

Dear Friends of The Harbor,

August, 2010

Another trip to Russia has come and gone. One of the purposes for this trip was to spend time with recent orphan graduates that have NOT gone through our program. I wanted to see how they were fairing, what obstacles they were facing, and get a better feel for how The Harbor can address the needs of this orphan population. I, also, felt a need to reconnect with my original vision. Spending so much time in front of the computer and on the phone has sapped some of my passion. I needed to see, feel, touch, and smell the need again up-close.

Marina, "Afraid"

Marina is 23 years old. She left the orphanage four and a half years ago for vocational school. She had no choice of which school to go to or which vocations to study. Marina holds certificates in two vocations, neither of which she likes, nor are they in demand. She graduated two weeks ago and was given a one-time sum of money from the government in the amount of \$1100. She received a 10'x15' room in a communal apartment that used to belong to her mother before she died when Marina was six years old. This is where I met with her and spent the afternoon.

Marina is about 5'2" and 90 lbs., dripping wet. Her room has a bed, two chairs, table, dresser, small refrigerator, and a boom box. There were no pictures, posters, or wall-paper on the concrete walls. Her one window was covered with shabby, tattered, yellowed curtains. There was one 60-watt light bulb hanging from the ceiling and no carpet on the very old and worn, bare-wood floors. Her room and the rest of the apartment reeked of animal urine and I tried hard not to turn up my nose. Her refrigerator had some cheese in it and she had a box of tea and cookies on the table.

I asked Marina if she had a job. She had worked for part of one day peeling potatoes in a restaurant. She told me she peeled a whole tub of potatoes and when they brought her the second tub and told her she was too slow, she quit and walked out. She has no idea of how to find another job. Marina has not ventured much out of her room because she is "afraid." She has never lived alone before. She doesn't know where any of the stores, clinics, or government offices are located in her region, and she lacks the confidence to just go explore. She dreams of having a good job, a marriage, and a family, yet, she has no idea or plan of how to get there. Marina is "panicked" about the present, so chooses to live in a fantasy world. After buying her start up furniture and bedding she has \$300 left, period. No safety nets. No parents or relatives. No friends any more. I asked if she was close to any of her previous care givers in the orphanage. She told me there was one. However, she has no contact number and no phone, even if she did. Marina said the orphanage was glad to get rid of them all, and she did not feel she could call for help.

Unfortunately, Marina's story is all-too-common for the tens of thousands of Russian orphans that leave the orphanages, annually. Marina was in an orphanage where she was well fed. They took care of everything for her. In fact, the government just spent a large sum of money renovating the orphanage to a state of the art facility! But, no one cared for Marina as a person. No one bothered to see what her gifts were, or to ask her what she wanted to study. No one made sure she was getting an education that

would actually translate into a job. No one helped her learn a work ethic, or taught her how to cook, clean, do a budget, pay bills, or do a job interview. No one helped her work through the loss of her mother. No one held her, rubbed her back, played with her hair. No one told her that her Father is the King of Kings, that she has a creator that adores her and has a plan for her. Life, at age-23, would be different for Marina had she come to The Harbor.

Natasha, “Hopeful”

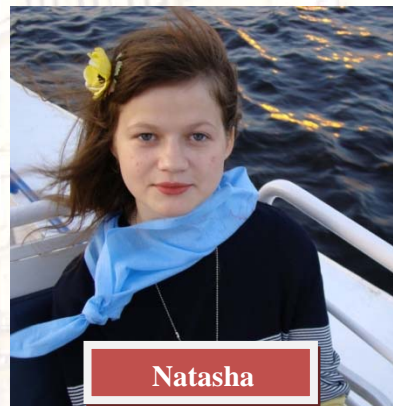
Natasha, one of our very recent graduates, stands in stark contrast to Marina. She came to Christ about a year ago and Jesus has radically transformed her heart and her life. I went to church with Natasha and was amazed to see her leading worship! During the sermon, I sat next to her and laughed as she helped me find books of the Bible in a Russian Bible! But, the most precious moment came at a picnic with her. We were going around the circle and saying our names and one adjective to describe ourselves. People were saying things like, “Masha, soccer.” When it came to Natasha’s turn, she said, “Natasha, hopeful!”

The Contrast

What does it mean for us to “visit the widow and orphan in their distress” (James 1:27)? Visiting with Marina reinvigorated my passion and conviction that Jesus desperately longs to give these orphans a future and a hope, like, for Natasha. Jesus sees each one, individually, and He wants to restore them, holistically. As His hands and feet, we can do no less.

Natasha’s transformation does not come cheaply. Yet, I want you to know that The Harbor is able to accomplish this for almost half of what the Russian government is spending per child in the orphanages, and substantially lower than what we spend on our own children here in America. Your faithful partnership is truly saving lives and giving hope!

My heart is bursting with gratitude to you and praise to our God. For all the Natasha’s...THANK YOU! For all the Marina’s out there...Let us not grow weary of love and good deeds!



Natasha

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melinda Cathey".

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Zhana & Luda

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