



Spring/Summer Newsletter 2009

One Heart Bulgaria

HOPE • LIFE • FUTURE
for Orphans

Volume 7, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2009

Bringing music to the orphans of Bulgaria

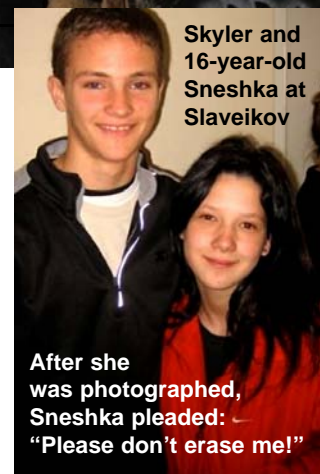
Each time One Heart Bulgaria president Deborah Dushku Gardner returns to Bulgaria she finds it to be a unique and unforgettable experience. "Bulgaria is like my second home and the orphans are like my own far-away family," she says. "I love seeing the children again, picking them up, holding them on my lap, and giving them much needed hugs. Each child I meet leaves an unforgettable impression in my heart."

The March 2009 OHB trip focused on bringing joy to the children through music, so Deborah invited talented songwriters and performers Sam Payne and Mindy Gledhill to join her. Included in the group were music manager Jeremy Barron; volunteer photographer Brad Luppino of Luppino Photography; Skyler Payne (who became a teenage heart throb to all the orphan girls); Kelly King Anderson, One Heart Bulgaria trustee; and Nikolai Gavazov, OHB director in Bulgaria.



Although many in the group were strangers, they became good friends through the wonderful experiences they shared.

The group visited 7 orphanages in 5 cities, and held 3 large concerts in historical buildings in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Bratsigovo, which were attended by 10 orphanages. The children adored Mindy, who touched everyone's heart with beautiful songs and the love she offered each child. Sam was a huge hit performing on a . . . *(Continued on next page)*



Skyler and 16-year-old Sneshka at Slaveikov

After she was photographed, Sneshka pleaded: "Please don't erase me!"

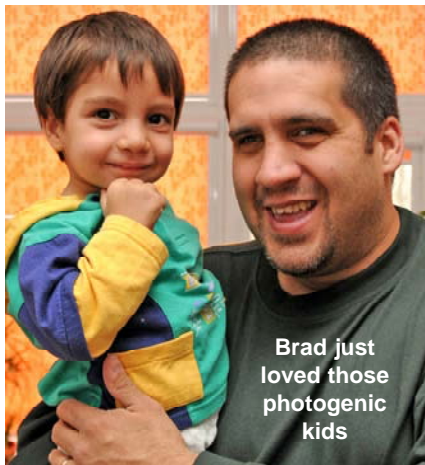
Inside This Issue

Bringing music to
Bulgarian orphans1
Sam and Mindy4

Adoptions now open6
Message from the
president7
Featured sponsor8



"Chicho" Jeremy was every orphan's favorite uncle



Brad just loved those photogenic kids

(Continued from page 1) . . . variety of instruments, telling stories in between songs and magically engaging the kids who stared at him the entire concert with huge smiles on their faces, often breaking out in clapping and laughter. In the background Jeremy managed the sound system and Brad snapped away on his camera. The rest of the group . . . well . . . during those concerts, it was all they could do to sit among their orphan friends and hold back the tears. For the orphans, this was perhaps the highlight of their lives--a night when they forgot for a few moments that they were orphans and instead felt special.

At the orphanages for little children, Sam and Mindy put on delightful interactive music shows. Others in the group held little ones on their laps and helped them clap, dance, or march to the beat of the music. Mindy loved and held each child as her own (whether or not their bottoms were wet) and Sam was willing to play on orphanage floors with kids piled all around him or on top of him.

OHB visitors also saw the results of the organization's programs. The *babas* (Bulgarian grandmothers) are making a huge impact in the lives of little ones

who desperately need individual attention and affection. The regular music, choir, or Bulgarian folk dancing lessons provided at many of the orphanages have given the children something worthwhile to do and are increasing their self-esteem. There are new washers, dryers, bed frames, and mattresses provided through donations to OHB in one orphanage after another. The group met children who have benefitted from the OHB dental program, received general medical care, or who have had hydrocephalus shunt operations. Orphanage directors and children asked about former OHB interns whom they remember fondly. The Family Dynamics International/OHB Caregiver Training Program is working beautifully at the Bratsigovo orphanage and the group even saw the much loved playhouse, which had been donated by American boys Davin and Michael.



"Baba" Vanya helps a "grandchild" make music



Back row: Nikolai Gavazov, One Heart Bulgaria field director. Front row: Mindy Gledhill, Deborah Gardner, Kelly King Anderson, Jeremy Barron, Sam Payne, Skyler Payne, and Brad Luppino.

Bulgaria's largest orphanage, Slaveikov, showed drastic improvements that have taken place since OHB installed windows and doors there 2 years ago.

