

Russian orphan children visit Back Mountain with hope for finding adoptive parents

(continued from page 1)

their own children. Gina, a former Miss Pennsylvania, runs a performing arts center for children who want to dance, sing, perform and act. Bill just loves all the kids. After four years of marriage and no children, Gina called *The Dallas Post* to inquire about an ad placed by Lutheran Services, an agency which was holding an informational meeting about adoption for prospective parents. "I think that was the beginning," says Gina. They also fell in love with "little Sarah," a Chinese girl adopted by a couple from Huntsville Christian Church, who sat in front of them every Sunday. "So we were thinking about a little Chinese baby."

Then last August Gina called a host family in Pennsylvania to arrange to meet two Russian orphan girls who were visiting through the kidsave program. The host family had three children of their own. A meeting at Knoebel's never happened because the host family decided to adopt the children. The woman called Gina in tears and explained she could not let the children go. Disappointed, Gina composed herself and wrote the woman a thank you letter. "We thought these were not the right children for us," she said. But says Gina, "This was completely God-led, in the stars, and when one door closed I waited for another door to open." Two days later the woman called again in tears to tell Gina and Bill that she was pregnant again and could not adopt the girls.

The Ackermans started the formal adoption process to adopt the girls through an agency in Scranton called Worldlinks, run by a Russian woman, Tatiana Suslin. Worldlinks provides all the necessary documents, arranges a trip to Russia to meet the children and provides interpreters to couples while in Russia. "There is more and more interest to adopt Russian orphans every day," Suslin said.

All ready to go to Russia, Gina and Bill were handed a another setback on April 25th when new Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that all adoptions were on hold until he could relicense foreign adoption agencies. Again,

Gina and Bill reeled but were not undaunted. Gina reread the translated version of Putin's announcement and decided that it did not preclude individual couples from proceeding with their adoption plans. She and Bill rewrote all their papers and documents, with the help of Suslin, and then wondered how they would get a Russian visa to see the two little girls they wanted to adopt. Bill, a frequent business traveler, on a long-shot called the Marriott Travel Club, which was able to arrange tourist visas for him and Gina.

They left for Russia the second week in May to attempt to see the orphan girls. They found the orphans well cared for and healthy, and were allowed to stay in the orphanage for five days. When they arrived the girls ran to Gina and called her "mother." They also introduced her to their little brother. "We were expecting to adopt two little girls, we would not have chosen three children," Gina says. "We knew the girls had a half brother but were told that they were not close, but as we stayed there we realized that this was a family."

The Russian government takes children from their natural parents in cases of abuse and neglect, both of which are aggravated by the country's rampant alcoholism problem. Says Gina, "We did not see much poverty; people had very few things but their relationships with each other were very important."

The department of education in each state is responsible for orphanages since they are considered boarding schools. The Russian government is very concerned that adopted Russian children are not abused, sold into prostitution, or adopted for their organs, explains Gina. "They are somewhat mistrustful and that translates into a stricter adoption process."

According to Kidsave there are 950,000 institutionalized children in central and eastern Europe. After graduation from the orphanages many of these children become "street people." One in five become participants in crime, and



During a recent visit to Hillside Farms, Wendy and Dave Garrety of Harveys Lake watched as Marina fed some hay to a hungry milk cow.

POST PHOTOS/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

one in 10 commit suicide.

Brian and Brenda Suder of Harveys Lake are sure their guest orphan girl is perfect for their family. "The boys were totally against the idea to start but we prayed about it and then Chris cancelled his summer camp to be with Marina," said Brian. "She's teaching us some things too. She takes away the dishes after the meals."

The Suders have two natural children, teenaged Chris, and Alex, who is younger. Marina, a 10-year-old Russian girl, will fit in well with the family. "We saw the press release in *The Dallas Post* in April asking for host families. My wife and I talked about it and contacted Barbara Kryger," Brian said.

Wendy and Dave Garrety, of Harveys Lake, are also hosting a Russian orphan named Vera. "We're having a wonderful experience this week," says Wendy Garrety, with a twinkle in her eye, as she glances over to her husband, who is yet undecided about the outcome of the visit.

Couples interested in hosting orphans are not committed to adopting them, but have first priority if they do decide to adopt a child. In order to become a host family, or stand-by host family, a home visit and interview is required. Couples intent on adopting are required to file the necessary immigration and naturalization papers, and must make at least one visit to the orphanage in Russia to meet the child.

"This is not convenient," says Gina Ackerman. "It takes a lot of time, paperwork, and emotion. If you wanted a child out of convenience you would never do this." All the children, whether adopted or not, must return to Russia

after their visit here.

Bill and Gina's Russian family are now off the national waiting list for orphans. Orphans are required to be on the waiting list for six months. The Russian government has given them a tentative "thumbs up" on their adoption. They are at the end of the process and, according to Tatiana Suslin, could be called to collect their new family as soon as the end of this month.

Sasha still needs an adoptive home here in the U.S. Anyone interested in meeting him should call Barbara or Brunon Kryger in Kingston at 714-4722.

