



Winter 2013

ORPHANAGE DIRECTOR EXPLAINS HOW BRIGHT CONNECTIONS HAS IMPROVED ORPHANAGE DAILY LIFE

Life has been a little brighter for the kids at the Orichevsky Orphanage in Kirov. That's because they are able to look forward to being done with classes so that they can go play with the new toys that Bright Connection's supporters bought for them! The Director of the orphanage, Marina Anatolievna, told us "the kids were so excited to see their new toys and games, many ran into the room and just looked around with awe, unable to decide which toy to try first." Some of the toys allow the kids to be



more active (e.g. jump ropes, balls, hoola hoops). Especially because, as Marina explained, it is hard for kids to be stuck inside all winter with very little to do. These toys have lifted the kids' spirits, and that is the ultimate goal of Bright Connections.

BE BRIGHT How You Can Be a Part of It

- **Hold Your Own Fundraiser** (grab a group of friends and contact us for simple ideas)
- **Spread the word** 'Like' us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @brighthought—tell your friends about us too!
- **Donate**—every \$1 donated helps improve orphans lives
- **Volunteer**—we can always use an enthusiastic hand! We have both virtual and local volunteer positions

RUSSIA'S ADOPTION BAN MEANS FEWER CHANCES FOR ORPHANS TO FIND A HOME

The recent Russian ban of US adoptions is a hot topic in the media at the moment. Though Putin had signed a short-lived six month adoption ban in the past, this one appears more threatening, as its institution is linked with the United States' signing of the Magnitsky Act, a law that seeks to hold Russia accountable for human rights violations, especially in the case of the death of Sergei Magnitsky, an auditor who died while imprisoned after exposing corruption in the finances of the Russian government. Signed into law on New Years Day, this ban puts a halt to an average of over 1,000 Russian children adopted by American families each year. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Americans have adopted approximately 60,000 Russian orphans, extricating them from the orphanage system that condemns so many that remain there. Despite recent opposition from the US as well as within Russia, on the 17th of January, Putin's child rights advisor as well as the president himself, both stood by the decision and defended it as an adequate and praised response among the Russian people.

It is impossible to ignore the numbers of children who lack families in Russia. So now Bright Connections' mission is even more necessary than ever before. Though Bright Connections has not made adoption advocacy one of its pillars, the fact that no orphans can make their way towards American homes, leaving thousands more children stuck in the system each year, our work to improve their lives in the orphanages is all the more crucial. We do not know how long this ban will last and so much information is still surfacing on this story. However, it serves as a clear reminder of how much our work can positively impact those in Russia who need it most. Please join us as we work to brighten these orphans lives and share your ideas on how we can help! To read the more about the adoption ban visit www.brightconnectionsinternational.org. | Written By: Beth Cleary

**A GIANT THANK YOU TO OUR CHRISTMAS
CAMPAIGN DONORS!!**

- Mary and John Council
- Katie Boynton
- Brian and Christine Costello
- Danielle Shanti

**BRIGHT CONNECTIONS
BRIGHTENS THE HOLIDAYS**

Bright Connection's Indiegogo campaign to bring a brighter Christmas and New Year to the orphans was a success! Thanks to our donors, Bright Connections was able to provide the orphanages with funds to make their Christmas a little more special than in years before. With this money they were able to add special foods such as cakes and bread to their Christmas dinner, as well as provide small gifts for the children. Russian Orthodox Christmas was celebrated after Western Christmas, on January 7th. Russian Orthodox tradition says to fast until Christmas Eve dinner when a special meal is served. This year the orphans were able to look forward to that special meal. Our help is even more appreciated during the holiday season when so many of the kids are missing having a family life. Bright Connections supporters have shown these orphans that there are many people out there in the world that still care about them.

Bright Connections Fun Facts

- We are an all-volunteer organization, we work hard so that all donations can go directly to helping the orphanages
- Together with our many supporters we are helping over 200 orphans
- Bright Connections has many virtual volunteers all over the world from countries like Russia, Luxembourg, Israel and the Ukraine.
- We have almost 1,000 followers on Facebook— Your 'like' could be number 1,000!



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