

## **Dentaid helps the Children's Charitable Fund in Russia**

Recently, a charity promoting blind awareness in the UK invited a number of potential supporters to a charitable reception. Upon arrival, instead of receiving the customary glass of white wine and nibbles, guests were promptly all blindfolded. They were then given a handgrip like that upon a guide dog and led for a walk outside. Over the next hour, they encountered staircases, lifts, escalators and finally a return crossing of the busy main road by way of a pelican crossing. When the guests were finally led back to the reception and the blindfolds removed, the potential supporters had a better appreciation of what it is like to be blind than the most compelling video presentation the charity could have produced. No doubt the supporters were more moved to support the charity in its work as a result of even momentarily experiencing the challenges of blindness.

This is true for Dentaid too. While the prospect of Dentaid trying to induce temporary toothache upon potential supporters at presentation evenings would, we suspect, be neither viable nor result in high attendance, a number of Dentaid supporters have reported first being moved to support Dentaid following a personal episode of toothache!

However, recently the subject of blindness and toothache was brought vividly home to Dentaid, following an approach for help by the Children's Charitable Fund (CCF), a charity working in Russia. The CCF primarily works in the remote Republic of Bashkortostan situated in the southern part of the rugged Ural Mountains. While they run dozens of projects ranging from the supplying basic humanitarian aid to disadvantaged communities to running training courses for youths and orphans, much of their focus is upon helping the high number of blind people in this remote region. Blindness can sometimes be a major disadvantage wherever one happens to live, but difficulties can be even more acute in areas of the world where state support is lacking, affordable medical care less available and where few dedicated blind charities exist. Certainly, in Bashkortostan, blind people are severely disadvantaged. One of the most acute areas they suffer is in the field of access to healthcare, and particularly oral health care. There are 3,000 registered blind people in Ufa alone (Bashkortostan's capital city,) including 600 blind children. Most of the blind community receive very low pensions and have no opportunity to find a job, so few can afford treatment in commercial dental clinics. As a result, CCF became aware that a large proportion of blind people in the region were also suffering acute dental pain, and they were determined to remedy this.

Therefore, in 2006, they approached Dentaid to help them set up a dental clinic, which would be dedicated to the oral health needs of the blind community of Bashkortostan. Happily, with sponsorship from Dentaid, CCF and ChildAid a complete dental surgery has just left Dentaid's workshops in Wiltshire to be crated and start its journey to the project. And while Dentaid normally supplies high quality and fully refurbished second-hand dental surgeries to dozens of such projects annually, thanks to a donation of a brand new dental unit by A-dec (UK) Ltd, the blind community of Bashkortostan will be receiving the very best dental care in the entire region. The dental service will be sustained thanks to the Bashkir branch of the Public Organisation for the Blind of Russia providing a dental treatment room rent-free and the CCF employing a full time dentist and dental nurse.

Dentaid continues to work in partnership with overseas projects to provide dental equipment to needy communities all over the world. Our equipment operation is expanding and the need for good quality dental equipment has never been higher. To enable us to satisfy the demand in developing countries for dental surgeries, we would be most grateful for donations of single pot compressors, ultrasonic scalers and capsule amalgamators. If you wish to donate these items, or any other good quality dental equipment, please phone Robert Leak on 01794 325149 or email him on [workshop@dentaid.org](mailto:workshop@dentaid.org).