



To Russia with Love



A group of institutionalized youth on a balcony outside their facility in St. Petersburg

Charlie and Miki Chastain have been working with disabled orphans and street children in St. Petersburg, Russia since 2001. They learned there are about 2.6 million orphans and street children in Russia. Of these, studies indicate that 80% will be molested, 60% will become alcoholics or drug abusers and 20% will commit suicide. The Chastains made several short-term mission trips early on and continuously sought the Lord's guidance about the possibility of moving to St. Petersburg on a full-time basis. In late 2005, the Chastain's approached the Mission Society with this idea and were commissioned in September, 2006. After much preparation, the Chastain's made the move to Saint Petersburg in May 2009.



The Russia Team: Susan Callahan, Deedee Vaughters, Pam McCollum and translator Anya, who grew up in a Russian Orphanage

In June, Charlie and Miki hosted a short-term mission team from St. John's. Comprised of **Deedee Vaughters, Susan Callahan and Pam McCollum**, it was St. John's first short-term mission team to Russia. The goals were to a) tour several facilities to better assess their needs and b) provide love and personal attention that the children desperately needed. *(continued next column)*

Deedee recalls the team's initial reactions upon arriving. "I think that we were most surprised by the conditions of the facilities that many of the orphans were living in. In the US, these buildings would have been condemned. There was the ever present smell of decay and unsanitary conditions." The team was also dismayed to see the extremely thin limbs on some of the orphans in the disabled facility. This was due to atrophy from a lack of play and exercise. The government requires that these orphans go outside only one hour per week and many do not meet this minimal requirement. They also noticed many children were tied to their beds or cribs with socks for safety reasons. All of this is a result of a shortage of caregivers, who are often responsible for over thirty children each.

Deedee has her hands full with one of the younger children



Despite the bleak outlook most of these children have encountered to date, there are recent signs of hope:

- ▶ Russia has been free for only about 20 years. There is hope in the new generation.
- ▶ A significant number of Germans come and volunteer with these children. Germany is also giving money for capital improvements to some of these orphanages.
- ▶ Some drastic improvements in the disabled adult facilities have just begun. They are being taught life skills and provided assistance in finding employment. They are also now allowed to marry, own pets and have computers.
- ▶ There are American families living in Russia who run transitional homes for the teenage orphans. The teens live with these families and are learning life skills as well as about God's love.

The team also wanted to emphasize their positive experience in St. Petersburg. "It is safe! Never once did we feel threatened there. We feel very comfortable telling everyone that St. Petersburg is a safe place to do God's work if so called." (www.actsofadvocacy.org)

Faith Promise Update

- ▶ 2009 Faith Promise Card Total: \$176,512
 - ▶ 2009 GOLT Proposed Funding Budget: \$144,000
 - ▶ Total Funds Collected Through 6-20-09: \$90,528
- Thank you St. John's for all your support that makes these important mission efforts possible!

Honduras Agape 2009

A mission team of twelve members traveled to Quimistan, Honduras on Wednesday, June 10. Team members from St. John's included the **Eberhard family--Brian, Beth, Christa and Annalise** as well as **Lauren Norton**. The work started in Santa Clara as team members dug a foundation in the rocky ground for a new preschool, planted beans on a mountainside and carried bricks from the kiln to the school's construction site. They also helped out with a bi-monthly health clinic in the small town of Banderas. On Saturday, the team had a break and toured a new hospital facility in Quimistan before cooling off in a scenic jungle waterfall that afternoon.

On Sunday, team members helped out with a Vacation Bible School (VBS) for the Agape Promise children in Quimistan as well as for school children in Banderas. Referred to as a "ve-be-es-iendo" by the locals, activities included singing songs, performing skits, playing games, coloring and making bracelets. The children in Banderas also received tote bags of school supplies donated by the fourth grade class at Aiken Elementary.



Annalise Eberhard and Lauren Norton help Beth Eberhard distribute school supplies in Banderas

A new activity for the mission team was the building of a desk and chair for a local school. Brian worked with a local woodworker in Quimistan to help build a prototype desk for future models. Team members were also able to view new stoves provided by the Honduras Agape Foundation that are 75% more efficient than older types, greatly reducing the amount of smoke inside each home.

As Beth summarized their trip, "Our time in Honduras was all about planting seeds, both literally and figuratively." The bean seedlings began to sprout leaflets within the week and the school's footers were securely installed. Finally, through two VBS sessions and daily interaction with the children, the team helped build relationships with the future of Quimistan and Santa Clara. (click on "June" under Blog Archives; <http://hafmissions.blogspot.com/>)



The team takes a welcome break from digging in the hot sun by cooling off in a local waterfall

Dentistas Down South

Dr. Randy Shelley of St. John's joined six others on a mission trip to Quimistan, Honduras in late March to provide dental care for both children and adults. Dr. Charlie Wyont of Aiken was the other "dentista" on the trip. Despite equipment failure and periodic power outages, the team treated 73 patients in three days. The first two clinic days were in Quimistan, where all the Agape Promises children were treated. The third clinic day was in a new location, Pueblo Nuevo, where 35 children and adults were treated. Even though this clinic has no running water, the team extracted 100 teeth.

Despite the long days and difficult conditions, everyone felt blessed to be able to participate. This is the eleventh consecutive year Dr. Shelley has been involved in this ministry to provide aid and comfort to the people of Honduras. (<http://hafmissions.blogspot.com/>; click on "March" under the Blog Archive).



