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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Donation Call to Give Presents to Local Orphans

By Nosheen Shakil

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Share Care works regularly with 12 orphanages. The donation call will mean children get gifts on New Year's Eve.

Dan Rapoport, managing director at the IFC Metropol financial company, has launched a charity donation call for used toys, books and clothing for the local charity Share Care, which helps orphans. People's time and cash donations are also welcome.

Share Care helps Russian orphans through rehabilitation and social adaptation projects, additional education, psychological support and much more. Share Care also has been working with kids with brain tumors since 2010. Anyone wishing to help can drop donations off at the Metropol office and the Soho Rooms club by Dec. 25.

Q: What is the first charity you gave money to?

A: The first donation I made was to my college fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, a month after

I graduated.

Q: Which charity is closest to your heart?

A: In 1995, I was working for a financial company that was a generous sponsor of the Tretyakov Gallery and the Mariinsky Ballet. Both were wonderful causes, but I thought there was a more immediate need in helping Russia's orphans and elderly. When my first child was born, I started looking for a way to help the thousands of sick, abandoned and unwanted kids who were institutionalized in orphanages because I felt it was unjust that they are growing up without the love that my children had.

In the past nine years, I have worked with six different organizations that helped these kids. I was very cognizant of the fact that charity in Russia is often a dirty word associated with theft and kickbacks. I did my due diligence and selected organizations that I was confident were helping the kids and not themselves.

Out of the six, "Podelis Teplom," or Share Care, had the most initiative. The staff were working for the idea. I was impressed that out of eight full-time employees, the highest monthly salary was 15,000 rubles ($470). The girls know the names and stories of the kids at the 12 orphanages they work with.

Q: What is the biggest difference between charity-giving in your country and in Russia?

A: I am not familiar with charity in the States, but two things for giving are crucial to me. First of all, the charity should not be denominational, secondly they should be honest and not keep donations to themselves. In the past, I heard terrible stories of new PCs and toys that were never delivered. The items were collected and went for sale. Share Care primarily delivers items as soon as they are donated. The fund's employees work out of idealism.

Q: Can you explain in more detail about one charity need?

A: We support 12 regular orphanages and some others on an occasional basis. The project, which needs most help from us at the moment, is Velikiye Luki. We recently took them on, and there is much to be done. Infrastructure needs urgently to be changed, and the budget for maintenance is not sufficient.

Q: Do you give money to panhandlers you see on the street?

A: I do not give money to panhandlers on the street or in the subway. They are part of organized criminal organizations that drop off these people at fixed spots in town. At night, the panhandlers are collected and their "income" is collected by these criminals. I prefer to give in a structured way, but if I see a grandma struggling in the supermarket to buy bread or milk, I will just pay for her groceries.

Sharecare.ru. Donations can be dropped off at the IFC Metropol office, 13 Donskaya Ulitsa. Metro Shabolovskaya. Reception is open 24 hours.
Soho Rooms, 12 Savvinskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 8. Metro Sportivnaya. Donations can be left after noon any day.

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