



Update Newsletter

N 8: November 2013

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A note from the president:

Our last newsletter was in May. A lot has happened since then. We had a successful summer hosting program: 53 orphans and one exchange student. We are now closing in on winter program. I have spent 67 days in Ukraine from August 12 to October 18th. The length of time was due to the personal adoption of 2 boys, but I did travel to many different locations during the time I was waiting for documents. There are several more Marina's Kids volunteers doing work as well. I will do my best to tell you all about what we have been up to.

Marina James, President, Marina's Kids



See our updates
as they happen.



Making a Difference!

Marina's Kids is growing. We are now working in 9 regions of Ukraine and 19 locations: orphanages, technical schools and a hospital. We have many programs including hosting with 53 children hosted in the summer of 2013; We help kids with important documents and legal issues, medical needs, living conditions, and teaching about life and Christianity.

You can make a difference with us, see the last page for more info.

www.marinaskids.org



An orphanage without orphans



It has been almost 3 years since I first visited the orphanage that pushed me to start Marina's Kids. I've made 7 trips to that orphanage since then, getting to know the kids and helping them with many things like clothing and better living facilities. This spring the orphanage, Marina's Kids location #1, got closed down. No one knows the true reason why, or what will happen to the buildings.

What happened to all of the kids? Out of 80 residing in the orphanage that spring about 20 were between 9th and 11th grade, those were all graduated to technical schools. About 10, with completed documents for orphan status were moved to other orphanages. The rest, about 40-50 were sent back to wherever they were found from: poor old grandparent, unfit relatives ...let's just say it is not good. I am doing my best to keep in touch with them, but I have lost contact with many. I pray that they are OK, and one day as they get older and have internet and phones they will find me, as many already have.

I know many of you are asking "was it worth fixing living facilities in that location? Did it help?" I say yes, lots of what we have done is being used by poor children in the community, like kitchen improvements and indoor bathroom for the local elementary school. The bathrooms and roofs for the dorms are sealed at present. They might become a home for the elderly, or in a year or so government will realize that lots of kids in the area are unattended and will reopen the orphanage; it has been known to happen before in Ukraine. Worst case scenario the land might be sold. In any case the care we showed the kids and staff was not for nothing. Relationships were built and we continue to guide kids to a better future. Our work in this location opened many doors at locations all across Ukraine and is enabling us to reach out to many other kids. We continue to make limited improvements in some living facilities at other locations since there are desperate needs. We continue to make these decisions with caution, however in Ukraine there are no guarantees about the longevity of a location.

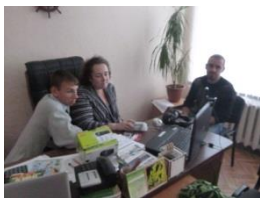
There is new reform in Ukraine, and the government wants to move to foster care instead of orphanages. The foster system will take time to be set up, but little by little orphanages are already closing down. While our work with orphanages may change as a result of the reforms our work with disadvantaged children will continue. Our goal is to follow the kids wherever they go, help with documentations for those who are missing it, so the kids can get medical and financial assistance from the government; we continue to build relationships and guide them as they become upper teenagers, help them to be productive and happy adults, and look for other institutions, such as medical clinics, that work with children which are in need of help.

Maybe one day an orphanage without orphans will actually mean that there are no orphans left, but for now we still have a lot of work to do. If you wish to help, please contact us.

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Location #10:

We arrived just in time for the scheduled Skype call for a boy who is being adopted, this was his first meeting with his future family. It was great to be able to translate their meeting each other. We checked on projects: installed toilets and painted a well used sand box. Of course we checked what needs to be done next. We also have delivered a TV for the kids to watch during the cold winter months.



Location #12: We were not able to personally visit it, but got report and pictures from our volunteer, Igor. We are planning to upgrade the shower house, but when it came to actually getting a contract with the workers, they wanted 2x the money that originally discussed. So we got a boiler for now, and will work on finding different workers and finishing the project summer 2014.

Before, breaking constantly and after many good years of use. Custom made to be able to provide 100 kids with hot water for showers.



Location #11:



We interviewed kids for winter hosting

June: delivery of summer shoes by our volunteer to this location



Checked on our project : auditorium (more in Newsletter #7 and FB)



Painted ceiling and rewired electric: before and after



This project is finally completed, I just do not have all of the pictures yet.



New floors: before and after



Location #14: This was the second time I visited this orphanage. It is one of the locations kids from location #1 were transferred to. We got socks and underclothing for all of the kids (about 90) and several soccer balls and jump ropes. We are also trying to get regular volunteer visits to get to know the kids. We were not allowed to take pictures there.

