

ADOPTION FOR ALL

THE BLOG OF THE FAIRNESS FOR FAMILIES PETITION IS NOW THE
I-600A RENEWAL UPDATES BLOG. :)

Thank you for signing the petition and helping secure the right to update the I600A. :)

The Faces of Forever - A Playground Worth Remembering

"Years will pass. Children, that by the will of fate were orphaned in Russia and ended up adopted and the citizens of the United States, will grow up. Of course the United States will be their new motherland, but maybe their parents and relatives, their friends and they themselves will feel something that connects them with Russia. Maybe the children's arms, stretched from one country to the other, through the borders, above the heads of the politicians, in spite of the tales and bad will of some people, will be able to tie our people with mutual fate, love and care better and stronger than any official international agreement."

- Cara Sadouskaza, Citizen of the Russian Federation

Dwight and Jenny Griffith first saw Alex's picture on a flyer of waiting children with special needs. The Griffiths had suffered through the emotional roller coaster of infertility, followed by ten years of the highs and lows of adoption and fostering. Finally, the adoption of their now 17 year-old daughter stuck. Then in 1994, just two years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Griffiths traveled to the city of Krasnoyarsk in the remote Siberian region of the Russian Federation to adopt their son Alex at 11 months of age; Alex was still in the hospital he had been born - premature and weighing less than 2 pounds. Alex's adoption was followed by three more domestic adoptions - Douglas now 12 and twins William and Katrina who are 10.

When Dwight and Jenny arrived at the hospital, Alex was malnourished, had rickets and was diagnosed with mild cerebra palsy. Alex, who has since been diagnosed with ADD, ADHD and sensory integration has faced many, many challenges in his 15 years but he has not let them stop or deter him. One of the many successes of his short life is the work he has done through his required service project to become a Eagle Scout, the Boy Scout of America's highest honor. Alex decided that he wanted to perform service for his first community, his community in Russia where he was born. After seeing pictures of the playground at Children's Hospital #20 where Alex spent the 1st year of his life he decided to build a new playground so that the children of Krasnoyarsk could have a safe, fun place to play.

Over the last two and a half years Alex has worked over 700 hours, received over 1000 hours of other volunteer help and exchanged over 1000 emails in the planning, design, fundraising, preassembly and quality check of the playground. With the help of the Rotary Organization, fellow Scouts and friends, Alex raised over \$60,000 to purchase and ship the playground to Russia and buy the materials needed to complete the installation. Alex will travel to Russia with five other friends and family members this August to install the playground. He will celebrate his 16th birthday in his country of birth with the grand opening of the playground he planned, designed, raised money for and built with his own hands.

Alex's playground is designed for children from five to twelve years of age and will be red, white and blue - the colors of both the Russian and American flags. To complete the playground Alex created two wooden totem poles for the entrance of the playground. One will be of a bear, the unofficial symbol of Russia, and one an eagle, the official symbol of America. Alex hopes that the totem poles will show the unity between the two countries.

The project has truly become a worldwide effort with Alex communicating and working with over 500 people in 23 states and 73 cities in four countries. Additionally, one of the best parts of the project is that Alex is now receiving emails from other adopted children around the world who want to do something for their birth homes. Alex hopes that his project will expand into a larger project of children helping other children around the world.

For more information about Alex's project you can check out the project's website at <http://www.kraplayground.org/> or if you would like to communicate with Alex on how other adopted children can provide service to their birth homes you may contact him by email at http://us.mc11.mail.yahoo.com/mc/compose?to=alex_eagle@hughes.net.