Migrant kids in Kaluga
"Equally Diverse"
(Однаково разные)

We are happy to announce a new project for next year.

Equally Diverse is an exciting programme which has been running for three years in the Kaluga region southwest of Moscow.

In the project, which has the backing of the local Ministry of Education, ten schools have committed themselves to support over 700 foreign children so that they can learn in a safe and welcoming environment.

One of the founders of the programme is Anna Ter-Saakova, who for several years was head of the Kids are Kids Integration Centre in Moscow (which FHM has supported for many years). At our Board meeting in November she joined us by Zoom to tell us about their new project.

Many schools do not have appropriate books or other materials for learning Russian as a foreign language. With our help, however, they can acquire modern beautifully illustrated books which give the children the opportunity to learn the “codes” for living in Russia – where people live, how cities are structured, the diversity of cultures, all told through stories which are relevant to their own experience.

The thirty teachers across the ten schools who are taking part will receive over 350 items (books and board games) which will support their other activities such as after-school Russian classes. In each school, one teacher will be responsible for day-to-day support which will include involving parents and other professionals such as speech therapists.

The schools will be encouraged to hold meetings with parents, to train other teachers about diversity and, where possible, to organise festivals and performances such as the programme Equally Diverse regularly arranged before the pandemic.

With the arrival of Corona Virus the work moved online, and many materials were produced to support the teachers. The courses contained a variety of additional materials, worksheets, and homework related to several books.

An information pack was produced and translated into Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz languages from the original Russian.

We are very happy to enable the project to move forward and look forward to a fruitful and enriching relationship.
Pandemic updates

**Big Change**

On 1st October this year *Big Change* celebrated its 18th birthday.

Since its founding it has helped over 700 young people build their lives after having been brought up in state orphanages. They have an average of 70 students every year, and have worked with over 1,200 parents and educators. 146 of their students have gone on to university or college.

Funding comes from various sources. FHM supports extra lessons (the "English Club") which teach a variety of skills (including English!)

Before the pandemic struck *Big Change* had just acquired new premises. After working online during the first part of the year they moved back to teaching face to face in September. It was a race against time to prepare their new home. Although they had to move back online again, the refurbished rooms will be waiting for them when the situation becomes more "normal".

One of their success stories is Svetlana Kuznetsova, who spent eight years with Big Change after growing up in a correctional boarding school. She is now a professional artist, creating bold pictures with a variety of materials – including improvised ones, because of lack of funds. She takes part in exhibitions. In July, the art gallery of the city of Suzdal acquired six of her paintings!

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**The Refugee Centre**

In spring the work of the Centre moved online and continued the teaching programme. The average number of lessons per month were:
- Younger group (Long day, preparation for school), 168 lessons for 36 children;
- older group (individual subjects), 140 lessons for 40 children;
- support group: 80 lessons for 31 children.

(in total, around 600 lessons for 90-100 children.)

Starting in summer children could have lessons both online and in person (in small groups with social distancing, etc.). Sessions are offered in a public recreation area *Hlebozavod*, the Museum of Moscow, in some other museums and in the city parks. In-person lessons are great, especially for younger kids. They come with best clothes on and look forward to each session. For some of them it is the only place they can regularly and safely go in Moscow.

*The Younger group at Hlebozavod, August 2020*
A "Quaker Bookshelf"

The plan to offer alternative bookshops a total of 14 titles of FHM published books has been shelved this year (the pun could not be resisted...). Because of Covid bookshops have been shut. The list is however available on the internet, with descriptions of each title, and the lists have been sent to online bookshops.

Drawing up the list, like so much in Russia, proved more time-consuming than anticipated as there had to be three variations to the presentation: secular, religious, and omitting gay content.

This compliance with the prohibitions of some online shops will be unacceptable to some Friends, but it is the kind of compromise which living in a repressive society can evoke: it is preferable to engage Russian speakers with the Quaker way, and trust that they can then find their way to quakers.ru and become aware of the full range of Quaker values.

The presentation, in Russian, can be found here: https://bit.ly/3nFfyW

Elizabeth Fry, a Biography, by June Rose, continues to be one of the most popular books. The reason is not known: is it on a training course reading list? Or, as someone suggested, is Rose’s honesty in writing about Fry’s alcoholism engaging to readers, in giving reassurance that Quaker witness can come with personal flaws?...

Another book in demand is Richard Foster’s Celebration of Discipline, which is on the reading list for Baptist priest trainees.

Behind the scenes...

In an article in Friends Journal, Natasha and Sergei take us behind the scenes into the "why, what, how?" of our translations work. A fascinating read. https://www.friendsjournal.org/translating-quaker-texts-into-russian/

New on the bookshelf: "No Extraordinary Power"

Helen Steven’s book “No Extraordinary Power – Prayer, Stillness and Activism” was translated into Russian several years ago.

The testimony of this remarkable woman is now available in paper copies as well as online.

Helen Steven was a Scottish Quaker and peace activist who rejoiced in life, laughter, and friendship. With her regular trips to the local pubs, her sometimes colourful language, and her subversive sense of humour, she broke all the stereotypes of what a “good Quaker” should be like. She was also totally committed to a life of prayer and activism, which are not the opposites many might believe but which are two faces of the same coin, and essential for each other.

People were drawn to Helen and she commanded their love and their loyalty. As well as her network of peace activists, politicians and diplomats regarded her as an equal, and she taught them gently about conflict resolution and building bridges rather than barriers.

The non-violent direct action (NVDA) network which she built up in the 80s, the “Gareloch Horticulturalists” (Gareloch being where the Trident missile submarines are based) still exists. Two of its members (both Roman Catholics) were part of her support group in preparing the Swarthmore Lecture in 2005 on which this book is based. We are indebted to them for the book’s cover photograph.

<<< Helen (right) and her partner Ellen Moxley outside the Scottish Parliament. Photo by the “Gareloch Hortles"
Environmental action
Making Buzuluk green again

Buzuluk is a town to the south of the Urals in the Orenburg Region, which straddles the border between European Russia and Asian Russia.

It has a long Quaker history: Friends worked there both before and after the Revolution, during a series of famines which caused great suffering over a huge area (25,000 sq.km). As well as food supplies the relief effort ran a malaria clinic and reopened three hospitals and an orphanage. Quakers from Britain and the USA lived and worked there for several years.

With these historic roots in Buzuluk, we were pleased to receive an application for support from "Green Patrol", a group of young ecoactivists who clean the banks of the rivers and hold waste sorting actions. They also aim to change people's idea of using the countryside as a dumping ground for debris.

We helped to provide materials for their initiative to sort out waste and transport it to the nearest waste disposal and treatment centre at Samara, 170 km away.

A video is available which shows the scale of the environmental degradation, and the work done in 2020 by the local volunteers: https://youtu.be/Cotlg4aIiEs

Publisher turned writer

This year Sergei Grushko at our Moscow office made the surprise announcement that he has published a book for age-range 12+, entitled Восставшее поколение, Rebel Generation. It is science fiction, but closer to social science fiction than reliant on technology.

"A group of people do not want to obey the traditional order in their tiny human community on another Earth, and are forced to flee into the unknown of a huge, harsh, virgin planet. They are pursued and face dangers, but they are far from helpless children, and an unexpected meeting promises something more than just a chance to hide and survive."

We can report that adults are enjoying it! It is available to download free on: https://litnet.com/ru/book/vostavshee-pokolenie-b247281