

BETHANY SOCIAL SERVICES

ST. PETERSBURG RUSSIA

2006 Annual Report

Bethany Social Services in St. Petersburg was officially registered as a non-profit organization in Russia on November 11, 1998. The mission of this organization is to “protect and enhance the lives of children and families through high quality social services and through improving the social work practice in the St. Petersburg and Leningrad area.”

Throughout the years, Bethany St. Petersburg has built its programs, along with a positive reputation, and has become well known in the Leningrad area. Agreements were signed with government and non-government organizations and several projects were implemented in 2006. Bethany’s team consists of 5 full-time employees, 25 contract employees, and 20 consultants.

LIFE SKILLS PROJECT IN LOMONOSOV (START PROJECT)

Bethany St. Petersburg adapted the curriculum developed by Bethany Christian Services in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and began this project in 1998 with 20 youth. The government specialists evaluated the results of this pilot program and, because of the obvious positive results achieved, the Committee for General and Professional Education of the Leningrad Area decided to develop this initiative. The “Teen Center for Children Aging Out of Orphanages in Leningrad Area” was opened.



Bethany participated in the renovation of a dormitory building of the trade school “Center for Teens,” where 50 youth (orphans) could live and receive education every year. Some youth will live here for 1 to 3 years until they complete their vocational training (the government decides for how long the youth will stay in this Center). While the government provided vocational training, Bethany trained these

youth in life skills. *This project was the first initiative in Russia where a trade school was also providing special support and life skills training to the orphan youth.*

Approximately 50 youth are part of Bethany’s program every year. They receive individual counseling and training in various life skills, such as personal growth, job placement, healthy lifestyles, and parenting skills. They also receive legal advice. Seminars are organized on various topics, including sewing, crafts, and aerobic lessons. The youth attend community events, and because of this project, the local community has changed its perception about orphans.

Life Skills Project Statistics

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Youth who graduated	34	24	34	18	22	22	20
Youth employed	32%	63%	79%	72%	55%	46%	60%
Youth who continue their education	9%	17%	14%	22%	18%	14%	15%
Youth attending mandatory military service	11%	4%	7%	6%	14%	27%	10%
Youth who have a place to live	82%	92%	93%	94%	100%	91%	90%

Bethany staff reported that they saw how the Life Skills Project increased the self-esteem and curbed the aggressive behavior of these youth. The government staff also recognized that Bethany made a difference in the lives of these youth.

In 2006, Bethany was received a \$42,000-grant from Geneva Global that has allowed Bethany to offer more services to orphan youth from Lomonosov, to the 2006 graduates of the Life Skills Project, and to other youth from the Leningrad Area.

This 12-month project began on November 6, 2006, and provides direct social, psychological, and legal services to 960 youth from the Leningrad Area, including:

- **Long-term life skills and healthy lifestyle training** to 40 youth from the Teen Center in Lomonosov
- **Interactive training “My First Steps for Independent Living”** for 900 orphan youth and youth from families (selected by the Leningrad Area Committee for General and Professional Education) that attend area trade schools or live in orphanages. This is a one-day training for 100 students per month for nine months.



- **Post-graduation support** to 20 youth who graduated from this program in June 2006 will benefit from support as they transition to independent living. The youth will receive support to:
 - i. Find and keep their housing.
 - ii. Find and keep a job.
 - iii. Receive medical support, as needed.
 - iv. Receive individual counseling and consultation to address issues they may face after orphanage graduation.
- **Evaluation** – Bethany evaluated the knowledge of the youth before and after attending the life skills training.

The head of Lomonosov municipal unit N.N. Smolnikova sent the following letter to Bethany in February 2007:

“The administration of Lomonosov municipal unit expresses its gratitude to Bethany Social Services for implementing the interactive game “Tomorrow Starts Today” in Lomonosov schools and orphanages. Information that students received will help them develop healthy lifestyles, and will teach them the basics of becoming responsible parents and heads of families. Thanks to Oleg Kosteychook and his group. We hope to continue our collaboration and wish you success in the implementation of the project.”

From Siversky orphanage: “Thank you, Bethany, for your interactive training that had the focus on family relations, bad habits, and civil rights. It was important that your young students talked openly with our orphans and this helped develop the orphan’s communication skills.”

EDUCATION PROJECT FOR ORPHANAGE STAFF FROM LENINGRAD AREA

The reform of the child welfare system brought with it the need to train orphanage staff, including orphanage directors, social workers, psychologists, and teachers. Bethany’s education project proved to be a success, and the Committee for General and Professional Education of the Leningrad Area requested that Bethany continue this program in the future.

Bethany has been organizing social work courses for the Leningrad Area orphanage staff since 2000, in partnership with the Leningrad Area Institute for Education Development. The goal of the project is to provide advanced social work training for professionals working in the orphanage (professionals serving 3,500 children).

Accomplishments in 2006:



From January through May 2006, a group of 25 students continued a training course that began in September 2005. The curriculum was developed by Bethany in cooperation with the Leningrad Area Education Development Institute to develop the professional skills of social workers and educators working in orphanages in the Leningrad Area. Eighty (80) hours of training were provided for these professionals in 2006, as part of this course.

In May 2006, these 25 professionals took their final tests and attended the graduation ceremony where they received a state diploma certifying that they attended this training and improved their qualifications.

