

THE CHERNOBYL AFTERMATH:

Although the Chernobyl disaster does not currently occupy the headlines as it did when the nuclear reactor exploded in the Soviet Ukraine on April 26, 1986, the aftermath of this catastrophe continues to have devastating effects on the people living in Ukraine and Belarus. Contaminated soil and waterways have contributed to poor nutrition and weakened immune systems in people living in the areas around Chernobyl, especially the children. One of the most predominant physical effects of the Chernobyl radiation on children is the profound increase (over 100%) in Thyroid Cancer, a disease rarely found amongst children elsewhere in the world. The corrupt political regime, poor economy, and compromised state of medical and dental facilities add to feelings of depression and despair amongst the people living in this region. The current economic situation of the region makes it nearly impossible for these people to relocate.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Since 1991, thousands of children living in the Chernobyl Region have participated in visitor programs underway in the U.S., Canada, U.K., and many parts of Europe to strengthen their immune systems and raise their spirits. Besides being provided with dental and medical care, they are sent home with vitamins and medical "care-packages" that include basic over-the counter medications that are not available in Belarus.

Children of Chernobyl is a world-wide program that broadens international perspectives and compassion. It provides opportunities for both the visiting children and their hosts to learn about life in other countries. It also gives the visiting children an opportunity to bond with people outside of their homogeneous lives, and provides a unique cultural exchange. Because of the economic and political problems in their country (not to mention the underprivileged status of the children participating in these programs), travel of this kind would otherwise be impossible for them.

OUR PROJECT:

Children of Chernobyl Foundation is the first program of its kind in Southern California. Originally founded in 1993 under the auspices of a local church, Children of Chernobyl Foundation is an all-volunteer organization whose mission is to reach out to some of the hundreds of thousands of children living in Belarus, a former Soviet Union Republic. We strive to live up to our motto, "Making a difference in the life of a child."

A new group of children is selected annually by our partner organization **Medicine and Chernobyl** in Minsk, Belarus, to participate in a five to six-week summer respite. The children are selected on a "most in need" basis. Most of the selected children come from loving, but destitute homes.

Due to the funds raised by **Children of Chernobyl Foundation** throughout the year, a new group of underprivileged children receives the opportunity to experience a break from their contaminated living environments by visiting San Diego each summer. As part of the program, San Diego host families provide nutritious meals, love, and sunshine to these children. Local dentists, ophthalmologists, primary care physicians, and radiologists donate their services to these needy youngsters.



Belarus received approximately 75% of the nuclear fallout from the Chernobyl Accident in 1986. The pale green represents the contaminated areas.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Be an Art Patron. Outstanding paintings donated by young Belarusian artists are on exhibit in San Diego every year. Proceeds from the sale of these paintings will be used to cover the cost of airfare, medical insurance and visas for our young visitors. Donations in the form of a purchased painting are partially tax-deductible.

In addition to selling the original paintings, we photographically reproduce this artwork and create greeting cards. Selling at \$2 per card, or \$20 per ten-card package, these cards provide us with extra funds while providing a less-expensive means for the community to enjoy the artwork.

Be a Host Family. Your warm generosity as a host family for a visiting child from Belarus would provide a boost to the health and spirits of not only the child, but also to their family, friends and community who worked hard to get their young one into our respite program. For more information, please visit the Host Family Guide on our website.

Be a Project Volunteer. Since our organization consists entirely of volunteers, additional volunteer support is essential to our project. We will welcome your inquiry on how you could help the Chernobyl children. Even an hour of your time or an idea can make a difference. Some of the tasks with which we need help are fund-raising, administrative support, public relations, and transporting art work. If you are interested in any of the above or have other ideas as to how to apply your skills in helping us, please e-mail us at: info@givehopesandiego.org.

Contact us at:

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