

One Heart Bulgaria

HOPE • LIFE • FUTURE
for Orphans

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New situation in Bulgaria calls for new efforts

By Thomas Winterton, One Heart Bulgaria Board Chairman

In February 2013, my wife and I traveled to Bulgaria as representatives of the Roosevelt Utah Rotary club looking for international projects to sponsor. We toured orphanages and spoke with directors about their needs. One thing was painfully obvious—there were a lot of needs! During this trip we met One Heart Bulgaria's field director, Nickolai Gavazov and saw firsthand how much One Heart does for the children in Bulgaria.

Fast forward to October of 2015. I traveled back to Bulgaria with One Heart Bulgaria's President, Deborah, and her husband John Brailsford. We visited many of the places I had visited in 2013. The improvements were many and noticeable! Facilities have been drastically improved in most cases. With the help of the European Union, Bulgaria is moving steadily towards their goal of closing all their orphanages. In place of traditional orphanages, they have built new facilities: the Family Type Care Center. Approximately 150 of these FTCCs have been built over the past year or two.

Each FTCC houses 8-14 children and imitate a family type environment as much as possible. The homes are new, modern and nice. I personally liked the surveillance

system that monitors the rooms to ensure the safety of each child. The children we visited with all reported liking the new living arrangements much better than the old dormitory style orphanages.

Seeing all this was very encouraging to me. While far from perfect, these innovations represent huge improvements. But budgets are strained, and we heard story after story about FTCC staff spending their own personal funds for diapers, etc. Though the facilities are nice, there is no money in the budget for programs like babas (surrogate grandmothers), nurses, or classes in sewing, dance, karate, woodshop, and other enrichment activities. Items such as diapers and medicines are badly needed. Furthermore, some European Union funds used to start and run social programs in Bulgaria ended in November 2015. This will require the country of Bulgaria to take over and continue funding. Some programs have already been told they will have to find outside sponsors to continue.

This makes organizations such as ours more important than ever. It is also going to require more funds and better logistics. We used to be able to hire a teacher and have 30 or more children participate in lessons. With the new FTCC centers, this won't be possible: they are spread out and each has fewer children,

who range widely in age. Also, some of the orphanages we help are still in operation and will continue to be so for a few more years.

I left Bulgaria greatly encouraged by the progress but also knowing that One Heart Bulgaria will have to work smarter and harder if we are to reach as many children as we have in the past. I encourage everyone reading this newsletter to continue donating generously and often. I am proud to be associated with this great organization. My trip to Bulgaria confirmed that One Heart makes a huge difference in many lives. It is well respected by many, including those in the government. As we met with various officials in Bulgaria, they let us know how much they appreciate our help. Thank you to all our donors and supporters that make this possible!



OHB's new treasurer introduces herself

My name is Elizabeth "Hazel" Reed. I grew up in Woodland, Utah and I currently live in Aurora, Colorado with my husband and four children. I am a professional bookkeeper, which I am lucky enough to do from my home. My husband and I met in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2002 where we were both serving as church missionaries. (Yes, we can both speak Bulgarian and love tormenting our kids by using it to plan Christmas and birthday presents right in front of them.)

During my 17+ month stay in Bulgaria I had the privilege of regularly providing service in three different orphanages: one for infants, one for elementary school aged children, and one for teens about to leave the

system. In addition to helping to facilitate my church's donation of necessary supplies, I was able to spend time weekly rocking and playing with the babies, playing soccer with the elementary students (some of whom didn't have shoes), and teaching English to the teens. At one point, I met a visiting representative from One Heart Bulgaria.

After I returned home to the states I became a fan of One Heart Bulgaria on Facebook. A few years ago, I saw a post looking for help with the bookkeeping and I volunteered. Now I am stepping up my role to take over as the new treasurer. I am excited for the opportunity to help out in this wonderful organization.



Bonding with Kremena

By John Brailsford

One Heart welcomes John Brailsford to our team! John did his undergraduate and master's work in psychology, and then completed a Ph.D. in Children and Family Sciences from Florida State University, where he wrote his dissertation on identity formation. He has worked as a therapist for sixteen years, and has been a public speaker and writer for the last decade. John married Deborah Dushku on June 11th. Combined, they have nine children and live in Providence, Utah.