Location #15:

During my last visit to Ukraine. I made 3 stops there.



All short ones- just in passing, for an hour or so. This is the second location kids were transferred to from location #1. We got them soccer balls, socks and underclothing as well. We had long talk with the director, getting to know each other. The last time I introduced our volunteer Igor to some of the staff. Of course seeing the kids was the best part, I miss them a lot. We are hoping to have a hosting program set up from that location for the summer 2014.

Location #17: This time I was finally able to travel to Kirill's hometown. I stayed at a small church. I have been in touch with a woman from that church for over 4 years now, finally we met in person. We set up a partnership with that church that visits an orphanage and Marina's Kids provided fruit for the kids during the Bible study time.



I spent some time with Kirill's friends.

An Orphan is Picking Life for Her Child.

It is common for a girl who grew up in an orphanage to find a boy that says he loves her and as a result gets pregnant. Many of these pregnancies end up in abortion, but not all. This is Natasha and her 1 month old son Mathew.

Natasha's life was a hard one. But she strived for better. She graduated 9th grade and entered a trade school like many girls to study to be a cook. Most hate what they study, and have no intention of working in the kitchen when finishing school. They only study because there is nothing else and government provides pension while in school. Natasha on the other hand upon graduation offered her help in a promising establishment with potentially good income.

All of the workers in the kitchen were over 30 years old and laughed at a young 20 year old, who said: "Just give me 3 days here, if you do not like what you see, you do not have to hire me or pay me". At the end of that time she had a job. All went well for a few months, that is till she found out that she was pregnant. The law is, if your employee registers her pregnancy with a clinic you may not fire her, and you must pay her for 2 month of maternity leave.

The day Natasha found out that she was expecting she yelled at her boyfriend and they had a fight, he in turn got drunk and went to her work to tell everyone while she went to the clinic. The next day when she came to work where she found out that she was no longer employed.

So, jobless and pregnant she decided to continue a relationship with the boy, they went to live in another city where his parents were. At which point he started to use drugs and stealing from her the money her older brother sent her for doctors' visits. When she tried to get help from his family, they said: "we cannot control him, never could. Just have an abortion, why would you want this idiot's child. The genes pass on you know." She said, "Yes, my parents were bad, and passed on their genes to me too, but I turned out OK". She packed her bag and left. Heading to the town where she finished school, and where her brother and friends were.

I was introduced to her by one of those friends, Kirill. At present she has no income. With help from her brother she is renting a one room apartment with a kitchen. It is on the fifth floor of a five story apartment building.



There is no elevator and no hot water. She bathes the baby and herself by heating up water on the stove, does laundry by hand every day and hangs it on a small balcony. The balcony leaks and water and wind get in to very old windows. Natasha is determined to be a good mom for her baby. She gets food and other things from her friends. Once the government assistance comes in she plans move to a better neighborhood to a lower level floor. I have no reservations that she will make it and that her child will have a lot better childhood than she ever did.

-Marina James, September, 2013

Kolya K.: (September 26, 2013)

"I can walk now!!!" This was the message I got on my phone last week from Kolya K.

Kolya has been in a cast from the waist down for the last 2 month following a very serious surgery. His leg bone where it entered the hip was rotting. That caused lots of pain, and if we did not take care of it, within a short period of time he would have lost his leg. For over a year our volunteers took Kolya to specialists and hospitals to figure out why he was limping and in pain. We ruled out cancer and found several other things wrong with his health that we had to deal with before surgery could take place. During the last few months he has been in a rehabilitation hospital. He will be living, doing school, and getting better there for the next 2 years. The day the cast came off he was so happy, that is for about an hour. He called to tell me: "They are finally taking me to take my cast off!!!"

Not an hour later another call: "I cannot move my legs! I cannot sit! I have strange black hair on my knee!"

I did my best to calm him: "With time, everything will go back to normal, and even better. You have not moved your legs in 2 month following a big surgery. Why do you think you will be in the hospital for 2 years? It takes time to get well".

That made things worse. Kolya started to cry: "What? I will not be able to walk for TWO years??? I thought that I will just be here so that I would not have to go back to the orphanage! I wish you never did the surgery, so much money, so many people helping, and for what? So that I could not walk for 2 years?!"

Just 3 days later when I came to visit him in his room I found an empty bed! The nurse told me that he was put on crutches. I went to the physical therapy room, no Kolya! I went through hallways asking everyone I passed by if they had seen a Kolya. I was told to go to the room he used to be in before the surgery, where he still had friends. Sure enough, he was there, a long walk from his room, first day on crutches, showered and happy was Kolya!

