



## Update Newsletter

*Number 5*  
October 2012

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## **Making a Difference!**

### **Announcing: Hosting Program for winter 2012:**

This winter is the first time Marina's Kids is able to bring in a group of orphans to the US for a vacation. Why hosting: Hosting is a way a child who has never experienced in real life what it is like to be in a family, in a safe home, can get a glimpse of that. It is a cultural exchange program, where a family in the US will show a child new ways to live, love, and learn. It is a chance for a family to put a face and a name to a title "orphan". To show love and caring is a privilege. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity please go to the "hosting tab" on our website. After you input your contact info, one of our volunteers will get back to you.

[www.marinaskids.org](http://www.marinaskids.org)

## Izmail

This is my 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Izmail. There are several kids there who have graduated from the orphanage we work with in the Odessa region, as well as many others from many orphanages around. Kids there are ages 15-19, live in dorms while attending a technical school. They get some government pension, and a bit of supervision. A lot of them have hard time entering adulthood.



***I stayed in the dorms, fully immersing myself into their lives. The goals of this trip were :***

1. To get shoes and some other winter clothing for 10-15 of them: I took 13 teenagers shopping at the market. All got winter shoes, some got jeans, some sweaters, 4- jackets, 6 blankets, and all socks and underclothing.
2. Start a new relationship program, connecting children with local believers: I connected with local Christians interested in working with us and with "our" kids. I had a meeting with Angela and Yana (mother and daughter) on the day of my arrival . We got to know each other a bit in person, and shared our visions for the program. On Tuesday night, I took 11 teenagers to their home in a village close by. We made pizza together, as well as some other food. Not long after our arrival, kids found out that there were 2 bicycles on the property. Soon they were taking turns riding up and down the street. Then Yana taught everyone to play a game called "Ninja". Surprisingly, I had seen my kids in the US play that game with their friends. It did not take long for the kids to forget about smoke breaks, and just have fun with their new acquaintances, hopefully soon to be friends and mentors. The plan is for these teenagers to have a meal with Angela , Yana and their husbands every weekend. That will get them to know each other better, as well as give kids a good meal. Then we will slowly introduce life lessons and Bible studies. Marina's kids will sponsor the dinners, as well as money for medicine when the kids need it. Angela and Yana are answer to our prayers, they will be our eyes and ears, our hands and feet on the ground with this group of children.



Night life that is...  
...night life that can be...





## Izmail continues...

On the last trip to Izmail we had ordered 2 new windows to replace old drafty ones. And one new door to replace the one that kept falling out. As well as wallpaper 2 rooms. (That is the only way you can remedy those walls)



*New door vs. old door*



*New window vs. old window*



***I spend time getting to know the kids***, see how they are doing and whatever else is needed. I spent a total of 4 days at that location , talking and listening , making deeper connections with this group of kids. What they need is love. Several asked me is I could find them a sponsor in US. When I asked what they mean by it, they answered: ***“Someone to call us, to check on us, to ask us how was our day. When we need medicine or we have no money to get clothes, to help us. But most of all, just to someone to care.”*** They see my relationship with Vladic and Kristina, what it has become over the last few years, and they want the same. I write this because I hope that some of you, who read this, might be interested in befriending an older orphan from Ukraine. Do not be discouraged if you do not speak the language, translators can be found.

## Updates on kid's stories:

**Kolya:** he is in a lot of pain, but that does not stop this energetic child from playing and enjoying life. We are hoping to get him to the US for surgery and recovery. There is a lot of work to get this done, documents, medical visa to the US, hospital willing to cover the cost, and host family to take care of this boy while he is recovering- **would you consider hosting him?** Of course all of this costs money, we have raised some of it, but still do need more financial support. If we can not get him here, there is a hospital in Ukraine that can preform the surgery, but we feel his recovery will be smoother if we can bring him to the US.



