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Giving a Helping Hand to Children

By Ingrid Nevenchannaya

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Father Christmas handing out candies to refugee children. Opora raises money to help provide presents for refugees, orphans and homeless children.

Opora, an organization that helps refugees from non-CIS countries, has been playing Father Christmas once again this year as it provides toys and essentials for refugee children, local orphans and homeless children.

A recent charity event saw art works by local artists auctioned off to raise money for Christmas gifts.

The event in late November at the Radisson Royal Hotel, formerly Hotel Ukraina, helped purchase lots of gifts for children for the coming Christmas. They will be given out on Saturday at the orphanage.

“It is not only a question about presents, I think, but about giving the children hope that [people] care about them,” said Tatyana Golubeva, from 25 Kadr Gallery, who helped organize the art on auction at the event.

“Some kids don’t have clothes, shoes. We do it every year,” said Opora director Dr. Gezahgn Wordofa. “The money will go to providing things for children.”

The event was also supported by CERBA, the Canada Eurasia Russia Business Association.

A spokesman for an orphanage run by Miloserdiye, an Orthodox Church charity organization, who requested that his name not be published, praised Opora for providing toys, blankets and clothing for their children.

Wordofa is a veteran in Moscow, working for years to help refugees. Opora recently held an event where Santa Claus gave gifts to refugee children at its center in the Moscow region.

“Our children from Iraq, Iran, Africa, Congo, they are all refugees. Also we work with refugees from Moscow rail stations,” Wordofa said. “We organize free dinners for them, we rent accommodations for refugees.”

Money is tight in Moscow now though, he said, with fewer donations since the financial crisis.

His organization looks after 300 children, working with various churches that provide aid as well.

“They have no education, and they can’t go to school without registration,” he said. “It’s a big problem.”

Originally from Ethiopia, Wordofa has worked in relief and development for more than a decade, including a period at UNICEF. He plans to return to Ethiopia soon. “I want to go back to my country, Ethiopia. I want to help them with my energy.”

If you want to help Opora, see www.drgeza.org or call 109-3345 or (926) 629-8638.

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