

# Angels from Abroad gives joy to Russian orphans

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DALLAS—Imagine growing up without ever being tucked in, without bedtime stories or good-night kisses. That would be the only life 17 Russian orphans might ever know, were it not for the Buckner [Angels from Abroad](#) program.



Angels from Abroad participant Alexander give his host mother, Becky Boles, a goodbye hug.

About 750,000 children in Russia are orphans, many between the ages of 6 and 16 years old. Angels from Abroad is an orphan-hosting program that seeks to show this age group what it's like to be part of a family and help raise awareness about adoption of older children.

This year, 17 Russian Angels stayed with host families from late July to mid-August, experiencing typical Texas summer activities like swimming, Vacation Bible School and even a rodeo.

“We try and find experiences these kids wouldn't normally get at the orphanage,” said Beth Brinkmeyer, coordinator for Angels from Abroad. “It

also gives the orphans an opportunity to meet other Russian children who are now adopted.”

The orphans also participated in a day at the salon, a day at the lake and a trip to the zoo. Former orphans who have been adopted participated as translators or just came along to reconnect with their Russian friends.

Since its start in 2004, Angels from Abroad has inspired 30 families to adopt from Russia. And although adoption is not the goal of the program, “it always makes us happy to see our children find forever homes,” Brinkmeyer said.

The Angels from Abroad program depends on donors, families and ministry partners to give the orphans an experience of a lifetime. Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall and First Baptist Church in Athens played a big role in this year’s events, Brink-meyer said.



Robin and Mitch Fortner and their daughters enjoyed their time with Maxim, an Angels from Abroad participant.

Lake Pointe provided donated suitcases and new toiletry items for the orphans when they arrived in the United States.

The church also held a two-day Vacation Bible School, where the children learned songs, played games and heard Bible stories.

“What a great opportunity Buck-ner gives us,” said Mary Jo Marvin, VBS leader and member of Lake Pointe Church.

“If I can get people to see these children, we can get more families from here to host, and we can spread awareness of the needs of these children.”

First Baptist in Athens provided food, drinks, snacks, snow-cones, bounce houses, fish fry and tent setup for a day at the lake in Athens.

Tracey and James Blakely from Garland have been host parents for five years and involved with the Angels program since its beginning. They even adopted their son Dima, the first child they hosted in the program.

The family also keeps in contact with many of the other children they have hosted who now are adopted into other families.

“Angels from Abroad is a life-changing experience,” Blakely said. “You can’t even put it into words.”

To learn more about the Angels from Abroad program, visit [www.angelsfromabroad.org](http://www.angelsfromabroad.org).