

Chornobyl Chronicle

CHILDREN OF CHORNOBYL RELIEF FUND NATIONAL NEWSLETTER Spring 2000 VOL. XVII



One of the many orphans in Zaluchya who suffer from genetic deformities. Japanese researchers have documented a doubling of birth defects since Chornobyl.

Ravages of Chornobyl are reflected in the Abandoned Children of Zaluchya Orphanage

In February, Pavlo Smyrnov, CCRF's Kyiv office director traveled to the southwestern corner of Ukraine, to investigate health conditions in Zaluchya, at a sanatorium for handicapped children. The investigation came in response to a shocking article by a Polish journalist, Andrzej Klimczak under the headline *Czarnobylska Umieralnica* (A Chornobyl Mortuary). Klimczak reported a very grim state of affairs at this group home in Ivano-Frankivsk Province where orphans and abandoned children suffering from multiple birth defects were left to die in deplorable and unsanitary conditions. Published in a Catholic parish newsletter in Connecticut, the expose was brought to CCRF's attention by our Hartford Chapter.

Mr. Smyrnov verified that conditions at the sanatorium were indeed deplorable, with hundreds of children forced to share cramped living quarters without adequate linens, clothing, medication, or laundry services. The staff at the orphanage are severely overworked and demoralized.

Most of the children at the sanatorium do not live past the age of 18 because of inadequate medical attention.

Several health studies have confirmed that the Chornobyl nuclear disaster has resulted in severe chromosome damage in many children and birth defects have doubled since Chornobyl. (See New York Times, April 26, 1996, TIME April 8, 1993). CCRF is mobilizing funding and support to create more humane conditions at Zaluchya. Thanks to the initiative of CCRF volunteer Mr. Osyp Holynskij and veterans of the Halychyna Division living in northern New Jersey, CCRF will be purchasing an industrial-strength washer and dryer for Zaluchya and delivering fresh linens, winter clothing, sanitary items and other essential supplies this spring. Follow-up visits are planned to determine what should be the next steps to improve conditions. To reduce the risk of birth defects in Ukraine, CCRF has distributed prenatal vitamins and published preventive health literature for thousands of pregnant women across the country.

(More about Zaluchya in our next issue.)

Ukrainian Women's Delegation Speaks about Women's & Family Health Issues

(Short Hills, NJ) On March 10th, CCRF founders Dr. & Mrs. Zenon & Nadia Matkiwsky hosted a delegation of women's leaders from Ukraine for a community forum on current health issues affecting Ukraine. The delegation met with leading aid providers and donors from Northern New Jersey. The delegation included Dr. Iryna Holubiova, Head of the National Committee for Women in Ukraine as well as the Vice Director for the National Committee on Youth Policy; Dr. Olesia Hulchij, M.D., Ph.D., Professor at Kyiv Medical University's Department of Health; and Ms. Roksolana Ivanchenko, Representative of the Department of International Organizations and the Commission for Human Rights affiliated with the United Nations.

The delegation came to the United States under the auspices of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organization (SFUZHO), to attend meetings at the United Nations in preparation for the International Women's Conference Beijing Plus Five to be



CCRF founders host the women's delegation to the United Nations. From left to right, Nadia Matkiwsky, Dr. Olesia Hulchij, Dr. Iryna Holubiova, Olysa Stawnychy R. Ivachenko and Dr. Zenon Matkiwsky.

held in Helsinki in July 2000.

During their presentations on March 10th, the delegates spoke about several key women's issues affecting Ukraine, including the trafficking of women, the decline in reproductive health, gender discrimination, and the need for better enforcement of laws to protect women.

Dr. Hulchij spoke about the importance of tracking and gathering accurate statistics about the current health trends in Ukraine. This is a very difficult and painful time in Ukraine, especially in the area of healthcare. For the first time in Ukraine, we are seeing a demographic imbalance where mortality rates (14.8%) have exceeded birth rates (8.8%). The population five years ago was 52 million. Today it is 50.4 million.

