

Kitezh and Findhorn Youth to Meet

Youth exchange between Kitezh and Findhorn offers young people a once in a life time opportunity to discover themselves and each other

Two groups of teenagers are eagerly anticipating meeting each other next year as part of our Findhorn-Kitezh Youth Exchange. In July 2009, 12 teens from Findhorn Youth Project will visit Kitezh and in October, 12 Kitezh youngsters will travel abroad for the first time to visit Findhorn. This will be the first youth exchange that Ecologia Youth Trust has organised since 1997, which was also Dimitry Morozov's first visit to Findhorn and the beginning of a long, fruitful relationship between Kitezh and the Findhorn Community.

Youth In Action, funded by the European Commission, will fund 70% of both exchanges. We need to raise a further £5,000 for each part of the exchange. Our Scottish young people are already enthusiastically creating fundraising events—a talent show, car boot sales, car and window washing and all kinds of odd jobs to raise half of what they need. Ecologia has promised to support them by fundraising for the other half.

Why now? Findhorn Youth Project leader Gabrielle Hamm is inspired and excited by the idea of visiting Kitezh with her group of lively teenagers. She says: "I've heard such great stories from my friends who exchanged with Kitezh 12 years ago and I want to bring this crowd of brilliant Findhorn youth to have the same fun and transformative experience."

The Role Play Game has been developed at Kitezh for their summer and winter camps for the Kitezh children with those from local orphanages and friends from Moscow. Each Role Play Game has a different theme, in a different 'world'. Sometimes it is a fantasy world, involving magic, other planets, other realities, or based on popular stories like Harry Potter or Star Wars, always a battle between good and evil, offering moral and physical challenges. The ultimate aim of the Role Play Game is for all the teams to come to a common agreement on how to make peace between all groups and how to take the best from each side. Creativity, night time adventures, logical puzzles and sports competitions are all part of the adventure.

Hony Pern, a volunteer, helped run a summer camp this year. She writes: "The staging of this Role Play Game is a two-week stalling of reality, where children and adults create and inhabit a different world. Given the opportunity to take part in the game, I finally understood exactly how these full-scale tales of legends and myths are made a reality in the small world of Kitezh. The Kitezh adults and older children

spend months planning day-by-day scenarios, costumes, music, staging and logistics. They create situations where children are faced with personal and group choices; they have to call upon their courage and powers of reasoning and judgement. This game presents an alternative means for the children to discover their inner abilities, and to grow in confidence in themselves and in the world around them. It was truly breathtaking to see how much the children get into the game, and it is an experience I would like to help other children discover."

For our exchange group next July, the theme will be Ancient Russia. The many tribes were invaded from the East, Vikings from the North brought in a Celtic influence, and Christianity was introduced through Constantinople. The Scottish youngsters will join the 'tribes' and together they will wrestle with issues of politics, morality, unity and peace making. Dance, music and art will bring cultural diversity into the theme. Honny and Gabrielle will accompany the Scottish group to Kitezh.

In October next year, the Russian youngsters will visit Scotland to stay with their new Scottish friends and their families, and take part in a special youth empowerment programme at Findhorn followed by a week on the island of Erraid on the West Coast.

We are counting on your support for our Scottish and Russian youth to take part in the exchange of their lives.

Liza Hollingshead



Building a raft, Summer Youth Camp

Kitezh Children's Community Network in Russia is an innovative approach to the therapeutic care of orphans. Foster families in Kitezh and Orion villages take children out of orphanages and raise and educate them together in a supportive rural community environment. Ecologia Youth Trust has supported the development of Kitezh since it began in 1992, providing professional training, raising funds to build the villages and running a programme for international volunteers of all ages to teach English and take part in every day life in the communities.

Peace is Possible Here and Now

In partnership with SNF, a Thai NGO and funded by the Big Lottery Fund, Ecologia Youth Trust has embarked on a project to support human rights, peace building and self-reliance for migrant workers from Burma in Southern Thailand. An interethnic youth camp was one of the first project activities.

