

Belarus Visit 2-11 November 2019 Blog

SUNDAY

We started our first day in Mogilev Shopping for supplies for our 3 June group visits today. Kostya was a shopping machine.

First visit was to marina and her beautiful family(the family of Andrea one of the volunteers with us) We spent some time exchanging gifts and catching up. Marinas new little sister Katia was born just 3 weeks ago so we had lots of lovely cuddles. Family now has Marina Micha Roma Kira and Katia . Marinas dad served a much needed cup of tea .

Then we visited the beautiful Princess Snow white also known as Lera. We met with mum and her brother Liosha and Vlad. Lera now gets the bus to a new school details of which will follow. Lera explained she has waited from June and kept her dress good to wear it for the first time for her Scottish friends.

We then visited some new potential children leaving cuddles and sweeties in our wake

Then we visited Yana in her brand new flat it was only just thier 2nd day in the lovely new home for the whole family. Yana has started a new school and she was full of smiles for us today.

We stopped at the beautiful home of interpreter Lena who gave us a much needed hot cup of tea and coffee and a spread of yummy snacks.

Then we finished our day in klimivichi visiting more potential new children. We have found some very needy new children for our group. One of the mums said she thought we were the first foreign visitors to their village. It was quite remote but we found the house 😊:) and a beautiful young girl who will come to Scotland next year.

. All in all a busy, tiring but brilliant first day . Lots of travelling. Over 2 hour drive to the kids and back.

Off now for a well deserved dinner with our friends

Sorry not too many photos today but we dont post photos of our new children until we are home and our new host families have seen them, then we will put them on here too 😊

MONDAY

Sorry again not too many photos of children today as we dont post photos of our new children until we are home and our new host families have seen them, then we will put them on here too 😊:-)

We started our second day heading straight to Klimivichi a two hour journey to visit 7 potential new children . As there are no photographs of the children we have taken pictures of the homes, surroundings and some of the siblings to give you an idea of the conditions in the villages and homes. We visited some very traditional Belarus villages.

We stopped again at the beautiful home of interpreter Lena who made us a wonderful lunch of homemade soup chicken and potatoes and a home made Apple and Pumpkin pie which was all delicious .

Then we finished our day in Klimivichi visiting more potential new children and getting lots of cuddles .Again we have found some very needy new children for our group.

Our day can be emotional and sometimes the little things can give us all a huge lift. Today it was passing a traditional horse and cart in Osmolovichi We asked nicely for a picture and got a photo bomb..

Another very busy tiring but brilliant day .

Off now for a well deserved dinner with our friends

TUESDAY

Day 3 in Belarus. The Dream Team are all together after Jo's arrival last night. We started our day with shopping for our June group children and our special visit to Vika and Dima. Lots of food and cleaning essentials were purchased by our resident shopping machines Kostya and Kenny.

Then we headed off to visit the children's hospital. It was a lovely visit we were shown all the marvellous work they undertake to help the children. We were able to meet with some parents and We also saw the equipment that the charity has donated over the years and head first hand from the doctors and nurses just how beneficial it is.

We were served a lovely cup of coffee before we left. Then On our way out of the hospital we took the lift which broke down between the first and second floor leaving the 4 of us Olya the interpreter Kostya and two doctors so 8 people "stuck in a lift" it was like a scene from still game although we all managed not to need the bathroom.. although some of us handled the claustrophobia better than others we will let you guess by the pictures. After 25 mins or so we were released and climbed out.

We left hospital and headed to visit Vika and Dima two beautiful disabled children. We were welcomed with tea and biscuits and had a wonderful visit with cuddles . Vika (girl) is 7 and Dima (boy) 4 . It was humbling to see how well cared for the children are by thier lovely mum

We stopped to visit a potential new child from the city the last of our pre visit meetings before we have the task of vhoosing who we bring to Scotland. Each child we have visited has been very needy and it will be hard making the final decision.

Then the excitment levels shot up as we headed out of mogilev to visit our two beautiful Belarussian princesses in Bykhov.

First we went to visit Nastya and her family Jo was welcomed with love and cuddles . We delivered our food parcels and gifts. Nastya had waited all day for Jo's arrival. She was overjoyed to see us and we spent a wonderful time with the family . We saw Sergei and Dima and little pocket rocket Maxim .. who shouted peep peep at us while he wheeled around at 100 miles per hour on his fire truck .

Then we headed further out of Bykhov to our final visit of the day to the beautiful Sasha. She was over the moon to see Donna . We took a food parcel and gifts and spent a wonderful time with Sasha her mum and little brother Androsha. Her other brother vlad was at the santatorium so we missed him this time. Sasha's mum has

tried very hard to update the house and there were some little additions from previous visits which was so wonderful to see.

It has been a day full of love and tears of joy x

WEDNESDAY

Thanks again to Andrea Keenan, our blog writer.

