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SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER – ONLINE VERSION

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COVER LETTER



A note from Olesya Bezhina

2001 graduate in American Studies from Chita State Technical University

May 2016

By the time I was introduced to “Musical Bridges” (as Siberian Bridges was known at that time) I had already been lucky to have spent a year in the US as an exchange student and was back in Chita missing the fluency of real spoken English of native speakers. I liked the opportunity to hang out with the Americans who came as teachers through Musical Bridges to our University; I was happy to have the little library building up from all the books that people in the US were donating and sending over to us – and even used some of them for my grad paper research. Thus, for some time moving forward, I hadn’t seen more to Siberian Bridges than as the organization that was promoting English learning in our rather remote neck of the woods.

Only years later have I understood that there was much more to it than met the eye. It was truly cultural and social exchange beneficial to both parties – the residents of the faraway Siberian town and the US donors alike. In part, it is due to programs and organizations like Siberian Bridges our two peoples and two countries have been able to resist the hate-talk and propaganda of the political and military establishment. Personal bonds of friendship, affection and understanding will always overcome the black-and-white media stereotypes and help us relate to each other through all of our differences.

I, for one, am happy to stay in touch with the old and new friends in the States and if you are a Siberian Bridges supporter, you can always count on a personal guided tour and a smile should you find yourself in the Russian capital--just give me a shout via Facebook to make sure I’m around :-)!



Olesya Bezhina
Business Development Director, Russia Jet Set Sports (jetsetsports.com)

SPRING UPDATE

- Three volunteers from our region will teach June and July at two language camps in and around Chita. **John Crust** of Winnipeg, and **Marie Nicholas** and **Janet Stewart**, both of Minneapolis, will travel separately for their visits. John and Janet will teach at the “Diplomat” (Дипломат) Language School's summer camp, and Marie will teach at the “City of Children” (Город Детства) camp. The English teaching assistance **Jennifer Drewyor** pioneered last summer in Aginskoye (see Fall 2015 newsletter) has expanded to these two private schools' summer programs this year.

John Crust, a Canadian-American, has extensive experience teaching English, including at the University of Lodz, Poland; Janet Stewart is Academic and Visa Services Specialist in the Learning Abroad Center of the University of Minnesota and a Russian linguist; and Marie is on academic leave from her undergraduate program at the University of Minnesota.



Marie Nicholas



Janet Stewart



John Crust

- Our fundraising event last December was our biggest yet. Held at the Mayflower Church in Minneapolis, it was preceded by a special guided tour at the nationally renowned **Museum of Russian Art** just



The Encampment River Boys



At the fundraiser, locating Zabaikalye on the map! across the street. Bluegrass music by **The Encampment River Boys** was the draw. This long-lived (40 years!) group includes

our Chair, **Chuck Ritchie**, his brother **Wint**, **Jack Taylor**, **Tom Skramstad** and **Mike McCarthy**. Chuck and Tom Dickinson gave slideshows, about the Children's Center and about our organization and Tom's and Chuck's 2015 visits to Chita. Russian-style treats were enjoyed, from filled chocolates in their



One of the slideshows



Checking out the zakusky

colorful wrappers to bright pink "Herring Under a Fur Coat" salad. It was our biggest crowd and most successful fundraiser so far!

- We want to recognize our growing list of volunteers, helping us in large and small ways. Through the efforts of **Judith Eisner**, the Minneapolis language club "Yiddish Vinkl" has donated a signed copy of a book humorous poetry by Yiddish scholar, Boris Sandler, to the Pushkin Library, and hopes to find Yiddish speakers in Chita as penpals. **Kevin Brondum** contributed this edition's lovely poetry translation. **Joe Dickinson** helped locate academic textbooks specially requested by the Pushkin Library. **Karim Ezzat** and his **PC United** non-profit continue to recondition used laptops for the Children's Center. **Marie** and **Janet** will carry them to Chita when they go to teach. **Robin Hoffman** continues to work on the new SB database she devised for us. She helped stuff envelopes for our last newsletter mailing. And she has also pioneered a wonderful way to donate to Siberian Bridges: an automatic contribution taken from her paycheck. We don't mean to embarrass her, but her creative way to contribute may inspire others!
- *A correction to the print version that was just mailed:* the long anticipated librarian exchange that was to begin with a visit to Minneapolis in August by the Director of the Foreign Languages Department of the Pushkin Library had to be cancelled at the last minute. We learned about this just after the newsletter was in the mail. The cancellation was due to unforeseen personal circumstances of the Director. Needless to say, we are very disappointed, but unbowed! We will get back to working on making this a reality.

