



News alert: Russia reopens

Lisa Flaherty and Steven Sax of Connecticut had all their ducks in a row by January 2006. They'd begun saving their daughter Emily's outgrown clothes and had started telling relatives and close friends about their plans to expand their family. They could hardly wait to bring home their second child from Russia.

But when Russia announced a lengthy restructuring of agency accreditation procedures in 2006, the couple was forced to play an uneasy waiting game. For almost two years, adoptions through accredited US agencies, like MAPS, came to a standstill, and pending Russian adoptions languished. For Steven and Lisa, the long period of uncertainty completely stalled their plans. "We couldn't do much at all. We didn't dare set up the baby's room, and we stopped telling people about the adoption because of the unknown timeline.

We were so worried that something would go wrong and that the adoption wouldn't happen at all," said Lisa.

For nearly two years, Lisa and Steven depended on updates from MAPS for news about Russia. Then, finally, in December 2007, when the Russian Ministry of Education hosted a ceremony in Moscow, government officials announced that MAPS had been reaccredited for adoption procedures.

The news couldn't come soon enough. With the new accreditation, which is permanent

and non-expiring, MAPS began placing children with families again – families that had been waiting and hoping far too long.

Now Lisa and Steven, along with more than thirty other waiting families, are double-checking their ducks and stepping up their plans to make room for their newest family member. "We're just ecstatic," said Lisa.

"We're getting the new baby's room ready, and it's hard to tell who's more excited – us or our four-year-old daughter Emily, whom we adopted from Krasnodar, Russia."

Lisa and Steven will fly to Russia in spring 2008 to meet their new daughter for the first time. "It's been an extremely long process this time, but we're looking forward to another smooth adoption," said Lisa.

Their story is just one in over 4000 that we have helped to create at MAPS. "One

of the best things about our Russia program is its long track record and, now that accreditation is in place, its

relative predictability," said Jen McKane, a MAPS' program coordinator who has been working with families adopting from Russia since 2001.

In fact, MAPS' strong track record in Russian adoption is one of the reasons Michael Hodsdon and Mary Ruoff Hodsdon of Belfast, Maine decided to adopt through our Russia program – with Jen's help.

The couple met their son Dima for the first time just before Christmas 2005 at the baby



Russian born Dima relaxes at home in Belfast with parents Michael Hodsdon and Mary Ruoff Hodsdon.

home in Murmansk, Russia. "When he came into the room with a caregiver," said Mary, "he greeted us with a little wave. I felt an immediate connection to this sweet little boy. At first he was so reserved and tentative that I was a little worried, but I remembered what I had learned at MAPS about a child's adjustment and realized that his reaction was totally normal. By the second day, he really began to warm up to us."

Jen explained, "The adoption process itself – with its two required trips – helps children make a smooth transition to their new families. The family and the child really get to know each other before the adoption takes place. That helps with bonding and reduces stress on both the child and the parents." So when the Hodsdons returned to Russia just a few weeks after Dima's second birthday, they were able to complete the adoption and bring their new son home without any hurdles.

He was, it seemed, already a member of the family. The bond was immediate and obvious, even captivating passersby in the airport on the trip home. "From the beginning, people were drawn to him," said Mary. "On our long trip home, fellow passengers told us how cute Dima is. Then,

At the airport, no one could believe we had just adopted Dima. He was so healthy and engaging, and he already seemed so attached to us.

MAPS... finding more ways to help

This winter, leadership here at MAPS is focused on strategic planning. Challenging times in inter-country adoption propel us to take a serious look at expanding our existing programs and developing new ones. The number of parentless children and social orphans in the world has not decreased. Rather, governments have made the international adoption process more difficult and, in many countries, impossible. But MAPS is taking action. Mercy Marchuk, director of MAPS Russia and Kazakhstan programs, and I will travel to Russia and Kazakhstan this winter to expand our adoption and humanitarian aid work in both countries. After that, I expect to travel to other parts of the world in an effort to develop new programs.

We are also focused on humanitarian aid around the world. I am very pleased to announce that Janet Braga, adoptive parent, former MAPS board member, and experienced development professional, has accepted the new position of Director of Humanitarian Aid and Advocacy. Under Janet's skilled and enthusiastic leadership, we will increase our humanitarian aid work around the world and serve as advocates for children who do not have a voice in their futures.

Volunteers continue to play a key role in MAPS' ability to make a difference in the world. Every adoptive parent who steps forward to help with one of our projects brings strengths and passions that move our goals forward.

In this issue, we send out special thanks to these parent volunteers...

Jennifer Baum, adoptive parent, is developing a website to assist families in the Russia program by identifying local resources that will help them meet the medical evaluation requirements for the Russia dossier.