Today was our Private visit day. We had an incredible day with our Belarussian princesses and thier families. We brought them from the villages to the city and went to soft play, trampolining, burger king and then a visit to the museum. I hope you understand why there are only a few pictures we were too busy spending every second we could with our kids.

Kenny was also out and about on his private day. He had breakfast with Tania's family, a secind visit to the hospital, then he visited a beautiful girl Tanya who was with the group from 2011-2015 she is now 16 years old. As you may know Tanya has been poorly and has been receiving treatment for cancer for 2 years now.

Kenny first had a really nice visit to Tanyas school he chatted with Tanyas English teacher who he knows and some pupils from a younger class.

Tanya is home schooled this year and her English teacher Lena who visits her in the house for lessons says she is a very good pupil and does well at English

As it was pouring with rain Tanyas teacher gave Kenny a lift to her house. Much appreciated 😊:)

He enjoyed a nice cup of tea and cake with Tanya and mum. She was looking very well and the big old Tanya smile was back. It was great to see. Unfortunately her appetite is not so big 😞:(Hope it returns soon to build her up for some more tests and possibly an operation in December. One that has been planned for some time. Mum appreciates very much the love and support she receives. Tanya also dreams of a return to Scotland sometime 😊:) Kennys day finished with bowling and dinner with his family.

We finished the day with the most incredible welcome into the home of Kennys boy from 2010-2014, Pasha. (Pasha himself is currently in Minsk working we just missed him as he left on the 1st Nov) but his dad Andrei a wonderful man invited us all to his home for a traditional Belarussian meal with his family. It was an honour to visit. We were fed so well and we laughed and talked all night . Lots of funny stories.

I don't think I can properly put into words the level of hospitality and love we are being shown here in Belarus it is so humbling and we are so very grateful.

Before leaving we were presented with gifts. Beautiful chocolate a towel for the table and a personal hand made phone holder made by the incredibly talented Nikita boyfriend of Aliona, Pashas big sister

We are forging friendships here that will last a lifetime. On that note and as I am bubbling away I will leave you all with the exciting news that tomorrow we start the process of inviting the next group of August children . Watch this space xx

THURSDAY

We left Mogilev early this morning to travel 2 and a half hours to Klimivichi to start the exciting task of inviting our new children for the August group.

For each child we visited we took a food parcel and a supply of vitamins and for the girls a Barbie doll and the boys a football.

Our first visit was to Veranika who will join our lovely new host family the Bogles. She is a bubbly happy girl who let out a gasp of utter joy when she opened her doll. Wow Barbie.

Next we visited Artum who will join moultrie- Wilkins family . Artum is quiet well behaved boy who was over joyed to receive his football from Scotland

Then we invited our next little boy Dima who will join the Magee family. Dima is a lovely smiley boy and very excited to come to Scotland . His mama told us she is so very happy and thankful for the kindness shown to her family and she gave us all the biggest hug.

After this we travelled to an existing family where we invited a 2nd child. Lera is currently in year 3 in the June group. They are a very needy family and as such we invited her Brother Vlad. He is a little smasher and will be hosted by the Ruddells.

We then went to the home of Ksusha who is a lovely little girl she had just had her ears pierced and was excited to show her new beautiful earrings. She loved her doll and opened it straight away to play. She will join the Kings.

Our 6th visit today was to visit Krystina. A stunning little girl . She was delighted with her Barbie and her lovely foster mum was so happy and thankful that we were inviting Krystina to Scotland she cried with joy and had us all in tears..

Our final visit was to Nastya the little sister of our Yana (June group) she is s very clever girl who was excited to join us having heard all about Scotland from Yana. She showed us her bike and loved her Barbie doll. Nastya will join the Bonnars.

After all the emotion we joined Elena and went out for a quiet dinner in Kilimivichi.

FRIDAY

We woke in klimivichi to start our 2nd day of inviting children to the August group and visiting some existing June group children.

We filled Kostya's car with shopping and headed to the home of Arina a gorgeous girl with a lovely loving family. She was so excited to receive her Barbie and looks forward to visiting Scotland and seeing the seaside . Mum is a wonderful lady who was in tears and thanked us with the biggest hugs and a bag of homemade biscuits for our journey. Arina will join the Dundas family .

We then visited Anya beautiful girl who lives on the outskirts of a village near klimivichi. She absolutly loves dolls and was thrilled with her Barbie. Mum was very thankful that she is coming to Scotland Anya will live with the McKay family .

We then travelled through the Dead zone stopping at the memorial for Veprin a village buried in 1999 as it was so contaminated by the radiation. The village had a population of 896 of which there were 70 children 64 of which had some kind of chronic disease . It was very moving.

We then drove back to Cherikov to visit Lera Grady her home is lovely and we had a much needed cup of coffee and a good catch up with Lera. We had a great look round her home and garden and saw her renovated outside toilet.

