

Russian adoptees, growing up in Decatur, learn about their native land

Overseas groups help Decatur families experience the culture

By **THERESA CHURCHILL**
H&R Senior Writer

DECATUR — When area couples adopted Russian children years ago, they never imagined they would find themselves on stage learning an ancient jig from their kids' native country.

Yet that's exactly what happened Saturday afternoon during a concert by two prize-winning Russian performance groups at Lutheran School Association High School.

Ruth Sublett and her daughter Katya, 15, were escorted to the stage from their seats by Semen Ioffe, 16, and Vadim Malykh, 15 — the two performers they are hosting for the weekend in their Decatur home.

"I knew the boys would choose us," Ruth Sublett said with a smile after the concert was over. "They weren't going to pick on perfect strangers."

Several audience members, including 12-year-old Derek Lewis and his adopted sister Allison, 9, of Clinton, also got to try their hand at some percussion instruments —



Herald & Review/Lisa Morrison

Irina Kazakova, 15, of the Russian singing group Golden Gates, performs at the Lutheran School Association high school gym on Saturday. About a dozen Russian performers sang, danced and talked about the customs of their country before a group including children adopted from Russia now living in the area.

but Derek simply laughed when accordion player Vitaliy Bezrodnov rapidly struck his tambourine against each of his raised boots and expected Derek to follow along.

"He is saving his energy for later," Bezrodnov said jokingly.

Attracting an audience of more

than 150, the concert by the Moscow Nights instrumental trio and the Golden Gates youths was both a fundraiser for Russian orphanages and an opportunity for families with Russian children to get together.

Barbara Wilkinson, client coordinator for Virginia-based Frost

International Adoptions, said some traveled from other states, including Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri and Oklahoma, to attend.

"We usually have a picnic in the summer, but this year we thought we'd try this," Wilkinson said. "We also saw no reason to keep it to ourselves."

Frost opened Saturday's concert to the public and involved Lifelink International Adoption and Central Illinois Adoptive Families as co-sponsors.

Derek and Allison's mother, Debbie, said such events help her stay in touch with other parents whose children have similar backgrounds and issues.

"It's not uncommon for these children to present with developmental problems because of improper nutrition and little stimulation before they were adopted," she said. "Children adopted at older ages have a whole other set of issues with trust and bonding."

Lewis and her husband, David, adopted Allison when she was 8 months old.

Russia is a country of contrasts, she said, with its people tending to be either very rich or very poor. Russian children adopted by

Russian groups bring singing, dancing, culture to viewers

Friday, July 21, 2006

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Herald & Review

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Moscow Nights, Golden Gates to perform at LSA gymnasium

By ALICIA SPATES
H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR — Decatur receives a culture shock when two prize-winning world renowned Russian groups perform in concert at the Lutheran School Association.

Hosted by Lifelink, an adoption agency in Champaign, and Frost International Adoptions based in Potomac Falls, Va., Moscow Nights and Golden Gates perform at 2 p.m. Saturday in the gymnasium of the school located at 2001 E. Mound Road, Decatur.

Golden Gates is a group of children from an elite music school in St. Petersburg, Russia. Their concert program includes songs, rituals, folk stories and games.

Moscow Nights is a trio — Vitaliy Bezrodnov, Oleg Kruglyakov and Makar Goldish — of classically trained artists, whose act includes humorous dancing, singing traditional Russian songs and education on Russian culture.

Moscow Nights' Bezrodnov said in a phone interview, "Our group is unique, even for Russia."

He described traditional Russian folk music as not being appreciated

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Moscow Nights and Golden Gates

WHEN: 2 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Lutheran School Association gymnasium, 2001 E. Mound Road, Decatur

ADMISSION: \$10 to \$7 per person; for tickets, contact Barbara Wilkinson at (815) 584-1579 or Debbie Perry at (217) 875-0019. Tickets will be available at the door.

ON THE WEB:
www.russianfolk.com

A catered luncheon will be available for an additional fee. The event is open to the public.

in Russia at one time.

According to the group's Web site, Bezrodnov used to travel the Russian countryside and interview the eldest member of each village to gain accurate knowledge of Russia's history and then incorporate it into the show.

"We teach appreciation of the past," he said. "We combine the music, entertainment and history part together."

Bezrodnov said the group encourages children and adults to participate in the show and talk about Russian culture in between performances.

Barbara Wilkinson, client coordinator for Frost International Adoptions, said the event is an opportunity for families to enjoy real Russian folk music and culture without traveling to Russia.

"It's an opportunity to take in something that isn't normally in (Decatur)," she said. The event is open to the public.

Proceeds from the event will go toward orphanages in St. Petersburg, Russia, that contain a lot of children, but not a lot of money to support them all.

"They try to do what they can for the children with the money they have," Wilkinson said of the orphanages.

Bezrodnov said there are more than 50 orphanages in St. Petersburg that have a huge need for transportation. The money can help buy a bus to drive the children to where they need to go, he said.

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