

Volunteer News

Dear Friends,

Here at Concordia we've started 2011, the Year of the Volunteer in style and this issue of Chat will tell you what we're doing to celebrate and how you can get involved! This year we have redesigned our logo, launched our new website, released our Summer Programme of over 1,500 exciting new projects, sent the Flag off Volunteering off around the globe as well as waving goodbye and welcoming home many enthusiastic volunteers, including Asha and Hannah who have kindly shared their experiences with us for this issue. Read on to find out more....

Other exciting news from the Concordia office is the arrival of Nadia, our new Medium Term Volunteer who has come all the way from Russia to help us during the busy summer season. However, Nadia is not the only new arrival. We also welcome our manager Fiona's baby boy, Finn to the team.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Take care

Zoe, Francesco, Francesca, Chloe, Nadia and Fiona
Concordia Team



Asha Jennings-Grant's project in Mongolia, 'The Land of Blue Sky and I'

Unlike most project experiences, I began mine feeling very tired. Prior to my arrival to the project, I had already spent 3 days in Moscow, travelled to Mongolia for 5 days on the Trans-Siberian train and went on a 3 day trip to the countryside (which I thoroughly recommend). So I was slightly drained of energy but intrigued to see how the next two weeks would pan out.

My first day of the project was quite relaxed. With an early start, I left my hostel and was picked up by the manager of MCE (Mongolian Workcamps Exchange). We arrived at an apartment block with children's climbing frames and play sets scattered around. I was then introduced to the supervisor of the project and he took me to our apartment, where I was pleasantly greeted by the rest of the volunteers. There were 2 girls from France, a girl from South Korea and a guy from Hong Kong. The apartment wasn't fully furnished but was equipped with the essentials, such as a kitchen, bathroom and 2 living areas, which we slept in. We also had a sofa bed and a TV that occasionally played badly dubbed episodes of *Lost*.

After our quick introductions we went to visit the first part of the project, a children's orphanage. As soon as we entered the building, we were surrounded by knee-high kids welcoming us and grabbing us by the hand. We were taken

to a classroom where a group of hyper and energetic 8-12 year olds waited for us. I realised this was the class we'd be

spending time with for the next two weeks. The kids spoke little English, some more than others, but we were able to communicate quite well and had a very entertaining meet and greet session where we were exposed to some of the talents of the children.



(Above: Asha, bottom right, with the other volunteers and their supervisor "K" at the orphanage)

After a play session and personal tour around the rooms of the orphanage, we made our way to the second part of the workcamp, a secondary school. As we entered the classroom, the students were already sat down at their desks and surprisingly in uniform (well, partially). There were mainly girls at the age of 14-16 years old. They were more laid back than the kids at the orphanage but still excited to meet us and full of enthusiasm. We divided ourselves around the class and got to know the students in more detail. I was quite amazed at the variation in the levels of English in the class. While many children spoke good English, some were at same level as the younger kids we met at the orphanage.

Before the project, I hadn't planned anything in the way of lesson plans and activities for the children in either group, because I didn't know what to expect. I was very open to see who we'd be teaching and at what level. Each day before class, we would discuss and brainstorm ideas for the next lesson. We decided that each session would have a different focus, for example grammar, punctuation, vocabulary etc. Then we would always end class with a game of charades or hangman. At the orphanage, our sessions were less structured and we mainly organised lots of arts and craft activities. We also helped with the cleaning on the weekends, which the entire orphanage (120ish) took part in.



(Above: volunteers with the children at the orphanage)

At the end of each day and sometimes on the weekends, we had the opportunity to visit places around Ulaanbaatar such as museums, temples and watch traditional performances. During the second week of the project, we also were given two days to take a trip into the countryside and stay a couple of nights in a ger (tent) with a nomadic family. In this "free time", we really got an insight into the Mongolian culture, being apart of the inner city and rural way of life. My experience of volunteering in Mongolia was very rewarding and fulfilling. Teaching English to schoolchildren was definitely a challenge but I truly have learnt new aspects about myself. I am very pleased that I was able to spend time in a community that was so welcoming, polite and helpful to foreigners. Through this experience, I have met some great friends and been exposed to a beautiful country that I hope I will return to in the near future.

Asha-Jennings-Grant, Volunteer in Mongolia, 2010

Would you like to be involved?

For projects in the North South programme (Latin America, Africa and Asia) volunteers must attend a North South Preparation weekend with the Concordia team in Brighton.

