

A little help—a big difference

Support for Kids Organization, Inc

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Special points of interest:

- Legal issues: registration and recording
- Belated Christmas presents
- The beds are great!
- Land of the Golden Fleece

Registration in Georgia

Legal issues—sooner or later you have to face them. Apparently, in order to avoid custom fees when you receive humanitarian aid in any form and quantity, you have to register your organization in the receiving country .

This legal issue was brought to our attention during our boot/shoes, etc. shipping saga. The list of all the documents required for this process was given to us by my Georgian lawyers who assured me of the simplicity of the process and promised to have it done in just a couple of days.

Here I am with a thick pile of files that barely fit in my briefcase, every document apostiled as required.

The next day, upon my arrival in Tbilisi, I went to the appropriate agency. In front of my eyes, the briefcase size files were turning into a suitcase size after being translated and notarized. Just this process by itself took almost a week. When eve-

rything was done, I called my lawyer to let him know that everything was ready for the second step. He was out of town and advised me to postpone the process until he got back. By the time we went to the registration office (it is equivalent of the recording office here), it was the 3rd week of my visit (2 days were devoted to the important religious holidays and everything was closed including the government offices). We turned in our application along with my pile of documents and the receipt for the registration fees (\$100!), a friendly girl gave me a piece of paper with the website link and the phone numbers to check the status of the application.

Georgia is trying to adopt the American style of operation, everything looked civilized - taking numbers and waiting for

your turn, no bribes, no calls from above, just a number assigned to your application. So far it was a very impressive transformation from the old style operation.

When I called the next day, I found out that my application had been stopped due to the lack of some documents (in that "suitcase"?), this

Support for Kids Organization, Inc is registered in Georgia

western transformation did not look as amazing any more and I realized that this was a time when I missed the old fashioned way of doing business there - if you know somebody, it can be done in no time with no problems.

I went back to the registration office, took a number, sat down and again patiently waited for my turn.

Trip to Aspindza

One of the orphanages I wanted to re-visit during this trip, Aspindza, is located in the farthest south-southwest corner of Georgia at about 140 km (about 80 miles) from the capital Tbilisi. Situated at the foothills of Lesser Caucasus mountain range, this high desert plateau was always very difficult to access. No wonder that in the 12th century Queen Tamar decided to

build a city-fortress of Vardzia in the nearby area. The centuries passed by, but the place remains as one of the more remote areas in modernized Georgia. Me, being alone and without a car (not just a car, I needed SUV to drive there) made this task almost impossible. No matter how noble my reason was, I could not find a single volunteer to take me there. The only hope I had was the presence of my good friend Zaza, who was also visiting Georgia for a few days at the same time.

When I called him with my request he, being himself and always ready to help, did not even hesitate for a minute. The very next day we were on the way to

Aspindza with his brother's brand new SUV. It took us almost 4 hours to cover 80 miles but we were so anxious to see the kids and deliver Santa's belated presents that we did not mind the lengthy trip (coming back was less fun).

Zaza, thank you for being a true friend and for your amazing help

Here we were, with 2 huge boxes of goodies - denim jackets, fleece sweaters and hats. I put them in oversized Christmas bags to make this whole process of gift giving fun. Whenever we give something to these kids, I try not to make it personally from me.



Registration in Georgia

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When I finally reached the counter, the same friendly girl gave me a list of the missing documents. I have to admit, that the legal language sounds the same to me regardless of by whom it is spoken - English, Russian, Georgian—I don't understand any of it. I had to call my lawyer again. I asked him to simply translate to normal language the name of the missing documents. I knew that I had them, except finding the right ones in that pile of files was like a looking for a needle in a haystack. I realized that I had no choice but to find them even if I spent all my remaining days digging in that pile and examining each and every paper. I was desperate and the fear of failure that

I flew thousands of miles for nothing, helped me to concentrate. I was literally sitting on the floor surrounded by stacks of papers and this accelerated the confusion among the office workers who did not know exactly how to handle my case; treat me as a Georgian or as American. I looked very strange regardless of my citizenship.

I don't know how many hours passed by, but my persistence and motivation finally were rewarded and I found what I was looking for! By that time the whole office was happy to get rid of me even if the documents I presented were not the right ones. The same friendly girl again gave me a paper with yet another number of my application.

