

Faces of Peace

Saving a War-Torn Childhood

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Orphans to arrive soon, Project needs support

With hints of spring come thoughts of our new program season. This year Project Life plans to sponsor ten orphans of war from three overseas countries: four Afghans, four Chechens, and two Sri Lankans. It costs \$4,500 to \$5,000 to cover all costs for each child.

Program Director Linda Redfield and volunteer Mirjam Kania from Germany, will spend 10 days in Russia this April selecting new children from the Caucasus region, and visiting returned orphans and their families.

Hajara Huzair, who travelled to Pakistan to return the Afghan boys last fall, remained overseas for the winter. She spent the past few weeks in Peshawar, Pakistan, helping to select orphans to travel here this summer. There are dozens of needy candidates among the very large number of displaced families living in this city near the Afghan border.

Ishan Rasheed who acted as chaperone for the Sri Lankan children the past two years, has already started the process of choosing two new children. They will once again come from the Trincomalee region, which has been hit doubly hard: first by civil warfare, and then by the Asian Tsunami of 2005.

Below: Madina plays at Strong Museum, October '07.



Obaid, Mak-Sharip, Safan, Hameed, and Dostam add their own colors to group art project at fall gala.

Fall '07 Fete Honors Ten Years of Progress, Brings Forth Decade of Memories

On November 4, 2007 Project Life's home base at World Life Institute Education Center in Waterport was filled to capacity as orphans, hosts, volunteers, and friends of Project Life old and new officially celebrated the program's tenth anniversary.

It was a day of reminiscences, laughter, and tears. Group art activities, diplomas, flowers, good food, and a piñata full of candy marked the day.

Chris Wilson acted as M-C for the official launching of Project Life's book, *Saving a War-Torn Childhood*. The collection of writings from orphans, overseas family members, and Project volunteers was created by a grant from the Genesee Orleans Regional Arts Council. Readers shared portions of the book with the assembled crowd.

The book is currently on sale at Swan Library, Albion, and through Project Life. See ordering information on page 4.

Notes from the Director***Much to give thanks for as community pitches in for program 2007***

Project Life's season 2007 was one of the best yet! (I probably say that every year!) Ten orphans from Afghanistan, Chechnya and Sri Lanka participated in our 11th annual program.

Many friends, new and old, from schools, community organizations, and churches showed their voluntary spirit this year. The **Albion Rotary Club** continued its support under the presidency of Grace Denniston. Rotary invited our group of orphans and their hosts to a Thursday luncheon. There, members heard a presentation from the Afghan and Sri Lankan children, who had prepared a participatory PowerPoint presentation.

Host families and voluntary staff attended the Homecoming football game in the nearby town of Albion. Ada Grabowski, superintendent of the **Albion Central School District** personally invited our group of 25 to be part of all of the excitement. Loudspeaker announcements introduced each orphan to the fans at the game. Prior to that, Rotary **Interact Youth** gave the orphans gift bags filled with school supplies to take back home.

Swan Library continued to offer their fabulous story/craft hour with Grace Kent in charge. Children acted out *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* and *Little Red Riding Hood* stories. Afghan and Sri Lankan children participated in the reading challenges and won prizes along with local children during the summer reading programs. It was the first time in the history of Project Life that non-English speakers gained enough proficiency to be able to read simple storybooks within a month of their arrival here.

The orphans joined Catholic Youth at **St. Agnes Church** in Avon, New York. Representatives of the St. Agnes youth group came to the airport during the children's departure, to present beautiful handmade banners expressing peace.

Three Holley families and one Albion family hosted this year's Chechen children. The Chechens arrived in September but it wasn't too late to enjoy a swimming party including visiting chaperone Alik Akhilgov. The host families gathered around a pool in Kent for a picnic. A picture from the occasion ended up on the front page of a Grozny, Chechnya newspaper under the headline *They bring joy to our children*. Swan Library later featured the translated article in their foyer display case.

From swimming to ice-skating, bowling to the zoo, **Brown's Berry Patch** ice cream to **Carlton Methodist Church's** hayride. And who can forget Washington D.C., Niagara Falls, the Aquarium, canoeing, **Millville Methodist Church's** gift bags, bikes to ride on, **University at Buffalo Dental** care, **Lake Plains Eye Center** care, fun at **Universal School**, and all the new clothes and toys from Buffalo friends for Eid? Every day was filled with so many donations, blessings and fun.

I'd like to thank volunteers Naila Shakoor and Adam Lieberman for their daily work in the English program, and Dena and Abrianna Adler for doing art, dance and dress up.

I am sure ten orphans left filled with incredible memories of the kindnesses pouring over them from Rochester to Buffalo and everywhere in between.



Here's to an equally successful 2008 season!
Linda Redfield

Left, Mak-Sharip enjoys his time at Springdale Farm.

Flowering of potential in ruins of war-torn Caucasus

by Adam Lieberman

In the summer of 1997 I was thirteen years old, and found myself playing happily with five young boys from a place called Bosnia. In that humble summer, Project Life War Orphans Rehabilitation Program took its first steps towards reaching out to orphans around the world.

William Shakespeare writes that “We know who we are, but know not who we may be.” Actresses playing the role of Ophelia have spoken these words on stages throughout England in centuries past, most likely never realizing the implications of the bard’s passage.

