

With thanks to St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Action for Russian Children (ARC), BKC-IH Moscow, Charity Aid Foundation (CAF), Vitol Charitable Foundation, World Childhood Foundation, GlobalGiving Foundation, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Ernst & Young, Clifford Chance, Global Fund for Children, Globus International, Linklaters, Nestle, TVAllianceMediaGroup, Centre for Philanthropy and "Cards of Kindness" project, the Future Actually Community of Translators, DeVere Group, Starbucks, Bulgakov House Museum-Theatre, Vladimir Spivakov Foundation, Pokrovskie Vorota Cultural Centre, Masterskaya Theatre and Club, Diell and numerous private sponsors for their help and support of the Step Up Orphan Opportunity Centre.

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## Time to Study!

or

*A New Academic Year at Step Up*



## Step Up and All Together



**В(е) ВМ(е)те!**



Photo by Dina Magnat

At last our long summer has ended and Step Up has begun its ordinary — interesting and busy — life. Over the long years of the Centre's work it has become a pleasant tradition to celebrate the opening of the academic year, to meet our graduates, teachers, guests and friends and mark the day in a friendly atmosphere. This year's opening ceremony took place on 17<sup>th</sup> September. As always we congratulated our graduates on the new step in their life they are about to embark on — they were all admitted to colleges, and one of them was admitted to university. Many young people continue studying at Step Up even after their graduation, taking individual classes. Our teachers are always eager to help.

Meeting new students and new teachers, the first gatherings of the Literature and Film Clubs, Student Council meetings, watching our football team — these were all events marking the beginning of the new academic year.

**We are grateful to Diell for the refreshments they provided for the opening of the new academic year!**

In September Step Up joined the **All Together** Charity Assembly.

We are now members of this non-profit partnership that unites several dozen secular charitable foundations.

## Dear Friends!

Step Up is preparing for the biggest of Moscow's New Year charity fairs, the **Dushevny Bazar (Heart-to-Heart Market)**. This is the third time we will have taken part!

We are beginning a series of **master classes** where everyone can try to be a craftsman creating handmade cards, Christmas tree decorations, painting bird feeders and making a variety of other things. Everything made will be sold during the **Heart-to-Heart Market** and all the funds raised will be used to pay for classes for Step Up students.

For more info on master classes, please visit our website, Livejournal or Facebook pages.

**If you wish to participate, please fill in the form on Step Up's Livejournal page or email us at [info@vverh.su](mailto:info@vverh.su).**



## Charity Clay Pigeon Shoot in support of Step Up



Step Up team  
Photo by Dina Magnat

On September 7<sup>th</sup> 2012

Russia's first charity clay pigeon shoot took place  
at the Fox Lodge shooting club.

Over 40 shooters made up of American, British and Russian businessmen represented international companies as different as TNK-BP, Ernst & Young, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Angry Birds. And while the socializing, networking and shooting was going on, those businessmen were also raising more than \$40,000 to help young people leaving orphanages receive the education of which they are so often deprived.

"Step Up becomes a key part of the lives of the young people who visit our centre every day," said Olga Tikhomirova, director of Step Up. "A stable funding base is essential if we are to meet the long term educational needs of our students."

The Step Up Charity Clay Pigeon Shoot will hopefully become an annual event, raising money for a good cause and giving its participants a fun day out. As Vitaly Farafonov, the tournament organizer, said, the event was a good way to mix shooting with volunteering – and to create something a bit different.

"We will be back next September," said Farafonov, "bigger and better."

Well established in Britain and now becoming popular in Russia, clay pigeon shooting is the art of shooting at flying targets.

It was the unique combination of sport and high spirits that made clay pigeon shooting such a good platform for a friendly networking and doing a good deed.

We are very grateful to everyone who took part in the Tournament, and particularly to its General Sponsors – **Linklaters** and **Ernst & Young**. Thanks also to **TNK-BP, Holland & Holland, The British Business Club (BBC), Lanxess, All Points North, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, The Presidents Club**, and to media sponsors **The Moscow Times, British Style Magazine, Smoke Russia, The Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, FINE Magazine, Promyshlennik Rossii (Industrialist of Russia) Magazine, Russian Hunting Magazine "Osnovnoy Instinkt"** and others.

