



## NORTH HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH BELARUS CHILDREN MINISTRY

*...The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Mathew 25:40*

**What is the NHCC Belarus Children's Ministry?** A ministry of compassion to children from the country of Belarus. NHCC families host Belarus children in their homes for 6 weeks during the summer.

**Why Belarus?** Belarus is a former republic in the Soviet Union that regained its independence in 1991. It is most recognized for the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant disaster in 1986. Although Chernobyl is located in the Ukraine, seventy percent of the radiation from the explosion fell on the Republic of Belarus, contaminating a large area of the country and affecting an estimated two million individuals. The government of Belarus grants permission for their children to leave the country during the summer to receive medical care and rest from the conditions of their country.

**Where is Belarus?** Belarus is located between Russia to the east, Poland to the west, the Baltic States to the north and the Ukraine to the south. Belarus is about the size of Kansas and has a population of ten million.

**How can I participate in the ministry?** There are opportunities to host children, host an adult chaperone/translator, help with group activities, donate clothes, donate food and medicines, help with translator transportation, sponsor a child financially, or help with other ministry needs and expenses.

**How old are the children that come to stay with NHCC host families?** The children are from 7 to 17 years old.

**Is it possible to select the age and gender of the children you wish to host?** Yes. Each host family selects the gender and age of children they would like to host.

**How long do the children stay with their host families?** The summer ministry is six weeks long.

**When will the children arrive and leave America?** The children typically arrive during the first or second week of June and depart in mid July.

**Who arranges for the children's transportation to and from Belarus?** The American Belarussian Relief Organization (ABRO) based in North Carolina facilitates the selection of the children, securing their passports and visas and all travel arrangements to and from America.

**What are the qualifications to be a host family?** A host family must be a two-parent family (exceptions for hosting adult chaperone), members or regularly attending NHCC and approved by the NHCC Belarus Children Ministry Group Coordinator, a pastor and ABRO.

**How much will it cost?** The estimated cost per child is \$2,500, including transportation expenses and living expenses for the time spent with the host family.

**Does the church support the ministry financially?** Yes. The North Hills Community Church Missions contributes toward the ministry expenses each year to reduce the costs per child, fund the expenses of children for host families needing financial assistance, and to help with some of the group ministry expenses, including transportation to and from the Charlotte airport. Individual members of NHCC also faithfully contribute toward the ministry each year.

**What does the host family do with the children during their stay here?** The primary mission is to minister to the physical and spiritual health of the children. They enjoy the same activities that American children enjoy, although they may not have experienced many of the activities that we take for granted. They love to swim, play games, eat ice cream, go to amusement parks, play sports and be a part of your family for six weeks.

**Who arranges for and pays for the medical needs of the children while they are in America?**

The ministry leadership arranges for the medical checkups for the children at no cost to the host family. There is also a network of local Dentists and Optometrists who donate their professional services. Host families are encouraged to use their own family Dentist and Optometrist when possible. There is accident insurance to cover each child and the ministry keeps funds available to cover unexpected medical expenses.

**How do you communicate with the children?** Although this is one of the greatest concerns of host families, it is ultimately a wonderful experience in learning how to communicate with someone from another culture. The language in Belarus is Russian. Some of the children have studied English in school. An adult translator is assigned to our group and is available at all times. There are many good translation dictionaries available to assist, and the ministry provides host families with some translated basic common phrases and words to help with the initial communication.

**How do you minister to the children?** The ministry organizes a Sunday school class in the children's Russian language for each Sunday during the six weeks they are here. The real ministry is the demonstration of Christ's love by the host family and the Church body by caring for the children during their stay.

**What do you send home with the children when they leave?** The children need winter clothes and medicines that they cannot afford or are not available in Belarus. Within airline restrictions for luggage, weight and content, we try to send each child home with as much clothes, medicine, and school supplies as possible. We discourage giving the children toys and games during their stay here because they will not have room in their luggage to take them home.

**Can we communicate with the children after they return home?** Many of the children do not have phones in their homes, however, you may write letters and if they have a relative or neighbor with a phone, it is possible to arrange for a translator to assist with a telephone call. ABRO also assists in translating and delivering emails to the children during the year.

**Can a host family request to host the same children each year?** Yes. The child's participation is subject to receiving permission from his/her parents, the Belarus government, the US government and ABRO. Host families are encouraged to continue their ministry to the children they have hosted/.

**When do we need to commit to hosting children, and how can we find out more about the ministry?**

Applications and deposits are due by a date to be announced, however, it is typically by the end of February. You may contact David and Cheryl Williams at 836-8588 or [trwilliamsfive@juno.com](mailto:trwilliamsfive@juno.com) if you are interested in hosting children or helping with the ministry.