



Alliance News

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Humanitarian Grant

Announcement Application and Guidelines

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Grant Announcement for Chernobyl Organizations

Contributing to humanitarian aid efforts of organizations helping children in the Chernobyl regions is an important part of the mission of the Children of Chernobyl United States Alliance (CofCUSA). In keeping with this objective, CofCUSA is pleased to announce a grant opportunity for 501(c)(3) organizations whose main objectives are directed toward children in the Chernobyl regions.

Two \$750 grants will be awarded to local organizations desiring to broaden their scope of aid to the children of the Chernobyl regions through a new project or initiative.

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

- The merit of the proposed project ;
- The initiative is not within the current programs of the requesting organization;
- The proposed project is relevant to the requesting organization's and mission statement; and
- There is a realistic probability of successful implementation in the 2008 calendar year.

Complete eligibility requirements, guidelines and applications are linked in the blue column of this newsletter. The documents are also available on our website, <http://www.cofcusa.org/> or by request by mail at CofCUSA, 9120 Lime Court, Fairfax VA 22032 or by email at info@cofcusa.org.

The application deadline is **April 15, 2008**. Awards will be announced on May 15, 2008. Recipients will be notified by phone and email.

Children of Chernobyl United States Alliance offers care, compassion, relief and hope to the people of the Chernobyl region, especially the Children.

We do this by:

Providing education, organizational development and support services to organizations with a similar mission, as well as by Promoting humanitarian aid efforts in the affected regions.

A True Friend of Chernobyl

Cec Calhoun has touched all of our lives. She may have been the resource person who helped you get your program started or the advocate who found the answers to your questions about a foreign partner. Regardless, she was the driving force behind the formation of the Children of Chernobyl U.S. Alliance in 1998 and responsible for its existence today.



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Cec's Chernobyl involvement began in 1995. She soon felt there was a strong need for an information resource and networking organization to assist programs in the United States. Cec contacted other grassroots programs and they came together for a meeting in Colorado. The Alliance was born.

In 2002 Cec was recognized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belarus with a Humanitarian Award. In April 2006, she was asked to participate in the Congressional Chernobyl Commemorative events and, on behalf of CofCUSA, accepted a "Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition". Cec makes an annual trek to Belarus to interview candidates for her local organization, for which she has served as program leader since 1997. Her local organization provides children with a health respite and also an opportunity to participate in a week long business educational experience in a university setting. The leadership and teamwork skills developed will be with the children for a lifetime. Cec has also coordinated various humanitarian outreach programs for orphanages, schools and clinics in Belarus.

Although she is stepping down from her position as President of CofCUSA, we know this fine lady plans to continue her volunteer efforts. So this is not "goodbye" but "see you around". Thank you, Cec, for all you have done for all of us --- especially the children.

Fall 2008 Conference

Last year's strategic planning revealed that 80% of CofC organizations were interested in attending CofCUSA national conferences, but more than half of those interested were unable to attend for various reasons. The board interviewed 35 spokespeople from nearly 50 organizations to address conference planning. The results were interesting.

37% preferred a National Conference held in the eastern part of the US and almost 46% preferred to have a conference for a day and a half, rather than the usual full three days. Fall of the year seemed acceptable, except for teachers, who would not be able to attend, and others who already had plans for that time frame. Cost and time were the major hindrances to conference attendance. Incentives, good publicity, and interesting topics and speakers were cited as reasons for attendance. Many respondents suggested that organizational contacts could encourage advertisement and publicity with their boards, local host families, and volunteers.

20% preferred a conference in Eastern Europe and the overwhelming majority of those also preferred the conference in Belarus rather than Ukraine or Russia, or with tour of the Chernobyl Plant. Most said that they would try to coordinate a conference with a visit to children, humanitarian aid partners, or villages.

29% of respondents stated they would not be interested in attending a conference for various reasons, mainly time and the fact that they already have human resources and information needed to stay abreast of current issues. Some are working in other countries, and some organizations are disbanding or reorganizing.

Jill Tyson, Conference Chairperson, is working together with the North Carolina Chernobyl children organizations to plan a national conference for this coming October. You will receive more details as soon as they become available.

