

## THE PETROVSK ZABAICALSKII CHILDREN'S HOME AND SCHOOL CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS



The children say "Welcome!" on the well-preserved grand staircase of the town's Stalin-era Palace of Culture

society. The driving force of today's Home is its tireless and dedicated director, Natalya Skliarova, who has given her heart to these children. Siberian Bridges is proud to be



The "Men's Band" of the Palace of Culture opens the ceremonies.

On February 7, 2013 the children and staff of the Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii Children's Home/School #1 celebrated their 50th Anniversary. Gathered at the city's majestic Palace of Culture were former teachers, graduates, and housemothers, as well as city officials, townspeople, and supporters of the Home. They were treated to a talented array of children and staff who, all in costumes that they made themselves, danced and sang to the delight of an enthusiastic audience. Official congratulations, many gifts, and awards highlighted a festive evening dedicated to the people who have, for 50 years, so lovingly served this often neglected segment of



The staff and faculty of the Children's Home/School. The banner reads: "Our Home, Our Heart"



### "Volunteerism" continued from inside...

relatively new commitment in Russia to the idea of helping others simply for the sake of being good neighbors and citizens.

"On Thursday, April 24, Judy and I reconnected with these same students via Skype from the site of Interfaith Outreach and Community Partners (IOCP) located in Wayzata, MN. Joining us was Lynn Vettel, Director of Community Engagement at IOCP. Lynn, who works closely with many of the 1,600 volunteers at IOCP, shared insights into volunteerism and at the same time was impressed by the spirit and the accomplishments of these young people. In particular is a new initiative where students have collected used clothing and household items. They repair and clean the items, and then put them on sale at the "Social Store"



where people can "buy" any item with a freewill donation. The money is then given to an organization supporting child cancer victims. The most exciting result of the conference, besides reconnecting with these young people, is the proposal to create a Volunteerism Exchange to send four American college level volunteers there, and they would reciprocate with four from their group coming here. At a time when relations between our two countries are strained at best, and when the value of a civil society is constantly challenged both here and in Russia, eight young ambassadors, imbued with a desire to learn and the readiness and passion to serve others, would be a testament to the spirit of cooperation and neighborliness and holds the promise of a better world."

(photos from May 2012 volunteering conference in Chita)



### UPDATE --- MAY 2013

- \*This year Siberian Bridges celebrates its 20th anniversary! It was chartered in Vermont in April 1993 as "Musical Bridges" by Thomas Dickinson, his sister Anne, and a friend Deborah Smith. It became apparent that our focus was more on education than music and the name was eventually changed to "Siberian Intercultural Bridges" then simplified to our current name. We moved to Minnesota in 2003. We will be holding a gala celebration and fundraiser in Minneapolis in October. Part of those funds will go to a special gift to our partners in Chita, Sibirskye Mosti. Details are still being worked out, but if you would like to attend or stay apprised of the event, please let us know.
- \*Judy Boudreau gave a slide presentation about hers and Chuck Ritchie's May 2012 trip to Chita for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (where Judy is completing 35 years of service!) and the MN Pollution Control Agency. The program emphasized the hospitality and warmth of the people they met in Chita and at the Children's Home, as well as Irkutsk and Moscow.
- \*Please note that the tour, *A Taste of Zabaikalye*, has been postponed to summer 2014 and places are still available. The more we learn about the Daursky Nature Reserve, the more exciting the trip becomes!
- \*Our Computers for Kids program continues. 26 computers have been collected so far; seven computers are now in use at the

"Update" continued inside

*"Update" continued...*

Children's Home and three more will be readied to go soon by our partner, PC United. (We split the computers we collect with PC United in exchange for the essential prep work they do on them.) So we are still collecting used laptops, aiming to get 100+ to the Children's Home. We are also collecting used digital cameras. The children love them!

\*We're still working on finding a way to send Univ of Minn PhD candidates to Chita for research and English teaching, looking for the department that is the best match.

\*Finally, we are really pleased with our new logo that mirrors the logo of our partner in Chita (brassily ripped off...with their permission). Thanks to Ryan O'Malley of Cincinnati, Ohio for his work designing the new logo. (The keyboard may have disappeared from SB's logo, but Tom will still play a recital next summer in Chita.)

\*

### Fauna of the Daurisky Reserve

A place we'll visit on the Taste of Zabaikalye June 2014 tour



Dzeren, antelopes endemic to Dauria



Japanese cranes

## VOLUNTEERISM IS ALIVE IN CHITA (and SB HISTORY NOTE)

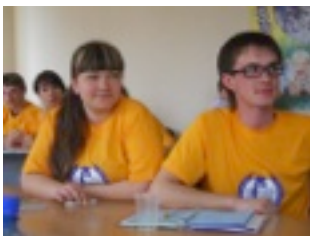
### Then

*Jean Dickinson, past Secretary-Treasurer of Siberian Bridges and mother of our founder, has extensive experience and expertise in volunteering. She and her husband, Charlie, former SB VP and board member, spent the month of April 2000 in Chita. During the visit Jean noted that volunteering seemed an unusual concept. She found the attitude to be "if no one tells people what to do, they don't [do anything]." Once, after visiting the veterans' hospital in Chita she told college students that volunteering was as easy as showing up at the hospital and telling someone "I have an afternoon a week available. Can I help out?" Jean's enthusiasm for volunteering encouraged many Chitincies, starting with work to clean up a local monument, picking up trash at a local park and creating a shelter for stray dogs. As her Chita friends wrote to Jean in an email on her birthday after the 2000 visit, "We already knew about thinking globally. You taught us to act locally."*