Dr. Randy Shelley attends to a young Honduran patient while dental student/translator Angie holds a flashlight due to a power outage

Recent Grads in Action

Whitney Simons spoke to a standing room only audience in Ward Hall on June 21. Whitney returned to St. John's to describe her eight month internship with Athletes in Action in Puebla, Mexico. AIA is a division of Campus Crusade for Christ and is looking to reach out to student-athletes in Puebla's 20+ universities. Whitney related her small team's struggle to develop this outreach program from scratch. "It took us basically three months to really get started," she explained.

Despite a culture dominated with religious symbols and rituals, Whitney's team found many who were yearning for something more meaningful in their lives. She described a major turning point when a team of female basketball players decided to give their lives to Christ one evening. This helped open many other opportunities to share the Gospel as well as help disciple recent converts. At the end of her internship, Whitney was not yet ready to return home. However, the arrival of the swine flu ("el gripe porcina") in May helped signal that the end had indeed come. She thanked St. John's for the prayers and financial support that made this once in a lifetime experience possible. Congratulations, Whitney, for responding to the Lord's call and stepping out in faith!



Whitney Simons talks with the Kenyan winner of a marathon in Puebla, Mexico

David Dill (grandson of Elizabeth Dill), a recent architecture graduate, will serve as an intern in Kampala, Uganda from August through December. He will work for Engineering Ministries International on the design of a new school project. St. John's is supporting David's trip through funds and prayer support. We wish David much success in his internship and look forward to hearing from him in person upon its completion.

Global Impact Celebration:

The 2010 GIC will be January 27-31.

Mark your calendars now so you won't miss out on any of the events!

VBS Brings Community Together

Children from five area churches, Helping Hands and Christ Central were invited to participate in a first ever Community Vacation Bible School (VBS) at Memorial Baptist Church the week of June 22nd. Memorial Baptist, First Baptist, New Life Ministries, St. Thaddeus, St. John's, Christ Central and Helping Hands all worked together to provide food, volunteers and decorations for a "Crocodile Dock" VBS. **Michelle Brown**, Director of Children's Ministries at St. John's, and Virginia Hammond of Memorial Baptist were the co-directors for the event. Other volunteers from St. John's included: **Jackie Hyche, Jennifer Willoughby, Frances Osteen, Karyn Osteen, Rebecca Osteen, Ann Jones and Heather Jones**. St. John's helped finance the VBS with Faith Promise funds. Also, Food Lion, Kroger and McDonalds all made donations for the event.

By all accounts, the VBS was a great success. Daily attendance averaged around 75 children and youth leaders, plus an abundance of adult volunteers. Michelle was especially impressed with the leadership skills displayed by the youth leaders from Christ Central. "They are helping to lead the younger kids around the rotation each night. Their attitudes are so positive and their fire for God is awesome to see!" With volunteers, food, decorations, prayers and funding coming from so many different sources, it was truly a "community" event.

Upcoming Events

Jerusalem (Local):

▶ **ACTS Monthly Collections:** July: cereal; August: instant or canned potatoes; September: canned beans

▶ **GOLT Potluck Supper/Missionary Visit:** A potluck supper to meet a new missionary team will be held July 22 at 6:30 PM in Ward Hall. GBGM missionaries Mike and Sherri Morrissey will also be visiting that day. The Morrissey's, both ordained ministers, are the first United Methodist missionaries to serve in Thailand.

Judea (Regional):

▶ **Santee Salkehatchie:** St. John's youth and adults will serve in the Santee camp July 11-18, helping to provide much needed renovations and repairs to homes in the area.

▶ **Kairos #32** will be held September 16-19 at McCormick Correctional Institution. St. John's currently has nine volunteers signed up to serve on an inside team or in the kitchen. The "Cookie Campaign" will begin in late July.

Ends of the Earth (International):

▶ **Short-term trip to Kenya:** A trip to hold a Christian Camp for the "Life for Children" orphans is set for August 6-18.

▶ **The Mission Society** will celebrate its 25th anniversary with an open house and banquet on September 11 at Norcross First United Methodist Church in Norcross, GA.



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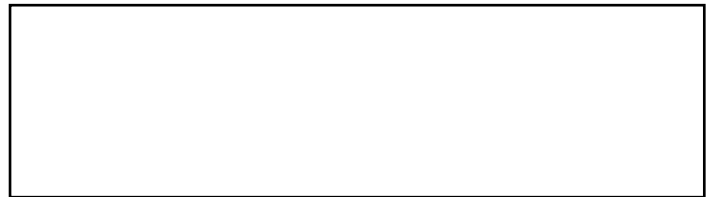
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PRAYER REQUEST BOARD

- ▶ During these difficult times, may God continue to meet the financial needs of all our mission partners.
- ▶ May God's healing and strength touch Jenny Reyes' father and may the Reyes' family gain clarity for their travel plans.
- ▶ May God provide Shirley Townsend-Jones with volunteers and organization as she begins a new ministry based upon her visit to ACTS while here at St. John's.
- ▶ May God continue to open doors for the SEED Company so that His message will be spread to the ends of the earth.
- ▶ Praise God for the 70 children and families that were reached through the Community VBS! May God begin the planning for next year's VBS.

**"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
I Thessalonians 5:16**

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For an online version of this newsletter and links to our mission partners' web sites, visit: **www.stjohns-umc.org** and click on **"Missions"** then select **"Global Outreach"**.