

UKRAINE : 2010 Summer Vacation Program

Thousands of kids in Ukrainian orphanages face a bleak future. Few parents will consider adopting a child who is over six years old, but these children long for a family they can call their own. Moreover, despite good care in the orphanage, few are prepared to start a life when they leave the orphanage at age 18, as they are provided with neither a higher education nor vocational training which will serve them in finding gainful employment when they are on their own. As a result, about 10% of children leaving Eastern European orphanages commit suicide, and many others are co-opted into drug dealing, the sex trade, or organized crime.

TDH would like to do something to address this problem, and so we are initiating this year a summer vacation program for children from 6 to 13 living in Ukrainian orphanages. The ultimate goal is to find families who would like to adopt these children, and so we are looking for families who will collaborate with us to either consider adopting such a child or exposing the child to others who may do so.

Our assumption here is that there is a natural fear of adopting an older child without knowing something of the background and personality of the child and whether that child will “mesh” with your family. This program gives the potential adoptive parent a chance to spend a full 4 weeks with the child interacting, observing, and hopefully forming a bond of friendship with him or her that will last a lifetime.

The children coming here will not know - at least not formally - that they are candidates for adoption. In fact, some children have spent summer vacations in several countries over past years - and their lives are enriched for it. They are pre-selected by the orphanage directors as children who have the qualities that would allow them to be adopted, including openness, a desire to relate to others, and physical and emotional health. Some of them- even those who are 6 or 7 years old - may have one or more siblings who may be adopted with them (although only one child may come to Canada at the time of the vacation program).



Hosting families are asked to pay for the cost of the program and of bringing the child here (about \$2500, a tax-deductible donation), and to provide the child with a quality experience: spending time with the child, introducing the child to cultural and recreational activities and events, or doing family activities.

Those who are interested may apply to be a host family. You are expected to provide a vulnerable sector (police) clearance, a medical certificate and 3 letters of reference. Families will be interviewed individually in a home visit, unless they already have a completed home study. If you are interested in adopting a child, we ask you to be aware of the criteria of Ukraine: you must be married, the hosted child must be younger than the youngest child in your family, and there should be a maximum of 46 years between you and the child you wish to host (i.e. if you want to host a child of 6, you must be younger than 52 years old).

One advantage of this program in terms of adoption is that if you decide that you wish to adopt the child you have hosted, you may travel to Ukraine with a child already proposed, instead of going there and having to select a child from the database of available children. Additionally, the stay in Ukraine - which constitutes a large part of the cost of adoption - is only about 3 weeks instead of the normal average of 8-13 weeks. While adoption is never forced on the host family or the child, it is part of the raison d'être for the program.

The happiness you may bring to a child who has little in his or her life cannot be measured in time or money or effort. We urge you to consider this program, which allows you to make a significant difference for one child.

If you are interested and would like to fill in the preliminary application form, please contact the person responsible for the program:

Manon Parent (manon@tdh.ca).

Manon Parent
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