### Now

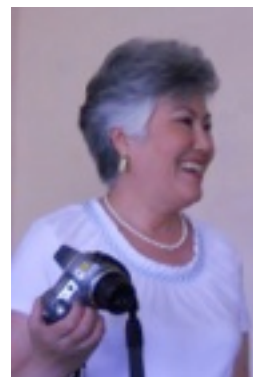
*Jean observed "a different mindset" in 2000. Nowadays, there is a growing urge to volunteer, and our connection to it began with **Olga Fleshler**. Friends of hers collected toys and clothing for a Children's Home. That effort was joined by university students, members of the Chita militia (police), families of students and on and on, eventually including Siberian Bridges. Our cooperation with the Children's Home in Petrovsk-Zabaikalskii is a direct result of that first toy collection and Olga's enthusiasm for it.*

*Recently, 13 years (to the month!) after Jean promoted volunteering in Chita, **Chuck Ritchie** reports on an international conference with the Chita volunteering community through the miracle of Skype:*



*"Last May in Chita, **Judy Boudreau** and I, met with an enthusiastic group of Chita University students who are passionate about volunteering. They represent a*

*"Volunteerism" continued on back*



MEET  
**ELENA SOLOVYEVA**  
President of Sibirskye Mosti



A founder and the first President of our partner NGO in Zabaikalye, Elena Solovyeva is the mother of three, grandmother of four and wife and partner of the retired balalaika soloist of Chita's Budashkin Russian Folk Instrument Ensemble, Nikolai Solovyev. Her training and profession are as a choreographer. She holds the position of Chairperson of the Krai's Copyright Association where her graciousness and congeniality must serve her well in the sometimes contentious job of protecting national intellectual property.

Our first contact with Elena was when she arranged Thomas Dickinson's piano recital at Chita's Museum of Art in August 2005. Though warned that no one would come in August (when traditionally, the city empties for vacations), the recital ended up attracting more than 50% overflow due to her skills as an organizer. That success was parleyed into concert series at the Museum that lasted several years.

*"I am the leader of this musical-educational NGO because I have always loved the arts, as one can tell in my own profession of choreographer. I dearly love music, primarily symphonic, chamber, instrumental, and vocal. But, the best relaxation for me is simply to take a walk in the woods. Pure enjoyment comes in pattering around the dacha and tending the vegetable garden. And my greatest joy is when the whole family gathers at the dacha."*

## Many thanks to our donors May 2012 - April 2013

<b>\$1000</b> Minneapolis Foundation in honor of Charles (Chuck) Ritchie	<b>\$50 - \$99</b> Joe Dickinson & Karen Schleske Carl M Duncan Larry & Linda Elder David & Helen Gehrenbeck John Hennelly Robert Hoffmann Sonja Johnson Sarah B Kling Brian Mahaffy Jean & Mary Anne Mauro Raia Meltzer Sayuri Miyamoto Chuck Ritchie Jerry & Theresa Strauss Chip Welling
<b>\$200 - \$600</b> Sarah Andersen Michael Bailey & Darryl Dahlheimer (Ameriprise match) Lee A Biersdorf Paula & Cy DeCosse Jean Dickinson (in-kind book shipment)	<b>\$10 - \$49</b> Ruth A Alliband Deborah K Andresen Coral Buchman Richard Cannon Katherine & Sebastian Cherian Charles & Jean Dickinson David & Johanna Duclos Carol Farnsworth Frances Giffen David Healy John S Holland Elaine Klaassen Kate & Dan Kuehn Barbara D Lordi Nancy Raeburn Robert W Rynerson Lyll & Inez Schwarzkopf Michael Scippa Richard J. Segers Don Vandenberg Cheryl Vennerstrom
<b>\$100 - \$199</b> Anonymous donations Mary Adams (TCF match) Elizabeth Atkins Judy Boudreau Thomas Dickinson Bill Drake Richard & Mary Ervasti Rita Gehrenbeck Cheryl L Johnson Tom Lonergan & Irene Duranczyk Steve Margolin Michael McCarthy Susan Nixon & Wally Lentz Kolean Pitner Charles Rendler Edwin Ritchie Audrey Saxton Wallace & Marilyn Small Alice Vollmar David & Ruth Waterbury Alvin Wen & Alexandra Moellmann	

*Our Mission: to foster cross-cultural discovery and partnerships with the people of Eastern Siberia that benefit individuals, communities and civil society*

### Siberian Bridges

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

*A 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation registered in the State of Minnesota*