Dr. Hulchij informed the audience that public health campaigns, family planning programs, NGO activity...access to contraception and physicians seem to be having a positive effect on the reduction of abortions. In 1996, there were 30,000 teen abortions were. In 1998, [teen] abortions decreased to 12,000. Despite these positive trends, Hulchij emphasized that the main reason for infertility in Ukraine is still the very high rate of abortions. Abortion is the main method of family planning in [Ukraine].

Over the past five years, Dr. Hulchij has advised several scientific projects in Ukraine, including studies initiated by the World Health Organization. The conclusions of these studies indicate that reproductive health is affected by economy, environment, and radiation. Only 6% of newborns are born healthy in Ukraine. Half of the pregnant women are sick in Ukraine-the anemia rate presently stands at 47%. The analy-



Dr. Daria Klchko, an obstetrician from Saint Barnabas Medical Center greets Dr. Olesia Hulchij and Dr. Iryna Holubiova during the reception.

sis of our official statistics and of our own studies show that Chornobyl is not in the past. Chornobyl is still very much with us. Chornobyl will be very much with us in the future, Dr. Hulchij said.

Dr. Hulchij concluded her remarks by praising the work of CCRF, which she had witnessed firsthand. All projects conducted by CCRF are very important for Ukraine. They were all successful and the results were visible.

INSIDE THIS EDITION:

- *Chapter Updates: Ridgefield, CT; Tucson, AZ; Hartford, CT; Fishkill, NY; Rutgers University - New Brunswick, NJ
- *Ukraine Update: Krasnodon Mining Accident; Sniatyn - Letters from Orphanage; Lutsk - NICU Conference Follow-up
- *CCRF Website Launch
- *Book Signing by Author Irene Zabytko - The Sky Unwashed
- *Calendar of Events

Schoolchildren in Western Connecticut collect thousands of Christmas presents for needy orphans in Ukraine

(Ridgefield, CT) Last fall, schoolchildren at the Landmark Academy, a private school in the western Connecticut township of Ridgefield launched a massive drive to collect Christmas presents for orphans and ailing children in Ukraine. Coordinated by a group of Landmark parents and teachers, the drive yielded over a ton of high-quality items including winter clothing, children's shoes, stuffed animals, toys, puzzles, posters, and playground equipment valued at over \$25000. Altogether, the gifts completely filled two mid-sized U-Haul trucks that were loaded on Veterans Day, November 14 and transported to a storage site at St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church in New Haven. On December 6th, the presents were loaded by volunteers from the New Haven chapter of the Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund and shipped by MEEST Parcel Service to seven separate sites in Ukraine. Follow-up visits to the orphanages by CCRF monitors confirmed that all the gifts had arrived safely.

The shipment was assigned to children at several orphanages including the Znamyanka Home for Handicapped Children (Kirovohrad Oblast), the Pushcha Vodytsia Sanatorium for children with cancer and leukemia, and children's centers in Rivenska, Chernihivska and Ivano-Frankivsk Regions (Oblasts).

We were extremely pleased with the generous response of all these children, said Lesia Palylyk, who initiated the drive with a joint committee of faculty and parents. I hope that our project will inspire other parents to

organize similar drives in their communities, and get the word out about the plight of Ukrainian orphans and those children still affected by the Chernobyl disaster. CCRF also delivered a large amount of high potency vitamins and over-the-counter medications purchased with the help of generous cash donations, including a donation by children from the Yonkers branch of SUMA. Many community residents also contributed to the drive. The most generous was Landmark parent Anita Monteith of Danbury who took the initiative to buy over \$2,000 worth of new winter coats, hats and down parkas for every child in the Znamyanka Orphanage. I've heard about the severity of winters in Eastern Europe. At least these coats should help to keep these kids warm, said Mrs. Monteith.

Those interested in launching a similar charitable campaign to support CCRF in their community are urged to call Mrs. Palylyk at (203) 79-2798, or to call CCRF's Connecticut office at (203) 387-0507.



Children from the Sniatyn Orphanage show their appreciation for toys donated by students from Landmark Academy. (See thank you letter next page.)