The group also took great pleasure in delivering hundreds of pounds of donated baby wash, soap, diaper rash ointment, toothpaste, toothbrushes, medicines, vitamins, hygiene kits, first aid supplies, and educational toys, as well as 22 hospital kits, 15 shunts, 15 file folder kits, and 12 handmade quilts. To top it off, there was a "fireside evening" held in Plovdiv where Sam and Mindy spoke and sang, and Jeremy, Kelly, and Deborah shared their thoughts. It was an amazing evening to end an unforgettable trip. Mindy, Sam, and others who participated will perform a benefit concert this fall in Utah. Check out the website for more information: www.oneheart-bg.org.

One Heart Bulgaria is grateful to everyone who volunteered and gave donations to make this trip possible: **Shawn Nielson and Marvin Gardner**: air fare; **Holly Latimer** and her **Cub Scouts**: file folder kits; **Sunny Morton** and **Jeanie Daviso**: hospital kits; **Integra LifeSciences**: shunts; **Matthew Landheim and Object Systems International**: transportation in Bulgaria; **Mano**, a wonderful helper and interpreter; **Melissa and Doug Toys**: educational toys; **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Providence Stake**: quilts, hygiene supplies, and medicines; **Sugar City 3rd Ward**: quilts and medicines; **Oakhills 1st Ward Young Men and Young Women**: blocks and jingle-bell mittens; **Sam Payne** (sampayne.com) and **Mindy Gledhill** (mindygledhill.com) for taking on this adventure and for their music; **Skyler Payne** for making friends with the teenage orphans; **Jeremy "Chicho" Barron** for believing this trip was possible and for all the love, treats, and meals he offered the orphans; **Brad Luppino** (luppinophotography.com) for volunteering to document the trip; **Kelly King Anderson** for her amazing energy and confidence; **Nikolai Gavazov**, who drove the group everywhere, set up appointments, arranged hotels and concert halls, and who continues to care for the children; to the **folks who took care of the families at home** while the group was in Bulgaria; and to each of **YOU** for supporting OHB programs and giving, in one way or another, to One Heart Bulgaria.

God bless you all!



Little kids make music with donated "jingle-bell mittens"



Kelly King Anderson loves the children at Rada Kirkovich Orphanage



Some of the children from Bratsigovo I orphanage performed at the concert. OHB provides a Bulgarian folk dance teacher and costumes.

Sam and Mindy: singing in Bulgaria



By Sam Payne

In March, Mindy Gledhill and I traveled to Bulgaria - a couple of songwriters on a trip hosted and organized by One Heart Bulgaria. Before we left, we were briefed by OHB president Deborah Gardner on all kinds of savvy travel tips (tank up on Airborne and protein bars, and always carry a roll of toilet paper -- just in case). We were briefed on the orphans we'd meet, too: on the poverty, filth, and illness we'd witness. We'd be dismayed upon coming back home, we were warned, at the extravagance of our own lifestyles. We appreciated Deborah's tips. We took them to heart. We felt prepared.

But there was plenty that she hadn't prepared us for. She hadn't prepared us for the delight we'd feel as our new orphan friends turned the music station on TV up way loud, and danced with us on the big wood floor at the Rada Kirkovich orphanage -- newly refinished through donations made to OHB. Or the tears we'd shed listening to young orphans raise their voices earnestly in song,

directed by a kind music teacher--a position funded by donations made to OHB. Or the excitement with which teenage

orphans showed us their bedrooms, replete with new doors and windows--purchased and installed with donations



made to OHB. We saw miracle after miracle, wrought by the hands of OHB and its friends.

On our trip, Mindy and I brought music to the orphans we met. In halls from Sofia to Plovdiv to Bratsigovo, we played concerts for audiences of orphans who had likely never seen a concert in their lives. In music-time

workshops right in their own orphanages, we saw the faces of toddlers as they touched a guitar for the first time, or clapped along with harmonica music. We swapped American pop songs for Bulgarian pop songs with bright, talented teenagers in impromptu gatherings—teens with all kinds of songs in their heads, but no one to share them with. We held those kids in

our arms and in our hearts. And as the days passed, we were struck by the power and importance of artful endeavors in lives that need lifting. As musicians, we've long been converted to that ideal. We place a lot of stock in it. And we can report with confidence on what we believe to be the very real and enduring potency of the musical moments we shared with our new friends.

But we can report on more as well. In all our Bulgarian travels, we could scarcely go anywhere without coming face to face with some life-altering work, laid down with care by OHB and its friends—the weight of miracles, all around us, all the time.

And that, we weren't prepared for. Friends of OHB, whoever you are, because of your efforts, there is strength and hope where there was only despair and loneliness, cleanliness and health where there was filth and illness. We saw it. We were changed by it. You are, in so many ways, the hands of heaven.

May heaven bless you.



Adoptions open in Bulgaria

After a hiatus of several years, the Bulgarian government has reopened the adoption process! As Bulgaria prepared to enter the European Union, all adoptions were put on hold. Because there wasn't a working foster-care system, however, many children ended up suffering as an unintended result. Thanks to the tireless work of the Minister and deputy Minister of Justice, the deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, and countless directors of orphanages, restrictions have now been lifted and the doorway of adoption is open to hundreds of children waiting for a chance at a good life.

