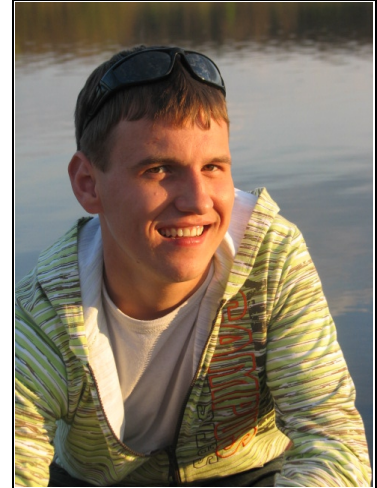


November 17, 2014

Dear friends of Last Bell,

This October, several members of the Last Bell Board of Directors went to Zhytomyr to visit with staff and kids, catch up with each program, and learn about the staff's vision for the future. We are excited by the stories we're hearing and the sense of change and possibility in the air!

Toward the end of our trip, Andre and Oksana Pankyeyev told us the most recent chapters in the story of Valera, a young man who graduated from Orphanage #4 many years ago. He was one of the first boys our Shelter staff connected with, and he had previously been baptized as a Christian. But he soon fell away from us. He couldn't find work, so he went to Kyiv. At times he was living in a train station, trying to wash himself in the station restrooms. And he was drinking himself into numbness and despair.



Valera in 2008



**Two Shelter 2 boys:
Kiril on left, with Sasha.
You can read about Kiril on p. 2.**

Andre and Oksana tried to talk to him but, as Oksana said, "He just couldn't believe that God would accept him again because of all his faults." Nobody could change his mind.

He showed up one winter night at the Shelter, drunk and despondent, with nowhere to go. Because of a rule at the Shelter about drinking, he was not able to stay there. He went outside the Shelter and sat in the snow.

Then Ed Gordon, a visiting American and beloved friend and volunteer, went out and sat in the snow beside him. He begged Valera to go to a rehab center. Valera was so moved that this cool American guy would come sit beside him – a dirty, drunk orphan kid – that he agreed to think about rehab. The next day, sober, he made his decision.

When hope was offered, Valera found the courage to take hold of it. Ed helped him go to rehab for six months; afterwards Valera stayed on at the rehab center

as a volunteer for a year and a half. Ed also helped Valera's mother go to rehab, though she didn't stay long; and Valera's sister also went for six months. Valera is still sober, and he has been learning and growing in his faith.

Forward five years: Valera is now ready to graduate from Bible school, where he has had extensive training in life skills, personal relationships, and Biblical studies.

After receiving so much help for so long, he is ready to give back. Recently Valera called to ask Andre and Oksana if he could return to Zhytomyr to do orphan care work with them. How could we ask for a better answer to prayer?

We continue to pray for a cup overflowing: that God would draw many more of our young adults into the safety and healing He offers, long into the future – even, perhaps especially, through Valera and other orphanage graduates like him who have learned what a gracious God we serve.

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During the Board's time in Zhytomyr we also visited the Shelter, where several teens are living full-time and several more visit on the weekends. It was obvious they all felt safe, and cared about their home. We visited two days in a row, and on the first night the kids were asking what kind of Ukrainian food we liked. They were looking for hints! One board member mentioned cabbage rolls – a very time-consuming recipe. But they spent half the day before our next visit cleaning and preparing cabbage rolls (the kids, not the staff!). They behaved like kids in a family, welcoming us into their home.

One of these young men, Kiril Volinets, shared with us that he wants to be a pharmacist. He's interested in the sciences and thinks he would really enjoy studying this field, even though he knows the odds are stacked against him. He is still at the Berdichiv orphanage and visits the Shelter on weekends.

Dave Liebel, our Board Chairman, asked what he was doing to pursue this goal. “I take my studies seriously,” he answered.

Maybe Kiril is an unusual orphanage graduate who would have responsibly pursued his goals anyway. But who knows whether he would have believed these goals were possible to reach without the Shelter and the loving support of staff and volunteers? The Shelter is a “home base” where it's safe to dream.

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Stop the Cycle, our program for orphan moms/dads and their kids, and the legal department are certainly the two areas where our ministry has grown the most in the last year or two.

In our Stop the Cycle program, we currently have 29 moms and 8 spouses. Altogether there are 40 Last Bell grandkids! We are looking for ways to expand our services for these vulnerable families. In the last year we've seen our community step up to help them, and we're currently

working very closely with a Zhytomyr-based mothers' support organization called "I Am Mom." And the guys in the legal department – Andre Pankyeyev and Senya Shulgin – have been extremely busy. In the last year they have worked on legal or administrative cases with 30 of our kids. Twenty were long, complex projects involving multiple agencies and lots of paperwork. The goal of many of these cases was to complete the appropriate documents so that our young people – including Stop the Cycle families, with little ones – could have safe, adequate housing. Nothing special: just a place to live! Andre and Senya have been increasingly busy as our kids have discovered they are available and willing to help with these seemingly-impossible tasks.

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Change is in the air in Ukraine. We see it in the culture as it longs for freedom from oppressive governments. We feel it as we meet more and more Christ-followers in a once very dark Zhytomyr. We've been experiencing it at Last Bell as change in our organization's leadership, and we are especially ready for whatever God brings next after spending almost two weeks side-by-side with our excellent, hard-working director Andre Pankyeyev and our wonderful Ukrainian staff.

We're just amazed at the natural abilities of our fifteen staff! As our kids have grown older and their needs have changed, our staff members have grown and adapted and reached out in new ways. When Orphanage #4 closed and our kids were moved to regional orphanages, our staff found ways to visit and draw them in. As they watched kids struggle to integrate into their trade schools, they intervened and sought new ways to support them. When more and more of our young people had children of their own, our staff formed and managed the Stop the Cycle program.



*Last summer in Kyiv. From left to right:
Valera, Andre Pankyeyev, Ed Gordon*

We know that in the future we'll be putting more energy toward stopping the vicious orphan cycle in the Zhytomyr region. And we'll be mentoring young men to lead their families, and we'll be working towards assisting kids in more robust ways with their biggest worries: finding housing and making a living. Our kids lack so many practical skills, and this prevents them from finding steady employment. We intend to change this.

Whatever challenges the next years bring, we are ready to meet them, walking alongside our faithful Ukrainian partners.

Thank you for YOUR faithfulness, for your prayers, for your interest and your thoughtful questions, for the myriad ways you stand beside us, saying to all our Last Bell kids, "You are not alone."

Grace & peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Last Bell Board of Directors