

A Good Cause: Center Looks to Help Kids Battling Autism

By [Richard Wordsworth](#)

May 03, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

After almost two decades in Moscow's PR and publishing industry, Anna Jackson-Stevens is one of many expatriates working side by side with Russians at the Dr. Romanov Center in St. Petersburg. Founded in 1989, the charity offers free treatment and rehabilitation to children struggling with autism and other neurological disorders.

Q: Of all the charities operating in Russia, what is special about the Dr. Romanov Center in St. Petersburg?

A: I like the fact that the Dr. Romanov Center treats new children all the time. The team works with the relatives to help them help their children be integrated into society. As the relatives learn and grow in confidence, they rely less on the center, which can welcome more families.

Q: What sort of lives could the children (with autism and other neurological disorders) expect without the help of the charity?

A: In my experience, families suffer stigma surrounding the conditions. Perhaps in an effort to protect their child, they limit social interaction and focus on the disability rather than seeking to reveal skills or interests, which can be a source of therapy and lead to greater harmony within the family.

Q: How are charitable organizations viewed generally in Russia?

A: I have heard expats comment that Russians are not charitable. I totally disagree. They may well be cautious about contributing to official causes when they have no way of knowing whether the funds reach the intended recipient, but the way they look out for vulnerable members of their community is admirable.

Celebrity support for charitable causes in Russia increased visibly around the time of the crisis and continues to add value to fundraising activities. At one glamorous party in Moscow, guests were encouraged to buy T-shirts which cost well over \$200. I bought a similar one for a cause in London, which cost about \$20, therefore reaching a far wider public. I'd like to see more opportunities for fun community activity, with greater attention devoted to giving time than money and efforts to make charity more accessible.

Q: What is your biggest success story from your time working at the center?

A: Keeping it open! Proceeds from our annual Winter Ball are now the most important single contribution for running the center, which treats all children free of charge. Together with generous donations (from Russians and non-Russians), a sum has been accumulated and put aside for the purchase of new premises to house the center, which faces eviction when the lease expires in two years' time.

Dr. Romanov Children's Rehabilitation Center. 52 Ulitsa Zamshina, bldg. 1. St. Petersburg. Tel. (812) 544-58-44. www.romanov-rehab.org.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/05/03/a-good-cause-center-looks-to-help-kids-battling-autism-a14549>