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Go to www.siberianbridges.org, click on the Donate button. At the new page, scroll down to the Helping.org button. Read the instructions first, then click on the Helping.org button and follow the steps.

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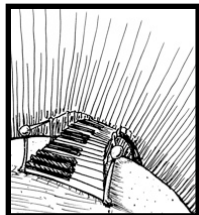
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*Access, opportunity and
good neighbors
through cultural exchange*

Siberian Bridges, Inc.

Updates continued...

Siberian Bridges

Since our last mailing in the spring, Siberian Bridges activities have accelerated. Chuck's trip in May expanded our understanding and commitment to our friends in Chita. Tom Dickinson's garage now warehouses more than a pallet full of books to be sent to Chita, collected by Renee, assisted by Jack Rendler.



Helen Gehrenbeck

(We just received an extraordinary gift of children's literature in teaching sets from White Bear Lake retired elementary school teacher, Helen Gehrenbeck.) In September we held our first annual soiree at the Mayflower Church in Minneapolis with slideshows by Tom (SB history) and Chuck (his May trip) ending with exclusive tour of the Museum of Russian

Art. A project close to our hearts is the development of a penpal program with the Children's Home. And we began the process of developing a Board to continue and expand the work begun 20 months ago by our stalwart band of volunteers: Mary Adams, Judy Boudreau, Renee Buchanan, Tom Dickinson, Shelby Flint, Jamie Hopkins, Lisa Kugler, Jack Rendler, and Chuck Ritchie.

Siberian Bridges, Inc.

3212 18th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407

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*Siberian Bridges is a 501(c)(3)
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All donations are 100% tax-deductible.*

Contributors in 2010

THANK YOU!!

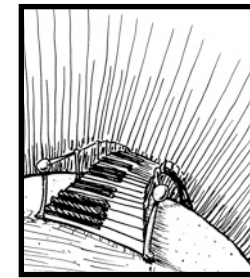
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Siberian Bridges Inc.

*Access, opportunity and good neighbors
through cultural exchange*

There's an old Russian proverb...
by Chuck Ritchie

There is an old Russian Proverb: Не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей--*Have not one hundred rubles, but one hundred friends.* In fact, as the proverb implies, wealth is measured not in monetary terms, but by friendship, then Chad Gehrman, Sue Slack, and I have been blessed with riches untold.

Last May we travelled to Chita, Russia, *The City of Exiles*, located some 6,000 kilometers from Moscow and 15 time zones ahead of Central Time here in Minnesota. Chita was the final destination of the Decembrists, the first revolutionary group in Russia, exiled in the early 19th century by Tsar Nicholas I. Today it serves as the administrative center for the Trans-Baikal Region, claiming a population of some 316,000 inhabitants.

Our first goal was to meet with the seven members of our sister organization, Siberian Bridges-Russia, a group of women who showered us with their hospitality and friendship, our first blessing of the trip.



Siberian Bridges-Russia: Yulia Bakhmutova, Olga Fleshler, Svetlana Sivtsova, Elena Shadrina, Tatiana Sukhanova, Elvira Baldanova and Elena Solovyova

Chuck Ritchie continued...

Chaired by the elegant Elena Solovyova, a choreographer by profession and a lover of music, these women, with the exception of Elena, and Yulia who works in the Pushkin Library, are all teachers. They have inspired their students to become involved in community oriented projects dealing with stray animals, ecological cleanup, and support for the Children's Home-School in Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii, a facility serving children from ages 3-18 who have no parents or who have been taken out of their parents' custody for various reasons. As a result of our meeting, our work in Siberian Bridges with these wonderful new friends has become so much more personal and enjoyable. They are truly an inspiring group.

Our second goal was to explore possibilities for tourism in the Trans-Baikal region. Our second blessing of the trip was to befriend local Buryats, a minority ethnic group, the largest in Siberia. We were treated to their history and culture through visits to the Tsugolskii Datsan (temple) which is the leading authority on Buddhist Philosophy and Tibetan Medicine. After we toured the temple, we attended and then were treated to a concert of Buryat music and dance. We were feted with the traditional ram's head meal in which I was asked to make the ceremonial first cut on the cheeks and the forehead of the prepared ram's head. We wandered on the steppe where



Chuck Ritchie, Susan Slack, their host, a Buryat scholar, and Chad Gehrman all in traditional Buryat garb

Genghis Khan played as a boy, an experience that created a moment of historical awe. There is such richness in the Buryat people and culture which begs to be explored in much greater depth.

Our third blessing came in the form of 125 children at the Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii Children's Home, under the leadership of Natalya Sklyrova, a truly remarkable and indefatigable woman. We brought t-shirts, hats and beanie babies and a highlight was being able to hand each student individually one of these gifts. What we received in return was truly disproportionate. In the first place, they presented us



Chuck with Sasha Baluev (in white) and his friend at the Children's Home

with a concert that literally moved us to tears because of the talent and beauty of their performance. Secondly, they would hand to us pictures that they had drawn or notes that they had written to us, expressing their thanks and love. We soon learned that this is no ordinary Children's Home-School in that Natalya and her staff look for any and every opportunity to extend to these children opportunities to develop skills and habits that they will need beyond the formal schooling when they leave the Home-School at age 18. These are children who have virtually nothing, have been in circumstances that no child should ever be subjected to, and will literally be on their own when they leave. Yet there was such a spirit of fun and joy, we could not help being touched by their warmth. And there seemed to be the possibility of hope for these children. Our joint task with Siberian Bridges-Russia is to nurture that hope in whatever way we can.

UPDATES

Tourism

We are working with two travel agencies (one in American and one in Chita, Siberia) to develop tours to Zabaikalye, beginning with a birding/nature trip in the summer of 2011 to observe cranes. The Daursky Nature Preserve near the Mongolian border is the nesting site for three varieties of cranes. Three other kinds pass through, making this one of the richest locations in the world for the observation of these magnificent birds. The trip will include learning about the Buryats--Russia's Buddhist ethnic minority--and a visit to the birthplace of Genghis Khan.



Genghis Khan Rock -- a natural formation located near where Genghis Khan spent his childhood.

Petrovsk Zabaikalskii Children's Home

In May our Chuck Ritchie (see his article) visited the Children's Home in the remote town of Petrovsk Zabaikalskii accompanied by his friend, Chad Gehrman and Chad's friend Susan Slack, bringing with them our best wishes and curiosity along with t-shirts celebrating the good neighbor relationship we have with Siberian Bridges-Russia and knit caps lovingly made by Karyl Mollgaard of North Minneapolis.



Petrovsk Zabaikalskii Children's Home

Updates continued...

The visit made concrete the value of our cooperation with the Children's Home through our partner, Siberian Bridges-Russia, and the t-shirts were much appreciated because they now finally had "team uniforms" that matched for everyone in the Home!

Books

We established a shipping schedule of sending a box of books every month. The books go mainly to the Pushkin

Library, the province's central library located near the center of Chita. Our cumulative donations over the years to the library constitute the single largest donation by anyone in the library's 100+ year history.

Renee Buchanan has headed up the collecting of books for us, mainly at the book sales of the Hennepin County Library system that occur three or four times a year. Chuck learned that the Pushkin Library is very heavily used, and that even scholars will come with student translators to use books we've sent. These books of are of great interest because they represent topics of scholarship not pursued in Russia during the Soviet Era. However, they are out of date, and we hope to help rectify that situation with future shipments.



Petrovsk Zabaikalskii Children's Home

(continued on back)