

## Moscow-based charity organizations

"Anna" Women's Crisis Center	124-6185; 135-1163
Action for Russia's Children	945-2493
Center for Humanitarian Aid	285-1107; 257-3010
Downside Up	256-4525
Hasidic Capella	464-7142
Medecins Sans Frontieres	246-3180
Operation Smile	961-2723; 961-2724
Salvation Army	911-2600; 911-2956
United Way	187-1780

her baby in the hospital for its own good, but she ignored their advice. "We never once considered giving up our child, no matter how hard the future would be," she says.

Today, Ivan's grandfather takes him on the two-hour commute into Moscow twice a week to use Downside Up's free services, including Moscow's only integrated kindergarten. Ivan also attends private speech therapy twice a week, which Alekseyeva says she can pay for as long as her job in KPMG's human resource department remains stable.

Downside Up's programs serve 65 families and the money to fund them comes mainly from two annual fund-raisers — a bike ride outside Moscow and a mountain climbing expedition in Africa. "All the money raised goes straight back to the kids' programs," says Reilly. Operating costs for the staff are funded through private donors, and corporations like Johnson & Johnson donate time, services and products to the day care and school. "It's a miracle that we have this center," says Vadim Rukin. "Both Vanya and I are learning what to do to make him happy."

### Shining a light on our heritage

Against similar odds, Alexander Tsalyuk is trying to perform a miracle of his own on the other side of the Russian capital. Tsalyuk is the artistic director of Hasidic Capella, a 20-man choir that performs ancient Russian and Jewish folk music, remnants of a culture that barely survived the Soviet regime. "Our grandfathers who knew the hymns died, and books where they were written were destroyed," says Tsalyuk. "We want to keep this beautiful piece of culture alive."

Until recently, Tsalyuk's search for funding was limited to the Jewish community. But the economic plight of his patron, the Marina Roscha Synagogue, has forced him to broaden his search. "They told us they would give us funding only if we could secure half of the amount we need," Tsalyuk says. "I'm not a business manager. I'm a musician. I have no time to be a business manager but this is what we desperately need. I'm willing to pay someone as big a commission as they want to work for our survival."

Tsalyuk knows the task of finding a well-heeled patron is daunting in a time of economic crisis, when the generous are squeezed and millions of Russians are being pushed below the poverty line. "Our troubles aren't as tragic as homeless families but still we have our own sad tale," says the 28-year-old director, who holds advanced degrees in the history of Jewish liturgical music. "We've had a brief window to shine a light on our heritage ... but the light could go out again. The faces of hungry children are hard to ignore, and culture usually suffers when there is no bread."

About 30,000 homeless people wander the streets in Russia's capital but only five city-run shelters exist to assist them, according to Moscow City's Social Protection Department. The Center for Humanitarian Aid, founded by Ethiopian Namrud Negash, distributes hot food to up to 200 poor and homeless people each day at the Russian Orthodox St. Peter and Paul Church near Komsomolskaya Ploshchad.

Negash says the government is the main culprit hindering his efforts to serve the city's destitute. The soup kitchen was forced to move from its location at the Kazan Station in June as part of a citywide effort to clean up the capital ahead of last summer's World Youth Games. A month later, the feeding program resumed at the church.

The program is run by both Russian and foreign volunteers, and most of its budget comes from individual donations and fund-raising events like the recent American Woman's Organization winter bazaar. The organization gathered a legion of artisans under one roof for a sale, 10 percent of which went to the center. Last year, the bazaar brought in almost \$90,000. "Last year proceeds went to [an American-based organization]. This year with such a bad winter ahead our members saw a need to give here," says AWO President Christy Ramos.

Fund-raising events tend to tap into the expat community in Moscow, ranging from auctions to wine tastings to holiday balls, and most if not all the proceeds are donated to Russian-based programs. Last year the United Way office kicked off its first campaign to raise money for the five local organizations it supports. These include The Salvation Army, The Moscow Medical Center for Treatment of the Paralyzed, Medecins Sans Frontieres, Logos — a printing and publishing center for the blind, and Russian-based Salyus — an organization which counsels and helps families with disabled children. Thanks to the blue-chip names

*The Hasidic Capella keeps the old songs alive.*

on its board list, the United Way's 1997 fund-raising campaign raised \$100,000, 75 percent of which was from corporate contributions. This year, United Way hopes to double that amount.

Downside Up's Reilly says that when it comes to giving, she can always count on the same faces and companies — usually foreign. Russians give to charitable organizations once they trust them, Medina says. But for businesses, in contrast to individuals, philanthropy is riskier. "They don't want to advertise their profits or attract the attention of the tax police or mafia."

Yet foreign companies with a history of giving have learned that political points can be won with a humanitarian gesture, no matter how small. Employees "appreciate it when we see our company making a contribution to Russia, opening up opportunities for our own people," says Alexander Chernov, the head of external affairs for Coca-Cola in Russia.

Public relations considerations aside, what shouldn't be overlooked is the impact of giving on those who need it the most. Just ask Ivan's grandad. "My grandson can catch a ball. He can talk to me. All of these good things are due to Downside Up. Do you know how happy that makes me?"

by Margaret Coker

RR