At the entrance to the Landmark Academy, a group of parents and schoolchildren prepare to load one of two U-Haul trucks full of Christmas presents for hundreds of orphans in Ukraine.



YALE RESEARCHER REPORTS ON CHORNOBYL AFTERMATH

On April 2d, the Hartford Chapter of CCRF hosted a lecture by Olena Maslyukivska, a graduate student from Ukraine who is completing her master's degree at the Yale School of Forestry. A native of Vinnytska Province (Oblast), and a graduate of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ms. Maslyukivska conducted extensive research for the Ukrainian Institute of Radiation Studies analyzing infant mortality and the prevalence of various diseases in territories contaminated by Chernobyl as compared to areas unscathed by radioactive fallout. The lecture was followed by a lively discussion with community activists. (Above, from left to right: Motrya and Nataalka Rudko, Julie Nesteruk, Nadia Haftkowycz, Olena Maslyukivska, Inna Stachiw, Irena and Dr. Andreas Bojko.)



Revelers at the January 16th dinner dance in Tucson help to raise funds for CCRF's 25th Airlift scheduled for this spring.



TUCSON, AZ

On January 16th, CCRF supporters from the Tucson area welcomed the New Year's traditional *makaitka* New Year dinner dance at the University of Arizona. Proceeds from the dance were designated for the Fund's 25th Airlift scheduled to depart this spring. Among the special guests was Dr. Paul Cap, (above) the Executive Director of the American Board of Radiology and a co-founder of the group American Friends of Radiology in Ukraine. Last year, Dr. Cap worked with CCRF to transport \$7,600 worth of radiological equipment and diagnostic view-boxes to Ukraine. CCRF is especially grateful to Bea Salywon and her organizing committee for helping to make the *makaitka* successful New Year's tradition. We're also grateful to Steven Mkitish and other generous donors from the Tucson area who helped to purchase more than \$6,500 worth of priority antibiotics for hospitals in Kyiv, Lviv and Poltava.



During the Neonatology Conference sponsored by CCRF at the Volyn Regional Children's Medical Center, Nurse Pat Benedetto from Newark Beth Israel Medical Center - NJ demonstrates infant resuscitation techniques using an anatomical doll as Dr. Morris Cohen (Director of Neonatology at Newark Beth Israel) and Dr. Tania Vyhovska (NICU Director VODTMO) look on.

CCRF Prepares 25th Airlift to aid New Regions affected by Chernobyl Fallout, other Industrial Accidents Major Shipment Bound for Families of Miners killed in Luhansk Disaster

This spring, CCRF is scheduled to send its 25th airlift to Ukraine, delivering more than \$350,000 worth of medical and humanitarian aid to hospitals in Bila Tserkva, Rivne, and other regions in desperate need of assistance. The first phase of this airlift will arrive in Ukraine during the last week in April, with more than \$104,000 worth of high-priority medical supplies for a regional hospital that serves coal miners and their families in Krasnodon. In March, a methane gas explosion killed more than 80 miners in Krasnodon in one of the worst industrial disasters since Chernobyl. This latest disaster underscores the need for stronger health and safety controls in the Soviet-built industrial complexes, said Alex Kuzma, Executive

Director for CCRF.

We can't forget that in 1986, hundreds of miners from this region were rushed to Chernobyl to dig shafts and pour lead and concrete beneath the melting reactor core, to protect the headwaters of the Dnipro River. These men risked their lives to safeguard the drinking water for millions of people living downstream. The least we can do is to aid their widows and orphans in the wake of this new tragedy.

The shipment to Krasnodon will be accompanied by CCRF volunteer Mrs. Lydia Welyczkowski and Kyiv director Pavlo Smyrnov. In our next edition, we will provide extensive coverage of this shipment.