In the Andaman coastal area of Southern Thailand there are many distinct ethnic groups including Thai Buddhists, Malay Muslims and Morgans (sea gypsies) plus a number of ethnic groups from Burma such as Tavoy, Karen, Arakhan, Burman and Mon. There is often racial tension and discrimination between groups. To address this a Peace Building for Youth Empowerment camp took place in Phang Nga, Thailand between 20 April and 10 May 2008 bringing together youth from these five ethnic groups.

Than Let Oo and Lin Oo at 12 and 13 years old were the youngest members of this peace camp. They are Christian and their parents are migrant workers from Burma. At first facilitators saw fear in their eyes. They stuck together during meals, leisure time or in the learning circle. Prior to the camp they stayed in their migrant worker community and never got to know outside people so they could hardly speak Thai.



Migrant workers are treated as third class citizens by the Thai community. Jaree, 15, a Thai Buddhist with strong leadership and sense of superiority when camp started, says:

In the past, I would never make friends with Burmese migrant worker kids. In school, I learned that the Burmese were invaders, they burnt our capital and took the gold away. They are our enemy. But

when we worked and played together for three weeks, I realised that they are just human beings like me and I like them. They are now my friends.



It is not only Burmese migrant workers who are marginalised. Muslims in the area are becoming isolated. Their situation has worsened in the past five years due to flare-ups of ethnic and religious conflict and violence in the provinces further south. Three Muslim teenagers out of seven were asked to leave the camp when facilitators found that they had guns and harassed other members especially those from Burma. The other four Muslims stayed, were integrated and became close friends with other members.

Win Win Maw, a Mon Buddhist from Burma commented on a Muslim participant:

At first I didn't want to talk to Wudy (a Muslim boy) because we did not know each other. But now I enjoy talking to



him. Even though we come from different cultural background we are now friends.

Here is a comment from Prapatsorn, 15, a Morgan Buddhist:

At first I thought the Burmese and the Thai couldn't get along. But learning in this camp made me realise that we are human beings. We have the same rights and dignity as all other people.

Morgan people are indigenous along the Andaman coast of Thailand and Burma. They were, and some of them still are, sea nomads. They have been there since before the Thai or Burmese came to settle in this peninsula. They are also treated as outcast citizens. They have a different language and cultural practices, and are in a very fragile position.

Through this experience the young people learned to love and respect each other and became close friends. Facilitators did not preach to them. The love and respect developed through the process of experiential and participatory learning e.g. group challenge exercises; sharing of cultural values; visiting a fishing community suffering due to modern development; non-violent communication; critical reflection about the prejudices of in their own community and last but not least, playing and living together over a sufficient period of time.

At the end of the camp there was a vivid change in Than Let Oo and Lin Oo. Their eyes were bright, smiles genuine; they teased the older youth, as kids of their age would do to their older sisters and brothers. They all shed tears when the camp ended and left knowing in their hearts that ethnic and religious differences don't need to be a barrier to friendship.

Pracha Hutuanuwatr & Jane Rasbash

Letter from Kitezh

Anton and Maxim were guests at the Kitezh summer children's camp and cheerfully joined in with Richard's carpentry work without either having a word of the other's language. They have just returned to join Misha and Masha's family. Their broad smiles say it all.

Such changes for them to enjoy! The building that was just a few walls and

sticks-in-the-sky is now transformed. It's not quite finished, but Irina's kitchen is sumptuous and warm and light, and Svetic and Roma's bedroom is larger and warmer. And the work goes on. I miss the great help of my builder friends who came from Scotland this summer and generously donated their time to double the size of a foster family's home, creat-

ing its complex roof and decorations. We had gas pipes laid in September (no gas yet of course ... next year?) so all the paths were rendered into sticky mud. The shell of another beautiful log house has been put up and the kitchen extension now has windows and doors. **All this progress is thanks to you, our donors, volunteers and friends.**