We then moved out of the village to visit the beautiful Daryna we took shopping and huge cuddles from home . We also while there invited her younger brother Danilla to join us in June. He will be hosted by our incredible FOCC hairdresser Collette and her son Leon. That means 3 out of 3 children from the front of our FOCC leaflet Nikita Daryna and Danilla have all been invited.

Our final visit of the day was to the lovely home of Ksusha we were given a warm welcome and stayed for coffee and had some traditional Belarussian foods . Ksusha was happy to see us and looks forward to coming to Scotland in June more than ever because there is now a puppy to cuddle 🐶🐶

Visits for today complete we are off to a restaurant with our interpreter team

SATURDAY

Today we stayed in the city. We started the day buying shopping for existing June children and shopping for 3 special visits

We started with a visit to the gorgeous Nastya in her flat. Her mum works many jobs and works so very hard . She had tea and home made cakes ready for us. Nastya was happy to see us and looks forward to returning in June to go to M&d's. Mum had some nice costumes for using at Christmas and we got a chance to dress up as Father Christmas and his Granddaughter Snegorichka. Good fun.

We then went to visit our Matvey . He was full of smiles and can't wait to come back to Scotland . He is getting taller I think maybe I will have to start wearing heels on my duty days ☐ We were again treated to a feast by Matvey's foster mum and we got to meet her lovely foster boys and her own son who treated us to a show of his accordion playing.

We then visited Alexey to give him the first look at his Belarussian calander. He was incredibly proud of his work. While we were there we learned that he has recently won 3rd place in an international art competition . Alexey explained it was a cartoon competition. He was very happy to show us his award. Then he gave us all a gift of a little clay rat. To celebrate the coming new year which will be the year of the rat. Kenny's was very apt as it was a little rat golfer.

We then went to visit Roman, who is being treated for cancer. What an outstanding young man. He asked lots and lots of questions about Scotland and Christmas. We took food and gifts from Scotland including clothes boots, trainers, new winter coats and Lego. Mum was overwhelmed with thanks for the kindness shown to Roman and the help we have given . Unfortunately he will go back to hospital next week for more tests and we promised to visit him again in February.

Our last June group visit was to our pocket rocket Vika. She was super excited to show us all her pets including a dog a cat and a hamster. She was bursting with energy and her smile lit up the room. Vika said she loved everything about Scotland and she is excited to return .

Our final visit today was to Zhenya a boy close to all our hearts. Luda had explained he was home from the school where he lives and that although in a new style flat his

situation was still very needy. So we surprised him with a visit for cuddles and photos . He is growing into a lovely handsome tall and smiley young man.

Tomorrow is our final day and includes our children's party, so lots and lots of pictures to follow tomorrow

SUNDAY

Our final working day in Belarus.

Donna and I were up earlier than everyone else to do a run in Mogilev . Thank you to Luda and Katya boss for loaning us the bits to allow us to run .

When everyone else got up we headed out to visit our last new August boy. Sasha who will be hosted by the Stonehouse family. Little Sasha lives in the city in a hostel and was absolutly overjoyed with the gift of a football. His eyes lit up the room.

We then visited Dima and Diana and their lovely mum for breakfast we were treated to a feast and it was lovely to meet Dima and Diana and see the difference FOCC makes to lives here in Belarus. Dima is at university studying economics and Diana is in her final year at school. Both hope to return to Scotland as adults.

We then travelled by trolleybus to the city centre where we had 45 minutes of power shopping before the real excitement of the day began .. The Party.

The kids were incredible and it was a joy to watch them reconnect as a group and catch up over pizza and cola before the serious very competitive business of bowling began . Lots of pictures guys hope you enjoy seeing all your gorgeous kids 😊.

We then ended the day and the visit with buffet at the office and a good blether.

Homeward bound tommorrow. Our final words from Belarus. Huge thanks to Andrea for writing the blogs and to the team (pictured) for everything.

Goodbye Belarus we love you BY

So today we say goodbye to Belarus.

We leave behind life long memories. We have made friendships that will last a lifetime and this experience has changed us in ways we never thought possible.

From the bottom of our hearts we thank everyone here in Belarus for everything they have done for us. Without you we cannot do what we do . As a wise man once said it is only when two halves of the team join that magic happens.

We have worked long days and have had our hearts broken over and over with the conditions we have experience but for every moment of low we have experienced the highs of the friendships.. the joys in the eyes of the children.. the hope in the eyes of the mums and dads we have met .. the giggles of team mates

We have invited 11 new children to our groups and can't wait to show you them . Host families you will all receive your special messages as soon as we can on arrival home

We just love what we do .

On behalf of the Angels we want Charlie (Kenny) to know that we cannot thank him enough for allowing us to travel to Belarus with him. You have given us the most incredible memories and we have seen for ourselves the selfless hard work that goes on behind the scenes.

From the three of us and all the FOCC team
You are our Boss . Our Hero . Our friend .
And from the slightly emotional blog writer
Thank you my friends I love you .
See you soon Scotland x