

A little help—a big difference



Support for Kids Organization, Inc

Volume/Issue 15

April 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the founder

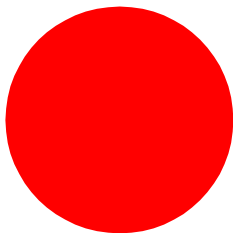
Letter from the founder	1	Dear readers and supporters, Almost every day we hear some bad news from around the world—the wars, political unrest, economic crisis, violation of human rights, etc. We all have our share of problems and we are so busy with our everyday lives that we don't anticipate much and even isolate ourselves from the world events . But on March 11 all of us were shaken by what had happened in Japan.
Update on the Proposed Reform in Child Care System	2	With the expected death toll now more than 11,000 and more than 16, 000 more unaccounted, the devastation is clearly greater than anyone could have imagined. It is not just a number of lost lives, nor the magnitude of that earthquake, nor the size of the tsunami or the threat of radiation that makes this disaster so noteworthy;
Success Story - Levan	3	mostly it is the realization of the fact of how fragile is our world, how small we are and how little or nothing can humans do to prevent and withstand the forces of nature. Almost all our problems fade away in comparison to the shocking images we have seen on TV. It is almost inappropriate to complain about our everyday problems which seem so miniscule next to that tragedy . More than 400,000 people are still in shelters in the freezing temperature.
Georgia up-close: Georgian Cuisine	4	
Our Info	4	

In the last few years we have seen a lot of natural disasters and human suffering here and abroad, but what was the most amazing to me is to see how the Japanese people are handling this tragedy — you don't see chaos, nor violence or marauders, you don't hear them scream, complain or demand. They don't blame anybody for this disaster. All you see is the order, their unbelievable patience, dignity, will and hope to restore their country.

This issue is dedicated to the victims of this tragedy. Let's pray for them and give the strength to the survivors.

Sincerely,

Ani Mdivani-Morrow



Update on the Proposed Reforms in Child Care System of Georgia

In the last issue I gave the recap of the new reform and mentioned that before we make the final decision regarding the purchase and management such SGH (Small Group Homes), we asked the Agency to provide us with the final list of the regions where the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia are not planning to purchase the houses. I have been waiting for this list now for more than 2 months. In the meanwhile, the Polish Association “Our Home” whose model has been adopted by the Georgian government for these reforms, held a meeting with the potential service providers (Support for Kids Organization, Inc was one of them and our representative Manana Sikharulidze attended this meeting) about the process of Deinstitutionalization of Child Care Services. When I reviewed the minutes of this meeting, it was clear that none of the attendees were willing to take a risk of purchasing the houses and have the responsibility of taking care of 8 kids. What most of them want is to be in management of such SGH and let the government buy and maintain the houses.

We have never received or seen the Request for Proposal to consider our involvement in this project. We assume that there must be a written document somewhere that might answer many of our questions.

We also have concerns that 15 GEL per kid (about \$8-9) is not enough to operate an 8 child home and provide proper over-site for the kids. In our estimation it would more likely take 4 homes with an onsite adult in each home and an overall administrator to oversee all 4. That might provide very basic necessities for the kids but will not make their life much better than it is now which we also assume is a goal of SGH.

It is very complicated scenario and I doubt that the government will be able to implement this reform. I decided not to wait any longer and be frustrated with their silence and uncertainty and just continue doing what we have been doing before — concentrate all our efforts and resources to the basic, daily needs for the kids. My next trip is scheduled for September and I have started to gather stuff to take with me.

One of the basics was to provide kids with warm coats. Mike was planning to purchase the fabric and a filler in the neighboring Turkey and manufacture the coats in Georgia. Being so far away might have been part of the reason we could not find the manufacturer who was willing to do the job. I even had another idea - let the older kids in one of the orphanages do the job if we would have provided them with a few sewing machines, fabric and patterns . It would have been an ideal scenario - training and some income for the older kids and the coats for the young ones. But again we encountered the problem - who knows where the kids are going to end up after this reform and who will manage them.

So now I am planning to carry with me whatever we buy for the kids (as most of you probably remember our Chinese experience and shipping dilemma, we will not repeat the same mistake). I am hoping to get some decency from the airlines and hope they will not be so greedy as last time (the United charged me for the second bag from San Diego to Los Angeles even though the main airline - Lufthansa—was allowing 2 bags for the overseas trip). The problem is that this time I am dealing with 3 airlines going to Georgia—United, Air New Zealand and British Midland. So good luck Mike writing a heartwarming letters begging them to allow me to take extra suitcase for the orphans. But who knows, all we can do is to try and hope that somebody at the airlines higher management cares enough to actually do something.



Success Story - Levan

As you already know, the kids reaching age 18 have to leave the orphanages and it is the biggest problem since in most cases they don't have any place to go. We are trying to address this issue in the appropriate agencies, but unfortunately there is no program supporting such kids.

