



TOLSTOY

FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

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Alexandra Tolstoy Institute Exchange Program

SPRING 2001

THE SECOND GROUP of orphan children from Voronezh, which is the fourth group to participate in Tolstoy Foundation's 3-month skill-enhancing student program for needy children, arrived on May 10th at the Tolstoy Foundation Center in Valley Cottage, NY. The group consists of 18 children from 2 orphanages in the Voronezh region. The 7 boys and the 11 girls who make up the group are accompanied by 2 escorts—1 from each orphanage.

For the next 3 months, these 18 children, ages 10-13, will be immersed in an intensive curriculum of: (1) English as a Second Language; (2) special training and development of practical skills, especially computer training; (3) self-help initiatives; and (4) cultural immersion programs in the idyllic and nurturing setting of the Tolstoy Foundation Center. The kids will also have the opportunity to learn about their own religion, to participate in an iconography class, and to try their hand at arts and crafts. Other classes being offered to them include Russian Literature, Russian Language, and American History. Just as with the other programs, horizon-broadening events and trips have been planned for the children, such as: a trip to the Statue of Liberty, sight-seeing in New York and in the Nation's Capital, a trip to Mystic Seaport and to Newport, Rhode Island.

Past results have shown how much this



opportunity to bring the children to the US gives them a sense of direction, support and hope, and acts as a powerful transformative catalyst that unlocks a new perspective for these children. We are glad to be contributing to these children's lives in such a positive and rewarding manner and, in this way, to be investing in a more peaceful and stable world for ourselves and for the next generation.



WHAT'S NEW AT TF

"LIFE GOES ON"

The Voronezh Regional Center for Aid to Orphanage Graduates

A major part of Tolstoy Foundation's US-based educational and training programs for Russia's disadvantaged and orphaned youth involves programs of follow-up support and training in Russia. One such TF program, in partnership with the *Committee for Social Services of the Voronezh Region*, is a *Regional Center for Aid to Orphanage Graduates* which opened in Voronezh at the end of January 2001. In addition to a psychologist, a legal consultant, a social worker and a bookkeeper, the *Center* has acquired 45 volunteers from among active supporters of a local grassroots charitable organization, who are assisting in visiting both orphanages and current graduates to determine and to assess a variety of existing and future practical needs that graduates will have upon leaving their institutions, such as, living accommodations, job placement, further education, and continued training. To date, 209 elementary and high school orphanage students have been interviewed, counseled and assessed on the basis of individual needs and requirements. The *Center's Hotline*, utilizing modern computerized equipment, is now successfully operating. Additionally, the *Center* is in the process of collecting comprehensive information on all local and regional graduates, which is being entered

into a comprehensive data base for reference and tracking.

Center staff and volunteers are actively visiting all local and regional orphanage institutions and offering future graduates workshops on planning for their future, complete with videos and directories of various municipal and district offices which may be contacted for assistance. The *Center* is also working with the teaching staff in orphanage institutions to assist them in preparing psychological profiles of all graduates and in conducting "Life Goes On" workshops to prepare graduates for life outside the orphanage. To date, the *Center's* work has also included: extending direct financial aid to 38 individuals; assisting the Bogucharsk orphanage in the acquisition of sports equipment; purchasing medicine for orphanage graduates who are war veterans and currently hospitalized.

Plans for May include continuing visits and assessment of additional orphanages in Voronezh and surrounding areas. Future plans also include establishing a library, complete with computers and access to various periodicals and publications. We are very proud of this partnership which shows that given a little financial assistance and support, good people in Russia can do great things to help their children.

The Life and the Work of Alexandra Tolstoy Exhibit: A SUCCESSFUL RUN

The L. N. Tolstoy State Museum invites you to the gala closing of the exhibit

ALEXANDRA TOLSTOY, *Daughter of Leo Tolstoy*

"I desire freedom above all else!"

