

# Sunflowers Chernobyl Appeal

## Newsletter



Sunflowers voluntary workers pictured with some of the older residents of Bogushevsk orphanage who helped with the building of our third home for independent living. Read the full story inside.

## Welcome To Our Newsletter.

We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers, host families, supporters and friends for your time, patience and support in 2013. Your generosity has allowed us to continue our work of helping the children of Belarus. We also thank the doctors, dentists and opticians who took such wonderful care of the children during their summer recuperation visit to Galway and Dublin. The group of 33 children included 5 special needs orphans from Bogushevsk orphanage and their carers who stayed in a house in Ballinasloe which was kindly donated by a local family for the month. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our host families for taking such good care of the children who were looked after and cared for in every way. We also thank everyone who organized events or supported the children in any way during their stay, especially local shops, butchers & vegetable suppliers who gave so generously to the children.

We thank the people who gave up their time during 2013 to take part in various fundraising events, and those who donated or paid for special items such as wheelchairs and other medical aids. Your generosity and kindness will not be forgotten. It is impossible to thank everyone through this newsletter but we hope you will accept our sincere gratitude for all you have done for these children who are otherwise forgotten. We wish you and yours a Happy Christmas and a peaceful & prosperous New Year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS  
& THANK YOU ALL.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a Happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

We also thank you all very sincerely for your kindness & generosity in 2013; you have helped to make a real difference to the lives of many children in Belarus who depend on our charity for so much, and hope that you will continue to support us in the coming year.



We urgently need funds to complete this project by purchasing the following:

- Bedroom Furniture
- Paint & Decorations
- Fitted Kitchen
- Kitchen Table and Chairs
- Living room Furniture
- Beds & Bedding
- Fridge-freezer
- Washing Machine
- Television
- Microwave oven

## Sunflowers Provide a Third Home for Independent Living

A group of 14 voluntary tradespeople travelled to Belarus last September to build a home for independent living for special needs orphans which will save them from a life in an adult mental institution. After the success of the first two houses completed by our voluntary workers where young adults have adapted so well to their new lives, the completion of the third and last house (pictured above) will be used by young special needs people moving out of the orphanage full time into the community.

These homes are unique in Belarus as the residents, while under supervision, are completely self sufficient in growing their own crops and raising farm animals to produce meat and vegetables which they use in home cooking with the surplus being sold to earn money for their household budgets. It is truly amazing to witness how the children have adapted to their new lives of independence, and the project is now being copied by the health authorities in Belarus for use in other orphanages around the country.

During the 10 day trip the volunteers installed new PVC windows & doors, stripped and rebuilt the front section of the house, installed toilets, showers and a sewage system. The volunteers also replaced the old timber floors, built new internal walls & ceilings, and insulated, studded and slabbed the inside of the external walls to protect against the harsh winters. This third home is the final piece of the jigsaw and is now being used by residents of the first two homes who are now ready for full independent living without supervision. This house is their stepping stone to a life of full independence in their own communities.

We would like to offer a few words of sincere thanks: Firstly to the tradesmen who gave of their time to travel to Belarus at their own expense to work on the project; they worked 12 & 14 hour days in what were at times very challenging conditions and never once complained. Thanks to Tommy Gilchrist, Eugene Delaney, Sean Madden, Tom Spelman, Seamus Garvey, Tony Ward, TJ Daly, Noel Dillon, John Harris & Louis Clarke; they are a shining example of what the true spirit of volunteering is all about. We also thank their families for their kindness in supporting them as they travelled to work on the project. Thanks also to everyone in Ireland for their fundraising efforts which made the project possible. But most of all we wish to thank the older special needs boys of the orphanage for their assistance with the building work; they worked side by side with our volunteers and really enjoyed the experience. It was a pleasure to see the volunteers treating the boys as equals and including them in every stage of the project. The volunteers treated the boys with dignity and respect and were happy to take the time to pass on their knowledge and skills to them.

The volunteers also paid a visit to our first two houses where the residents took great pride in showing us their homes. We enjoyed a lovely home cooked meal and baking which was all prepared by the girls. Afterwards the residents sang songs and told us about their lives before living in an institution, and what their new lives mean to them now. Finally, the director of the orphanage asked us to thank the people of Ireland for your love and kindness towards the orphans and asks that you might continue to support them in whatever way you can; especially the weakest children who are cot bound since birth and who sadly spend the rest of their lives in the orphanage without ever having the chance to leave.

Our charity also carries out projects in the orphanage itself to improve the lives of the residents who sadly will never have the chance to leave. Just now we are focusing our efforts on the most severely disabled children who are totally dependent and require 24 hour care. These children suffer from chronic physical pain, mental anguish, depression and loneliness and crave contact and affection. These children unfortunately will never be adopted and are sentenced to a life behind the bars of their cots until the day they die; therefore it is our intention to raise their levels of care and to make their lives as comfortable as possible.

Here in Ireland we are of course living in uncertain times due to the global financial crisis, but when we witness how much these vulnerable children suffer it is impossible for us to turn our back on them. We are appealing to you to help us to complete this very worthwhile humanitarian project for children who have no voice and who are otherwise forgotten by their society .



Sunflowers Chairperson Pat Dillon pictured here with 12 year old Olga from Bogushevsk orphanage. Olga, who is blind, rarely leaves her bed and suffers from a number of serious medical conditions. Our charity visits the orphanage a number of times a year to install and monitor our various care programmes for the over 260 special needs children and young adults. We deliver humanitarian aid in the form of medicines and medical equipment, as well as carrying out renovation and decoration work to the children's bedrooms and living areas. The sunflowers have carried out many such projects in Belarus over the past 15 years which have benefited the most vulnerable children in society. All this of course is only made possible by your continued support and generosity.



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