Before my last trip one of my dear friend asked me to find a deserving kid and she made an incredible offer—to fund housing for the duration of the college years. We were speechless but at the same time I got very nervous about selecting the right candidate. I could not make a wrong decision.

I interviewed several potential candidates and only towards the end of my trip I found my selection in Kojori orphanage. He is an 18 year old boy from Western Georgia who passed the entry exams to Tbilisi Humanitarian University without any tutors or outside help. His name is Levan Chakhaia.

After selecting Levan for this scholarship, he signed an agreement that his grades should be no less than B and that he has to try to find part-time job. The reports will be given regularly by his college and our Georgian manager. The stipend amount was set to \$100 per month. I put my friend's funds for 1 year in the Georgian bank to avoid future wire transfer fees. In a very short period of time I had left before my departure, I managed to find Levan a decent room, supply him with all basic necessities starting with forks and spoons and ending with mattress, pillow and blankets. We also got him some basic school supplies, text books and the rest was up to him.

As I mentioned, I was very nervous and worried if I made the right choice; there were some very good kids, what if Levan will be a disappointment?

Well, not only he is a straight A student (I am getting his academic report on the regular basis), he is the best in the entire class, faculty and professors love him and just recently he was awarded a 2 day paid trip to one of the sea resorts. Regrettably he declined this offer at this time worrying that this trip might interfere with his study, but he hopes that there will be more opportunities for him in the future to be rewarded for his hard work.

We have no doubt that it will be many more and much better offers for him, he will succeed and will be an example for the rest of the kids in the orphanages. Levan is just a proof of our motto “ A little help - A big difference”, all he needed is a little support to save his future.

Of course, that would not happened to him if not that incredible generosity and kindness of a complete stranger. Sharron (I know you did not want me to mention your name), you are absolutely amazing human being, there are no words to describe how I feel, how privileged and blessed I am having you as a friend. You just saved the future of one kid and I promise you, Levan will make us all proud for our support, that once upon a time, long time ago we were part of his success.





Support for Kids
Organization, Inc

P.O. Box 3242
La Jolla, CA 92038 USA

Phone/Fax: 858-279-7339

Mobile: 858-344-0808

E-mail: ani@supportforkids.org

A LITTLE HELP—A BIG
DIFFERENCE

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

Georgia up-close : Georgian Cuisine

This is just a continuation of that “multivolume book “on Georgian cuisine I mentioned in the previous newsletters. The very first thing you will notice on the Georgian table is the abundance of various greens - parsley, cilantro, basil, tarragon, mint and some others which I could not find in the dictionary . Georgians love to munch on these greens during dinner. Looking at the amount of these greens somebody might think that it is a pasture for the cattle, or in best case that the Georgians are vegetarians. Yes, we love our vegetables because they taste so good. One of the reason is that they are born of a landscape rich in alluvial minerals washed down from snow- capped mountains. The second part is their preparation.

Georgian cuisine uses familiar products but due to varying proportions of its obligatory ingredients such as walnuts, aromatic herbs, pomegranate seeds, barberries, garlic, vinegar, red pepper and other spices combined with the traditional secrets of chef’s art the common products do acquire a special taste and aroma, which make Georgian cuisine very unique.

Georgians are not vegetarians and they love and consume a lot of meat and dairy products (especially cheeses). But during this great lent (before Easter) I will not be testing your temptation by offering you the recipes of some mouth watering dishes . Instead, I am sure you will enjoy this delicious and healthy vegetarian dish.

One of my favorites is *lobio* (beans) which can be made in dozens of different ways. Here is one of them.

Ingredients:

1/2 lb of small kidney beans
1 medium onion (finely chopped)
1/2 cup of walnuts
1/2 bunch of fresh cilantro and parsley (each)
1 garlic clove
1 small hot red pepper
1/4 tsp of cinnamon
Pinch of ground cloves
1/2 tsp of ground marigold
3/4 tsp of salt
1-2 bay leaves
3/4 cup of pomegranate juice
Pomegranate seeds (for garnish)
Vegetable oil

Preparation:

Soak the beans overnight. The next day drain and rinse them.

Place beans in a large pot with bay leaves and cover with fresh water. Bring the water to a boil and then simmer until the beans are tender, about 1 hour. Drain, discard the bay leaves. While the beans are still warm, stir in chopped onion lightly sautéed in vegetable oil.

Grind cilantro, parsley with walnuts, garlic and red pepper. Add to the beans.

In a small cup mix together cinnamon, cloves, salt and marigold; stir into the bean mixture. Pour in enough pomegranate juice* to moisten the beans and mix well.

Allow the beans to cool to the room temperature, then serve garnished with pomegranate seeds on top. Enjoy.

*Note: you can substitute pomegranate juice for wine or balsamic vinegar. As for the garnish, you can use finely chopped cilantro.