**Pavlic:** This time I found him in a good health. He is in the last year of this school, and is planning to continue his education to learn about computer networking.



*Pavlic and his sister, Ira*

**Stasic:** I was met at the airport by Vladic, Kristina and also by Yuri, who graciously offered to drive us around that day. Right away we headed to the town where Stasic lives. He was moved by the social services to a new family. So we got to meet them. Ira, his foster mom and her husband, Sergey, are a rarity in Ukraine- to become a foster parents and to treat the child as their own, on top of that they also want to take in the younger sisters: Nastia, 18 mo. And Katya, 9mo. And are willing to help Stasic and the girls keep in touch with the older siblings. Stas is doing well with his new family: he is catching up on his school work, which is not easy, he missed most of 1<sup>st</sup> grade last year;. He is also learning good hygiene habits and manners.

After meeting up with Stasic, we headed to the hospital to see the girls. They have been there for 9 month now, and can not be moved till their paperwork is in order. This was the first time Vldic and Kristina met their half-sisters. It was a good visit. Afterwards we went to look for their biological mother. We did find her, that visit was not so pleasant. Her living conditions and lifestyle were upsetting to everyone. But a mother who has given you birth, will always be your mother, no matter how much she wronged you. It is a feeling of hate and of love mixed together. Any child is pulled toward that.

We finished visit with Stasic on a happier note, at his new home. He tried on new outfits that I brought from America, and we ate dinner together. For Stas it was a birthday and Christmas all rolled into one. Vlad and Kristina approved of the situation, they kept saying: "He will always have hot water" and "the Dad is so nice and helpful!" **Next for these kids:** we are working on getting the paperwork together for the girls to go home. Katya is not doing well with her health and development. At 9months of age she is still not sitting by herself. She also has other problems for which she needs to see a specialist in Kiev, but can not be taken there till paperwork is done.

Vladic holding  
Katya, Stasic and I,  
Kristina holding  
Nastia



# New Stories of the Kid's who's lives we effect:

**Nikita**, nicknamed "Barsic", is one the first kids I met when I started coming to Odessa region orphanage. He has been orphaned at a very young age. At first seems like very self capable young man, but if you get to know him better is lacking a lot of knowledge needed to live as an adult. That is actually pretty typical for a 17 years old orphan. A smoker from the age of 6, he is easygoing and very generous to his friends. Which is one of the reasons he never has any money. He likes to goof around, go fishing, and miss classes. But on the good side, I was told by his teachers that he has improved over the last year by 10-20% on his school attendance and behavior!

## **Here is a small story about him from this trip:**

Nikita had broken his arm 2 weeks before I got there. In Ukraine when one has a broken arm it is casted only on one side and around the thumb and That is wrapped in to a bandage, but do you think a cast like that will last long?

The day after I got there he was walking around without a cast. His excuse was: the bandage is messed up and dirty. I offered to get him a new bandage, he replied: "it won't stay anyway. Can you get me a new cast? Look how bendy this one is!" And is was rather bendable! I was a bit surprised to his answer, so I said: "You want me to *buy* you a new cast?" He said: "yes, it is sold in pharmacies. If I go back to the doctor, I will just make same kind of cast that does not last anyway".

He was right, it was sold at a pharmacy! I paid about \$10 for all of the supplies I needed. These kids have such a confidence in me, he let me cast his arm. (No, I did not break any laws by doing it). And it was not a cheepUkrainian cast job- I did it the American way- all the way around the arm. He promised to keep it on for several weeks (which I now know, he did not keep his word, but he swears that it is healed and is not hurting).

*Please, pray for Nikita, and for his friends.*



Dec. 2010: Nikita is on the right side.