Nor did I realize what these words suggest until, ten years later, at the age of twenty-three, I found myself flying overseas. With me were six children, all depending on me to protect them on their homeward journey, having departed the United States on the evening of November 8.

Project Life celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, bringing with it the rush of memories of over one hundred orphans of war and world disasters, served since the summer of 1997. On this momentous year for Project Life, I was given the opportunity to travel as the sole adult chaperone for this group of Chechen orphans. It is quite an overwhelming feeling, knowing that there are six children with you that depend upon you, and trust that you will do everything in your power to look after all of them while traveling.

Even more overwhelming is the knowledge that the families of these children await their arrival in a faraway land, and depend on you just as much, if not more than the children in your care. I cannot express the feeling of gratitude, coupled with relief, that I felt upon being rushed by loving mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and other relatives at the airport in Ingushetia on the night of our arrival.

I realized more than ever on this trip, though I have traveled to Russia several times before, that the hope we bring to children is not for them alone. The hope expands to their families, and then billows up, touching the hearts of everyone around them. I saw the faces

of mothers and grandmothers full of light, glistening with tears of happiness that may never have occurred had it not been for the work this program has done. I experienced firsthand the power that love and care extended across a long distance can give to so many people.

I have seen the people and the mountains of the Caucasus in years past, but never did they glow with such beauty as when I brought with me the returning children, who embody their culture’s hopes for the future.



Zalina (Project Life '06) visited with Adam Nov. '07.

Ten years ago, in the summer of 1997, I was thirteen years old, and found myself playing happily with five young boys from a place called Bosnia. In that humble summer, Project Life took its first step towards fulfilling its mission, and it hasn’t stopped moving since. Now, ten years later, Project Life has served over one hundred orphans from around the globe, and brought hope to corners of the world that perhaps had forgotten the meaning of the word.

Hundreds of years after *Hamlet* was written, William Shakespeare is one of the most famous of all literary writers. In ten fleeting years, Project Life has only had a brief glimpse of what it could become. I have had but a glimpse of what I could become through this miraculous program. There is nothing more hopeful, than the thought of what could be achieved through Project Life in years to come, for the sake of so many who may not yet have had a chance to realize what they too could become.

A taste of our 10th anniversary publication...

The Spirit of Giving by Sharon Sugar

A couple of days after Karina arrived at our home, she was given a package of new socks and underwear at school. She brought them home and wanted us all to come upstairs to her room with her. We assumed she was just excited to receive new things and wanted us to see her open them.

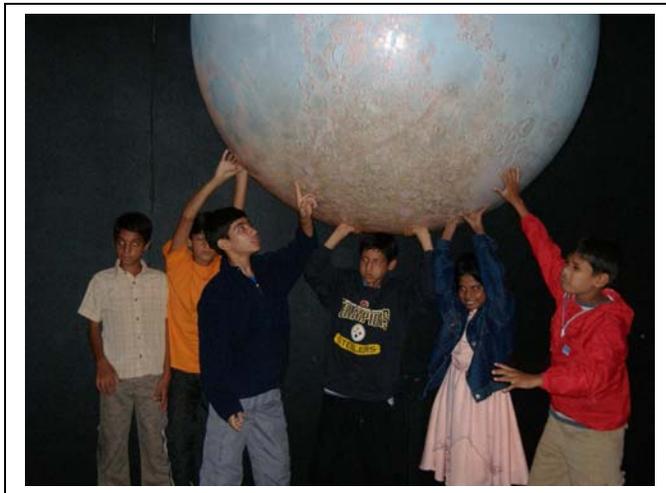
She opened the packages and immediately made three piles of socks and three piles of underwear. With a big smile on her face, she picked up one pile of each and gave them to Hannah (her host sister) and another pile of each she gave to Abbie (her other host sister).

Although we all protested and tried to return them to her, she was insistent that they keep her gift. It felt wrong to take something from someone with so little. Tears came to my eyes as I witnessed her generosity and her excitement in giving out of the little that she had. So much had been taken from her throughout her childhood, but her giving spirit remained.

She had an exuberance and a love of life that I haven't witnessed in many people, especially in someone who has lived through so much sadness and heartache. Our lives are richer because of the time we shared with Karina. She will always hold a special place in our hearts.

Buy the book and help us raise funds to support the program this summer! It's a 40 page soft cover volume that includes poignant memoirs, letters from orphans who returned home, follow-up surveys, and inspiring original works by individuals touched by their contact with children of war.

Order by e-mail: projectlife@worldlifeinstitute.com, or call 585-682-0730. Price including shipping is \$10 U.S. Donate \$125 or more and receive the book as our thanks for your support.



Above, Hameed, Dostam, Obaid, Ismail, Haseena, and Safan "hold up the Moon" at Rochester Museum & Science Center; Ismail and Haseena in Butterfly House at Strong Museum last fall.

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WHOM DO WE SERVE? Orphaned children of war and natural disaster. Children are 9 to 13-year-olds with high socio-economic, psychological, and emotional needs. All children live with family members in their home countries. We do not select children from orphanages or seek permanent fostering or adoption for them in the United States.

WHY? We aim to provide peace and support for each child's rest and recuperation from trauma. Our program improves physical and psychological health, builds trust and confidence, and inspires new hope.

HOW? A three-month program of education, recreation and health care, along with hosting by volunteer American families in the western New York region. All children return to their families overseas at the completion of the program period.