Because of the numerous requests for adoption help One Heart Bulgaria has had in the past, we have decided to name Janet Peterson as our Adoption Support Advocate. OHB will not be acting as an adoption agency, but Janet will be able to make referrals and answer questions.

Adoption Information:

OHB Adoption Support Advocate:
Janet Peterson
Phone number: 435-752-7638

Reputable agencies or resources you can contact:

Wasatch International Adoptions;
Kathy Junk ; Tel: 801-334-8683;
email kathy@wiaa.org; www.wiaa.org
Approximate cost of adopting
through this agency: \$23,000

Happy Family (Bulgarian Agency);
Violeta Strijleva; violeta@happyfamily-bg.com

Approximate cost (not including travel costs, home study, paperwork and documents) through this agency: 8,000€ or \$14,000

www.reachoutbg.org/ (go to the left sidebar which says "adopt")

<http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov/adoption3.html>



OBH President Deborah Gardner says of the little boy hugging her, "He called me Momma!"



Message from One Heart Bulgaria president Deborah Dushku Gardner:

“Tri”-ing to help the orphans

Anyone who knows me knows I always exercise. As a child, I made up obstacle courses for my dog and me on the school playground. In high school I played sports. In college, even during finals, you could find me in the weight room or down at the track late at night. I packed dumbbells in the suitcases that I hauled around Bulgaria on my mission. Through 5 pregnancies I've done my best to stay fit. After years of the same routines, however, I was completely unmotivated to exercise at all. So, I decided to try a “tri”—I would start training for a triathlon. But instead of just doing this for myself, I was going to do it for the orphans! In my mind, the orphans and I became a sort of team.

For the next 4 months, I swam 2-3 times a week at night, driving 13 miles on the icy highway out to the high school pool. I swam laps for up to an hour, and then made my way back to my car through the falling snow (it always seemed to be snowing) and a sloshy parking lot with long wet hair. “For the orphans,” I'd tell myself, “do it for the orphans!” By 10:00 PM I would finally be home.

I also ran and cycled and even tried to keep up with the weight training. It was truly a test of determination to keep up this regimen. I found that trying to excel in all three disciplines was more challenging than I thought it would be.

During my trip to Bulgaria I had told a few orphans I was going to do a triathlon for them. They looked at me in shock. I could tell what they were thinking: “For me? Why would you do that for me?” In my mind I replied, “Because you don't get to do ANYTHING. You have no opportunities, nothing to look forward to, no way to excel, no one to cheer you on; so I will compete in your place.”

Three weeks before the Woman of Steel triathlon, Kelly King Anderson, OHB trustee, decided to put on her running shoes, borrow a bike, and jump in the pool (although not all at once) to join the cause. I was so grateful for her support and for her champion spirit. Kelly finished with arms up in the air and an enthusiastic “whooh-hooo!”

The race was a thrilling experience; I highly recommend it! I'd like to say that



Deborah and Kelly pose on the winners' blocks. They raised \$1,200 which will be used for more music programs for the orphans.

I broke some sort of record, but the only records I broke were my own. When I crossed that finish line it was with a huge smile on my face and a heart full of thoughts of those orphans. I guess we crossed that finish line together!



Jeff Swift, OHB VP; Sheri Swift, OHB secretary; and Brooke Ropelato, board member set up an information booth at the race and sold hand made Bulgarian items. Kelly is on the left and Deborah on the right.

www.oneheart-bg.org
435-792-3508
165 North Main
Providence, UT 84332



Sponsors go above and beyond

One Heart Bulgaria is able to give assistance to 25 orphanages thanks to dedicated donors and sponsors. Matthew Landheim has been a long time supporter of OHB in a variety of ways. He sponsors Slaveikov orphanage for 200 children through his software company Object Systems International (OSI), located in Sofia, Bulgaria. Matthew strongly encourages his Bulgarian employees to visit the kids at Slaveikov. "OSI has about 20 employees, and so has a front-row seat from which to observe OHB's activities on the ground. OHB's efforts are incredible, and they are paying huge dividends to the orphans. The sponsorship has been an easy way for OSI to make a positive impact in Bulgaria, as well as to provide OSI employees a chance to help their own," explains Matthew.

In addition, the OSI office crew has accommodated OHB volunteers many times by allowing them to stay in a bedroom at the office with full access to the kitchen, bathroom and internet. This has been extremely helpful in keeping our travel costs low. In addition, OSI staff members often pick up and drop off OHB travelers at the airport.

During the last big trip Mano, an OSI employee (and now our friend), served as translator in between hauling around tons of the group's luggage and supplies in his own car. OSI also rented a large capacity van with a driver to help the group get around while in Sofia. A big "thank you" to everyone at OSI!



TO SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTION RIGHT NOW, CUT OUT AND MAIL TO 561 North 150 West, Centerville, UT 84014
Do you want to make automatic monthly donations? Visit www.oneheart-bg.org and click on "donate" to learn how.



I want to help! Enclosed is my donation to One Heart Bulgaria

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Email _____

Phone _____

☐ Please send me more information about One Heart Bulgaria, a non-profit tax-exempt charitable organization.



561 North 150 West, Centerville, UT 84014 • 435-764-3093 • www.oneheart-bg.org