# New Stories of the Kid's who's lives we effect:

**Slavic, 19yrs old:** This is how he was introduced to me: In the spring of this year , when I was with a group of technical school students in Izmail we were coming back from food shopping at about 10 o'clock at night. A very tall young men came to our group of about 15. I did not pay much attention till he left. Kristina pulled me aside and whispered into my ear: "Do you remember that lunch meat we bought? Well we gave it to that boy", she nodded towards a figure sheepishly standing now a distance a way, " he had nothing to eat today ...and a loaf of bread...and some eggs...I hope it is OK?" she waited for me to nod my head, and continued: "can he come to dinner tomorrow night? He really wants to meet you!"



This time around, I asked about him as soon as I came back.

He showed up on the third day, with a big smile and dog. He told me that he lives now with a family, and part of his rent is walking the family dog. While we were talking, the dog got a hold of a tree branch and it was quiet an adventure getting him off the tree!

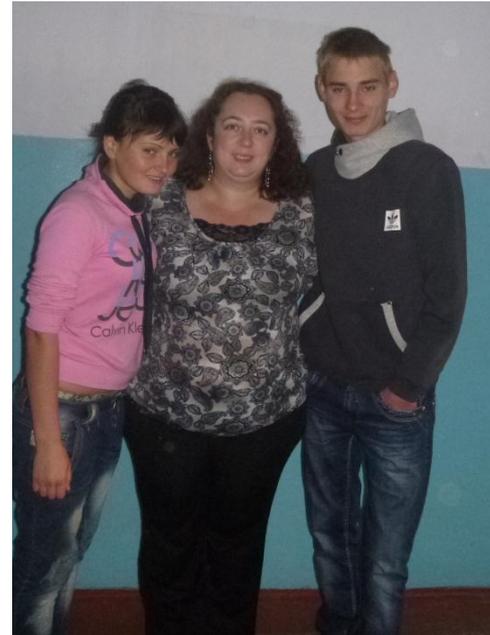
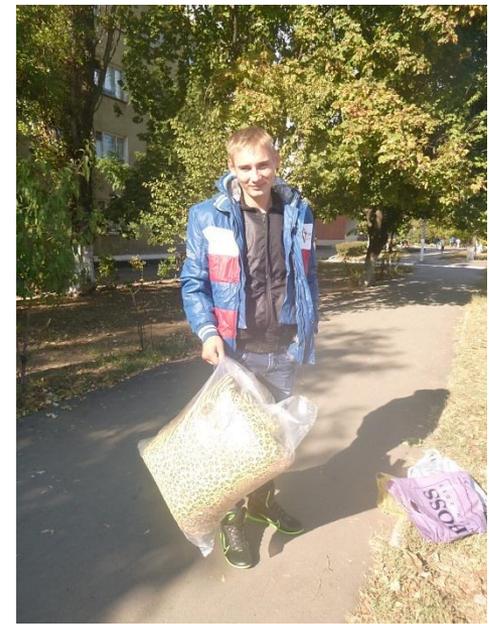


The next day (my last, full day in Izmail) Slavic was at my side as soon as I left the dorms. I was heading to a "burger club", where I was told I could get a wifi connection. He asked me if I was going back to the market today. He said on the day I was getting clothes for kids he could not make it. I asked if he needed anything specific. His answer was : "well, the only clothes on me that is mine are socks, underwear, and these half broken shoes. The rest I borrowed, and I have nothing for winter." He was wearing a rather short sleeved fall jacket and sports pants with a long hole on the side. I changed my plans and we headed to the market, with was closing soon. A few hour later Slavic was a proud owner of a sweater, jeans, jacket that will be warm enough for the winter (if he wears his new sweater with it). We also got him winter shoes. We ended our shopping with a warm blanket and a 120lb of potatoes that was to be divided between many kids in the dorms. We grabbed a taxi to get back, and after helping me get the potatoes into the dorms, Slavic ran home to drop of his purchases. I started to head to the "burger club". It took no longer then few minutes after I arrived there, when Slavic walked through the door, plopped in the seat in front of me and with a big smile enquired if I have ordered yet.