Fishkill Rotary Donates Ambulance to Ukraine: Update

(Dutchess County, NY) On January 19th CCRF staffer Ksenia Kyzk Salewycz met with the leaders of the Rotary Club of Fishkill, NY to report on the successful delivery of the fully equipped Ford ambulance which, in conjunction with Rotary International, the Club donated to the Volynian Children's Medical Center (VODTMO) in Lutsk, Ukraine. The ambulance was delivered last year and has serviced each of the 16 Raions (counties) in Volyn Oblast. Just in its first four months of operation, the ambulance successfully transported and saved the lives of 22 infants (14 preterm & 8 term). (Above photo from left to right John McKinney, Joan Pagonos, Dr. Charles Chase, Charles VanVoorhis (donor of one-half ambulance), Ksenia Kyzk Salewycz, Skip Rotkamp, George Supan (Chairman of Committee), John Mitchell (Secretary), Roberta Theiss (President), Dr. Ken Ardrey, Hugh J. Maurer, Donald Williams).



A nurse at the Poltava City Maternity Hospital adjusts tubing for a baby recovering in the critical care station provided by CCRF. With your support, we hope to replicate the success of this unit in Rivne which is targeted as our priority region for the Year 2000.

Giving Babies a Fighting Chance:

CCRF's partner hospitals continue to report dramatic progress in their efforts to reduce infant mortality with the help of technology and training provided by CCRF. Since last fall's national training conference in Lutsk, the Poltava Maternity Hospital and the Volynian Regional Children's Medical Center have reported sharp decreases in overall mortality and growing success even in the case of infants with very serious pathologies that were once untreatable.

LETTERS FROM UKRAINE

Honorable Benefactors!

On behalf of the students collective at the Sniatynsky Middle School Orphanage, thank you for the interesting games, school supplies, clothing, toys and personal hygiene articles that we received from you. We are thankful that there are still people in the world who are ready at any time to help those who need help. Continue doing such good deeds, and may such blessings return to you a hundred-fold!

Respectfully, *Irina Savchynska,*
Head of the Student Council
Sniatyn Middle School Orphanage



These students at the Sniatyn Orphanage in Ivano-Frankivsk Province are just some of the hundreds of youngsters across Ukraine who received new clothes, toys and school supplies thanks to supporters in Connecticut. (Photo by Pavlo Smyrnov)

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE !

www.childrenofchornobyl.org OR www.ccrf-iccf.org



On March 13, CCRF launched its new website featuring the latest CCRF activities, and updated information on the Chernobyl aftermath. Designed by Mark Ciapka and Michael Baresh of Applied Dynamic Solutions, LLC - a full service web design and development company based in Warren, NJ, the website can be accessed at www.childrenofchornobyl.org or www.ccrf-iccf.org. The site includes the latest information on CCRF projects, finances, photographs of children who have benefited from CCRF shipments, and a detailed outline of CCRF's partner hospitals and other ongoing programs. All of us at CCRF are very grateful to Mark and Michael for the many hours they donated to design this powerful new resource for our foundation. As of May 2000, our supporters will be able to visit the site and make tax-deductible donations on-line by credit card. We welcome your feedback and we would gladly consider your recommendations as to how the site can be further enhanced to meet our supporters' needs.



The perfect synergy of creativity and technology

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Irene Zabytko photo by Tim Dunlap

Chornobyl Novel Makes a "Poignant Debut"

Library Journal has called it a riveting first novel, Kirkus Reviews hailed it as unforgettable, harrowing, wrenching. CCRF is pleased to announce the release of a highly acclaimed novel from Algonquin Press. Based on a true story, The Sky Unwashed by Ukrainian-American author Irene Zabytko traces the lives of a family whose life is shattered by the Chornobyl nuclear disaster. A contributing writer for the Orlando Sentinel, Ms. Zabytko has been nominated for Barnes & Noble's Discover Great New Authors series. On April 25th, at 6 p.m. Ms. Zabytko will be the guest of honor at the opening of CCRF's new Connecticut office at 1358 Whalley Avenue in New Haven. Earlier that day, from 4 to 5 p.m., the author will be a guest of the Yale University Bookstore for a book-signing ceremony.

