



Orange Team (L-R from the top) - Elvin, Paul, Oksana, Vanya, Lee Anna, Lena, Katia, Natasha, Katia, Jenya, Zhenya, Gleb



American Team – Thomas, Paul, Todd, Paige, Lee Anna, Hunter

Paul Johnson

June 25, 2011

Thank you so much for your prayer and financial support for our short term trip to Kiev, Ukraine! We arrived back in Birmingham the night of June 20. Our team felt undergirded by your prayer, and the Lord provided for each of our six team members so that we were fully funded. The trip was awesome, and we saw Him at work both in the lives of the orphans we ministered to and in our own hearts.

Our primary work was Monday through Saturday, June 13-18, at a 20-30 acre facility where we helped to run a sports/English camp for 21 kids from the orphanage. Weekends before and after provided “bookends” for hanging out with Ukrainian church members, planning, and wrap-up.

Our team members were Todd Smith (team leader), Paige Sprayberry, Hunter Twitty, Thomas Twitty, Lee Anna Culp, and me. This was a terrific team, and we had a great time together. The Ukrainians agreed this one of the most unified and strongest overall team that they have seen from the U.S. God certainly answered prayer as we worked with each other and our Ukrainian friends 24/7.

Hunter preached in our host church, Solomensky Presbyterian, the first Sunday on Loving each other (John 13:34-35) and I preached the second Sunday on Humility and Servanthood (Philippians 2:3-4). Our challenge was to put those truths into practice, by God’s grace, during the week with the kids. We drove to the camp facility Monday morning with 21 orphan kids mostly age 12-17 on a large bus, not knowing them at all. On Saturday when we left, almost everyone was in tears. The kids experienced love, attention, discipline, teaching, encouragement, and fun. We got to know them and their stories and shared our

lives and the Gospel with them from before breakfast in the morning until late at night. I figure we ran or walked about 10 miles each day.

Their favorites were “Capture the Flag”, soccer, ultimate Frisbee, English (especially Apples to Apples), dancing at the disco 2 evenings, 2 days in the swimming pool, skit/talent night, ping pong, the daily Treasure Hunt/Quest, and meals together in the dining hall. Every afternoon we led discussions in our teams on the spiritual theme of the day (friendship, kindness, love, dreams, etc.). We watched the movie *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* in Russian with English subtitles, and the kids found Narnian Chronicles books for each of them at the end of their Quest on Saturday. The American Team presented each kid with a sports gift bag, a nice frisbee, and a water bottle inscribed with a Bible verse. This was in addition to prizes they were given during the week.

Lee Anna and I were the Americans on the “Orange” Team with 7 kids – most 13 years old (other teams were “Lime” and “Indigo”). You can see them in the photo above. One note, from a girl, read, “I feel God’s love, that is coming through you . . . and I think that is great, that you do so many things for other people. Thank you very much for everything!!!” All of us received notes similar to this. As Anastasia “Nastia” Taranenکو (Shelter Ministry Founder www.shelter.org.ua) shared, “The camp was definitely a miracle from God, for children, for me and for our ministry! Alabama team - you are the best!!!))

What impact can one week have in the life of an orphan? Because of the wise planning and organization by Nastia and the Ukrainian team – and the Spirit’s working in hearts - this week was powerful. We could all tell it. Several of the kids were close to believing in Jesus. And the good thing is that Nastia and her team will continue to meet with these kids, and others not able to come to the camp, every week . . . following up on the seeds which were sown.

Thank you again for your support.

Warmly in Christ,

Paul

p.s. to see photos on Facebook, click here:

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1968161777140.109023.1635831993&l=2eca2150ed>