The Utah-Russia Institute—A Look Back

The Utah-Russia Institute was established in 1993 under the direction of Governor Michael O. Leavitt of Utah and former Prime Minister-Yegor Gaidar of Russia. The purpose of the organization is to establish educational, humanitarian, cultural, and business relationships and projects between the people of Utah and the citizens of Russia.

One of the first projects the Institute undertook was a humanitarian/educational exchange to Nar’yan Mar.

Nursing students and faculty from Utah Valley State College traveled to Nar’yan Mar to donate time and equipment to meet the medical needs of the people there. While there, they met a young girl afflicted with scoliosis since childhood.

In the fall of 1998, this young girl, Oksana Martyn, through the efforts of those who had traveled to Nar’yan Mar a few years previously and the Utah-Russia Institute, came to America to get a new lease on life.

On October 6, 1998, Oksana was operated on at Shriners Hospital in Salt Lake City, free of charge. This operation was a success and dramatically changed the course of Oksana’s life.

Living in a society of intense economic pressure, where physical disability could mean no job and no social standing, Oksana had little hope for the future.

But the corrective surgery allowed Oksana to return to “normal” life and activities. She was able to return to public schools and begin to plan for the future.

Before the operation, she was at least three inches shorter than her mother. Now she proudly stands an inch taller.

Russian Trivia

1. What year did the Iron Curtain fall?
2. In what present day country was the wall that served as symbol of the Iron Curtain located?
3. What currency is used in Russia?
4. How many letters are in the Russian alphabet?
5. What is the capital of Russia?
6. In which city of Russia is the Hermitage located?
7. Who is the most renowned and beloved Russian poet?
8. Who is the current president of Russia?

Look for answers in next month’s edition.
Curiosity, Culture and Cooking: RASG’s Evening of Russian Cuisine

On the evening of Friday, May 11th, several RASG families and supporters were welcomed into the Wahl home for lessons in preparing Borscht and Pirozhi, two Russian favorites. The instruction was lead by Nadia Alekseeva and her friend Oksana, both students at Utah Valley State College. Nadia and Oksana illustrated how easy and enjoyable Russian cooking can be. Aside from the demonstrations and endless chatting, everyone enjoyed browsing the beautiful Russian artifacts displayed around the home. Without question, the evening’s highlight was tasting the Borscht and Pirozhi after waiting patiently throughout the preparations and cooking time.

Many thanks to Nadia and Oksana for their excellent work in preparing the food and to Tom and Merrilee Wahl for so hospitably opening their home to all participants. The activity was wonderful, and we encourage everyone to attend the next cooking showcase. Look for the recipes in this issue.

Is Love Enough?

More and more Utah families are opting to adopt from Eastern Europe. These families are made up of loving, strong, compassionate people. Many of them have decided to adopt because their hearts have been touched by the plight of hundreds of thousands of children who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves in deplorable situations, living at a subsistence level with no hope of realizing their potential.

These caring couples and families open their hearts and homes to the children. Many of the children thrive in the warm and comfortable atmosphere of their new homes, basking in the love of their adoring parents.

Unfortunately, some of these adoption stories do not have such a happy ending. Some parents quickly find themselves overwhelmed, despite their best efforts to reach out to and love the children.

On May 17, KSL News (Channel 5) aired a special on the frequently unforeseen difficulties that accompany foreign adoption. In the special, parents who have adopted pointed out that sometimes love is just not enough. One mother explained, “The hardest part was we thought that all it took was love.”

These families struggling with the darker side of foreign adoption need all the support and love they can get. Some community resources are available, although many parents are unaware of them. Such resources can be a godsend and can mean the difference between a family made whole and a disruption of the adoption.

Foreign adoption can be wonderfully rewarding, but it is important to remember that there are and will always be challenges.

If you need more information on local resources or the challenges facing foreign adoptions, please contact Jenny Davis at (801) 222-8897.

For a full transcript of the KSL special report, visit www.ksl.com.

Focus on Children

Focus on Children, a non-profit humanitarian and adoption agency, will hold a reunion party on Saturday, June 9 at Riverview Junior High and Riverview Park in Murray.

Anyone who is interested in international adoption from Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, or several other countries, can be included by contacting Dellory Matthews at focusonchildren@juno.com or 801-982-1420.

There will be entertainment, door prizes, a quilt raffle to support humanitarian projects, a catered lunch, puppet show, and pinatas.

In addition, one of the organization’s Ukrainian coordinators will attend as well as agency staff and many families with internationally adopted children.

This event is free but you must have reservations by June 7 to be included in the count for the caterer.

For more information on Focus on Children, please visit www.focusonchildren.com.
If you travel to Moscow or other large Eastern European cities during the summer, you might be surprised to find the streets less crowded than you had anticipated. In fact, you may have to look long and hard to find someone who is not a tourist like yourself, especially on the weekends.

You might ask yourself, “Where have all the Russians gone?” And you might be very surprised to learn the answer.

