

BERDICHEV'S "LITTLE RAY OF SUNSHINE"

How the churches of Christ are helping these disabled children



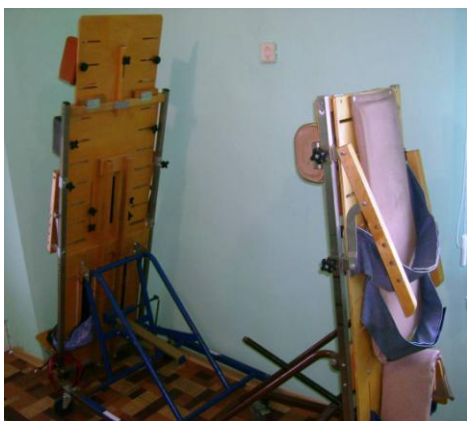
In October 2010 as I was leaving out of Nashville, TN's airport I received an email from Washington, DC asking if I would take time to assess the potential needs and supplies for the Zhitomyr Region of Ukraine. This was the Region hit hardest by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986. This was exciting to me as the Glen Allen, VA congregation has been involved in Zhitomyr for years and had shipped a container to the Church there. I met with a number of others and viewed the various locations. One of the areas was a

city call Korosten and the Consignee there accepted two containers and distributed through their area. One of the recipients was located in the city of Berdichev. Berdichev has a population of 98,000+. One of the places we helped was a clinic for disabled children. Every week this clinic offers treatment to 310-380 children who have a broad scope of disabilities (physical, mental, emotional, and genetic). This clinic receives no funding from the State and is totally dependent upon kind hearts for their services.



The Director of the clinic is Timothy Petrovich. He is a kind man with a great heart of compassion for these children.

The clinic opened in 1994 and Timothy Petrovich says that four generations of post-Chernobyl victims have been treated. The staff is composed of one Physical Therapist and three others. Their efforts are supplemented by volunteers and parents of the children receiving treatment.



But the story of my visit to Berdichev, Zhitomyr Oblast Ukraine began months before the call in October 2010...C.U.R.E. is a ministry of the West-Ark church of Christ in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Our partnership with C.U.R.E. has enabled us to do so much as we ship benevolent items all over the world. Ron Moreton is the usual driver that brings truckloads of commodities to us. On one of his deliveries he asked if I would be interested in "a whole lot of children's disabled equipment." He said they had just been offered many of those handicapped items from hospitals and clinics in Iowa and Missouri. I was not sure what I would do with them but I told him



that I would take them and soon our warehouse was piled high with some of the strangest looking items I have ever seen—most of us working there had no idea what these items were designed to do. Visitors to the warehouse, who did know what they were doing, looked at the items and were amazed at the quantity and expense involved. At that point I had no idea where to ship these odd looking pieces.

Fast forward to the assessment visits in October 2010...As I walked through the various places that we had identified as potential recipients I was shocked to see some of the very items that had been in the warehouse for so long. I asked about them and was told that these were very few in numbers because they were so expensive and difficult to get in Ukraine but they were greatly needed. I was amazed that here I was looking at one piece that was treasured and I literally had HUNDREDS of things like them in the warehouse!

As I made the follow up visits in Zhitomyr a couple of weeks ago and then the visit to Berdichev I could not help but think of the marvelous and amazing way in which those handicapped equipment had made their way from Iowa and Missouri where C.U.R.E. had picked them up from hospitals and clinics to Ft. Smith, Arkansas to Judsonia, Arkansas and ultimately to the Zhitomyr Oblast, Ukraine.

While visiting in Berdichev I was shown exercises and tasks that the children do to help with motor skill development. One young lady showed me some beaded flowers that she had made. The older children knit and I was given two of the knitted dolls (Thanks to Roene Blankenship of Joplin, MO we have been able to ship several boxes of knitting yarns and these are given to the special needs schools so the students will have materials).