Many thanks to everyone who took part in the organisation of the Tournament and who worked so hard to make this event happen.





## Step Up students visit a basketball match organised by Basketball Without Borders



Photo by Darya Alekseeva

On September 16<sup>th</sup> Step Up students attended the final game of National Basketball Association's International Basketball Camp.

This year Basketball Without Borders Europe took place at CSKA Sports Complex in Moscow. The event was organised by the NBA, FIBA and RBF. Step Up students were invited to watch the final game and meet the sportsmen.

After the game, players from the Russian national basketball team – Andrei Kirilenko, Timofey Mozgov and Alexey Shved – came over to greet the young people who had been watching the game.

Meeting the Olympic stars and Masters of Sport highly motivates our students for their own personal development. One cannot achieve success without personal effort — all our extra-curricular clubs, such as the football team and theatre studio, are the initiative of our students. Maybe, one day, we will have our own basketball team as well.

**We are grateful to the Philanthropy Centre for putting us in touch with the NBA and the opportunity to be spectators at this match!**

## Step Up Football Team: matches and training



Photo by Howard Amos

Despite the Centre's summer holiday, Step Up's football team continued their weekly training throughout July, August and September.

We were also invited to watch several games! Five members of the team went to see Scottish side Dundee United play Dynamo Moscow in August. Though Dundee United lost 5-0, I don't think anyone will forget the amazing support of the Dundee fans for their team!

And some Step Up students also attended a friendly game between the Russian national side (it was new manager Fabio Capello's first match in charge) and the Ivory Coast, which ended in a 1-1 draw.

Many thanks to **coach Graeme Stowers** for the Dundee United tickets and **the Russian Football Association** for the chance to see the Russian side in action.

We are currently participating in **the Blitz Corporate 6-a-side Football League**. The teams have played several games, but the tournament is not over yet. We are backing our footballers all the way!

Coming in our next issue - further news of the tournament and the winners.

Watch this space!



For the long years that our Centre has existed we have seen many wonderful events and changes. Step Up teachers are inspirational people who help the students find a purpose in life.

In this issue we have an interview with a remarkable person: teacher and Literature Club moderator Mikhail Sverdlov. He shares what Step Up means for him and tells us about the Literature Club, which has been a part of the Centre for many years and is a place where students, teachers and guests meet to discuss higher matters, to discuss Literature...

## **Mikhail, when and how did you start working at Step Up?**

I was brought here by a friend of mine, Lena Stafyeva. I do not remember if she herself worked in the Centre for more than two years, it was maybe even less than a year. It may sound strange but the history of ROOF and Step Up owes her a lot. It was 1999 then, I think. Can you imagine that? It was 13 years ago. It was the Centre's first year. I have worked for our organisation since the first year of its existence.

## **Our Centre has been in existence for more than 10 years and has continually evolved. As you've been here since the beginning, how would you characterise the present stage?**

I would call it a stage of common sense and intelligent warmth — warmth is sometimes exaggerated and over-sentimental. I like it now. As the Russian chronicler Pimen, I consider history from the heights of my own age, and I like what is happening. There is a balance. I like our teachers and the atmosphere here. I like that there is no disorderliness, but events such as trips, birthday celebrations happen all the time. Our Centre has a homelike atmosphere, clear politics and very positive attitude towards children, which they can feel themselves. Children cannot be deceived, you know.

## **What made you remain all this time? We have had hard times, haven't we?**

I think there is something of the family here, some centrifugal force, so to say. Attraction, liking, friendship — they connect me with both the teachers and the students. I've always considered them my family and they have always considered me theirs. It's a place where you feel at home. And it is very hard to leave such a place — even if such a thought crosses your mind.