Mike Canning, adoptive father, member of our board of directors, and chair of our finance committee, is a principal at Deloitte Consulting LLP in Boston. Mike has generously offered pro bono consultation services from Deloitte to assist us with our next steps in strategic planning.

Shelley Farnham, adoptive parent, has volunteered to serve on our human resources committee.

Paul Rosenberg, another adoptive parent, will give us his time and expertise to assist with strategic planning.

Ovid Santoro, adoptive father, will help with international program development and support of a humanitarian aid project in Kazakhstan.

Debora Spar, mother of a child from Russia, has offered her assistance in international program development.

Please stay in touch and let me know how you would like to get involved. The MAPS family of board members, management and staff, parents, and other supporters is a powerful group. Together, we will accomplish great things on behalf of children here in the US and around the world.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Mitchell

Stephanie Mitchell, LICSW
Executive Director



when they learned that we had just adopted him, they were shocked – he was so healthy and engaging, and he already seemed so attached to us.”

“The process went so well largely because of Dima's wonderful caregivers in Russia, and the effort they put into preparing him for life with ‘Mama and Papa,’” said Mary. Michael added, “Dima left the baby home and never looked back.” Now four years old, he excels at his Montessori preschool and says that trucks, trains, holidays, and snow are among his favorite things.

Although exact numbers are unknown, estimates suggest that about 700,000 children live in institutions in Russia, and Jen knows that more loving, permanent families are needed. “We would love to see more families apply. Many children are available right now, including babies, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, and sibling groups,” she said.

Stephanie Mitchell, MAPS' executive director, is excited about the future of the Russia program. “Now that we are reaccredited, we're looking to expand our program into other regions in Russia and give families even more options. This is great news for those who have an interest in a particular province or ties to a specific area in Russia.”



Oops!

In the last newsletter, we ran (almost all of) this photo of G2: Global Generation members. Now, here's the whole group. On November 7, they presented their thoughts and gave advice to adoptive parents during a MAPS series about transracial families in Falmouth, Maine.

Kazakhstan yurt to build community pride

In Kazakhstan, nothing symbolizes family like the yurt, a movable tent-like home. In fact, the word yurt literally means “community, family, relatives” or “people.” Intricately intertwined with Kazakhstan’s history and strong sense of family ties, the yurt has become emblematic of the country itself and the nomadic roots on which Kazakh culture was built.

That’s why we developed the Kazakhstan Yurt Project. Made possible by donations from families who have adopted through our Kazakhstan program, construction of a yurt at the Astana Baby Home in Kazakhstan will begin this spring. Libby Walch, MAPS’ Kazakhstan program coordinator, said, “It’s important to the orphanage director that these children, who are without families, still develop a strong sense of identity and belonging.”

In ancient days, the Kazakhs saw the world itself as a giant yurt, with the sky its domed roof and the earth its square floor. Holidays were celebrated in the yurt, babies were born there, and the tapestry of family was woven under its curved ceiling. A family’s lineage and continuity

could be measured by the accumulation of hundreds of years of smoke stains on the shangrak (the wooden lattice crown). Though its felt walls could be repaired and rebuilt, the shangrak remained intact, a family treasure passed through the generations from father to son, symbolizing wealth of heritage and a hopeful future.

For adopted children, loss runs deep. Without parents or family, they live on the margins of their culture, where basic needs are met but emotional and social development is often overlooked or neglected. For these children, loss of family brings with it not only a childhood without parents, but loss of status, history, ancestry, culture, and family identity as well.

Although MAPS cannot find a family for every child living at the Astana Baby Home, we can help build for them a stronger sense of community and a



foundation of ethnic pride and belonging. By building a yurt for these children, we offer them a sense of cultural belonging and provide a symbol of community, a gathering place, and a source of pride and unity for both the children and the staff members who care for them.

Libby said, “The yurt teaches the children that they come from a long line of strong people and gives them a lasting connection to Kazakh culture and history. They can be proud of their identity as people of Kazakhstan. Like their ancestors, they can withstand and prevail.”

Cover girl



Now eleven, Tatiana swims with a new dolphin friend during a holiday vacation at Sea World.

When we created new informational materials last year, we chose a photo of Lynda Caine and her baby daughter for our newsletter and website masthead because the picture expressed such love and joy. When we tried to let the family know, we discovered they’d moved, so we couldn’t get in touch. Then, recently, Lynda surprised us with a note. We were delighted to hear from her. Here’s what she had to say...

Dear MAPS,

While I was reading the summer newsletter, the photo on the top right hand corner caught my eye. It’s a picture of my daughter Tatiana, whom I adopted from Sochi, Russia in 1997.

I feel such deep gratitude to MAPS for supporting me through the adoption process – what a fantastic organization! Karen [Stager, who founded MAPS’ Russia program] and Mercy [Marchuk, who helped coordinate Tatiana’s adoption] were my guardian angels, and they supported me as I waited month after month for Russia to reopen adoptions.

Tatiana is a very bright girl who loves sports and playing music. She is the joy of my life. I look forward to staying in touch with MAPS.

United States: The MAPS domestic adoption programs provide services to families seeking open, semi-open, or identified domestic adoptions.

More about two program offshoots...

Domestic Networking allows MAPS to work with our partner agencies throughout the country to bring birthmothers and adoptive families together. And within the Domestic Infant Program, we work with birthmothers who have decided to make an adoption plan and would like to select the family.

Domestic Networking: Not only do we maintain strong ties with our current partner agencies across the US, we also continually explore new relationships. Networking with a variety of agencies allows us to better accommodate the preferences and needs of our waiting families. When they want a certain level of openness, particular racial/ethnic heritage, or fee structures that work best for them, we can give them more options. Right now, waiting parents are typically matched with a birth family two to twelve months after profile submission.

Domestic Infant Program: MAPS staff is involved in all aspects of the program: birthparent counseling and support; adoptive family education, home study, profile preparation, facilitation of communication between birthparents and adoptive parents; development of the birth plan; and post placement services and support. Adoptive families must live in Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, or Rhode Island.

China: Despite increased wait times, China remains an established and well-regulated program that is relatively economical. Since China requires a two-week adoption trip, parents have plenty of opportunities to sightsee and to form lasting relationships with other traveling families. The children, with or without special needs, are of all ages and both genders (although waits are typically longer for boys).

Russia: MAPS is reaccredited (see cover story), and we can now offer well-established programs in four regions. Children from babies to school-age, primarily Caucasian, are waiting for families. Sibling pairs and groups also need homes. Couples and single women are welcome. Depending upon child preference criteria, the process takes from six to fifteen months from program acceptance to placement.

India: A great option for parents of Indian descent, the program is currently well-suited to singles or couples with Overseas Citizens of India status and to couples where one spouse holds an Indian passport. These families may have the option of making foster care arrangements for the child in India while the approval process is underway. (Non-Indian families must be willing to adopt currently waiting children. An increasing number of older and special needs children are available.) Referral time is usually within three to six months for families of Indian descent.

Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan is known for quality orphanage care with a typical child-to-caregiver ratio of 3:1. Because families visit their children daily for a number of weeks before bringing them home to the United States, children usually adjust easily to their new families. Children are as young as eight months. Kazakhstan

offers a relatively quick process that often takes less than a year to complete.

Ukraine: In January, the new Ukraine adoption authority once again began accepting applications from families in the United States. We are excited to resume our Ukraine program and to find loving, nurturing, and permanent homes for the many available children there. Both our US-based program coordinator and our Ukraine-based adoption partners are knowledgeable and experienced. Families appreciate that they are actively involved in the matching process. After meeting the child, the adoption process in Ukraine is often completed in about three weeks.

Guatemala & Nepal: The future of both these programs is uncertain because their adoption laws are changing. Though we are not currently accepting applications, we encourage interested families to check in with us for news and updates.

Build that bond!

It may seem simple, but a bedtime song can work wonders between parents and their child – especially an older child. Pick an easy song like *You Are My Sunshine*, *Inch by Inch*, or a folk song from your child's birth country – and sing the same song every night. Singing together helps with bonding and adds a soothing and enjoyable routine to your child's bedtime.

Russia – open again!

MAPS, the first American agency to place Russian children with American families, began arranging Russian adoptions in 1991. Since then, we've placed about 1200 Russian children in loving homes and funded a variety of humanitarian aid programs to improve the lives of children who remain in orphanages and foster homes.

Now, after nearly a two-year hiatus, MAPS' reaccreditation has been finalized – and we're ready to place waiting Russian children again. And, here's more good news... adoption timelines should be relatively short. Once a family's documents are registered in Russia, parents can expect to make their first trip within two months to a year – two to eight months if requesting a boy and two to twelve months if requesting a girl. Families open to adopting toddlers or older children may have an even shorter wait. Both married couples and single women may adopt.

For complete information on our Russia program, please call us at (207) 775-4101 or visit mapsadopt.org.

We're home!



China

Richard and Tena and their daughter Emily, 9 months

Kevin and Kelly and their daughter Crystal, 19 months

Guatemala

Julie and her daughter Rosalina, 9 months

Lawrence and Theresa and their son Brayden, 9 months

Hector and Jessica and their son Hugo, 6 months

Karen and her son Nicholas, 12 months

Simon and Loraine and their son Andre, 16 months

Craig and Allison and their son Edward, 6 months

Joseph and Nancy and their daughter Gabrielle, 12 months

Marla and her daughter Maya-Alta, 6 months

Gary and Michelle and their daughter Eliana, 7 months

India

Tracy and Fay and their daughter Pooja, 5 years

James and Audrey and their daughter Kaviya, 3 years

Dileep and Lisa and their son Sankul, 22 months

Michael and Betsy and their daughter Jodi, 5 years

Christopher and Elizabeth and their daughter Ashley, 13 months

Kenneth and Coralie and their daughter Manisha, 4 years

James and Tyrella and their daughter Aleia, 2 years

Lisa and her daughter Kajal, 5 years

Walter and Nevjinder and their daughter Maya, 2 years

Immanuel and Debby and their daughter Rachel, 3 years

Jayanshankar and Vanishree and their daughter Jai, 17 months

Scott and Colleen and their daughter Adaya, 21 months

Kazakhstan

Michael and Sharron and their son Misha, 8 months

Susan and her daughter Sarah, 8 months
Heather and her daughter Carolyn, 9 months

Sam and Julie and their daughter Anika, 8 months

Steve and Kjersten and their daughter, Aitugan, 8 months

Russia

Mark and Andrea and their daughter Darya, 2 years

Arlen and Leslie and their son Ruslan, 21 months

Ardelle and her daughter Anna, 4 years

Samuel and Kate and their son Calvin, 2 years

Christopher and Kimberly and their son Daniel, 2 years

Michael and Jennifer and their son Nathaniel, 18 months

Cheryl and her daughter Julia, 17 months
Laurel and her daughter Serena, 2 years

Taiwan

Corey and Amanda and their daughter Lilliana, 10 months

US

Charles and Tara and their son Elliott, newborn

Andrew and Shelia and their daughter Sophia, newborn

Stanley and Lauren and their daughter Callista, newborn

Markus and Ilka and their daughter Sonja, newborn

Daniel and Amy Ryder and their daughter Avery Faith, newborn

Brian and Eileen and their son Douglas, newborn

Tondra and Kevin and their daughter Hazel, newborn

Russian delegation learns about US services

This year, MAPS – the first American agency to place Russian children through international adoption (1991) – hosted a delegation of Russian adoption officials for one day in Boston. MAPS personnel – Stephanie Mitchell, executive director, and Mercy Marchuk and Karen Stager, present and former Russia program directors – greeted the nine visitors and provided opportunities for them to learn about US-Russia adoptions.

They visited the International Adoption Clinic at Tufts Medical Center, where international pediatrician Dr. Laurie Miller spoke about children's health, developmental, and medical needs. She, along with our adoption staff and board members, answered questions about the availability of medical services for adopted children, assuring the delegation that adoptive families receive pre-adoptive counseling and education and

post-adoptive evaluations, support, and monitoring. "It's this rigorous, unified process – developed in conjunction with countries who share our goals – that makes it all work, that helps both children and families adjust to adoption," said Stephanie.

Later MAPS parents and their children adopted from Russia met with the officials at a local bistro where they visited and shared stories. The delegation was particularly impressed when one teenage boy put his language studies to use and spoke with them in Russian. And they were pleased to see firsthand how strong the families are and how wonderfully the children have adjusted to new lives in the US.



This winter Stephanie and Mercy will visit two of the delegates in Russia. "Hosting the delegation helped strengthen understanding of and support for international adoption. It was a great opportunity for face-to-face discussion between adoption officials and professionals from both countries, which improves understanding and helps us work together more effectively," said Stephanie.

Teddy bears bring smiles to children near and far

Furry brown “ambassadors” greeted children around the globe – from Maine to India – when Build-A-Bear Workshops donated new stuffed bears to adoption agencies belonging to the Joint Council on International Children’s Services. One of the organizations to receive the bears, MAPS quickly dispatched them, making sure that they went to children in need.

So far, the bears have been delivered to...

- a pregnancy resource center
- community counseling centers
- a hospice program
- a rural Maine subsidized childcare agency
- homeless and children’s shelters
- Children’s Hospital in Boston
- Acadia Hospital in Maine
- orphanages in Russia
- orphanages in Delhi and Pune, India



Eight cuddly teddy bears all dressed up in bright red bows offer a friendly welcome outside Youth Alternatives in Maine, a non-profit organization that provides therapeutic services to children and families in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.



Minal enjoys a warm reunion and a gigantic hug with sisters Maria and Rosa Manuel of Massachusetts.

A visit with Auntie

Families of children from India and Nepal gathered in Boston in December for a joyful visit with “Auntie” Minal Dani, India-based coordinator for our India and Nepal programs. A beloved member of our staff since 1998, Minal serves as our in-country liaison to the orphanages and assists families once they arrive in India. Minal was thrilled to reconnect with “her” families and see how the children have blossomed.

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