



# Siberian Bridges

3212 18th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55407 – [www.siberianbridges.org](http://www.siberianbridges.org) – [info@siberianbridges.org](mailto:info@siberianbridges.org)

## UPDATE

Here is a quick update of developments at Siberian Bridges since our last newsletter. These exciting projects are a testament to the strength of our new leadership and Board who started this past spring.

- **Computers For Kids**—Current strongest focus is on this project. The insert with this newsletter describes it in detail. Reliable, networked and online computers are part of today's world. The at-risk children of the Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii Children's Home will have a leg up on computer skills and increased contact with the outside world when this program comes to fruition.
- **Penpals**—Local teacher of Russian, Oksana Cox at St Paul's Central High School is helping to find penpals for these young kids in Siberia. A friend abroad can expand the life of a child in a small remote town.



- **Kids Care Pipeline** – sends a bi-monthly box to the Children's Home of material needed for the education and enjoyment of the kids who range in age from 5 to 17. Each box has a different theme. So far we've sent a parcel of jigsaw puzzles and another of music CDs. Next up is 2012 calendars featuring American scenery, then a box of DVDs. Contact us if you have ideas for future boxes and/or might have something on theme to include.
- **Helping Hands Siberian Summer Camp**—A new exciting initiative—still in the conceptual stages—to send service volunteers from America to a summer camp for the children of the Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii Children's Home. These volunteers would work on English language and other educational needs, work on local service projects with the kids (environmental cleanup, painting, repairs, etc.), and take the kids on vacation—something few of them have ever had. (Most of them have never been to Lake Baikal, one of the world's, natural wonders, yet it is only a few hours away from the Home!) If you have an interest in one of the most beautiful travel experiences in the world—Siberia in summer, and in this area in particular!—while helping kids who really need it, please contact us about progress on this project!
- **Books Project** – We continue to send two boxes of books a month. We have plenty of books for now, and our supply is easily replenished at the book sales of the County library system. Please read the Email of Appreciation here (inside 1st panel) from the Head of the Pushkin Library received by SB President, Thomas Dickinson in September.



## Meet Paula Ramaley

Chair  
Siberian Bridges



A native of Minneapolis, Paula brings to the Board refreshing energy, extensive organizational experience and a solid commitment to connecting people from the Midwest with people of the Zabaikal region. It is no wonder, since she has been enamored of things Russian since her undergraduate days! She majored in Russian Studies at St. Catherine's, and earned a Master's Degree in Russian History with a minor in Russian Art at Georgetown University. She spent two summers on staff at the Concordia College Russian Language Village, and then studied in Russia through ACTR.

In 1991 she worked as a program officer in IREX, the largest academic exchange program between our two countries. Her experience there led to her own business arranging language, cultural studies, and research programs in Russia for universities, including the Universities of Minnesota and Arizona, and Seattle Pacific University. While in Moscow, Paula was the Director for the Fulbright Russian Program.

Paula's interest in Russian art led to being on the staff of The Museum of Russian Art here in the Twin Cities. She represents several Russian artists and serves as a consultant for several art museums in Russia. Currently she is creating a virtual museum of Russian art for the Internet, and hopes to open a small gallery in the near future.

She is married to Reed Holiman, a Real Estate Consultant; and together with their two children they enjoy sailing, boating, hiking, and kayaking.

Asked about her goals for Siberian Bridges, Paula quickly warms to the challenge of expanding SB's capacity to create and execute programs that serve our mutual interests, strengthen relationships, and celebrate the volunteerism that lies at the heart of all our efforts.

## Meet Natalya Skliarova

Director  
Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii  
Children's Home



Simply put, Natalya Skliarova is a modern saint. Tireless and energetic, this mother and grandmother is also mother/grandmother/aunt, confessor/teacher/ referee, and fierce defender for some 125 unfortunate children--children neglected by family and the system, who face daunting challenges to becoming functional members of society when they leave the Home at age 18. The Home is also a school with a dedicated staff who also know the importance of giving these children the skills they need to move on.

Natalya says to the children, "If you don't agree with something, don't complain. Offer an alternative, then act. Do something!" She leads through action. No matter what is going on--basketball, a social dance, or a project in or outside of the school--Natalya is right beside the children, involved and participating.

She extends responsibility to the students in making decisions that affect them, either as individuals, or as a group. They make choices and then learn to live with the consequences, a deliberate orientation toward responsible living at any age.