Mamatsi Guli

Heart of the Brave

Ecologia is collaborating with Madge Bray to support Mamatsi Guli, a children's village in Georgia very similar in ethos to Kitez, and the Datuna Appeal to save a small Georgian boy from unbearable suffering. Ironically, the two organisations we support for their work with disadvantaged orphan children are in countries that went to war with one another. **Ecologia Youth Trust supports disadvantaged youth in all countries irrespective of political divides.**

Mamatsi Guli was founded two years ago, in the village of Toxliauri, 45 minutes from Tbilisi. Their aim is to provide children living on the streets or in desperately under-funded orphanages with a foster home and a loving environment. They work to counter the social stigma surrounding such children, offer support to foster families, and provide activities of all kinds to help the children's growth and development, placing an emphasis on the preservation and protection of Georgia's natural environment.

With funding from the European Voluntary Service, Ecologia planned to send two young volunteers to Mamatsi Guli in the autumn but when war broke out this was postponed until next spring. Now that the situation has stabilised, volunteers are again able to visit and contribute to Mamatsi Guli's work.

Lucy Hopkins, one of the first volunteers to Mamatsi Guli, writes: "I was fascinated by what Madge Bray told me of this far-away culture. It sounded like a fairytale.

Intrigued and inspired, I planned my initial trip with a view to establishing a longer-term connection. Drawing from my training in performance arts, I put together a mask-making workshop.

The children were curious and involved and a real pleasure to work with. We made painted two-dimensional masks and constructed three-dimensional masks with moving parts. We took our creations into the forest and performed among the trees. We set up a room in the Razmadze house which became their art and play room. The Razmadze house is the hub of Mamatsi Guli. The atmosphere is convivial with children running in and out, black tea bubbling in coloured kettles on the stove and conversations in English



and Georgian. I felt immediately at home.

I was touched by the attentiveness of my hosts and their generosity in opening their lives and culture to me.

Georgian culture is extraordinarily warm, if challenging for our British reserve, but also marvelously freeing.

I found this difference between our two cultures less to do with form or protocol and more to do with a way of being, of looking at and being in the world. I can't wait to go back."

Ecologia welcomes applications from volunteers to Mamatsi Guli and donations to support its growth and development.

As the weather progresses towards the winter, the pace is frenetic. Materials are running out and every time I ask for something it must be carefully considered: could it wait till the spring? There's coal to be paid for and the winter electricity bill will be huge. We don't know yet how the global financial crisis will affect Kitez-Orion but it certainly will. In the last month, the value of the Moscow

stock exchange has fallen by 60%. Our Russian banking donors are unlikely to have anything to give in the near future. Problems ahead. I think we will be growing more vegetables here next year. So Kitez still needs its friends, just to keep going. Remember us, please.

Andrew Aikman

Datuna Appeal

Getting by with a little help from his friends!

Datuna is a bright alert little boy of seven, a natural survivor who dreams of being a footballer. He is a social orphan and a victim of severe child abuse. He lives in Georgia, one of the poorest post-Soviet states, where medical resources and child care services are precarious and there



is no child protection legislation. When Datuna was three, he fell from a 10th floor apartment and sustained terrible injuries which caused paralysis. Datuna's mother used him to beg on the street for three years. Traffic police found him alone and abandoned in the night, filthy and crying in pain.

Datuna now lives in Temi, an alternative orphanage community home to 80 adults and young people, many with severe learning difficulties, not far from Mamatsi Guli.

When he arrived two years ago, Datuna looked yellow, spoke very little, and was paralysed from the waist down. The deep pressure sore at the base of his spine had turned necrotic and Temi community members had to struggle to keep it clean without dressings or medical facilities, aware that an infection in this wound could kill him.

Datuna's spirit is indomitable, but his rapidly worsening untreated curvature of the spine puts his life further at risk.

