

A little help—a big difference



Support for Kids Organization, Inc

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Dear readers and supporters,

March came so quickly that when it was the time for my monthly newsletter I realized that I don't have much to write simply because I don't have much news.

Maybe it should not be called a "newsletter"?

I am not trying to find an excuse, but most of the things delivered in my newsletters are based on the information received from Georgia.

Unfortunately, I can not expedite their ways of thinking, working schedule and decision making process. Whenever you hear "it will be done in 2-3 days" more likely it will take a month.

In the last issue I informed my readers about the new reforms in the Child Care System of Georgia . The implementation of this reform is still not quite clear and this uncertainty affects our decision making as well.

In this issue I will provide the very brief update I have regarding this reform.

So please, don't loose interest and your faith in Support For Kids Organization Inc., We are trying to improve the lives and the future of less fortunate kids.

Once again, thanks for your continued support and also thank you for your input and sharing your thought about our future plans.

We wish you a very Happy St. Patrick's Day and let's his lucky charm be with us now and always.

Sincerely,

Ani Mdivani-Morrow



More About Reforms in Child Care System

Here is the recap of the new reform:

- Creation of Small Group Homes (SGH) instead of large institutions for abandoned children
- 17 big orphanages providing care to up to 800 children of 6 to 18 years old will be divided among these newly created SGH
- The number of kids is going to increase by 175 because several boarding schools will be closed this year. Thus, the estimated number of children in this age group will amount to 975
- Open 72 homes accommodating at most 8 beneficiaries to ensure a full transfer of all the beneficiaries of the orphanages into SGHs
- These SGH will be built or purchased by the government or donors (about half and half)
- The management functions of these SGH will be given to private entities selected on a competitive basis
- The state will purchase these services from organizations (for profit or non-for-profit) which will assume responsibility (including financial) for the proper management of several SGHs

As I mentioned in the last issue, the new reforms in the Child Care System of Georgia made us slow down almost to a point of stopping everything and reconsider our future plan of action. Apparently, this reform was not as easy as it might be seen even for the government. What is happening in reality is:

- The government basically frees itself (at least partially) from a financial burden and asks us, non profits and other non government organizations to take care of these kids
- The agency can not buy even the half of the necessary houses (36) because as soon as the word spread that the government is looking for the houses, the real estate prices went through the roof even in the regions
- Now the Agency is hoping to get additional funds for the purchase of these new houses from the sale of existing orphanages

Before we make the final decision regarding the purchase and management of such SGH, we asked the Agency to provide us with the final list of the regions where they (the Agency) are not planning to purchase the houses. We don't want to look at the same regions where they are looking which will increase the real estate prices and also result the concentration of orphanages in one part of the country. If we go ahead with this project, we would like to focus on the regions that can be relatively easy to manage, that can provide agricultural, industrial or service related vocational training for the kids; have some basic infrastructure like roads, schools and be included in the list of regions provided by MoLHSA (in case you forgot the abbreviation, it is The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia).

I have been waiting for this list since my last newsletter, February 1st. Even though February might not be quite a complete month, it is still a month and I start losing my patience and getting upset at my friend Nati in this very Agency who had been a great help before and especially with the shipment (she is the Head of the Department with Donors). But now, even she can't help because she is not in charge of the purchasing decision and she relies on the information from others. It seems impossible to get this list simply because I doubt that it even exists and that the agency bought properties and is not willing to share.

Our Georgian Manager - Manana

It's about time to introduce you officially to our Georgian representative and manager who has been tremendous help for our organization.

Her name is Manana Sikharulidze, a.k.a. "Little Doll" . She really is a Doll—she does everything that I am asking for effortlessly, without whining or complaining. Because of her sweet nature and character, lately she has even become a mediator between me and Nati from the Agency. Whenever I am losing my patience, which happens quite often lately, it's time for Little Doll to step in and calm down any friction.

