

Over 230,000 children live in 1,600 Russian orphanages. Over 90% of them are social orphans, removed from their parents due to neglect and abuse. Nearly all of them are underdeveloped physically, mentally, and socially due to poor living conditions, inadequate nutrition, and insufficient emotional care. Many live in rooms of 6-10 children, sleeping on old mattresses with ragged blankets.

Children, some as young as 16, leave the orphanages facing a grim future, with limited educations and few life skills. During their **first year** out of the orphanage:

- 50% are prostituted or pregnant
- 40% become addicted to alcohol or drugs
- 40% are homeless and unemployed
- 10% commit suicide



# Kostroma Kids Program

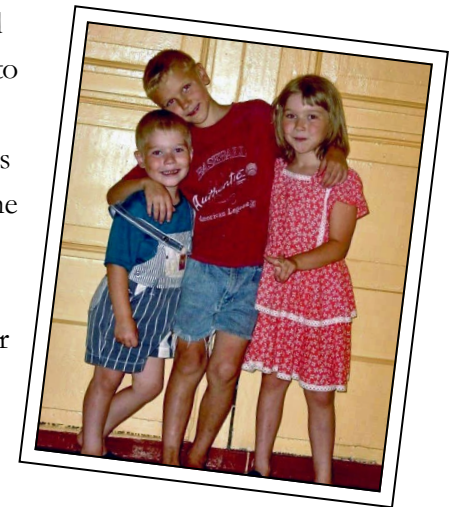


## How You Can Help

Like young people everywhere, these orphans have dreams and hopes, but they need our help to make them a reality. Although the orphanage directors and their staffs give so much of themselves, the children's needs are simply too many for the very limited orphanage budgets.

The mission of Ascent Russian Orphan Aid Foundation's **Kostroma Kids Program** is to work with the orphanage staffs and local schools to provide funding for the programs and necessities that cannot be covered by the orphanage budgets, to help these children overcome the tremendous obstacles they face. The number of programs we can offer and the number of children that can be positively affected is determined solely by the amount of funding available.

**All contributions are tax deductible, and every penny raised goes directly into the programs for the children at the orphanages.** There are no salaries, no fundraising budgets, and no overhead, only volunteers who care deeply about the children's welfare.



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**Summer Orphanage Program:**

Many of the children living in the orphanages suffer from very low self-esteem, a history of physical and emotional abuse, and negative role models. Because they are institutionalized, the children have few opportunities to get the love and attention they need. The goal of our summer program is to provide the love and attention these children deserve.

We spend an entire month working with the children, filling their days with new activities and adventures, boosting their self-esteem in the process.

We coordinate and fund a field trip each day—bowling, paintball, shopping, ice skating, museums, boat rides, horseback riding, carnivals, go-karts, parades, city celebrations—things these kids never get to do because of the limited budget at the orphanage.

The remainder of the day is spent in and around the orphanage swimming in the nearby river, hiking through the forest, riding bikes, playing sports, learning how to use computers, berry picking, gardening, singing karaoke, and playing cards with positive role models.

We coordinate and fund family dinner nights where the kids learn life skills by helping to create the menu, shopping for the food and supplies, and preparing the meals. The kids, the entire staff (and some of their children), and the volunteers then all sit down for a bountiful meal and great conversation, two things that rarely occur in the orphanage cafeteria.

**Post-Orphanage Program:**

Without support, children who leave the orphanage fail to make the transition to independence successfully. These children are especially vulnerable when they leave the protective orphanage environment and are

forced to deal with the harsh reality of life outside the orphanage. Lacking the necessary life skills, housing, employment, and guidance, they are easily exploited.

Working with our local Russian volunteers and the orphanage staffs, the new Post-Orphanage Program will provide mentors and financial support to ensure the orphanage graduates are able to continue their educations, find adequate housing, and secure jobs. The program will provide assistance with living expenses when attending technical schools, repairing their housing, completing paperwork for educational and housing opportunities, purchasing adequate clothing and necessary supplies and tools for work, and tutoring.



*"Your friendship means much more to me than anything money could ever buy."  
-Letter from Ruslan, 16, Svirstroy Orphanage*