North South Preparation weekend dates:

17th – 19th June 2011

8th – 10th July 2011

For more information or to book a place:

-visit our website www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk

-call our office 01273 422 218

-send us an email, info@concordiavolunteers.org.uk

What could you be doing?

- Turtle conservation in Mexico
- Work with street children in India
- HIV/AIDS awareness in Malawi
- Clown training in Morocco
- Elephant conservation in Indonesia
- Help in an orphanage in Vietnam
- Re-plant the forest in Mongolia
- Harvest rice in Hong-Kong
- Build a Primary School in Kenya



Fly the flag for Volunteering...around the world!

2011 is an important year for volunteering. Not only is it the European Year of volunteering but also the International Year of the volunteer +10. With such a big year ahead of us, Concordia is very excited to be part of a worldwide Alliance Flag Tour campaign promoting and encourage active involvement within civil society.

Two flags will be travelling through 4 continents, 25 countries and hosted by 36 different voluntary organisations to celebrate the valuable contribution the voluntary service has on society, communities and individuals. The participating organisations will take the flag to one of their voluntary projects or an organised event, inviting and informing the local community.

More than 100 staff and volunteers attended the opening ceremony in Armenia on the 4th March. The two flags have now started their journey's and are on their way to South Korea and Wales. The Flag Tour will finish at the General Assembly 2011 in November in Southampton, United Kingdom hosted by Concordia with a celebration and display of the season's events.



(Above: launching the flag in Armenia)

Be a part of this event! Follow the flag around the world to celebrate this special year of volunteering.

www.allianceflagtour2011.blogspot.com/

**Hannah Kennedy's
EVS project in Latvia**



Not so long ago, or so it feels, I was saying goodbye to my family and friends, excited at the prospect of a year in another country, where I knew none of the language and couldn't ever pronounce the name of the city in which I was to live. The time between hearing about this last minute project, being accepted by my hosting organisation and arriving had been a matter of weeks. However, I had known about EVS and had been looking for a project for almost a year by this point.

I've now been in Latvia for around five months. Five months of highs and lows, many firsts and new friends, and, ultimately, new experiences and memories that will last a long time. But there's still just about seven months to go, in which I hope to see and experience many more new things.

My project is in the Language and Cultural Centre 'World at Our Home' in Rēzekne, the seventh biggest city in Latvia, not far from the Russian border. Due to this a fair majority of the population are Russian speaking. A language I have only

just started to learn. However, in my first four months I had Latvian lessons, and while I'm nowhere near

fluent I am able to at least make myself understood mostly and understand others if they speak slowly. Which is a big improvement on when I first arrived not even being able to pronounce the name of the place I was to live in.



'World at Our Home' are involved in organising and participating in seminars and youth exchanges in Latvia, other European and neighbouring countries. As well as this they also hold weekly language lessons and act as a sending, coordinating and hosting organisation for EVS volunteers. Most of the lessons are English, but recently Spanish, German and French started as well, as in early January we were joined by three new volunteers.

In the past few weeks we've been busy writing applications for two seminars and a youth exchange to hopefully be held at the end of this year. As well as this we applied for a cross-border project between Latvia,

Lithuania and Belarus with a very confusing application form.

I'm from southern England, where snow isn't so common and the coldest I remember it being is -10°C so you can imagine my surprise when I heard last winter here was around -30°C and that it's normal for snow to last from November to March. So far about half of my time in Latvia has been covered in snow. This has some good points, such as being able to go ice skating and a first for me; sledging! In the last few days the snow has begun to melt and it's already beginning to remind me of Spring. I've also heard a lot about Summer which I'm looking forward to.

Like many things, being away from home can take some getting used to, especially if, like me, you haven't lived away from home before. What I basically want to say is I think EVS is an amazing experience. Yes it has it's up and downs, but so do most things. So if you're currently searching for a project I wish you luck in finding one soon and if you're on your project now I hope you enjoy the rest of the time wherever you may be.

*Hannah Kennedy, EVS Volunteer in
Latvia, 2011*



***Would you like to take a year
out to volunteer abroad but
don't have the funds...?
Join EVS!***

European Voluntary Service (EVS) is open to any one aged 18-30 who is a resident of the UK. You can volunteer for 6-12 months anywhere in Europe. A grant covers your travel, medical insurance, accommodation, training and living expenses; so there is no cost to volunteer.