The next day when I called a friendly voice informed me that my application has been processed successfully.

I went back to the registration office to pick up a so much desired and presumably some fancy stamped document.

How disappointed I was to find out that to receive such an important document all you have to do is to scan the barcode on your application and some smart machine in the lobby of the registration office prints just a very unimpressive piece of paper with a few lines on it.

A truly amazing experience! [and a lesson in patience and persistence]

Trip to Aspindza

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There are several reasons: first of all, these gifts are from all of you, their supporters; the second, I don't want them to get the idea that somebody is responsible for their care and some rich American aunts and uncles have to send them goodies. Also, we have to remember that they are a bit different from the other kids, they are shy because of their status and when the presents come from Santa or some other abstract person, they are less

embarrassed accepting the gifts.

When we were opening the bags, the kids were lined up against a wall and none of them was asking "Is it for them?". I know that they were anxious to get the new things, especially some bright color stuff that was screaming from the fancy bags, but they were calm and even adults would envy their mature behavior.

Another noticeable thing was that they were not expecting more than one gift and when I was giving a jacket to the one girl who already had a sweater, she was telling me that she already received one present and somebody will be left out without it. That was very remarkable.

You all probably remember the face of one cute little girl on the invitation card without front teeth. That photo was taken in July 2009, just six months ago. How surprised I was to see that little mischief turned into a shy little girl. I barely recognized her. But she and a few others remembered me from the last

trip with Mike and after awhile when they were used to my presence she and her friends were giving me a big hearty hugs. Zaza was further overwhelmed with emotions from this scene.

The whole trip was worth it just to see them again, give them love and know that no matter how far away they are, you are here for them and they are not forgotten.



Thank you from Digomi orphanage

One of the first things I wanted to do was to see the actual beds we delivered. They looked great on the photos, but I wanted to check them in reality. They are great!

I was so impressed by the quality and workmanship that I called the manufacturer and thanked them again for the excellent job.

Another thing was to

see gratitude in the eyes of the kids for whom they had been



ordered. They were for the older boys and it is even harder for them to express themselves especially when they are grateful and embarrassed at the same time. Instead of simple "thank you" they were rushing me to show how "cool" the beds are and how they have organized their own little spaces.

Only when I was leaving did they line up and say in unison: "Thank you very, very much".



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Your tax-deductable financial gift is the most important action you can take to help this great cause. Please visit our site www.supportforkids.org donation page

Please help

Letter from the Founder

Dear readers and supporters,

Nothing can be more rewarding than to see the actual results of your hard work, work that would not be done without your continued help and financial support.

Even though we still have not yet solved the shipping issues of the boots/shoes and the legal matters might not seem as important as the kids; still, I can say that the trip was successful and I am hopeful that the contacts I made there, including several meetings with the high government officials and the media coverage (twice on national TV and radio address) will be useful in the future. At least "Support for Kids Organization, Inc" has officially set foot on a Georgian soil which was a necessary step in order to continue our mission.

In this letter I also want to send our prayers to all the victims in Haiti which is a reminder that Haitian kids as well as other kids around the world need help and we will continue to do our small part with your support.

Sincerely,

Ani Mdivani-Morrow

Georgia up-close - Land of the Golden Fleece

The Greek legend of Jason and the Argonauts and the search for the Golden Fleece (3rd century BC) is generally believed to refer to the western part of Georgia— Colchis.

Jason sails with his crew aboard the Argo, where King Aietes hoards the Golden Fleece, the magical coat of a winged ram sent by Hermes. The Golden Fleece is protected by a sleepless dragon, but wily Jason seduces Aietes' daughter Medea into helping him steal the fleece and flee back to Greece with the bounty.

Despite the theme of Grecian aggression and the duplicitous nature of the sorceress Medea, the story of Jason and the Argonauts is proudly related in

Georgia and while the Golden Fleece itself seems more like a metaphor than an actual treasure, there may be a glimmer of truth based on the recent discovery of the oldest gold mines in the world (4th c. BC) found on Georgian territory. Such unique exhibits have not been

discovered even in Egypt.

In the Caucasus region of Svaneti, the locals have been reported in historical times to use sheepskins to seine the river for gold.

