

Children's Sports Day With a Big Difference

By [Max de Haldevang](#)

August 09, 2011



The Gift of Life charity organized the sports event, with more than 300 young cancer survivors taking part.

The children played table tennis, they ran, they shot at targets — from a distance the event looked like an ordinary sports day, but to participate here, each child must have done one essential thing.

The International Children's Winners' Games, which ran Aug. 4 to 7, is a tournament set up by the Gift of Life charity and limited to children who have survived cancer.

Set up by actresses Chulpan Khamatova and Dina Korzun just five years ago, Gift of Life is one of the country's most respected charities focusing on raising money to treat seriously ill children, particularly those with cancer.

The tournament was a way of celebrating "good news and successes," said Nadezhda

Kuznetsova, one of the charity's organizers.

It gives the children a chance to meet others who have gone through what they have, to see that they are not alone in their recovery and "enjoy themselves after all their time in the hospital," she said.

More than 300 children from nine different countries, including Turkey, the Czech Republic and Hungary, took part in the competition.

"Through sporting events like this, they can show other children and other adults that they can confront their goal and tackle it head on," said Mikhail Terentyev, head of the Russian Paralympic Committee. "By organizing events like these, organizations make it possible to return to children their lives through sport."

Some of those taking part are physically disabled; others remain in a fragile state but still made huge efforts.

"One girl ran in the long distance and fell, but she got up, ran farther and finished," said Sergei Shilov, a six-time Paralympic ski champion who awarded prizes to the children, the charity stated.

One contestant was Sasha Druzhinina, 7, from Volgograd, who spoke excitedly of how she had been training for the running and shooting events.

Druzhinina was diagnosed with leukemia in 2005 but only recently received the all-clear. Her mother, Olga, told of how the family had to scrape together money to send her to Moscow for treatment and how Gift of Life had stepped in to pay for medicine, help with volunteers and even rent a flat for her family so they could be with her while she was having treatment.

Guests at the festival included pop star Angelika Varum and actor Mikhail Yefremov, who showed one of his most famous films, the Soviet children's classic "When I Become Great."

As part of the event, a group of children kept a photo diary of the games, which can be seen on the fund's Facebook page.

The tournament, which organizers hope to become an annual event, was planned with the help of big-name sponsors including KIA Motors Russia, MegaFon, Philips, Kaspersky Lab, R-Pharm and Mary Kay.

For more information about the Gift of Life charity, see www.podari-zhizn.ru.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/08/09/childrens-sports-day-with-a-big-difference-a8805>