

“These circumstances were not a coincidence. They were the plan of God. The Gospel is not only words; it means hope and compassion. People need to see compassion first. Remember that Jesus first satisfied the needs of the crowds, then told them the Gospel. That is what has happened here.”

—Pastor Alejandro Bojorquez

Dear friends and partners of The Harbor,

As we get closer to celebrate seven years of our ministry on September 3rd we can sit back and reflect on the trials and accomplishments over the years that have passed so quickly. Orphans in Russia have been an issue for almost a century, and the further we get the more of a problem we have. Orphans are one of the most vulnerable people in our society today along with the homeless and street children who have faced major hardships in their childhood. Frequently, they wonder why they have had such a difficult past, but will never know nor understand until they leave this world. However, we know that no matter what happens on this earth, there is a reason for it and it is not a coincidence.

The Harbor has seen 50 of our graduates become successful as a result of someone believing in them and giving them an opportunity that has transformed their lives. Offering the gospel without building a relationship does not show results or produce a life of value; thus, The Harbor has stepped in and shown love, compassion, mercy and kindness. Compassion is when you not only know that there is a problem, but actually do something about it. Thus, The Harbor is satisfying the needs of the lost and forgotten souls which build a path to salvation and the ability to bring the Gospel. As a result, 80 percent of our graduates have made the commitment to accept Christ as their personal Savior.

We are happy to report at the beginning of the new school year that we are now supporting 18 residents in the two-year residential program and 4 graduates in the Next Step Phase, a post-adaptation program. The summer went well. Many of our residents have found a job, learned how to sustain their job for a long period of time, earned money and learned some of the basic concepts toward good stewardship. It is a challenge to teach orphans how to be good steward of their finances. Instant gratification is their major temptation after earning their own funds. Thus, we have seen a great success in the graduates gaining employment and job skills.

In addition, Luba, The Harbor's Director, found a program outside of St. Pete that teaches survival skills and how to be part of a team. It is a very challenging program because our participants had to live in tents out in the forest without such luxuries as a shower or indoor plumbing, as well as other comfortable city privileges. The program also tested their faith and ability to survive in difficult situations. Such training helps to build character, strength and care for one another. Just a week ago, The Harbor staff went through the same training as well. Such trainings equip not only our graduates, but also our staff as well. We hope to tell you more about them in the future.

Our goal in 2008-2009 is to train 50-100 orphans at the Professional Training Center (PTC). In the fall of 2009, we desire to open a third residential program that will house 8 additional residents with 3 new mentors; thus, The Harbor hopes to reach 24-26 residents in a two-year program and 12-14 graduates in the Next Step Phase, or post-adaptation program.

“Can we ever say that anything is truly ours? All things—possessions, talents, jobs, ministries, loved ones, even our very lives—belong to God. Our responsibility is to use these gifts to glorify Him and point people to Christ. ‘If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have’” (2 Cor. 8:12, NIV). - *Decision Magazine* by Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

We are grateful to every one of you for joining The Harbor and faithfully supporting the cause. You are using the gifts that God has given you by enabling and pointing our participants and graduates to Jesus Christ, which brings glory to Him. "The value of a gift is judged not only by its size, but also by the attitude of the heart and motive behind it." We know that your motives behind your gifts are pure, faithful, filled with passion, love and care. Thank you for your faithfulness.

A brief update about our residents:

While being at The Harbor, **Ura** has learned qualities such as patience, perseverance and politeness. This has earned him the ability to work in a computer store. One of our male participants, **Misha**, continues to be a challenge for The Harbor staff. We are happy that he began a job at one of the crepe/blini cafés this summer. Please pray for Misha due to much of his difficulties of defiance and strong atheist beliefs. Our new resident, **Andrei**, works at McDonalds. **Dima & Borya** are both in the process of finding a job; however, they also seem to prefer the path of least resistance and hard work. **Igor & Sasha** for the summer were with their relatives so they worked in the suburbs. **Denis** has been struggling to find a job so he needs your prayers. Employment in the summer has shown great results and a tremendous change in our residents. We hope to continue to see independence and growth in the lives of our residents through hard work and God's will in their lives.

Our girls did really well this summer as well. **Ira**, The Harbor mentor for our female participants, has stepped down from this position and now works as the Director of our Professional Training Center (PTC). Therefore, **Ulia** has taken the position as our new mentor for the girls. Many of our girls this summer worked in the capacity of a salesperson. As reported by many of our female participants, this type of work is quite enjoyable.

Additionally, we had American volunteers who worked with us. **Lauren** was with us for three weeks, and she has written a letter concerning her thoughts and observations that we would like to share with you in the future. We also had a volunteer named **John** who is a son of missionary parents that have been living in St. Pete for the past 17 years. Through their experience, The Harbor learned more life skills that we will implement in the future that will enable our graduates to live more independently according to their budget. Many of our residents have observed the financial freedoms that many foreigners, even volunteers of The Harbor, have exhibited over the years. John and his parents have helped The Harbor by being an example of the humble life-style that is required by many of the participants.

The Harbor prays and hopes that our graduates will set their priorities on God by making investments into the kingdom of God rather than in earthly treasures. We continue to pray daily that they will surrender their lives to Christ and will anchor themselves in Him especially for those times that temptations cross their path. We want their faith to be strong and have root so that when storms rage against them and troubles of this world come it will not cause instability in their soul. Many times it is those small daily choices that so impact their lives. With a good foundation rooted in Christ, those choices can lead them down the path of God's will for their lives rather than a life of risks and bad behavior.

Truly words cannot express our deep gratitude and appreciate for your commitment and partnership with us. Orphans need God now more than ever as things tighten in Russia politically. It is our great desire that our graduates who have been transformed by making a commitment to follow Christ will become radical Christians to be examples by touching the lives of other orphans. This cannot be done without God, as well as your faithful prayers and your eternal investment into the kingdom of God. Thank you so much.

Blessings and love, Alex & The Harbor

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