A letter sent on January 25, 2006, by the rector of the Leningrad Regional Institute for Education Development, S.A.Lisicyn, stated:

“The administration of the Leningrad Regional Institute for Education Development thanks Bethany Social Services St. Petersburg for organizing and delivering the qualification

courses meant to improve the skills of the educational staff of the Leningrad Area orphanages. Courses were intended to increase the professional skills of the orphanage caregivers and teachers, and ensure the orphanage modernization of the educational process.”

EDUCATION PROJECT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS FROM KRASNOGVARDEYSKY DISTRICT OF ST. PETERSBURG

This project was initiated as a response to the government’s request for continuing education for its social workers. It began in March 2006 and had the goal of improving the professional skills of social workers from this district who work with children, families, and children with special needs. Thirty (30) social workers from various state child welfare organizations (serving 886 special needs children and 5,040 other children living in families) attended this 112-hour course.

Accomplishments

Twenty-five (25) of the students were successful in completing the course and graduated on December 19, 2006. Feedback from the participants revealed their satisfaction with the friendly, open atmosphere created during the training sessions by the professionals.





A letter sent on February 14, 2007, by administration of Krasnogvardeysky district stated:

“We thank Bethany for organizing the training course, Improvement of Legal and Psychological Skills of Social Workers. Thanks to your efforts, 25 specialists of our district got new knowledge and skills that were very needed in their work with children and families.”

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS OF INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN FROM RIABOVO ORPHANAGE

Most of the children residing in orphanages in Russia are diagnosed with developmental delays. The lack of individual care, love, and nurture that only a family can provide—along with some of the issues (health or mental)—that the children may have been born with are some of the causes for these delays.

The main goal of the project is to reduce the long-term institutionalization effects for the 30 children living in the Riabovo orphanage. Services are offered to children by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a psychologist, speech therapist, special education teacher, an educator, and dance, music, and drama teachers.



The kids are divided into groups (based on their age and skills) and attend a variety of activities. Art therapy, speech therapy, music and dance lessons, recreational activities, role playing, and games are designed to increase the children’s cognitive performance, and gross and fine motor development.



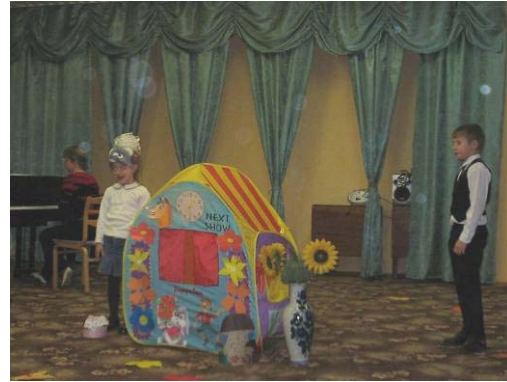
The team from Tosno Correction Center consists of four professionals (a psychologist, a speech therapist, a special education teacher, and a dance and rhythm teacher) who work once a week with the children, either in small groups or individually. In addition to these specialists, a music and drama teacher works with all the children twice a week.

Accomplishments in 2006

- All children were involved in the performances that were organized throughout the year



Mucha-Tsokotuha (Russian fairy tale)



Teremok (Russian fairy tale)

- The Riabovo drama group was invited to attend the Leningrad Area festival for orphanages called “Art Theatre through Children’s Eyes.” The children in our group were the youngest to attend this event.



- Special celebrations for Christmas and New Year’s, “Saying Goodbye to Winter,” and concerts took place in the orphanage.
- Evaluations done at the beginning and the end of the year showed significant progress in the children’s development, skills, and knowledge.

- The Education Ministry of the Leningrad Area included the Riabovo orphanage as a pilot orphanage where a foster care program would be implemented. Bethany was asked to coordinate the efforts made in this new project.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Two groups visited the Russia program in 2006.

The first group, led by Phil Wiltjer, worked to at the Kingisepp orphanage from April 25 to May 10. Part of the orphanage was renovated and transformed into a nursery that will be home to 16 orphan babies. The group was successful in its mission and the orphanage was very grateful for the support that they received.

In June, a group of 14 people visited the program in St. Petersburg. The group had the opportunity to visit most of Bethany's programs, had official meetings with various government officials, and also saw the beautiful sights of St. Petersburg.

Bethany St. Petersburg was the only nongovernmental organization (NGO) from Leningrad Area that was invited to be part of the foster care training using the "PRIDE" model organized by Norway for the child welfare specialists from the Leningrad Area. The "PRIDE" program received its license in Russia and it intends to prepare foster parents and orphanage specialists for domestic placement of orphan children. Lidia Pavlova was Bethany's representative at this training. The training sessions took place in September, October, November, and December. At graduation, the students received a certificate that allows them to train foster parents.

On December 7, the program director was involved in the "Social St. Petersburg 2006 Conference." During this conference discussions took place about the new legislation pertaining to NGOs.

The Caterpillar Company (through Jim Sickinger) in St. Petersburg decided to continue their financial support of the Riabovo project. They pledged another \$5,000 for this project in 2007. This amount added to what was received from the Vermeer Foundation in Iowa (another \$5,000) will allow this project to continue for another five months into 2007.

Jim Sickinger and his wife also gave a generous donation that allowed Bethany to purchase special Christmas gifts for the children in the Riabovo orphanage.