Over two decades ago, a young missionary visited an orphanage in Sofia, Bulgaria. On that day, the children instantly loved her. She loved them so much that she couldn't forget them and determined to help them somehow. Her experience led to the founding of an organization with a dear friend, Heidi Glyn Barker; that organization has blessed the lives of thousands of orphan children.

A few months ago, I married that young missionary, now a grown woman. As her husband, I've now joined her in her mission to improve the lives of children in a faraway place. I've felt from the start that I was born to do this work with her, but my motivation to serve these children took on an added dimension yesterday,



when I met a little girl named Kremena. We were visiting a small orphanage for disabled children in Plovdiv. When we arrived, one of the caregivers was holding a little girl with cerebral palsy, then walked over to a crib and left her lying there. Within a few seconds, I heard her cry, and I couldn't stay away.

Kremena likes to be held, but there aren't enough workers in the little orphanage in Plovdiv to hold her all day. As I stood next to her crib, I had no intention of picking her up. I was just there to offer a little comfort until she fell asleep. But, something happened when I held her hand. She stopped crying and her beautiful brown eyes looked into mine with intensity. It's as if she knew me somehow, and I realized that I knew her, too. From then on, it wasn't going to be easy to just walk away. Whenever she sensed that I might move away, she seemed alarmed. Her eyes begged me to stay, and she kept trying to lift her head and sit up. I helped her up, and, once her head was off the pillow, I couldn't resist lifting her into my arms.

Over the next 25-30 minutes, we were inseparable. At one point, I got too warm and put her back in the crib while I took off my sweater. She cried out loud, with big tears falling down her face, until she was back in my arms again. We danced and spun around in circles. I shifted her from side to side multiple times so she'd be comfortable. I played with her hair and sang children's songs I learned long ago, as a missionary in Spain. She smiled at me, and we laughed together when I gently tickled her tiny ribs. All the workers in the orphanage smiled and laughed with us too. It was blissful.

I kissed Kremena's cheeks repeatedly and told her how pretty she was. She stared up at me, mesmerized by my voice and the movements of my face. She just stared up at me sometimes, and it was all I could do to contain my emotions. It was as if two dear friends were meeting again after a long time apart. When it was time to go, I held her close before placing her gently into the arms of one of the workers. Kremena was at peace this time, as if she knew that I had to go and that our happy reunion had lasted as long as needed.

As long as I live, I'll never forget this little girl and our brief time together. For me, my experience with her provided a glimpse through the eyes of God, who sees all of His children through loving eyes. Now, I understand more than ever why my wonderful wife was so moved many years ago to do the work we are doing together today.

One Heart Bulgaria president reports on trip, conference

Our recent trip to the orphanages was very successful! It was wonderful to bring my husband, John, so that he could experience what we do in Bulgaria. We loaded our suitcases with children's undies, diaper rash cream, onesies, baby sleepers, and some toys and off we went! Once in the country, we purchased a lot of shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and baby wash with the money our friends had donated.

In Bulgaria, we learned about the new system for orphans, as described in Thomas Winterton's article (*page 1*). The new buildings are in great condition, but in time they will need repairs and new appliances and there will be no government budget for that. In fact, the operating budget is very low, so the children still need monthly support with hygiene items, medicines, and supplemental food. Over and over again, we were asked if we could provide diapers, which they say they never have enough of.

The old orphanages that are still open do not house as many children as they used to. Parents are being encouraged to keep their babies, and older children are being turned away in many cases. Also, more adoptions are taking place, which is exactly what we want! Meanwhile, we are helping the children who remain to have as good of a life as possible.



John & Deborah
Brailsford

At the Baba
Training
Conference





Nickolai
Gavazov

In Plovdiv, we held a training conference for our *babas*, Bulgarian grandmothers who help take care of the children. Participants came from all over the country. Our Bulgarian Field Director, Dr. Nickolai Gavazov, spoke, followed by my husband John who, as a therapist, educated staff members on attachment disorders and also on

the power of kindness in working with children.

Several times during the conference, the *babas* shared tender success stories about the children they take care of. Their eyes filled with tears as they spoke of their love for these children and how, with consistent personal attention, the children progress and come alive again.