Here are two of the thousands of EVS projects available:

Country: **Turkey**

Dates: 30th June 2011 – 29th June 2012

Fully funded

Project Code: 2009-TR-62

Work: Volunteers will work for a Youth Club which organises educational, cultural and foreign language courses. During the project the volunteer will work at the Eurodesk office, help with publicity and promotion in High Schools and Universities, help produce a

short film, participate in the cultural and artistic activities of the organisation and carry out a Turkish language course.

Country: **Portugal**

Dates: 1st May 2011 – 30th September 2012

Fully funded

Project Code: 2009-PT-23

Work: volunteer at a non-profit organisation, whose aim is to study and promote themes such as active European citizenship, cultural exchange and solidarity, on local, national and European levels. Volunteer work will include, working at the information office, awareness campaigns, assisting with workshops, working with other volunteers in collaboration with social organisations, carrying out social studies and helping at special events such as folk festivals.

**For more information contact Chloe Foster
evs@concordiavolunteers.org.uk or call 01273 426 491**



Special Projects

We've picked 3 projects that we think look particularly good!



Ha Cau Orphanage, Vietnam.

Project code: VPV14-11

Dates: 11/07/2011-23/07/2011

Age: 19 – 70

Work: Ha Cau Orphanage is an NGO that supports children in difficult situations. It provides housing, education, basic care and vocational training to help children create a better future for themselves. Volunteers will teach English to the children, organise games and make crafts with the children to help fundraise. They will also help redecorate the classrooms and improve their library. Volunteers will stay at the orphanage and there will be a curfew at 10pm. English will be the common language but volunteers are encouraged to learn the basics of the Vietnamese.

Study theme: This project will focus on the environment and the importance of daily eco-friendly practices.

Travel terminal: Hanoi Airport

Volunteers must attend a **North South Preparation** with Concordia, see page two for more information.

Extra fee: 160 Euros payable on arrival



Piedicavallo, Environmental and Conservation project in Italy.

Project code: LEG19-11

Dates: 04/07/2011-18/07/2011

Age: 18 - 70

Work : Piedicavallo is a small village which lies at the foot of the Rosa Mountain in the Cervo Valley, an area rich in history and nature. Volunteers will be involved in maintaining green areas, restoring traditional stone buildings and organising cultural events. They will also have the chance to go trekking and climbing in the mountains, enjoying the breathtaking nature.

Accommodation: local hostel.

Travel terminal: Airport of Milan or Torino



Kundapur, Volunteer with Tribal Communities in India.

Project Code: FSL-WC-497-11

Dates: 15/08/2011-28/08/2011

Age: 19 - 70

Work: Volunteers will work with the tribal communities alongside a local NGO in Kundapur in areas such as education, environmental protection, reforestation, tree planting, health and hygiene awareness. Volunteers need to be creative in their approach to give out the message through drama and street plays. Volunteers are asked to bring educational materials and ideas from their own country.

Volunteers must attend a **North South Preparation** with Concordia, see page two for more information.

Extra fee: 7,500 Rupees payable on arrival.

Vist our website to **apply** for these projects or take a look at the **1,500 other exciting opportunities available.** www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk



Concordia Calendar

- **Coordinator Training:** 15 – 17th April. *This event is fully booked.*
- **Concordia Open Day:** 11th May, 12-5pm. *If you're interested in volunteering abroad, but can't decide where, or you just want more information, come and join us for a chat at our office.*
- **Concordia Open Day:** 2nd June, 12-5pm
- **North South Preparation:** 17-19th June. *Places still available! See p.2 for more info.*
- **Concordia Open Day:** 29th June, 12-5pm
- **North South Preparation:** 8th- 10th July. *Places still available!*

Hoodies and T-shirt



You can buy our beautiful T-shirts and Hoodies online at the Concordia Shop.

www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk/shop

“Privet” Hello from Nadia

From participating in several short-term projects through the one LTV I have done, I finally got my dream MTV project. I really enjoy making it here at Concordia office. I am sending old, present and future volunteers my warm Siberian greetings.



(Above, Nadia - Concordia Office Medium Term Volunteer)

More information?

If you would like more information about anything that you've read about in this issue, get in touch.

Email us: info@concordiavolunteers.org.uk

Call us: 01273 422 218

Visit our website: www.concordiavolunteers.org.uk

Come to an Open Day: Concordia
19 North Street
Portslade, Brighton
BN41 1D

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue, especially Asha and Hannah for sharing their experiences. Until next time...