Natalya is tenacious against the myriad threats to her charges. One such threat is a government initiative to consolidate and/or eliminate facilities such as hers. She faces enormous pressure to close the school and put the children in the city's, a move devastating to these at-risk children, and would cost her teachers their jobs. Because she articulates the needs of the children so eloquently, and due to her passion and commitment, she has so far convinced the authorities not to implement this plan.

At her recent 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration teachers and staff all said in unison: "Thank you, Natalya Nikolayevna, for teaching us to love children." And love them she does!



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## Email received from the Pushkin Library September 5, 2011

Dear Thomas [Dickinson]!

We, being the members of the Multicultural Centre of the Zabaikalsky Regional Universal Scientific Library named after A.S. Pushkin, express our gratitude for your parcel, consisting of six boxes. We have received these books recently. Your gift will turn out to be very significant and useful for us, moreover, we should like to continue this friendly cooperation with you with the assistance of "Siberian Bridges" [*Sibirskye Mosti*] and their leaders Tatyana Sukhanova and Olga Fleshler.

With respect,  
Ekaterina Kostritsa  
Director

## ***SB HISTORY NOTE: The Teacher Program***

When SB sent its first English teacher in 1992, he was the first American to live in Chita since 1925 and the only native English speaker.

During its Teacher Program, 1992-2005, SB sent over 20 teachers, more than any other NGO providing teachers to Zabaikalye. They taught at the two universities (now merged) in Chita and in the Buryat towns of Dul'durga, Uzon, Alkhanai, Aginsk, Krasny Chikoy and Zutkulei. Most taught a full school year, some stayed for more (and four marriages transpired, too!).

All received a standard salary for the time (\$80-\$200/mo) and lived in standard accommodations, which meant for those in the towns, cabins with outhouses, wood heat and water drawn from a cistern or well.

*We are so proud of our teachers!*  
David Balan, Noel Becker, David Brooks  
Richard Chapo, Sophia DeMaio, Tom Dickinson  
Patrick Findler, Ann Henry, Steven Houtsma  
Jessica Jacobson, Dan Kirwan,  
Whitney Lawson, Kevin Magee  
Michael Matthews, Colin McMullan  
Jennifer Mordes, Stacy Neterer  
Robert Romano, Brooke Swafford  
Frances Werle

## Scenes of Siberia: Two Russian dachas



## 2011 Contributors (to December 6)

Samuel J Ahern, Minneapolis  
Ruth A Alliband, Stillwater  
Kristi Anderson, Minneapolis  
Anonymous, Minneapolis  
Elizabeth Atkins, Belmont, MA  
Michael R Bailey, Minneapolis  
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Scott E Bartell, Minneapolis  
Mary Bean, Minneapolis  
Donald W Betts, Afton  
Lee A Biersdorf, Minneapolis  
Judy Boudreau, Minneapolis  
Scott & Renee Buchanan, Robbinsdale  
Roland & Coral Buchman, Stillwater  
Roger W Cuthbertson, Shorewood  
Paula and Cy DeCosse, Minneapolis  
Joe Dickinson & Karen Schleske, Minneapolis  
William Drake, San Francisco, CA  
David P Drew, St Paul  
Jon & Christine Galloway, Wayzata  
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Rochelle Hoffman, Minneapolis  
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Daniel & Kathryn Kuehn, Arden Hills  
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Steve & Cynthia Mueller, St Louis Park  
Rachel M O'Brien, Victoria  
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Edwin Ritchie, Wayzata  
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Sue R Wilcox, Englewood, CO  
pKent Wolkow, Victoria  
Elaine & John Zimmer, Brooklyn Park

# Contribution Form

***By check:***

Print this page, fill out and send with your check payable to “Siberian Bridges, Inc.” to:

Siberian Bridges, Inc  
3212 18th Ave S  
Minneapolis, MN 55407

***By credit card or Paypal:***

Go online to [www.siberianbridges.org](http://www.siberianbridges.org) and click on the “Donate” button. At the new page, scroll down and click on the “Paypal”, “GiveMN/Razoo”, or “Network For Good” link. Follow instructions at the new page.

*(NOTE: you can use Paypal even if you are not signed up for it, and you can use a credit card there, too.)*

***Siberian Bridges, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All donations are 100% tax-deductible.***

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Name

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Address

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Address 2

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City, State, Zip

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Email for paperless receipt of SB materials

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Contribution amount