Yulia and Me

by Emily Smith, 4th Grade
Hand in Hand for the Children of Chernobyl

Yulia is one of 42 children who came to us all the way from Belarus. Belarus is near Russia. Yulia is nine years old. She came to us because of the Chernobyl accident. Chernobyl has a nuclear power plant that had an explosion over twenty years ago. It contaminated a lot of Belarus. Yulia speaks Russian and knows very little English. My family has a Russian - English dictionary. It helped us to understand Yulia, and Yulia to understand us.



Yuliya with Rachel and Emily Smith

We took Yulia to swim club. She took her diving test and passed so that she could jump off the diving board. One week Yulia and my family went to Ocean City. Yulia had never seen the ocean. She dove right into the waves and hit the sandy bottom. When she came up she gave a smile and a thumbs up. Later in the summer my Dad and sister Rachel took Yulia to Philadelphia. They visited my Dad's workplace. Then they took their shoes off and went into the fountain in front of the Art Museum on Logan Circle. They had fun, especially when Yulia stepped onto the platform, lost her footing and fell into the water. We taught Yulia many things about our lives and she taught us some things about hers. She lives with her mother and father in an apartment. Yulia has a cousin, Sasha, whose Mom just had twins. Every morning Yulia's Mom walks to Sasha's farm outside their village to get milk from their cow. She taught us songs about "her fishing", "her Dad shooting a rabbit", and "her Mom hiding under a table".

When summer came to an end, Yulia had to return home. We took her to the church where we had picked her up. Her two duffel bags, filled with clothes, were loaded on the bus. Then we had to say good-bye. It was hard and everyone was crying. She waved goodbye through the bus window and we waved back. Yulia was glad to go home to see her parents. Although life is difficult in Belarus, Yulia loves her country and her family. Hopefully she feels that she has a second family in us and a friend in me. I hope she returns for another visit.



On the Boardwalk

Letter from Pinsk

Yulia Bagdanovich, Pinsk
Annandale Virginia UMC COC



With the Peters Family in VA

My name is Yulia. I am 19 years old and I first came to the States ten years ago. I remember how anxious I was to come back to see my American family and my new friends.

I have benefited a lot from the program. To begin with, I have become more sensible and independent. When you leave your home and your parents and go away for 6 weeks, you have to learn

to make your own decisions about what to wear, whether or not to call your Mom, or how to deal with all these new people who come your way. You develop a very strong sense of responsibility.

It's such a thrill to come all the way across the ocean and be faced with a different culture, language, people, a different environment and lifestyle. It all may come as a shock in the beginning, but after a while it grows on you and becomes part of you. I guess you can say it makes you more open and tolerant of other people's ways. I've learned not to reject or criticize things I am not used to. I also learned a lot about the US and its history and culture, and I have improved my English so much! Thanks to the program I feel like I have two homes. I've become so close to my American family that I miss them almost as much as I missed my own Mom and Dad when I was in America.

Probably the most important thing to mention is that I have become kinder myself, having seen kind people around me. During my visits we did charity work for the homeless and people from low-income families. In our Bible classes we not only learned about the Bible, but also cooked meals for the homeless and helped at the food pantry. I also enjoyed helping the teachers with the younger Belarusian kids. All this experience has shown me that we are not the only nation in the world who needs help, but there are a lot more people out there who need it as well. And it's not just financial aid I am talking about, it's also moral support and encouragement. Just to know that somebody, who is not a relative or a social worker, somebody who lives thousands of miles away from you, in other words, somebody, who doesn't have to help you, but is willing to...it fills your heart with warmth and appreciation. It feels like these people touch your soul.

Do Svidaniya, Pavel!

Pavel Shidlovsky, Counselor of the Embassy of Belarus, recently visited CofC organizations and supporters in the State of Washington. Among his many contacts there, he met Dr. David Wright, a dentist with the Ellensburg program. Pavel will also visit the North Carolina groups before his reassignment in March. Pavel has been a good friend and supporter of Chernobyl programs, and we wish him well in his next assignment.



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