



The Kids First Fund

“Our work stands
as testimony to
the bright quality
of human charity.”

JAY SORENSEN



FROM THE PRESIDENT

2004 was a year of great contrasts. The year was marked by successful preparation for the future with record fundraising results, tremendous board member participation and the development of our first strategic plan.

But it was also a year of great sadness because of the unexpected death of Sergei Zholtok — who was a husband, father, friend, NHL player, honorary Kids First Fund board member and a passionate advocate for children in Latvia. My prayers go out to the wife of this wonderful man, Anna, and his sons Edgar and Nikita.

The year was also marked by the pain and suffering endured by children of the world. Horror continues to be in abundant supply for our youngest generation. Regions of the world are ravaged by war, poverty and disaster. As the world has seen through coverage of Asia's tsunami, children are always the most vulnerable — and the most dependent on the help of others. That's where the Kids First Fund steps in to help.

Children don't have economic clout and they don't vote. But all too often they are forced to suffer the sins of our global community by fighting as soldiers, working as virtual slaves under dangerous conditions, or quietly accepting the physical and sexual abuse of the adults in their lives.

Your support of the Kids First Fund helps remove the horrible stains caused by mankind. You contributed to the contrasts of 2004. Our work stands as testimony to the bright quality of human charity — which stands in stark contrast to the darkness of child abuse.

Thank you for joining me on this path. Together we are doing marvelous things — and we are truly making a difference for abused children in a little corner of the world called Latvia. Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to serve the Kids First Fund!

For the kids,

Jay Sorensen

Volunteer and President

“We fill a need by helping abused children in rural Latvia that is probably unique among U.S. charities.”

IRMA KALNINA

Board Member
(Riga, Latvia)

“I trust the Kids First Fund to spend my donation wisely.”

GEORGE MIKELSONS

Chairman, ATA
(Indianapolis, Indiana, USA)

NUMBERS HELP TELL OUR STORY

The following statistics describe the accomplishments of the **Kids First Fund** since its founding in 1999:

- Direct assistance for the care of abused children: **Approximately 380 children have received services since 2000**
- Professionals, such as police officers, doctors, legislators, judges and prosecutors, reached via the seminar series since 2001: **420**
- Project examples: Renovation of social hall and residences for children, purchase of athletic equipment, field trips and outings, training and education for center staff, social worker and psychologist salary subsidies, operating support for abused pregnant teenager home, conference material printing and hall rentals for educational seminars.
- Funds raised 1999 through 2004: **\$200,000**
- Program expenditures 1999 through 2004: **\$61,000**
- Future project expenditures planned: **\$200,000**
- Bank account balance at year end: **\$139,000**
- Amount deducted in U.S. for overhead, salaries, fundraising and administration: **\$0**

RECORD FUNDRAISING AIDED BY ON-LINE EVENTS

We raised over **\$49,000** from fundraising activities during 2004.

Over **\$30,000** of this amount was generated by online events such as the “**Great On-Line Travel Auction for Kids**” held during early 2004. The idea for an auction was initiated by a very generous offer from George Mikelsons who is the Latvian-born founder and Chairman of ATA, a major U.S.-based airline.



The online auction began as a short email message from George Mikelsons: “If it will help the kids, I can donate some tickets.” It evolved into an auction of over 60 airline tickets featuring travel on AirTran Airways, Frontier Airlines, Icelandair, Midwest Airlines, Scandinavian Airlines, South African Airways, Swiss International Airlines, Virgin Atlantic Airways and of course... ATA.

Cash donations made by individuals showed a healthy increase during 2004 and grew to \$19,000 from a 2003 amount of approximately \$13,200. The Kids First Fund continues to benefit from in-kind donations from its supporters. For example, donors contributed airline tickets that allowed board members to make trips on two occasions to Latvia during 2004. Special recognition is made for Matthew Frederick who donates his time, and the cost of web hosting, to bring you the KidsFirstFund.org web site.



“Spending nearly a week in Latvia provided an important in-person perspective of the country, its people and most importantly, the children.”

SHARON POLK

Board Member
(Kansas City, Missouri, USA)

BOARD MEMBERS TOOK FACT-FINDING TRIPS

Your board generously donated its personal time during 2004 by making multiple trips to Latvia during 2004. Judge Mike Dwyer and Jay Sorensen traveled to Latvia during January 2004 to conduct interviews that resulted in drafting of the “**Report on Systems to Protect Children from Abuse in Latvia.**” This report ultimately led to the development of a strategic plan for the Kids First Fund and its 2005 initiative to develop a family shelter in Latvia.

Mike Dwyer and Jay Sorensen conducted fourteen interviews with representatives of government and NGO organizations involved with child abuse issues in Latvia. Much was learned about existing systems that protect children and the gaps within Latvia’s social safety net of services. The development of Latvia’s first family shelter, to provide service to abused mothers and their children, was identified as a priority. Furthermore, the rural region of Latgale, with its extreme unemployment, was identified as an area in great need of outside resources. The report is available at KidsFirstFund.org in English and Latvian.