On March 6, 2001, after a historical and successful 6-month run of *The Life and the Work of Alexandra Tolstoy Exhibit*, the L. N. Tolstoy State Museum in Moscow hosted gala ceremonies to mark the closing of the Exhibit. More than 20,000 visitors had flock to view the exhibit. In the words of V. B. Remizov, Director of the Museum, "It is important to note the social significance and impact of this unique project undertaken by the Museum, thanks in great part to the participation of the Tolstoy Foundation

.... The amazing personality and the noble work of Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy elicited an unprecedented interest among visitors..."

Among the numerous guests at the gala closing ceremonies were friends and supporters of the Museum, representatives from the cultural, scientific and academic communities, and major local and international media coverage, including the British BBC.

Mr. Remizov concluded that "there is still much that needs to be done in the area of education

and enlightenment" about the Alexandra Tolstoy legacy. "... (we) extend our deepest and most sincere gratitude to the Tolstoy Foundation for its assistance with the exhibit ...and for the Tolstoy Foundation (archival) materials, which were a genuine revelation for Russian citizens, and which imbued the exhibit with an exceptional value and interest."

The Exhibit will now be relocated to Yasnaya Polyana, the birthplace of Alexandra Tolstoy, where it will continue to be open for viewing.

CHILDREN FROM TULA: *The Letters Continue*

We continue to receive heart-warming letters from members of the group of children who participated in the Fall 2000 semester of the *Alexandra Tolstoy Institute* educational and training program, as well as encouraging reports from their instructors. US program goals are brought back to local institutions to preserve and to nourish group ties that were forged during the semester at the TF Center. To this end, regular meetings are being held at the Yasnaya Polyana Museum-Estate with the children and their parents, along with workshops that are geared toward fostering and preserving the valuable lessons and experiences that the children gained during their semester stay at the TF Center, and

coupled with excursions and trips to cultural and historical sites in Russia. The children have easily reassimilated into their environments and their academic progress is impressive.

Yet it is the personal letters which warm our hearts above all else. P. Z.'s mother sends us news about her son, who suffers from various ailments:

"At TF, he never once had stomach troubles ... In fact, his health improved. He was surrounded by such care, such warmth at TF, which even I cannot give him because of all the pressures of my life."

There are perhaps no better words to summarize the value and the importance of TF's programs for these children than

the words of a parent who has seen firsthand the benefit of the program's effect on her own son:

"The enormous, wonderful work that the Tolstoy Foundation is doing is priceless. You instill a hope for the future in children for whom life is very difficult ... The most important thing is that their faith in themselves, in their abilities, and in kindness does not die in their hearts. They must strive toward that which is great and good ... My wish is that your good work will prosper and will continue to warm the still weak hearts of our children ... I have not expressed even a tiny portion of the gratitude I would extend to you!"

A Letter from

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TOLSTOY FOUNDATION

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TOLSTOY FOUNDATION announces some upcoming changes in its adult group homes. Since 1952, the Foundation has maintained both individual and group residences on the Valley Cottage campus. Over the past few years, however, the need for the group homes has been declining steadily, as new residents are increasingly opting for the individual apartments and houses. With rooms remaining unoccupied in each of the 2 group-home buildings, the Foundation will consolidate these homes over the next few months into the larger facility (OPH1), whose single-story design provides better access to all residents. The smaller 2-story structure (OPH2) near the nursing home will be closed, with its future use yet to be determined.

As part of our continuing commitment to the program, several upgrades and improvements will be made to the single-story group-home building during the next few months. Indoor renovations will include the installation of a new heating system, additional windows, and "freshening up" of several rooms and the common areas. Sliding glass doors will lead to a newly constructed 400-square-foot deck, from which residents will enjoy fresh air and views facilitated by cleared trees and revamped landscaping. Repaving of the driveway will complete the project.

The Valley Cottage residences continue to be an integral part of the Tolstoy Foundation's mission. We look forward to these improvements, which will provide a home far better suited to the enjoyment of its residents.

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Copies of the Annual Report may be obtained at the above address.

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