

Zdrostvoitchya, (I can't spell in Russian and maybe a few other languages I don't have time to list.)

After 30 hours of travel, 3 hours sleep and 2 broken suitcases, we are finally here and hooked up to the internet. I hope you are clapping! Speaking of clapping, the one disconcerting thing that happens on every trip here is that the entire plane of passengers applauds when the plane lands in Simferopol, Ukraine. We aren't sure if they are amazed they landed or getting rid of the tension of wondering if they were going to land or they just really like borscht. Why ever they do it, it always gives me pause.

It was great to see old friends last night from last year. One of the young men who was Rich's interpreter last year was there to greet us. He is such a wild and crazy guy but we love him anyway. (So different from us.) All the hugging and giggling was, of course, a smoke screen to what was to come the next morning.

We spent the entire first day, today, starting work on a long list of projects. I was really worried when all the jobs seemed to center around jack hammering and hauling large barrels of concrete. Just as I had scoped out a good rock to break my leg with, I heard the word "paint." So my limbs rejoiced and I started scraping old paint and Rich went off to jack hammer.

I discovered that scraping endless numbers of benches that have been painted without scraping since Lenin, is a lot like Pilates without the stretching... or the mat... or the stopping. Sandy, the other female on the work team, and I, worked together, happily working without grumbling and lots of drugs! Rich had equally as much fun jack hammering and digging up concrete.

The great news is that my interpreter from last year is now working at the camp, helping with the day school. She has really grown in her faith since last year. We caught up while we scraped, of course, and I was amazed at how the potential I saw in her last year was emerging. Sadly for her, she came near the great Huckleberry Finn scraping machine and was sucked right in. One by one the children who arrived for the day camp also became part of my little sweat shop. Actually it was our little sweat shop because Sandy, my coworker, was also a recruiter. Our little sweat shopees were even showing off their pride in their workmanship to each other by the time they went home. Actually sweat shop is spelled s-k-i-l-l t-r-a-i-n-i-n-g o-p-p-o-r-t-u-n-i-t-y in Ukrainian so I am sure that parents were pleased.

When we ~~finished~~ ~~stopped~~ quit scraping, I was headed for dinner, with camera in hand, and found the camp director, Andre, standing with a shot gun over by the trash cans. I was relieved to find out he wasn't sending me back for more scraping. Actually, he had just shot a rat that must have been shunned by the other rats by the trash cans and was therefore within easy range and clear sight of Andre and his weapon. (Not that Andre is a bad shot but I noticed no other rats were even wounded or heard scampering.)

I am beyond tired, which you can tell from my writing, so I will be off to bed now. The team is amazing, funny and so far very tolerant of ~~me~~ each other. Please pray that we continually keep our love for God inwardly filling and outwardly apparent as we deal with each other, the children, the community and the staff. II Timothy 1:7 is Rich's and my verse for today.

I posted all the pictures from today on the site below. (I also included a little teaser picture so you will be encouraged to check the site.) Bringing the camera was a great idea and I am totally committed to taking many pictures each day for all of you because I love you all so much. It has nothing to do with the fact that you can't actually take pictures and scrape at the same time.

<http://picasaweb.google.com/visionlearningllc/Ukraine#>