# New Stories of the Kid's who's lives we effect:

Spending a day with Slavic gave me chance to get to know him better. Slavic does not remember his parents. He does remember at the age of 4 standing on a street corner with his friends and a soldier coming up to him and telling him if he puffed on a cigarette, he would get a candy. And of course what 4 year old will not refuse a candy. The kids around him, his friends thought it was funny and kept asking him to smoke. And that is how at the age of 4, he became a smoker! In case you are wondering where such young kids can get cigarettes, I will tell you- they either smoke butts found on the street or bummed them from older friends, who bummed them from adults).

Slavic has finished technical school a bit over a year ago, but his documents were never done right, and so he can not get regular work. He is doing construction work on occasion now, whenever he can find it. But it does not sustain him. Last winter, the coldest in a long time, he was homeless for several weeks. He survived it by getting into "internet clubs" before 9pm. At that time doors lock for the night, and for just about \$1.50, you can play computers till the morning. So Slavic slept in a chair in front of the computer. His friends feed him when they could. Till one friend let him stay at his house, where he is still living. Whenever he can, he pays rent about \$22 a month. He is hungry most of the time. Has almost no possessions to his name. He says he was a big problem child before, but now he has gotten smarter. He no longer cares if he has cool jeans, and the fact that he does not know where his next meal will come from no longer bothers him. One day he wants to go back to he village he was born in and start his own business. He wants to bring jobs into that area. He is hard working, optimistic, and helpful to anyone who needs him.





# Time with the Children

When I got to the orphanage it was like no time has passed at all from my last trip. I remembered about 60 of the kids by name. And they rewarded that by great smiles and hugs. One boys has glued himself to me for most of the time I was there. He told me on the second day with amazement: "You looked at me, and said: You are Kolia, right?"

*Kolia is on the left side of me, Vania and Polina on the right.*



As always, spending time with kids was a big part of the trip. Face painting, talking with them, giving them massages, and doing girls hair and nails. I dried tears of injustice, kissed boo-boos, rubbed stress out of some shoulders while discussing life. At night I went into their dorms to wish them goodnight. With the little kids I came in at getting ready for bed time. It was a game to check if they brushed their teeth. Then read them Bible stories, listen to them tell me stories and poems. At the end I pray with them and got them all into beds. I gave them goodnight hugs and kisses, and fixed their blankets. The last night was hard, some cried and would not let go. Others wanted to know, why do I have to leave anyway? Some said that it will be a long the winter, because next time I come, it will be in the spring.



Dimas, Ricardo, and Igor



Getting little girls to bed: behind me are Polina, Marina, Liza, Olia, and Annyshka .



## Odessa Region Shopping

- This time around I brought with me 150 pair of socks,- 2 pairs for each kid. We also have purchased underclothing and stockings for everyone, as well as some other clothing.
- 270 lb of donated winter clothing are on the way to the orphanage, scheduled to arrive there in mid November.
- We have purchased 70 light bulbs, cleaning and personal hygiene supplies to last few month.
- A DVD player for each dorm and new movies, more sports supplies and board games, also supplies for cross stitching and beading.
- Winter shoes and jackets we will get after the shipment arrives, and will know better who still needs what.



*Giving out socks and stockings*



## Sharing the Faith

One night, as it was time to go to the younger kids dorm for their bedtime Bible story, I had to kick all the older kids out of my room. I promised them that I will visit their dorm that night as well. The only Bible I had with me was the one with little kids stories, so I stopped at my room to drop it off before head in to the older kids room. When I arrived 5 excited boys in that specific room asked: "So, where is the Bible?". I did not expect that at all, usually I am the one starting God related conversations. I know that one boy, Andrey, has been on a hosting program to the US in the summer, and there he was given a Bible. So I asked him to get it. I picked one of the stories about Jesus, after the reading it we started to discuss what we read. As one thing led to another, we got to the topic of our sinfulness and of God's forgiveness thought the gift of the cross.