CHILDREN'S CENTER REPORT

It has been anything but a quiet few months at the Children's Home (now referred to as a "Center") in Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky since our report last fall. The children are now looking to their exams before the summer break, having nearly completed their first year of attending local schools, rather than onsite at the Home as had been the norm for the Center's history. There have been adjustments, successes, and some issues, but **Natalya Nikolaevna Skliarova, Director**, feels that the kids have handled it well overall.

This transition also brought other challenges. Since there are now some unused classrooms, they are being adapted for other uses. One such renovation is a "relaxation room" where there is a new massage table and in fact, a new certified massage specialist on staff who works with the kids and the adults. Another addition is the purchase of a new inflatable trampoline (the kind we see at events where the kids get in and jump and bounce all over the place.) This is very popular with the kids as well. New microphones and speakers enhance the wonderful performing that is an important part of leisure time at the Center, its high quality sending it often to regional and even International competitions. Recently a group from the Center competed in Ulan Ude in just such an international competition, and **Zoya Chizhkova** was one of the winners. On the sports side, their soccer teams recently made the trek to Chita for regional competition, which they won.

We mention all of this because Siberian Bridges, thanks to your generosity, has been able to play a supporting role in all of the above. Our financial support has helped make these changes a little easier. In addition, some of those funds have been used for a program, devised by the Director, staff and children, of nominal monetary awards for deserving students. Natalya Nikolayevna assured us in a note accompanying the detailed accounting of the use of our funds, that these awards provide motivation, and the recipients consider it an honor to be recognized. This spring the awards were expanded beyond just good grades to recognize good hygiene and contributions to the community. The best part is that the children themselves chose the award winners through their student government, *Raduga* (Rainbow).

A new initiative is "Suitcases". The Center is preparing boxes for graduating students with daily sundries, bedding, winter clothing, shoes, etc.--basics they'll need as they set out on their own. This may prove to be another area where SB can help.

Thank you for your financial and moral support for this place and these children, bolstering the work that Natalya Nikolaevna and her staff so tirelessly perform.

And speaking of graduates, **Alexey Kopitov**, class of 2015 and former President of the Center's student government, *Raduga*, moved to Chita for college expecting to live in his deceased mother's apartment--only to find a squatter had taken it over! A long court case restored the apartment to Alexey, but the squatter spitefully removed faucets and other fixtures, and made a mess that Alexey has been repairing. There has been an outpouring of help for him to defray these costs. Despite this tough start, he is doing well in his studies and adjusting well to life on his own.

Tonya Konovalova (Spring 2015 Newsletter) just graduated college and is job hunting, and apartment hunting with her beau, Artur, with marriage in the air!



Zoya Chizhkova winning in Ulan Ude



Alexey Kopitov with SB's Judy Boudreau in 2012
at the Center's summer camp

SEE ZABAİKALYE YOURSELF!

Two unique opportunities to tour our favorite *far side* of the globe
arranged and led by Siberian Bridges

2nd Taste of Zabaikalye Tour

moved to July 1-13 2017

(July 1-15 with Lake Baikal add-on).

- Estimated all-inclusive cost from arrival at Domodedovo airport in Moscow to departure from the same): \$4500 (inquire about cost of the Lake Baikal add-on)
- Minimum 10 tourists, double occupancy.
- Features the Krasny Chikoi region on the western edge of the region. It is noted for the beauty of its forests, hills and rivers, the Old Believer communities, the indigenous Buryat culture, and the archeological digs uncovering the source of our own continent's indigenous ancestors who migrated across the Bering Land-Bridges more than 10,000 years ago.
- **Request a color brochure:** siberianbridges@gmail.com or [download here](#).



Camping Adventure in Zabaikalye

July/August 2017, ~13 days

- Preliminary cost estimate is \$800 for the Zabaikalyan portion only. Does not include roundtrip flights US-Moscow and Moscow-Chita (roughly \$1700-\$2500 total). *The economical way to get a taste!*
- Minimum 4, maximum 8 tourists.
- Agent: Svetlana Lazerevskaya, Director, Ivano-Arakhlei Regional Park with extensive experience leading wilderness trips in the region, and international orienteering champion.
- The trip will include 4 days exploring the Ivano-Arakhlei Regional Park near Chita, 4 days flat-water rafting down the Ingoda River and 4 days of cultural tourism in the capital city Chita (on arrival and before departure from the region). The nature part will be in tents and a cabin, with meals prepared over campfires; in Chita it'll be hotels, restaurants, museums, etc.
- Basic fitness, but no special athletic skills required.
- Ages 9 and above

DONORS – APRIL 2015 - MARCH 2016

Our profound gratitude for making it happen!

\$1000 - \$1500

Anonymous
Lucy Hartwell

\$200-\$500

Anonymous
Sarah Andersen and Christopher Hayner
Michael Bailey
John and Pat Case
Charles and Jean Dickinson
David Duclos
Irene Duranczyk and Tom Lonergan
Mike and Amy Hooley
Ilya Katsnelson
Steve Margolin
Michael McCarthy
Lorie Long Michaels
Kent Ritchie
Bruce St. John
Julie Steiner

\$100 - \$199

Mary Adams (with TCF match)
Marilyn Ashley
David Balan
Gregory and Anne Bartel
Paul Best
Lee Biersdorf
Judy Boudreau
Katherine and Sebastian Cherian
Charlotte Currier
Darryl Dahlheimer
Rita Gehrenbeck
Robin Hoffman
Donald Leavenworth
Gregory Leierwood
Jean and Mary Anne Mauro
Jo Ann Musumeci
Carolyn Nickles
Susan Nixon and Wally Lentz
Beverly Pochardt
Wint Ritchie
Coleen and Ross Rowley
Jill Savitt
Elizabeth Sherod
Jennifer Smith
David and Ruth Waterbury
Sue L. Wen

\$50 - \$99

Marcia Aubineau
Larry and Linda Elder
Carolyn Berman and Joseph Jolton
Joseph Dickinson and Karen Schleske
David and Helen Gehrenbeck
Richard and Dixie Grossman
Jamie Hopkins
Sonja Johnson
Cyrus and Shanta Kapadia
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Virginia Nacionales
Karl Narveson and Rebecca Benz
Oliver Perz
Paula Ramaley
Ronald Reimann
Bradford Shinkle
Jerry and Theresa Strauss
Jack Taylor
Alice Vollmar
Ben Wright

\$10 - \$49

Anonymous
Coral and Roland Buchman
Richard Cannon
Lisa First
Edward Forbes
Jane Galbraith
Inez Gantz and M. Aaron Bean
Cheryl Jacobs
Jill and Fred Marderness
Barbara McBurney
Daniel McNeil
Raia Meltzer
Janice Kay Myers
Deborah Newcomb
Lyall Schwarzkopf
Diane Steen-Hinderlie and John Olson
Vickie Winge
Stacy Woods
Diana Yefanova

A SPRING POEM FROM ZABAIKALYE

МОЛОДОЙ ОЛЕНЬ **Четырёхлетнему Ивану Михайловичу**

**Смело он репейники бодает,
Делает вдоль берега шаги,
По колено в воду забредает,
Распуская воду на круги.**

**Ты, олень, плещись себе в угодую,
Озеро копытами копытъ.
Жабрами процеженную воду
Всё равно тебе не замутить.**

**Делай свои детские проказы,
Нынче день-то больно уж хорош!**

-

**Очень глупый, очень
большеглазый,
На тебя точь в точности похож!**

Вячеслав Вьюнов

YOUNG DEER
To four-year-old Ivan Mikhailovich

**He bravely butts the burdocks,
Takes steps along the shore,
Knee-deep into the water he wanders,
Spreading it out in circles.**

**Buck, splash as you please,
Trample the lake with your hooves.
The water, filtered by gills,
Won't be muddied by you anyway.**

**Do your childish mischief,
The day is so terribly fine! --
Very silly, and very wide-eyed,
Looking exactly like you!**

Vyacheslav Vyunov
translation by Kevin Brondum

DONATION INFORMATION:

To donate with a credit card, go to siberianbridges.org and click the [DONATE](#) link.

Write checks to "Siberian Bridges" and mail to the address listed here.

Siberian Bridges
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Siberian Bridges is a 501c3 non-profit registered in Minnesota. Donations are 100% tax-deductible.