



FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

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CONTACT INFORMATION

3212 18th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55407

siberianbridges@gmail.com | www.siberianbridges.org

DONATION INFORMATION:

- To donate with a credit card, go to siberianbridges.org and click the [DONATE](#) link under "About".
- Write checks to "Siberian Bridges" and mail to the address listed here.
- Siberian Bridges is a 501c3 non-profit registered in Minnesota. Donations are 100% tax-deductible.

FALL 2021 UPDATE

Tom's Fall Trip to Chita

As you read this, Tom Dickinson is on his month-long visit to Chita, his first visit since summer 2019. He is going as a private guest of Elena Prusakova, Founder-Director of The City of Childhood Child Development Center. He'll be meeting as many of the Center's after-school English students as possible (City of Childhood now has the largest private supplementary English program in the region with over 500 students enrolled). Tom will travel to Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky to visit the Children's Center "Unity," bringing our best wishes and some child-sized Siberian Bridges t-shirts we planned to deliver in 2020. He'll probably play at the town's Music School, and he also hopes to play a piano recital or two in Chita, as well. And he'll finally meet his godson, Seva Kulakovsky, soon to be three, whom he last saw at his christening when six months old.



*Seva and his big sister Varya with Tom
(November 27, 2021)*

Children's Center "Unity"

Children at the Center "Unity" are in full swing for this school year along with a number of activities and celebrations, two of which are shared here.

On October 5th, they celebrated **Teachers' Week** with a concert in which they dedicated songs, dances, and poems to their wonderful teachers. At the end they gave them cards, flowers, and gifts that they themselves had made. There is high regard for teachers in Russia and one line from their presentation captures this well: **"It is rightly said that a writer lives in his works, a good artist lives in paintings, a sculptor lives in sculptures created by**



him. And a good teacher is in people's thoughts and actions. And the highest

reward for a teacher is not titles and awards, but recognition that for some of his/her pupils he/she has become a real **guiding star.**" We too salute the wonderful teachers and support staff at the Center. Theirs is truly a labor of love and we extend our best wishes from Siberian Bridges to each of them.

A second activity was the celebration of a solemn

ceremony in which 21 new recruits joined the ranks of the local branch of the **All-Russian Children and Youth Military Patriotic Movement "Youth Army."** The goal of the movement is "to revive the good old traditions of children's and youth organizations aimed at strengthening the country's defense capability! We want our children to grow up benevolent and sympathetic, to treat the history and traditions of Russia with care. Currently, in many regions of Russia, thousands of young Russians are becoming members of UNARMIA, who are ready to build a bright future for themselves and their country." This is a theme that still plays a major role in the culture of Russia, and one which of course many young people take seriously. What strikes us at Siberian Bridges is the incredible effort that Natalya Skliarova, the director, and her staff put forth to make sure that their children are kept in the mainstream of their civic development, despite their unfortunate circumstance.

Finally, several of the children participated this fall in a national **Save Lake Baikal** program that



invited Russians to make art about the lake and its value. Lake Baikal is only 5-6 hours from the Children's Center and is an International Heritage Site according to the United Nations. Here is a sampling of their contributions.



"The future of Baikal is in our hands"
Baikal program



Children's Center Art for the Save Lake



Spring 2021 Siberian Bridges Newsletter



The Shipleys

On another front, we received good news from Michael and Irina Shipley, our good friends in Chita who are also helping to support young people once they are out of the orphanages. One such person is Lyuba Dneprovskaya, a young lady who is studying Chinese and interior design. She developed what was feared to be a brain tumor that was causing her headaches. With our support, Michael and Irina were able to send her to Moscow for diagnosis and some sightseeing – it was her first trip ever to Moscow. The good news is that it is not a tumor, but a cyst; unfortunately, she still has headaches and will have to find a specialist in Chita to help her. She is nonetheless in good spirits and very grateful for her sightseeing time in Moscow.

Anton, another young man whom they support, is in Kazan at computer programming school and is doing very well. We are so excited by what Michael and Irina do to help these young people. They make a huge difference!

We are also happy to report that Irina and Michael became grandparents for the first time in October! Their son Zhenya's wife Angie had a daughter they named Olivia.

International Student's Day

On November 16th in the US and November 17th in China and Russia, the Fifth Annual International Students Day Conference was held between the students of the University of Minnesota, the Chita Institute of Baikal State University and Northeast China Normal University. Organized by Professors Irene Duranczyk in Minnesota and Elena Pishcherskaia in Chita, they are very happy with their new partner university in China. Emphasizing social contact and increasing cultural awareness, the conferences have always tried to make it easy to express ideas in one's own language and have translations made in each location to get past the limitations of favoring one language over others. International Students Day, November 17th, was started in 1941 to commemorate the killing of students in Czechoslovakia in 1939 by the Nazis and the unity of students from around the world addressing the right to an education and human rights. It continues as a day celebrating student multiculturalism and activism.

Movie Club

Professors Duranczyk and Pishcherskaia have continued to host “Movie Night” this year. It started as a Siberian Bridges project two years ago where the participants viewed a Russian and an American movie and discussed them by video conference. Both professors’ students have joined the conversations as well as members of Siberian Bridges. Movie pairings thus far were two SuperHero Movies *The Joker* (USA, 2019) and *Major Grom* (RU, 2021); two STEM movies (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) *The Heart of a Dog*

(RU, 1988) and *A Beautiful Mind* (USA, 2001); and on December 3rd, two animation movies *Shrek* (USA, 2001) and *fortress* (Russia 2015). It has been a great vehicle for cultural exchange between college students and Siberian Bridges.



November 26 in Chita after watching Shrek for the Dec. 3 Movie Club.

3rd “Taste of Zabaikalye” Tour

Siberian Bridges is planning on leading its 3rd “Taste of Zabaikalye” tour next summer (2022). Please join us! Details are in the works. The tour, restricted to ten tourists, would last 18 days and include Lake Baikal, an exploration of the native people of the region, the Buryats, with their fascinating Shamanist and Buddhist background, learning about the noble Decembrists exiled to the region, visits with dear old friends of ours at their dachas and homes, and maybe even an English-learners’ get-together in the city center like we held during the last tour. Join us for this unique tour opportunity to a rarely visited part of the world. Deadline for signing up is March 1, 2022. Contact us for more information and estimates of cost.