Newark Church to Commemorate Chornobyl Anniversary

On Wednesday, April 26th, at 7 p.m., St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church at 739 Sanford Avenue will host an ecumenical memorial service honoring the victims of the Chornobyl nuclear disaster. Clergy and laity from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches will take part in a traditional memorial Moleben for those who have died as a result of the fire and nuclear meltdown at the Chornobyl Atomic Energy Station in northern Ukraine.


At the conclusion of the memorial service, the parish will host a symbolic bread and water reception honoring the Chornobyl victims. The guest speaker will be Irene Zabytko, author of The Sky Unwashed, a novel about the Chornobyl aftermath recently published by Algonquin Press. For more information, please call the St. John's Rectory at (973)371-1356 or call CCRF's New Jersey office at (973)376-5140

- CALENDAR OF EVENTS**
- September 16: Rochester (NY) Golf Tournament
 - September 16 Danbury (CT) Holy Trinity 5K Road Race
 - September 17 Cambridge (MA) Wine & Cheese Reception
 - September 24 East Hanover (NJ) Gala Banquet



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY (New Brunswick, NJ)
Members of the Rutgers University Chapter of CCRF and the Rutgers Ukrainian Students Club enjoy the success of the April 5th Battle of the Bands rock concert to benefit CCRF. The four-hour-long concert at the University's Campus Center featured four of the most progressive bands on campus - Lloyds Limit, Faux Monk, Shiloh, the Copasetic, Ben Trovato. CCRF is grateful to the organizing committee led by Roman Holowinsky (President), Matthew Rakowsky (Vice Presidnet), Roman Bauer (Secretary), Stefan Kuchuk (Treasurer) and to all members who initiated this fundraiser. (Above left) CCRF staffer Inya Chehade (Rutgers University Alumna & former Ukrainian Club President) and (above right) Nadia Matkivsky, CCRF Board Member with attending club members. Other members include: Deanna Yurchuk, Natalia Hutsul, Paul Farmiga, Olesh Brozhyna, Ikhliya, Khisana Hutsul, Lida Boychuk, Mark Chirovsky, Tina Warianka, Greg Maliczyszyn, Andrew Mandzy, Adrian Chraplyvy, Damian Holynskiy, Mark Chraplyvy, Svitlana Hrynchyk, Adrian Olesnyak, Ikhlichynsky, Adrianna Rihrew Umyn, Andrea Bilowchuk, Mykel, Andrea Popel, Christina Shandor, Annette a, Baidura Rojek, Christine Lueyk, Diana Madiya Symczyk, Ossp Lebedowicz, Peter Rimac, Natalle Senyk, Sonia Skrypczyk, Suzanne Kopan, Triften Chmil.

BE A VISIONARY!
Remember the Children In Your "Zapovit"



One of the first poems that every Ukrainian schoolchild is required to memorize is Taras Shevchenko's Zapovit - the final Will and Testament in which this great human rights champion described the legacy he hoped to leave for future generations in his beloved homeland.

Unfortunately, many North Americans who care deeply about Ukraine and the children of Chornobyl forget to follow Shevchenko's example. They forget to write their own Zapovit!! Your will and your estate can be a powerful instrument in promoting your vision for a new Ukraine, where children can live in a healthier, more democratic environment with decent medical care and dignity and hope.....By designating a portion of your estate to the Children of Chornobyl Relief Fund, you can reap important tax benefits and you can plan your future with the comfort of knowing that you are leaving a cherished legacy for some of the world's neediest and most deserving children.

If you have not yet drawn up your will, please contact an attorney today. You may also contact our office at (973)376-5140 or write to CCRF, attn: Zapovit Legacy Circle, 272 Old Short Hills Road, Short Hills, New Jersey 07078. We promise: Your generosity will not be forgotten.



Mark Your Calendars !!

On Sunday, September 24th, in East Hanover, NJ, CCRF will hold its Gala Fundraising Banquet marking the 10th Anniversary of the Children of Chornobyl Relief Fund. The banquet will be held in honor of US Senator Frank Lautenberg (above) for his outstanding support of the Chornobyl children. Please call (973) 376-5140 TODAY to make your reservations!

Children of Chornobyl Relief Fund, Inc.

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