"He's a great boy," says Judy Harvey of Trucksville, a mother of three and a former Red Cross swim teacher. "Excellent at adapting to all environments and oh my, what an incredible athlete. He learned to swim in just two days."



Chris Suder talked over the finer points of cows with Vera.

If you'd like to help

Anyone interested in learning more about hosting or adopting Russian children can contact these resources:

World Links Inc. is licensed by the PA Dept. of Public Welfare to provide domestic and international adoptions. World Links is the sponsoring agency for Kidsave International's Summer Miracles Program, which brings children ages 5-11 from Russian orphanages to live with American families for five weeks each summer. The goal of the program is to find permanent adoptive families for the children. Host families are under no obligation to adopt.

Contacts:

Barbara and Brunon Kryger: Program coordinators who find host families, set up activities and plan transportation.
Phone: 714-4722
e-mail: Russianchildren@aol.com

World Links Inc.: Selects and brings children from Russia, coordinates host families and couples interested in adoption.
Phone: 383-8229
e-mail: wl_adopt@teispint.com

Kidsave International: Program to bring children from around the world to find adoptive families. Help with travel and medical expenses.
Web site: www.kidsaveinternational.org

Cara Nygren to attend Univ. of Tennessee

Cara L. Nygren, a recent graduate of Wilkes University with a degree in Chemistry, will be attending the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for graduate studies to pursue her Masters degree in Physical Chemistry. She is a graduate of Lake-Lehman High School, and the daughter of Dale and Brenda Nygren of Sweet Valley.

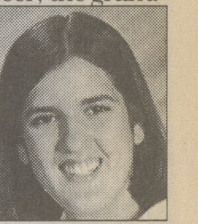


Eric Nygren named to Syracuse dean's list

Eric A. Nygren, Sweet Valley, was recently named to the dean's list at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY., for the spring of 2000 semester. He is a junior at the L.C. Smith College of Engineering and Computer Science. He is a graduate of Lake-Lehman High School, and the son of Dale and Brenda Nygren, Sweet Valley.

Spencer earns USAF ROTC scholarship

Mary Jane Spencer, the granddaughter of Dave and Dolores Spencer of Lehman has been awarded an Air Force ROTC scholarship to the University of Hawaii. Mary Jane will be majoring in Pre-Med. Mary Jane is an honors graduate of Wall High School, Wall, NJ.



Area graduates from Mansfield U

A total of 279 degrees were awarded during Mansfield University's 136th commencement ceremonies in May.

A graduating class of 252 received bachelor's degrees, 11 received associate's degrees and 16 master's degrees were awarded.

Graduates from the Back Mountain were: Amory J. Fetko, Dallas, BS Criminal Justice Administration; Michael L. Kittle, Sweet Valley, BS Criminal Justice Administration; John R. Romano, Dallas, BA Liberal Studies.

Dallas Class of 1990 planning reunion

Dallas Senior High School, Class of 1990, is planning a reunion. Any interested classmates should contact either Peter Solinsky at Putskil@mindspring.com or (215) 508-0676, Erica Bullock-Mahoney at 333-5323, or Brenda Olsen at 675-2073. The tentative date for the reunion is set for September 2, 2000.

Send or bring your sports reports to
The Dallas Post

607 Main Rd.
Dallas PA 18612
(across from Offset Paperback)



Back Mountain families who are hosting Russian orphan children gathered at Hillside Farms recently. From left, Wendy Garrety, Marina, Brian Suder and Vera.

"WE LOST WHAT WE THOUGHT WE HAD, AND WE NEED TO GET IT BACK"

Join

"DEFEND OUR WATERSHED"

MEETINGS:

Thursday Evenings
6:30 p.m. Commissioners Mtg.
W-B Courthouse

EVERYONE INVITED

MEMBERSHIP:

\$10 Per Year

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____

Send to:
Defend our Watershed
P.O. Box 2612
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701
www.defendourwatershed.org

Yes! I want to help save 40,000 acres of watershed land.

Feeling like new again...

A modern, friendly setting offers a convenient location for Back Mountain residents who are in need of physical therapy due to personal or work-related injuries.

We offer:

- An experienced staff
- Patented "STRIVE" equipment (Target loading arms on each piece of equipment ensures powerful results and eliminates overtraining while enhancing functional strength)
- Flexible hours designed to meet your schedule
- Easy, direct registration with therapists
- Free parking

Outpatient physical therapy, occupational and speech therapy are available.

MERCY
Health Partners

Because others depend on you... Depend on us.

"The therapists at Mercy take the time to personally involve themselves with your individual needs, and my results have been amazing."

— Sue F., Dallas

"Within a relatively short time, the therapists had me resuming the activities of a normal lifestyle."

— Daniel T., Shavertown

With a referral from a physician, dentist or podiatrist, you may choose **Mercy Health Partners Outpatient Therapy** at Shapes Total Fitness Center, Memorial Highway, Dallas.

Hours: Monday through Friday 7am-5pm.

674-8890 740-5252

Mercy Health Partners Rehabilitation

AT SHAPES FITNESS CENTER,
DALLAS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY