



## ***Dear Friends,***

New year...new look. After lots of thinking, second thoughts, ideas coming and going, decisions taken and then changed, eventually, we decided...ready or not, we take off!

It is like this that the boat you see in the picture became a bit the image of this “graphic” journey. We would like you to share our idea that it represents a new adventure within Ark adventure. In the next months with the precious help of our friend Anna, we’d like to refresh the layout as well as the contents of our bulletin and mostly we’d like to renew our website. We’ll keep you posted.

The event, which during the last period more than all the others kept our family in anxiety, is what has happened to our Andrej (here the picture and further on, you will understand what it’s about).



Last year Andrej was called to participate to a TV show called “Dreams come true”. During

the show he shortly told his story and he expressed the wish to have a portable computer in order, despite his physical movement's problems, to learn a profession and become independent. His request found a quick answer from someone in the viewers who contacted us and gave us the money to buy the computer. What we didn't know at that time was that she was Andrej's mother.

This kind of story unfortunately is less rare than you can think. Basically, Andrej was born with the problems he still has, and the hospital convinced the mother to give up the child because he was going to be a big problem for her and most likely he was going to die within few weeks.



After some inner struggle the mother gives up the child and leaves him at the hospital. For eighteen years she thinks her child is dead. Then one day she turns the TV on and...Months have passed since that day. Months during which she has been afraid to step out, afraid of her own reaction in meeting him, of Andrej's reaction, and fighting with

her feel of guilty. Finally the decision to show up on Andrej's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.



And then, like it is in life, reality becomes easier and better than we think. Mother and son started a new relationship. Of course there will be difficulties, but there will also be new certainties. Stories like this in our reality cannot pass without leaving a mark. For one who found, almost as a miracle, his mother, there are many others who wonder: "what about me?" Sometimes it comes just with a shadow of sadness, sometimes with a deeper sorrow.

The final celebration of the Christmas period it has been a special day, full of emotions and different for everyone young and grown up.

A group of *young entrepreneurs* from Almaty, who met each other thanks to social networks, decided to come over to celebrate New Year's Eve and share this special occasion with someone that they consider less fortunate. From this feeling, they thought to organize a full day with singing, dancing, games totally created and organized by them. They invited a

hip group from Almaty who made a private concert only for us.



We cannot describe the excitement of our boys and girls. They wanted to take pictures next to the “stars” and some of them, like Andrej, they managed to have the T-shirt they were wearing signed by the artists.

All the pictures are from that day.

With mixed feelings of hope and fear, we met for the first time, the person in charge of the Social Defense Department. It is important because the Department has power over the orphanage from where some of our kids come from, and on the retirement home where Vova and Natasha live and went back after the long desired holidays.

Our fears were based on the fact that the new staff didn't know anything about us and at first they were quite suspicious and diffident. On the other hand we have hopes because after our introductions and after clearing some of the misinformation they were told, we agreed on some forms of cooperation. Among these possibilities, we were asked to organize

a meeting with organizations working in the field of social problems, in order to see some concrete projects and hopefully step by step to bring some changes in the law and its applications.

Also we hope to find a good project monitored by the department which can be used as test for future cooperation and experiences.

Nevertheless now we have to face today reality and bureaucracy, which once more took the group of our disable children back to the orphanage, in order to pass the official annual medical commission. These procedures should last one month. Of course some of our boys are afraid that it'll be a one way ticket.



The dental clinic is almost finished, and we are looking at the last instruments necessary to start. In the meantime we are collecting all the documentation necessary for the licenses.

We look with hope to the new local sponsorship opportunities that could open a new chapter of our events. We will keep you updated in our next bulletin.



And now, everyone on board and have a wonderful trip through this year that we wish it'll be full of great things

A big Hug!

*The Ark Family*

In Italy

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