With your help, Datuna now has an airbed, a soft wheelchair cushion, and dressings for his wound which is improving slowly. Fiona Lindsay, a senior physiotherapist visited Temi and conducted a detailed assessment. A wooden frame was constructed, and now, strapped into it, he can stand upright for the first time. A daily exercise routine was established to arrest the worsening of his condition until a life saving operation can be arranged in Scotland. This is a big job, but we are determined that Datuna will live life to the full.

A huge thank you to those whose donations have made this vital work possible!



Richard Brockbank from Scotland with Anton & Maxim

Five Years On – Rosie is Home at Last!

After her epic five-year 20,000 journey, Rosie is finally home. She arrived in Scotland at 5:00 am on June 18th where she was met by her son, James, other family members and close friends plus a piper. Maria Calvo from Ecologia was there to meet her too but the big celebration would wait until Rosie was back at her starting point in Tenby.

Those last miles running through the UK were in some ways the hardest. Plagued by a torn muscle, she still kept going as fast as she could in her eagerness to finally get home, and so neglected it. She had physiotherapy treatments along the way but it got worse. Only 30 miles from Tenby, she could barely stand and so went to hospital where it was found she had two stress fractures. After a bit of a rest she was off again. Slowly and on crutches, she, nevertheless, arrived in Tenby on the expected date of 25th August to a tumultuous welcome from her family, friends and the entire town.

How is it to be back? “Amazing,” she says, “to live again in a home where one can just press a switch and turn on a light! Being able to turn a tap on! The first bath I had at home felt so marvellous that I went to sleep in it and let the water overflow.”

Then there were radio interviews, a big piece in The Times and a book contract with Harper Collins. The book is due out in the spring so she is working to a very tight deadline. She is finding this as challenging as any of the hardships she faced on her journey.

Throughout the whole time and despite many difficulties and challenges, Rosie has never lost track of why she had done this—to support the causes that mean so much to her. She says, “It is so very important to remember that my run has achieved nothing, unless it can help the Cancer Awareness and Prostate Cancer Society, and the brave children of the Kitez Community in Russia.”

As a tribute to Rosie’s remarkable spirit, let’s match her generosity with our own and continue to give our support to Kitez.

Rhiannon Hanfman



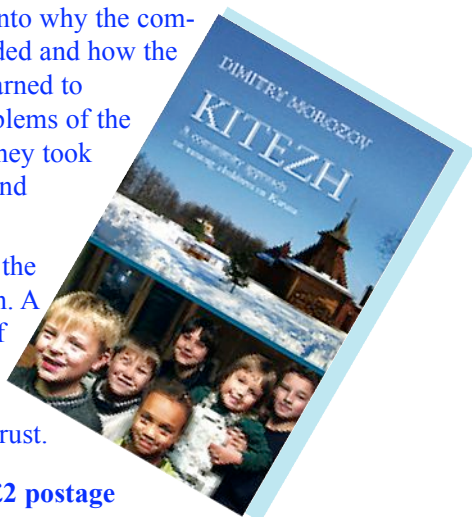
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AVAILABLE NOW!

By Dimitry Morozov, the founder of Kitez Children’s Community in Russia, this long awaited book gives a personal insight into why the community was founded and how the foster families learned to approach the problems of the orphan children they took into their hearts and homes

Proceeds support the children of Kitez. A limited number of copies are available from Ecologia Youth Trust.

Price: £12.99 + £2 postage



Greeting Cards for all Occasions

Handmade by the children of Kitez
Each card as individual as the child who made it.

Price per card £2.00

Pack of five £7.50



Gift Certificates

For £10 you can send one as a birthday or Christmas gift to your friends and family and they will know they have sponsored a child in Kitez.



By receiving this card you have sponsored a child in Kitez Children’s Community in Russia. Thank you.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas from

Alina Voganova (26.09.1999) came to Kitez in June 2007. She has a large scar on her arm because her alcoholic mother dropped boiling water on her. She’s optimistic and positive and has made many friends. She loves reading and sports.

Each gift card has a photo and description of an individual child and picturesque Kitez on the back.

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