## **The Literature Club, which is one very important part of Step Up's life, continues its work today thanks to you. How did the idea of the Club come about?**

It came a long time ago. The Club has been around for more than 11 years... I think it was created thanks to Irina Pavlovna, when I was working in my second year at the Centre. I didn't believe her at first, I was sceptical. What did our students need complicated conversations on classical literature for? Very few came at the beginning. Sometimes there were just a couple of adults at the Club's sessions and there were no students at all. So the Club existed back then. The Club has seen different people at different times, and some very extraordinary people have given the Club its particular charm.

Then Olga Tikhomirova came up with the policy of attracting students to participate in the Club's work. And so the Club's present life began. Now there is a regular following and students and graduates participate in the conversations in their own way. It is something familiar in the organisation's routine for them: they spend time taking part, it makes them curious. The Club is already an essential part of the Centre and both students and graduates participate. That's important.

## **What do you think the Literature Club can give the young people attending it today?**

That's a complicated question. Actually, I am shy talking about literature because there is no conviction that everyone needs it today. Rather, that it is for some selected people. Not everyone apparently needs literature though, at the same time, it is absolutely necessary for personal development. However, not everyone needs personal development: not everyone is capable of it, not everyone wants it. I cannot force anyone. I meet a demand — if you want me to, I'll talk about it but if not then I'm quite happy to be silent. That's my attitude. People need to talk about the things that affect them personally, but that are above them and which have nothing to do with their everyday lives.



We need to talk about culture otherwise our lives grow poorer. If you are able to start such a conversation, then it's a stroke of luck for everyone — those who are talking, those listening, those who participate and for the presenters and the perceivers. Not everyone can participate in such conversations. Culture is a hard thing for many people and not everyone has the need or ability to receive culture. Still, people should be given a chance to talk about it, as most institutions do not give them such a chance, or just destroy all such opportunities. Besides, at the Club's sessions, every student is respected and heard. It is a place where you can speak and everyone will listen to you, argue with you or agree with you — instead of calling you to the blackboard and asking exam questions.

What is literature? Literature is a gateway to the world, a real world that is not limited by everyday life. If you have such an opportunity you should take it, that's all. A friendly informal talk over a cup of tea is different from an ordinary lesson. There are very few such clubs in Moscow.

## Are there any stories associated with Step Up students that have stuck in your memory or particularly touched you?

I'll tell you one thing. Several times I have been pleasantly surprised to see what has happened to people. You see them at some initial stage, and then gradually, two or three years pass, and you see a change in them. At Step Up they are taught, talked to and are not rejected. There can be family-like quarrels and arguments, but our young people are never just reprimanded. I have faced some unexpected changes in people several times. I've always been sceptical. But more than once the changes that have happened have really touched me — the rough old soldier who doesn't know words of love. They have touched me as a human, and it wasn't funny, it was wonderful. This is something you can talk about — or be silent about.

There was one lesson some time ago when I was wrong about one person, one of our students. I was sounding off as usual, saying something I now don't remember, and was mistaken. I admitted my mistake and I can tell you that I'll never jump to conclusions again, especially when it comes to our students. I won't jump to conclusions. We must keep our eyes open, as miracles do happen.

### Step Up at the Village Fete



On the invitation of St. Andrew's Anglican Church we took part in the **Village Fete** annual Charity Fair in September. We sold T-shirts with the Step Up logo and handmade leather bracelets decorated with knitted flowers. It was a great chance to get acquainted with the other participants of the Fair and exchange contact details. Our new friends are always welcome to visit!

**Many thanks to our students who helped out during the Fair!**  
**Special thanks to Aleksei Abaturov and Viktor Zhelyabin!**

Step Up would like to thank the **GlobalGiving Foundation** for giving us the chance to receive online donations. Many thanks to everyone who supports us at:

<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/giving-russian-orphans-an-equal-start-in-life/>

With your support we have collected the required amount of donations from 50 donors, which means that now we are regular members of the GlobalGiving international charitable network and can continue receiving your support online.

You can support our work online through GlobalGiving or via a bank transfer. For more information, please visit "Support Us" on [www.vverh.su](http://www.vverh.su).

**Thank you!**