Her devotion to our cause multiplied since our trip to Mestia orphanage. Those of you who attended our second annual fundraiser might remember me mentioning how terrified she was on that road and asking our driver every 5 minutes "Excuse me, what's your name? I think we are going to crash".

After she met those wonderful kids the desire to make a difference in their lives became a top priority for her.

Her involvement plays a huge role and eases our operation. Just to list a few things she is doing - gives me almost daily updates on what is happening, has constant contact with the agency, calling some of the directors of the orphanages from where she gets more information about kids and their needs, gets weekly academic reports from the University on Levan's grades and manages his monthly stipend (Levan is the kid who has been selected for monthly stipend), takes care of some business which I apparently did not finish, I just assumed that I did - accounting, receiving tax-exempt status and dealing with Georgian IRS .



Just a week ago she was representing Support For Kids Organization Inc during the Annual Report meeting of the State Care Agency. Apparently we were the only small non-profit organization presented during this meeting. We were in the company of giants like Red Cross, Save the Children, World Vision, etc. It is a big achievement that our organization is being introduced at the government level, being present on such event and even being mentioned with gratitude during the speech of the director of the Agency. This time she highlighted our latest contribution - fixing the water system in Telavi orphanage.

Manana does it all and she does not receive a penny for it. It is a pure devotion, love and care to our cause. It is almost impossible to find somebody, especially in current economy when everybody is struggling for survival to find such honesty and motivation.

Thank you Little Doll for everything, you are the best.



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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 Feast

The culture of any country is defined by its history, language, religion, folklore and cuisine. When we mention Georgia to anybody who has ever visited this country, the first response is sadly not the beautiful landscape or the ancient history, it's the food! You might assume that these people were starving before.

The Georgian Table, called "*Supra*" probably is the very definition of Georgian culture. Without doubt the food is absolutely delicious, but it still matter of a taste and can be argumentative.

What is absolutely undeniable is the uniqueness of Georgian table, where basic food consumption could be elevated to art.

The Georgian *Supra* is conducted in a wise manner in accordance with the ancient ritual. At the beginning of the table, a toast-master called "*Tamada*" is appointed either by a host or by the guests. He should undoubtedly be an eloquent, intelligent, smart, sharp-witted and quick-thinking with a good sense of humor. A *Tamada* acts like a director of the party, where guests are like actors responding to the toasts and often with their own interpretation.

At the Georgian table a toast-master bridges the gap between past, present and the future. It seems that not only the guests, but their ancestors and descendents are invisibly present at the table. A *Tamada* toasts them with the same love and devotion as the other members of the table. He announces traditional toasts to the homeland, peace, health, happiness, well-being, in a strict order.

When drinking the toasts all men have to stand up and drink wine in silence. A toast can be proposed only by a toast-master and the rest are to develop the idea. Everybody tries to say something more original and emotional than the previous speaker. The whole process grows into a sort of oratory contest. There are special toasts which according to the ritual, should be accompanied by a song or a verse.

Love, life, friendship and other abstract notions are subjects of eloquent toasts at the Georgian table. Every speaker tries to express his personal understanding of these notions. When a person is toasting, the rest are listening to him with great attention and respect. The revelry never grows into an unrestrained drinking-bout. The table has come to an end. A *Tamada* proposes a toast to the Saints patronizing the Georgian people. Finally, one of the men proposes a toast to a toast-master and thanks him on behalf of all guests.

Songs have always accompanied the Georgians in joy and sorrow, in battle and labor. Special drinking songs and wedding songs (if it is a wedding party) as well as chants full of humor, sung by guests during the course of the party contest. It may sound strange but sometimes even events of social, economic and political significance are discussed during the table talks.

Do You Want to Know Where the Georgian Man Reveals Himself in All His Splendor? This is at the Georgian Table !

As I mentioned before, the Georgian cuisine deserves a devotion of a multivolume publication, this was just an introduction.

