

March 1, 2009

Dear Ministry Friend,

Greetings from Washington, DC! It's a dream to be able to say those words, so first I want to thank you for your prayers that made possible my coming! I've enjoyed my ministry work thus far in inner-city Washington. Although there have been the usual adjustments that an international visitor needs to make, by now I have adjusted to almost all cultural differences (I'm still looking for new experiences, though!).

The main thing that shocked me at first was the abundance of motor vehicles and almost no pedestrians. It was frightening to walk even two blocks to the local CVS. Now I can do it easily. I also learned how to use the buses and the subway, how to work with a checking account (my first!), how to buy things with a debit card, and how to use the microwave. All these things might seem elementary to you, but to me they were like the first mountains I have overcome. I've also gone ice skating for the first time, and bowling for the first time! Please excuse if this letter seems a bit long, but I thought you would be interested what I'm doing.



Figure 1 Southeast White House

I am staying at the Southeast White House (SEWH). It is a 3-story house, nicely furnished and well cared for, with almost never-ceasing activity going on inside. SEWH provides many services for inner-city Washington, and the interns help with these. Every weekday we interns have to be downstairs by 9 am, ready to start work. In the mornings we usually clean up the house, because visitors can come by any day. Then we have some free time getting ready for the afternoon activities with the children. They come every day after school for 2 hours to take part in different programs like homework club, book club, field trips, SS Crew (Bible Study) etc. In the evenings we are often free to do what we want.

In the first several weeks of my stay here at the SEWH, I was able to learn a lot about various programs for the community. One of very important programs is called "Friends". These 'friends' are people who commit themselves to mentoring of 7-9 children from at-risk families for 12 years, from the 1st grade till the 12th. These full-time mentors make a commitment to stay in that position for no less than 3 years. The programs are aimed to help children learn how to be successful citizens and good people, and to help prepare them for college. There is also a volunteer mentoring program where mentors make a one-year commitment. I applied to be such a mentor.



Figure 2 One of the boys from our ministry.

Another area of community service is the "People's House" – a program providing help to teens and adults in various aspects: job search, college application, food, medical aid, clothes, etc.



Figure 3 The children and I enjoy a field trip.

There are also programs designed to help teenagers find their way in life and get them off the streets. One of these programs is "Girls Rule". Once every two weeks teenage girls get together, have dinner, and discuss various topics of their life with their leader. Besides that, every other Wednesday night, teenage boys and girls meet at "Forums" where they have interesting discussions and lots of fun. Also, every Wednesday afternoon a group of teenage boys spends several hours learning how to cook.

The SEWH is also a place of meeting and reconciliation for all people regardless of their background or ethnicity. Every Tuesday people come to enjoy the prayer breakfast we serve. For us it means that we get up at 6 am. For them it means a good breakfast, interesting discussions and important messages from God's Word. In addition, every other Wednesday we serve lunch for anyone who wants to come. Once a month on Monday nights we serve dinner for women from the neighborhood. It's called Moms' Night Out, a time for them to enjoy the evening while their children have their special program in another room. The moms get together, eat, discuss things from their life, study the Bible, and hear guest speakers talk on various issues of life.

God is constantly teaching me something here. Being a foreigner in your country, I understood more fully what those words mean from Hebrews about our being wanderers in this world. Indeed, this planet is just our temporary home. Another important thing was my realization that time is short (I have less than 10 months left), so I am responsible to do as much as I can for the Lord every day. This is why I am now choosing among different opportunities to serve at weekends. I have decided to be a part of Eternal Access – a drama and music ministry and help with children's ministry in a very large church – McLean Bible Church in Vienna, Virginia.

There are lots of things that I would like to implement later in our Moldovan society or anywhere else where God will send me. Like, for example, friendly behavior of people, the ideas of moms' night out, prayer breakfasts, etc.

Thank you once again for making my coming and learning possible. In closing I want to update you on my financial situation. On advice from the SEWH team, we budgeted for my monthly expenses (mostly food and miscellaneous) to be about \$250. I'm finding that with transportation (I don't have a car), insurance, and other expenses, my actual monthly total is about \$400. When I arrived, I had enough money from my generous American friends to remain through May. I knew I would need to raise the rest of this money, plus any expenses for classes or seminars I would want to take (probably around \$600). If any of you would be able to help me stay through December, I would be most appreciative. By law, I am not allowed to work with the visa I have, so my financial support can come only from donors. I feel I can do and learn much in America that will be useful back in Moldova, and I would like to be able to stay the full time I am allowed. Checks can be sent to the International Teaching Ministry, 2425 Old Dennis Road, Weatherford, TX 76086, and you will need to write "for Marika Deriuseva" on the Memo line.

It is difficult for me to ask for this help, especially knowing about the financial crisis in the US, but I also know that God is faithful, and if He wants me to stay the full time here, He'll find a way to help me with these financial concerns.

Yours in His Service,

Marika



Figure 4 One of my new friends