3 more days later a text on my phone: "I can walk again!!!"

Next week Kolya will be traveling to Kharkov's hospital, where the surgery was done, for a follow up appointment with the doctor. He still has a long road ahead, but we are over the harder part.

Please consider supporting Marina's Kids organization, we have many kids who need many different kinds of help. Including Kolya, who still has 2 years of therapy.

Get to know some of our kids: Follow up with Stasic,

Katya, and Nastia:

You might remember the story "Searching for Stasic". If you have not read it, you can find it on our website (publications tab).

Here is what is happening with them now:



Stasic is in a good foster family, he is growing well, and is very loved and happy. We were able to visit him this summer. His 2 sisters are in another foster family. They are adjusting and growing well too. Both are now walking and talking. If you remember there was a time when we thought that Katya was not going to make it at all, and then if she did, there was a swelling in her brain that was a possible problem in her health and development. Well the swelling is gone, and even though it took her till her 1st birthday to start sitting up, she is catching up to where she should be in a development for her age.



Sasha: The bone tuberculosis that crippled his back is not fully gone. As a matter of fact he has gotten a lot worse in the last week. We have arranged for him to travel to a specialist in Kiev. I will keep you updated on Facebook. www.marinaskids.org



From our volunteer, Julia.

Some time ago, Marina James – the president of our organization, mother of many beautiful kids and a wonderful woman asked me from my side to write an article about our mission trips in Ukraine from Marina's Kids name, to describe our work in the regions of Ukraine.

What is charity? We do not do things to show others that we are good, we do things to change kids' life, to prove them that we really love and care for them.

We want to show everybody who wants to help that there are hundreds of ways how to help.



In an orphans life they see a lot. They stand so many things in life that most of us cannot go through. We adults cannot handle many things that they can. An orphan's life is full of hurt: from other people, kids, relatives, bio parents and society in general. Have you ever seen how people look at the orphan child (if he or she is not very clean) when he/she walks on the street?

I have seen many times! Many people do not care, many look with suspicion, many think only the worst about them because they look dirty. They do not know what a huge world is inside each child.

We work with kids who were abandoned by parents, relatives, raped, burnt in fire or water, beaten with sticks or other things. Some kids have HIV, some have problems with hearing....Some kids cannot eat or walk because nobody was taking care of them. But most of the kids are being very healthy. Healthy but very hurt by life.

6 Within years of work at orphanages and with each child personally we created our big family. People who are always ready to work for kids.

For me Marina's Kids represents eternal and pure love to all kids that we know and are trying to help. For the last 7 years I see hundreds of kids at the orphanages, believe me it is very possible to remember all their names. Very possible to visit them and do things for them. Not for money, not for benefits. But because there must be somebody who can do things for others "only because" There is nothing impossible in our life if we really want to do good things.

- We do birthdays parties for kids. With cake, fruit, candies – (you will not believe but I can get so many things for \$ 100 , and that is only 10 people with \$10. Not difficult and so easy to make a child happy.
- Buy winter clothes and boots for kids. Now in winter they will not be wearing flip flops. (they can sometimes come to meet me at the bus station in winter wearing only t-shirt and sandals)
- We decorate kids' rooms at the poor orphanages, putting pictures, clocks, blankets and toys in the rooms, getting books...
- We visit sick kids at the orphanages where kids cannot even leave the rooms. They are mentally and physically very sick. They left all sunshine for us. After visiting this orphanage my life looks perfect for me.
- We arrange sight seeing trips for kids to the big cities.
- Movies
- Picnics
- Buying and delivering medicine
- Getting diapers and baby clothes
- Repair rooms, roofs, yards, floors
- Take kids for dinners
- Shopping or taking kids out for a walk.
- Visiting kids at the hospitals
- Delivering letters to kids and gifts from their host families



We all can help. Some can help sending pictures, posters and candies to kids for birthdays, some can help with medicine or diapers (only a few \$ from a few people and I can visit 2 or 3 orphanages with gifts)

I hope one day we will see many kids becoming successful people, soccer players, teachers, doctors, layers, businessmen...

Just do not give them wrong and fast promises, but try to support them in the way that you can. One day at a time!

Let them in your life and you will get much more in return.

We have only a few weeks before winter hosting. Help us to make children happy during Christmas!

www.marinaskids.org

Location #2: Technical school clubhouse: August -October 2013

In this location we work with orphans that have aged out of orphanages and now live and study in a technical school. There is almost no supervision and the kids leaving orphanages are missing key knowledge to succeed in life, and they also do not trust most adults. Our program is set up to be run in 3 stages.