To close the conference, I stood and expressed my deep gratitude to these amazing caregivers who have become the grandmas and aunts of the orphans we love. I told them that at the start, we provided only food and medicines for the children, but found it wasn't enough. The children didn't just need to be kept alive – they needed to LIVE. They needed to be loved, kissed, hugged, and looked in the eye. That's why we hired these women to play with the children, read to them, sing to them, and LOVE them. We would like to provide a *baba* at each of the new centers, but, to do so, we will need to find more sponsors. To help, please contact Donna Dushku at donna.dushku@oneheart-bg.org.

While in Plovdiv, we met with the Director of Social Policy to get permission to build our "Opportunity Home" apartment complex to house orphans who have aged out of the system, where they will be trained in life skills and vocational skills. At that meeting, we received permission to build and then to run our program independent of the government. With this news, we are ready to meet with a Bulgarian contractor, show him the building plans, and get a bid. We have more fundraising to do to meet the costs, but we are well on our way with a

third of what we need. I'm 100% confident we'll secure the funding needed to build this special place! Again, your help is much appreciated in making this happen.

Our last stop was the Children's Rehabilitation Hospital, in Kotel. I love this hospital's preventative approach and plan of action. If you are a physical therapist, neurologist, occupational therapist, or rehab specialist, this is where we need your help. At Kotel, nurses and doctors provide physical therapy and other rehabilitative procedures for children with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, club foot, and any other birth defects that inhibit their physical abilities. They are doing the best they can with the training and equipment they have. They would like One Heart Bulgaria to send specialists and therapists over to train their staff and work with the children for at least a week. They also want the parents of the children to receive some additional education and training.

What makes this hospital unique is that they also work with parents of disabled children from all over the country to educate and support them so that they don't get overwhelmed and end up abandoning their children at an orphanage. This happens a lot, actually. Young unwed mothers, who have no idea what to do with their disabled children, may just leave them at orphanages where most live in a crib. This sedentary existence causes their muscles to become tighter and tighter, twisting their limbs into unnatural, stiff positions, eventually calcifying their joints so they become crippled and immobilized forever. I think it is wonderful that this hospital is supportive of parents to help prevent that from happening.

We are excited for the opportunities to help at Kotel. We need to organize for a group of doctors and specialists to visit in the spring of 2016. There are also structural needs: the flooring and furniture need to be replaced and the hospital needs new radiators and air conditioning units—the winters are cold and the summers are hot! If you can help here, let us know.

It is always hard to say good-bye to Bulgaria and head back home. It has been a privilege to serve as president of One Heart Bulgaria these past 10 years. It's rewarding to make a visit and evaluate things firsthand. I am met by grateful orphanage directors and government officials, eager to express how impressed they are with One Heart Bulgaria's humanitarian efforts. They ask me to thank our sponsors and donors. So, thank you! We couldn't do what we do without your support!

Deborah Dushku Brailsford

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Newsletter



One Heart director receives plea for help

The following letter was recently received by Dr. Nickolai Gavazov:

To:
The Director of One Heart Foundation
53, Georgi Nizmirliiev Str., Plovdiv

Dear Mr. Gavazov,

This letter is from the Family Type Care Center for disabled children in Gabrovo. Since 2014, we have two FTCCs operating in Gabrovo as a government delegated service to the Gabrovo Municipality. The budget we receive is very insufficient to cover all needs.

At this moment we have 24 children and young men and women accommodated in our two centers, aged 4 to 29 years. Part of the children go to kindergarten another part go to a specialized school for disabled children. Further to that we have organized attending to daily care centers, where various kinds of therapists work with them. Also, for some of the children we need very much weekly consultations with child psychologist, who to prescribe a therapy for coping aggression and self-aggression, if necessary.

We address this plea to you if you can

possibly donate to our children the following needed items:

Hygienic materials Diapers
Bed sheets Clothes
School items Toys
Wheelchairs
Children wheelchairs

We would be very grateful if you respond positively to our request !!!

Respectfully

Marinela Lazarova, Manager

If anyone would like to contribute to fulfill this special request, please contact Donna Dushku at donna.dushku@oneheart-bg.org.

TO SEND A CONTRIBUTION RIGHT NOW, CUT OUT AND MAIL TO 165 North Main Street, Providence, UT 84332
Do you want to make automatic monthly donations? Visit www.oneheart-bg.org and click on "donate" to learn how.



I want to help! ☐ (Project) _____ ☐ General fund

Name _____

Address _____

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



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