Board members traveled again to Latvia during October 2004 to establish relationships with program partner candidates in Latvia. U.S. based members Sharon Polk, John DeGregorio and Jay Sorensen were joined by Latvia-based members Irma Kalnina and Rogers Grigulis for a series of meetings in Riga. Meetings were held with representatives of eight organizations including Dardedze Center Against Abuse, Embassy of Canada, Attistiba School of Social Work, Latvia’s Ministry for Children and Family Affairs, and Latvia’s Welfare Ministry.

The meetings resulted in the forging of new relationships with key social service organizations and in particular, helped create the beginnings of a strategic partnership with the Dardedze Center Against Abuse (see photo of board members at Dardedze).

“We look forward to a wonderful and cooperative relationship with the Kids First Fund to help abused children in Latvia.”

AGNESE SLADZEVSKA

Dardedze Center Against Abuse
(Riga, Latvia)

WORK BEGAN TO DEVELOP LATVIAS' FIRST FAMILY SHELTER

We have entered into a letter of agreement with the Riga-based Dardedze Center Against Abuse (“Dardedze”) to establish a relationship in which Dardedze would plan, develop and operate a family shelter on behalf of the Kids First Fund and the other founding donors. Directors from Kids First and Dardedze plan to meet in Latvia during early 2005 to establish a formal agreement defining each organization’s roles and responsibilities.

Dardedze is widely regarded as an exceptional provider of services and programs to children, families and professionals in Latvia. Direct assistance is provided to children through evaluation, therapy and shelter services. Treatment is also provided on an outpatient basis to children and families. Dardedze provides professional training on child abuse-related issues and is a strong advocate for increased legislative protection of children

Latvia-based partnerships will form the foundation for the development of the family shelter in Latgale. Partners, such as Dardedze, provide local expertise and support for the project. The project will also include a local municipal partner that will provide the building and will eventually assume complete financial responsibility for the program.

The primary mission of the shelter is to provide a safe, healthy and healing environment for abused children and their mothers. Services provided to mothers and children will strive to restore self-respect, dignity and mental health through counseling and therapy. Mothers seeking to establish independence would receive additional support through vocational training and job placement. Families seeking to reunite can be supported through counseling and anger management classes. The shelter will consist of 6 rooms with each accommodating a mother and up to 3 children in a family-friendly non-institutional environment.

The Kids First Fund anticipates committing a minimum of **\$200,000** to this project over a period of 5 years. Additional resources could be sought from other foundation sources, Latvian government funding and EU social development grants. Dardedze will have responsibility for developing and operating the family shelter under the guidelines established by a grant agreement with the Kids First Fund.

The local municipal partner will assume increasing financial responsibility, with complete funding provided by year six of the project. Dardedze would work with the local municipality to generate new sources of financial support through local and international fundraising efforts. In addition to the partners named above, the project may involve other founding donors. Kids First plans to identify foundations and NGOs having an interest in child abuse prevention in Latvia. These founding donors can provide added financial support for initial renovations and furnishings and perhaps augment the operating budget.

“Dr. Friedrich’s work on the trauma of child neglect and abuse in Latvia is a tremendous asset for the Kids First Fund and children of Latvia.”

JAY SORENSEN

President and Board Member
(Shorewood, Wisconsin, USA)

DR. WILLIAM FRIEDRICH JOINED THE BOARD

William Friedrich, Ph.D. and member of the pediatric and psychology staff at **Mayo Clinic**, was elected to the Kids First Fund Board of Directors. In his work in clinical psychology at Mayo Clinic Rochester, Friedrich studies the impact of traumatic events on children, adolescents and adults. He earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from University of North Dakota, an M.P.H. in behavioral sciences from the University of Texas, and completed a clinical psychology internship at the Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences.

His research on the impact of traumatic events on children has resulted in the development of the Child Sexual Behavior Inventory and the Adolescent Sexual Behavior Inventory, two scales that can be used as outcome measures for treatment. Friedrich has also participated as a team member for child abuse-related project work in Latvia, and other eastern European countries, through the Soros Foundation and as a Fulbright Scholar.

ABOUT THE KIDS FIRST FUND

The Kids First Fund helps abused and abandoned children. We protect children from abuse. We empower young adults with a positive future. We strengthen families. We build awareness of child abuse. Current projects provide support for children in Latvia. The Kids First Fund supports programs to educate child welfare professionals such as police officers, judges, social workers and prosecutors on child abuse issues. Direct assistance is also provided to centers providing care for abused children. The Kids First Fund is a very efficient non-profit organization and does not incur any expenses since all staffing and services are donated.

Learn more and donate online at:

KidsFirstFund.org

Write to us at:

The Kids First Fund
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