- Stage 1: get to know kids , show them we care.
- Stage 2: find local volunteers and have the kids starting to trust them as well. With dinners and other time together.
- Stage 3: rent an apartment that will be a safe place for kids to go to, where we are now.

Pasha, one of more talented and driven kids of the bunch. Every time I come, I bring him something to develop his talent, this time it is a Chinese yo-yo. He practiced the whole weekend.

I would like to advocate for this young man: Pasha has a younger 12 yrs. old brother. Both are adoptable. Blind adoption anyone? These 2 boys are wonderful. Pasha only has one year to be found by his forever family, or he will be a forever orphan.

Brothers: Pasha, 16
and Ricardo, 12

2013/03



Sharing a meal together...

My second stop was after the opening of our club house. I came with Kirill to visit the kids. We stayed at the apartment that is walking distance from the technical school. This apartment has been rented for the purpose of being a safe comfortable place where the kids can come after school and on the weekends. It has hot water, laundry machine, good kitchen, pantry filled with simple food. Orphans and other kids from poor families are invited to come, fellowship with our volunteers. There is a set schedule of what to expect on certain nights. Some nights are for cooking lessons, some for a movie that can be later discussed, one night a week is just for girls, one is just for boys.



At present there not that many kids using the club, many are shy, but Yana, our key volunteer at that location is persistent. She has been visiting kids at the technical school regularly and we see the results of the kids being more open with her and coming more often to the club house.

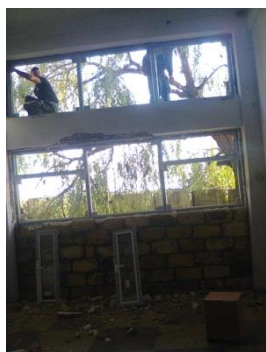


Zatoca Hospital for Children

Location # 13

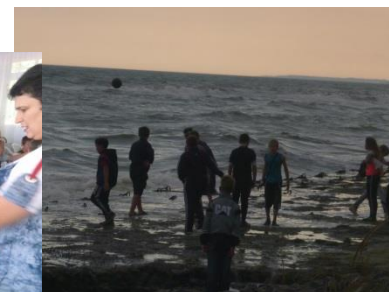
Sanatorium Zatoca for children is a new addition to Marina's Kids locations. Located in Odessa region and servicing kids with diseases like scoliosis, and all the way up to tuberculosis of the bones. This hospital houses about 350 kids from all kids of backgrounds, about 30-100 of them orphans (the number varies). This is the only place I know of that will take orphans with conditions like that, and they come from all over Ukraine. The kids stay there anywhere from few weeks in the summer, and in cases of some orphans for 2 or even more years. There is a school on premises for those who stay there during the school year, There are physical therapy rooms, aroma therapy, heat and light therapy. In the summer all of the kids go to the beach of the Black Sea that is on the property of the sanatorium.

This sanatorium was built in 1937 by the order of the King of the kingdom of Romania, who ruled that region during 1918-1940. The sanatorium was originally built for rehabilitation of children suffering from bone tuberculosis from rich Romanian families. It is in a shape of a cross, still with the original floors, and walls. The sanatorium sits out of the public eye, and inside children suffer with drafty windows, moldy bathrooms, and antiquated medical equipment. There are lots needs. The windows were last replaced 60 years ago and with a constant salty breeze from the sea they have so deteriorated that some are starting to fall out. They are taped and nailed and covered with plastic. Some have been bricked over. The hardest thing for me to see was once beautiful doorways on the first floor that opened up in the summer and let the sun shine and fresh air in, now taped for the winter so that no fresh air can get in. As the building is heated in the winter the windows sweat. The water condenses on them from the inside, and then evaporates to the ceiling, causing mold problems. The showers are no better, the smell of mold is overwhelming due to the improper ventilation. This is a government hospital, the government pays salaries, provides food and medicine, and about \$200 a month (yes, it is not a typo: two hundred dollars a month) for building repairs, medical equipment, ambulance repair and gas for it.



