

A Special Story

“Grandpa” Brian had just graduated from college and decided to spend a year of immersion in Vladivostok. Following the advice of his parish priest he contacted the [Mary Mother of God Mission Society](#) and learned of the Grandma Mentoring Program. Here is Brian’s story as told by him.

I think my main service is to be a positive male role model for the young kids, most of whom are between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. It’s a shame, but the children are starving for attention, mainly from men. It is not their fault, but the odds of succeeding in life are stacked heavily against them. It is my hope that the guidance and love from me can point them down the right track in life so that they do not become another statistic. Also, I hope that my daily visits teach them the importance of commitment. They love spending time out of doors exploring everything from parked cars to snowy hills or just what I happen to have in my pockets that day.

They still get a kick out of the size of my gloves compared to theirs. I’m surprised at how well they respond when I quiz them on the days of the week, colors or numbers. When they switched from calling me “Papa” to “Brian” it touched me. When we first went inside, the nurses didn’t have to show me around, the kids couldn’t wait to give me a tour. They were starting to feel more of a connection and a bond with me, which was essential to my goal. I was more than just the guy who brought them candy. I became a friend.

I love seeing them bundle up in their little snowsuits, made up of mixed and matched coats and gloves. It’s amazing how cheerful and excited they always are. Perhaps they don’t fully understand their situation. Sometimes I fail to grasp it myself. Usually on the bus it’ll hit that they don’t have a mother and a father to care for them. They don’t have a warm loving home like I did. It doesn’t always register. Sometimes I slip and ask them if they have brothers or sisters and they respond with blank stares.

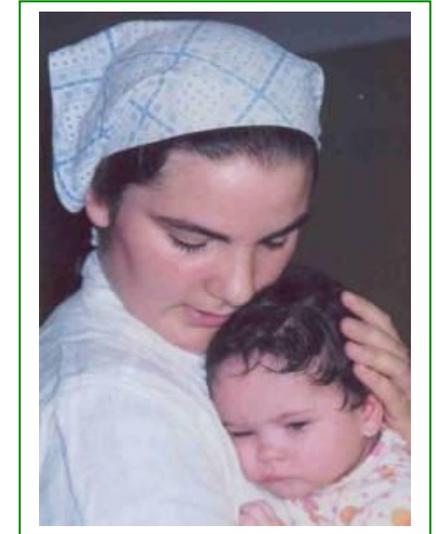


Brian with two of his “grandkids” outdoors.

Above all they long for physical contact. Heading outside, it’s common to have ten different kids each grabbing onto one of my fingers. I have to be careful, however. Tanya loves to be picked up and carried, but once I do that, they all start screaming and waving their little arms in the air, aiming to get the same attention.

At the end of the day I’m usually tired, hungry and dirty but I feel great!

Grandma Mentoring Program



Providing love and nourishment
to orphans in Russia
Vladivostok Baby Hospital # 3
Artyom Baby Hospital
Ussuryysk Baby Hospital



**Mary Mother of God
Mission Society**

Reviving the Roman Catholic Church
in Eastern Russia

What is it?

This is a unique program in southeast Russia that pairs caring adults with needy orphans.

Who are the Grandmas?

A “Grandma” is any adult involved with our parish in Vladivostok, Russia. Grandpas get involved too!

Why they do what they do

The Grandmas (and Grandpas) typically are parishioners who do not have full-time employment or whose pensions do not cover their basic living needs.

This program allows them to spend time doing something they love while also providing a source of income for their personal needs. The parish in Vladivostok gives a Grandma **\$60.00 monthly**. The Grandmas spend 48 hours per month in personal one-on-one time with the orphans.



“Grandma Tanya” giving a haircut.

Who benefits?

Typically, there are few workers in the orphanages, so the orphans have little personal time with an adult. Many suffer with emotional or attachment disorders due to the lack of meaningful human contact.

Since emotional nourishment is so essential to a child’s development and well being, the children are the direct beneficiaries of this program. Each Grandma visits an orphanage several times a week sharing his or her love with the children.

Many of our mentors are lonely elders, without grandchildren of their own. Some have children who have died or moved away. The Grandmas and Grandpas love spending time with the orphans, and are able to give of themselves in a direct and personal way. They teach the children games and songs, do craft projects with them, and even take them on outings.

All grandmas are screened by the orphanage administration and are approved by the state social service department. They are thrilled to be part of the program and the children thrive on the love and caring attention they receive from their new friends.

The Communist culture of the recent past did not encourage nurturing one another. But now, the Grandma Mentoring Program opens the door to live as Christ teaches us. This is one of the most successful charitable works we have developed, and we hope it spreads throughout Russia!

Ways to help

- Pray for us!
- Learn more about the program on our website and spread the word.
- Contact our office to arrange for a monthly donation from your credit card, or to set up an automatic bank withdrawal.
- Send a check every month, noting “Grandma Mentoring” in the memo.
- Hold a fundraiser to “adopt a Grandma.”



Some of the first Grandmas in Artyom.

For more on the Grandma Mentoring Program see our website or contact us at:

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