka Maina” (“Grandma Marina”, with some letters missing☺), and Mark, 6 months old. About 2 years ago Kristina received an apartment from the government. It is not easy task. What helped her was that she was a pregnant, aged out orphan, with a younger brother, and her baby’s father grew up an orphan himself. So after many month of running around different offices, she got it! It is a tiny place: one larger walk through bedroom, one small bedroom, small kitchen, and a toilet “room” (size 3x3 ft.) ...No hot water, no shower/ bath. And untill my visit in the fall, they had no refrigerator. During my May visit we got building supplies and some used kitchen cabinets, which Sergey, Kristina’s fiancé, has been working on. It is done, except hanging cabinets. This time, we got them a refrigerator, as well as some food to put into it. My hopes that in 2017 we can raise funds to install a shower and a hot water heater.



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Time with my “grandkids”



Jackets... Winter is coming...to Ukraine, and lots of the aged out kids have no jackets. This time Kirill and I personally shopped for 3 jackets. Kristina, a young mother of 2, shopped with us; Marina, a young mother of 3, we picked her jacket and shipped it to her; and Olia, not a mother, but a student from a very poor family, and so small of a build that it is almost impossible to find her size that did not look like a little girls jacket. For Olia, we hand delivered it when we got back to Odessa. All 3 young ladies are extremely happy and thankful. Several more jackets for orphanages were shipped ahead of time and distributed accordingly.



Before my trip, a kindergarten teacher, Heather Friedrick, of Medina Christian Academy in Ohio, has organized a donation drive with her class. The kids brought in socks and dolls for the kids of Ukraine. The package came in time for me to take some of the donations with me. Two doll were given by their previous ""mommies" for me to find them a new home, and a new "mommy". Alina, a one year old daughter of a young mother that grew up in the orphanages, got to pick the one she liked more. The second one went to Nastya. Socks were a big hit as well with the little kids in one of the orphanages. The rest of the items collected by the kindergarten class will be shipped and given out a bit later. Thank you so much Heather, and her class☺-

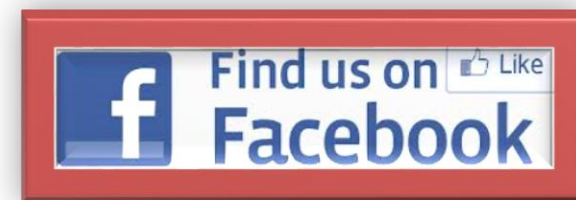




Tuesday, November 8, 2016 , the day before going back to US, I threw away my face painting supplies...the ones I use to paint on the kids in the orphanages. No, I am not giving up face painting, I am saving the next group of kids from a contagious disease. This is what happened: on Saturday we visited an orphanage where I face painted kids, and today, I got a call from Oleg, one of my friends that we work with. He let me know that this specific orphanage has an outbreak of Hepatitis A. The worst part is, most of the kids are not vaccinated, and the government does not work efficiently enough to be able to fund the needed vaccines at the present time. I gave our volunteer, Olga, in Odessa, the go ahead to sponsor the purchase of vaccines. This took most of the funds I left her to finish several projects, but I believe this is to be a much more needed cause.



Lifesaving surgeries for underprivileged kids and orphans...our partnership with the Odessa hospital for children led us to raise money and sponsor surgeries for about 10 kids now. Here are some photo's of Anna. She is doing very well. After her surgery our volunteer Angela was able to visit her at the orphanage and bring some needed supplies for Anna and other kids.



Our volunteers work hard in Ukraine, there is so much more that happened in the last few month that is not in this newsletter:

- ***Kirill working with an orphanage, and young mothers in Crimea,***
- ***Angela working with aged out boys and local orphanages in Izmail***
- ***Olga and Inna working with young mothers in Odessa region***

And many, many, more...I bet I could post a 10 page newsletter every month!...if there was the time...Please see more pictures and stories and what Marina's Kids is doing in Ukraine on our Facebook page. I am also willing to travel to you local group to tell you in person how Marina's Kids ministry is changing lives of so many young people for the better. –Thank you for your support, Marina James, President, Marina's Kids.



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**My next trip to Ukraine is scheduled for
April 9-24 of 2017.**

I will be traveling with my daughter, Katherine from the USA, and as always meeting up with Kirill and other volunteers in Ukraine. On the agenda are stops in our transition home in Izmail; visits to about 5-6 orphanages; meetings with aged out orphans; and time with our volunteers to review our work and plans. I will post on the Facebook page as I travel, and will have a newsletter with highlights after I get back to the US.

As always your prayers for wisdom, strength, and a clear vision; as well as for the children we work with; is greatly appreciated. **There are always so many needs.**

-Thank you, Marina James, President, Marina's Kids.

Plans for 2017:

- 2 trips to Ukraine, Spring and Fall
- Some of the projects we hope to work on:
- Develop a business in Izmail that will employ aged out orphans and eventually support our transition home.
 - Help aged out orphans mothers, who were able to get government housing in improving their living conditions: Anna needs radiators and windows; Kristina could use a shower or a bath tub.
 - Replace some windows in one of the orphanages.
 - Continue to support several young moms with monthly packages of food and baby supplies.
 - Sponsor several heart surgeries.
 - Work on starting a second transition home

Praise, Prayer, and Plans

As always funds are needed to run our many programs.

Donations of any amount are greatly appreciated. If you wish to contribute please go to our JustGive Site:

<https://npo.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=30-0687266>

FREE, easy way to support Marina's Kids

Amazon.com will donate 0.5% of your purchases to Marina's Kids. All you have to do is to log in on <http://smile.amazon.com>.

Then find us by our name or EIN # [30-0687266](https://npo.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=30-0687266)

This link will take you there as well:

<https://goo.gl/yEBYyP>

Please continue to pray that God would give wisdom and guidance to the leaders, volunteers, and children we work with.

Thank You

***For your support,
Marina James,
President, Marina's Kids***

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