A time-honored tradition in Russia is the annual exodus to the “dacha” - a small home and a piece of land outside the city where a typical Russian family grows its food. Throughout the spring and summer, many Russians travel to these small homes and spend their days growing and cultivating gardens—food to sell at the market or to live on throughout the cold winter.

A dacha is typically heated only by a wood-burning furnace, although there is little need for added warmth in the summer. Many dachas do have electricity, but the only access to running water is at a nearby well or tap. Dachas are built up in little communities and the camaraderie among members of such communities leads to a very hospitable and comfortable ambiance.

Those who visit the dachas always enjoy the seemingly relaxed atmosphere, but do not be deceived—dachas are where the Russians go to work, not to play. It is at the dachas that the hardworking characteristic of Russian nature is most evident.

The dacha communities are like ghost towns for most of the year, but in the summer—they come alive!

### Upcoming Events

**JUNE**
- **June 1** Mothers for the Children of Russia Benefit Concert (8:00 Provo Marriott)
- **June 2** Mothers for the Children of Russia Benefit Concert (7:00 Skyline High)
- **June 12** Independence Day (Russia)

**JULY**
- **July 27** Focus on Children Benefit Concert “Colors “
- **AUGUST**
- **Aug. 11** Russian Adoption Support Group Annual Summer Picnic (11:00-2:00)
- **Aug. 18** Focus on Children Benefit Concert- Marvin Goldstein (7:00)

**AUGUST**
- **Aug. 20-25** Focus on Children host booth at Provo High School Craft Fair

**SEPTEMBER**
- **Sept. 22-28** Russia Days

**Russian Adoption Support Group joins FRUA**

The Russian Adoption Support Group is in the process of becoming a Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption (FRUA) chapter here in Utah.

Many of our parents are already aware of this wonderful resource and have utilized it in the past.

There are many benefits to this change and we expect an increase in numbers as we switch over.

Changes to the functionality of the Russian Adoption Support group will be minimal.

The greatest change will come in the form of increased access to information concerning adoption and post-adoption challenges, nationwide networking and continuity for all those who move out of state.

Annual fees will be paid to FRUA at a rate of $30 per family per year. Some of this money will be used to support the national network, while some of it will be used in our local chapter.

After you become a member of the group, you will begin to receive quarterly booklets full of wonderful information on culture, adoption and life in general. These booklets will serve as a great resource to you and your family.

I hope you will take the time to fill out the enclosed application form. If you have already paid your fees this year, please give me a call at (801) 222-8897 so that the money can be sent to the appropriate office.

If you have any further questions on this change, please feel free to call.
RASG recipes courtesy of Nadia Alekseeva

Borscht

Ingredients

¾ head of cabbage, sliced approx. ¼” thick and 2” long
1 medium beet, peeled and shredded
2 medium carrots, peeled and shredded
½ yellow onion, diced
1 medium bell pepper, diced
4 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 lb. Steak meat, sliced into strips
small can tomato paste (1/2 large can)
salt/pepper to taste
sour cream (optional)

Directions

First boil approximately 10 cups of water. When boiling, add the potatoes and meat. At the same time, sauté the onions, beets, carrots and peppers in a separate pan. As the meat and potatoes continue to boil, skim the surface of the water and remember to lower heat to medium when meat looks done. After the onions are slightly browned and the beets, carrots and peppers are softened, add tomato paste and continue to stir. Add the sautéed mixture to the meat and potatoes and let it simmer on low-medium. When the potatoes have stewed in the Borscht for at least 5-10 minutes and are considerably soft, remove approximately half of them from the soup. Mash the removed potatoes, and stir them back into the soup. Keep the Borscht on a low simmer for at least twenty more minute, allowing the flavors to diffuse. Add salt and pepper to taste while on heat. Upon removing from heat, serve warm with a dollop of sour cream (if desired). Enjoy!

Pirozhki

Ingredients

½ head cabbage, minced
½ yellow onion
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
2 Tbsp. tomato paste
Pilsbury canned dinner rolls (or any you prefer, Rhodes frozen dinner rolls work well when thawed on a cookie sheet under a towel for a couple of hours and have risen)

Directions

Add two cups of water to a sauté pan and add the cabbage and onion, simmering at a med-high heat until most of the water evaporates and the vegetables are softened a bit. After the water has considerably evaporated, add the vegetable oil, and proceed to brown the vegetable mixture on low-medium heat. After the mixture is browned add the tomato paste and continue to stir for a couple of minutes. Remove the mixture from heat to let cool for approx. ten minutes. Preheat oven to bake at 325 degrees. After the mix has cooled a bit, roll out one dinner roll at a time, flattening the roll to be round and no less than ¼” thick. Scoop approximately one heaping tablespoon into the center of the flattened roll. Fold the dough over so it creates a half circle with the edges lined up and pinch the dough together. A bit of flour on your fingers often helps “glue” the piroshki closed when the dough is a bit moist and won’t stick. Place each one pinched side completely up on a slightly greased cookie sheet. When the filling has run out or when you’ve made a desired amount, place in oven and bake until the dough reaches a rich golden-brown color. Remove from oven, let cool a bit and enjoy!