

Smalleys Thrilled with Volgograd

TRIPLE BLESSING

Captain Candi Smalley distributes clothing to triplets from a corps family of seven children.

By *Robert Docter* –

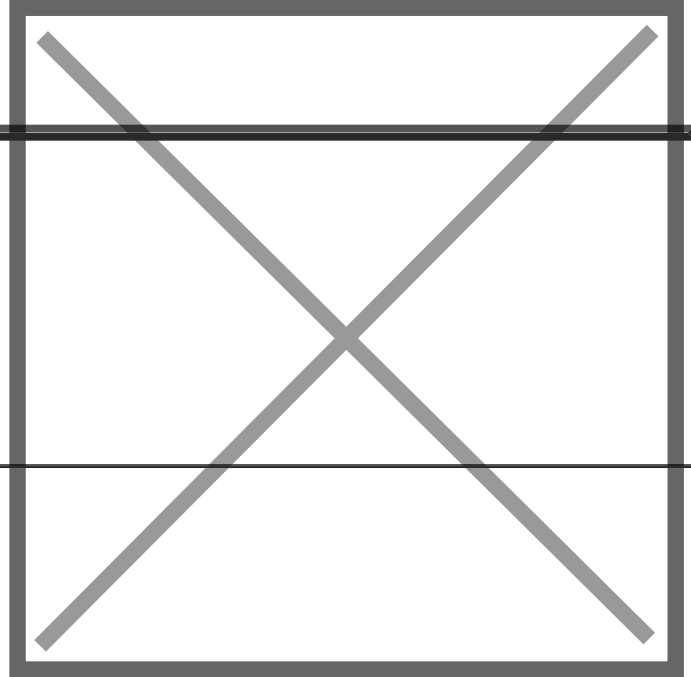
Captains Chuck and Candi Smalley returned to Volgograd, Russia, this week, with their two young children, Sam, 11 and Colleen, 9 after a Western furlough. The sense of thanksgiving, dedication and commitment to God was evident in their glistening eyes and strength of spirit.

“We’re aware of the presence of God in our lives as never before,” Chuck Smalley said. “We can feel the prayers of people supporting us. It’s wonderful.”

The Smalleys have completed over 13 months in Volgograd (formerly named Stalingrad) and look forward to their return. Their original appointment was to begin work in establishing a second corps in the community, but the illness of the officer in corps #1 required them to undertake those duties.

Located 500 miles south of Moscow, Candi Smalley reports that the growth and service potentials are exciting. Another corps in Moscow and even one across the river are in the planning stage.

They found the corps well established in what they describe as the “best building in the CIS command.” It is a large, two story, former kindergarten obtained by the negotiating skill of Captain Mike Olsen three years ago. The top floor supports three programs: physical therapy and education for invalid children, a teen center with a weight room and craft facility, and a senior drop-in center. They feed 100 people five days a week. Earlier, the government had provided some staples, but they are now having to buy all of the food, which imposes a serious financial burden. They also provide daily support and visitation for homebound seniors.



“People need to know how important their Self Denial and World Service giving is,” Smalley said. “We would find it very difficult to exist without it, and the service we provide would be reduced. That giving is essential to programs like ours.”

Smalley expressed great appreciation for the gift of clothes from ARCs in the USA Eastern territory. “People here don’t have any extra clothes. They are required to wear the same thing all the time, and they really appreciate the gift of additional warm clothes,” he said.

With 16 soldiers on the rolls when they arrived, the Smalleys have recently enrolled 18-20 more. “People want to come to church here,” he said. “The corps meeting room seats about 100 people, and they jam themselves in to hear the word of God.”

The Smalleys report that their children are “doing very well. They are happy and outpacing their parents in the mastery of the language. They play with the children and attend school with them and seem quite happy. Actually, they are looking forward to their return.” Smalley stated that the most difficult challenge is the language. They are picking up some essential words, but relying on translators to conduct business makes it very difficult. “We have good, honest translators,” he said, “but our lack of understanding of the Russian social structure and rules of procedure can lead to misunderstanding at times.”

The food supply is much better, they report, but vegetables are in short supply during the winter. “We learn to enjoy cabbage and potatoes,” Smalley added with a grin. They drive a 4-wheel drive Lada which looks like a small Ford Bronco and has a top speed of 55 miles per hour.

While their dollar income is about one-fourth of that available in the States, “we find this sufficient. We are not suffering in any way and find it important to live close to the people,” Smalley stated. He reports that the people are warm, friendly, generous and grateful.

The couple looks forward to the ministry of the Western Summer Service Corps team, which will be arriving in a few months. They will be very helpful with outreach efforts to children and youth and will be instrumental in helping establish the new corps. “Life is never boring, here,” Smalley reported. “It’s always interesting. It’s such an adventure.”

Both Smalleys report good fellowship with other American ministers in Volgograd and delight in the rare but welcome pleasure of seeing other Western Salvationists like Lt. Adam Morales and A/Captain Sherry McWhorter. They look forward to the arrival of Lt. Colonels Bill and Barbara Hunter who will be assuming responsibilities as general secretary in Moscow.

Smalley expressed delight in the ability of Colonel Joy Church, territorial league of mercy secretary, to obtain some medical reference books for physicians. He had recently suffered a severe break of his left arm, which required hospitalization, and this afforded him the opportunity to witness to many members of the medical staff. His primary physician has expressed high interest in “joining his church.”

The arm break occurred when Smalley was demonstrating the American technique of performing “wheelies” for Russian youth with his son’s bike. He landed hard on one elbow, he said with an embarrassed grin, but it brought him an experience with the Russian health delivery system and the opportunity to worship.

“Our biggest prayer concern right now is for greater stability in our work in Volgograd.” Local government authorities seem to manipulate their use of the kindergarten building. “We are confident God will do His work,” Smalley said, “so just tell the people to keep on praying.”