I asked them: "if someone gives you a gift, when does it become yours?"

I demonstrated with something in my hand. As they understood that they actually have to take it, before it is theirs.

The youngest boy, Vanya, said: "but the gift of salvation is not a physical thing , how do you take it?"

"You accept it in a prayer", was my answer.

"We do not know how to", said Vanya.

"Well, I can pray and if you want to take that gift tonight, you pray with me".

As I prayed a prayer of salvation 5 boys had bowed heads and repeated my words, and at the end there were 4 loud Amen. (The 5<sup>th</sup> one I was not sure of, that led to another conversation with that boy on another day)

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This was my 6<sup>th</sup> trip to that orphanage, but it was the first time someone else joined me on it. Edward, from Chicago, as well as Joseph and Mathew from Canada, met up with me in that orphanage to work with the kids and start on green houses projects.

A group program was prepared by and led by Edward. It was a slide show helping kids to make better choices as they grow up. It was followed up by one on one times with kids , as well as in groups in the evening. The response of the kids was great, many came for the talks. Many have received New Testament Bibles. Thank you Edward, Mathew and Joseph.



*The night we prayed: top left to right: Andrey (13), Stepa (13),  
Bottom: Kolia (12), Vanya (10), and Shooric (12)*



## Big Projects Updates



**Spring of 2012:** we started a big project- installations of indoor bathrooms for elementary school. The work continued though the summer. **The ribbon cutting ceremony and the bathroom openings** were awaited till I could come to the orphanage. Everyone is happy with the results. Now the 1-4 grade kids have hot running water to wash their hands with and do not have to go to the unsanitary outhouses in the bad Ukrainian winter weather.

*Old outhouse bathrooms  
(see more in Dec. 2011  
Newsletter)*



*Old heating system, called pechka, is an in-wall space. Using coal to heat the wall, which radiates warmth (not heat) into the room.*



**Project started this fall, 2012:** last dorm heating and bathroom. Also, upgrade electricity, fixing walls, and replacing/ putting in glass into the windows. This project will be complete by the winter allowing a group of kids to move into this building.



*New heating unit includes a coal burner to heat water in the radiators and 16 radiators in 7 different rooms .*



# Praise, Prayer, and Other Requests:

- **Praise the lord** for the work that has been done so far. And pray as we continue that he will give us clear direction, strength, and finances to do His will.
- **Marina's Kids needs your help:** we are in need of an accountant: someone to look for grants; also collection and sorting of donated clothing
- **Kolya K.'s surgery:** there is lot that needs to fit together for this boy to be able to have a successful recovery- contact me for up to date needs for this boy.
- **Hosting program this winter:** for smooth running of the program, for more families to come forward, for safe travels for the kids.
- **Green houses projects:** wisdom and finances as we start on this venture with our new friends from Canada.
- **Thank you to** the mystery person who keeps getting us the "Fidelity charitable " grant, we just received another check in the mail!



## Continue praying for:

- **Orphans:** Their well being and good relationships with their caregivers, who are there to guide them. Wisdom and patience of the caregivers. Anxiety of unknown due to restructures in the systems.
- **Orphans who have aged out :** Their safety, wisdom, loving / guiding adults in their lives. They are only 15-16 when they leave- life is very hard for them.
- **Growing Relationships:** Of our organization with locals. And, most of all, our relationships with the children.
- **For more volunteers** in US and in Ukraine to work with these precious children of God.
- **Sharing Christ:** We are putting together a Bible study/ lessons to do with the kids. Please pray for wisdom as we develop the program, opportunities while we are there, open hearts of the children and the caregivers to the Word of God.

To support us financially please send a check to: *Marina's Kids*.

Phone contact: 267-210-4909

123 New St. Glenside, PA 19038 or donate through PayPal online at

[www.marinaskids.org](http://www.marinaskids.org)

**Thank You** For your support, ♥ *Marina James*.<sup>1,2</sup>