Update since the article was written: 2 new windows are now installed

***This article is from September 2013, Facebook post
See a lot more pictures ,with descriptions , from this
location on our FB page.***



Marina's Kids would like to help: the Head Doctor's vision is to start improving the life of the children by first replacing the windows in 9 rooms that will be the orphan children's quarters. He wants to set up one of the rooms as a living room with TV, games, couches, and other things that will help kids feel at home and have a good visiting place for guests, like local church groups and American missionaries as well. For now all of the orphans are mixed in with other kids and do not have an advocate actively looking out for their interests, as parent would. A new position has been created for a head nurse for the orphan kids. It will be a woman that I came to know well, she was a head nurse in an orphanage that just closed down and has been volunteering with Marina's Kids for a while. Inna has been taking good care on Kolya K, and making sure that he got the medical help needed for his leg. As well as going beyond her work duty to take care of many other kids from that orphanage.

Marina's kids will be looking for new bed sheets as well. All of the sheets are very old and have been patched many times over. If anyone has connections with a hotels that have slightly damaged sheets please let me know.

We also will be looking to get the hospital new equipment. Their equipment is from 1980 and is constantly breaking.

We believe that we can replace 2 of the room's windows later this fall, and hope that by spring we will raise enough money to replace the other 7 rooms, as well as redo the shower room properly. It is my hope that Marina's Kids can bring a group of people there in the spring to do the projects and spend time with the kids. Marina's Kids organization is involved with many projects that improve lives of the children. To learn more about the programs and how to support us please visit our website www.marinaskids.org and our FB page.

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Location #3:

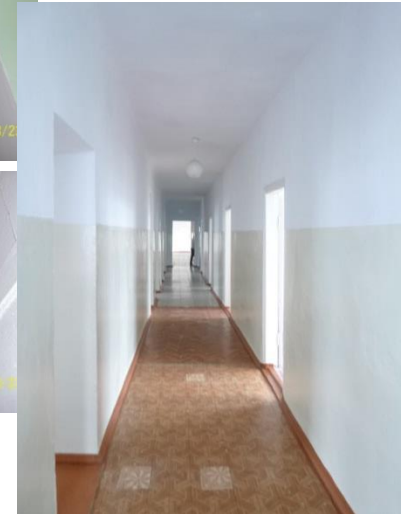
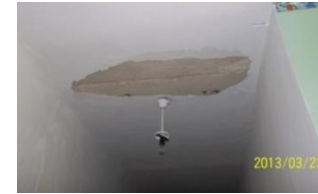
September 2013

I visited this location with Kirill for a few days. We checked on upgrading the second floor project. Close to 30 bedrooms now have new floors, wallpaper, lighting and drapes. It feels and looks so much cozier and the kids just love it.

We also were able to translate phone call for many kids that were hosted in US during the summer hosting programs. Visits with kids is the best and most important part of our mission.

Summer projects: supplying graduate kids with bedding and other things as they are ready to go to technical schools.

Sponsoring the graduation: prom dresses shipped from USA.



Before and After



We have also got some lice shampoo, some more paint, and replaced a door for medical center that was a fire hazard.



Praise, Prayer, and Plans

For the next 6 months

Winter Hosting: About 30 kids are coming for our program.

Summer 2014 hosting program will be ready with listings in February with the deadline in May. We are expecting about 70-100 kids available to choose from 7-10 different orphanages.

<http://marinaskids.org/hosting> if you would like more information. Or **call our** Hosting Program Director, Michelle Phillips 859.496.0419

Clothing collection/ shipping:

- Clothing and other items are needed.
- Orphanage assistance will be happening throughout the year as well as on the trips.

Transitional care: Continue to develop and implement programs for the older orphans.

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

Mission Trips: I plan to bring a group this spring April-May timeline to Ukraine. We will be staying mostly in Zatoka. Fixing living quarters for the orphan rooms. Doing a art/ fun camp for kids. We will also visit several other locations. The trip will last 10-14 days. I will send out more info on this in January.

Future projects:

Medical: Sasha and Kolya K.

Documents: Many kids do not have proper need help getting documents.

Repairs: Windows in Zatoka hospital; Leaky roofs in 2 different orphanages;

Shoes: we want to provide 300-500 orphans with winter shoes in December.

Graduating Kids: We want to support older children once more with graduation and a care packages including bags, clothing, bedding and school supplies as they leave the orphanages to go to technical schools.

We are looking for volunteers: secretary, different project managers, grant writers, writing and editing, driving for different projects, clothing donation collectors and sorters, website manager, fund raisers, organization presenters and promoters. There are many other needs, please call me, Marina, for more info.



Thank You

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

Marina's Kids | 123 New St. | Glenside, PA 19038
(267)388-1361 | www.marinaskids.org
Marina's Kids is a not for profit organization and is recognized as a public charity under section 501c3 of the internal revenue code. EIN: 30-0687266

Summer 2013 hosting program: 53 orphans experienced a family's love.