



## News Update:

### Humanitarian Aid Delivery to the Ukraine December 2009

On Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December Steve Taylor and John Taylor from the Drop Inn Ministries in Ramsey delivered over 9 tonnes of humanitarian aid including 1700 shoe boxes to the charity Morning Star in Rivne, Ukraine.

All started slowly mid August with a few shoe boxes filled with gifts being delivered to the 'Drop In' thrift shop on the corner North Shore Road in Ramsey. But as word got out hundreds of individuals and organisations old and new began to respond with ones, tens, and hundreds of shoe boxes. Each of the special boxes being destined for a deserving child was cared for and prepared for travel by Steve and his trusty helpers.

Although Steve's isn't the only charity on the Island that organises shoe boxes what does make him different is that he delivers the presents in person and ensures they are distributed to the most needy children.

The shoe box destination, Rivne, is a city of 1.1 million people living on the doorstep of Chernobyl, many of whom worked and lived in the Chernobyl area and all of whom rely on food grown in Chernobyl to survive. The rate of thyroid and bone cancers in the city far exceeds the averages across the globe which has led to a large number of children with one or no parents. It is estimated that at least 3000 very needy children live in this city alone. Although the Ukrainians have a national health service the medication has to be paid for making them unattainable for many.

Meanwhile back in Ramsey, Steve loaded all the shoe boxes with extra bags of clothes for all ages, toys, push chairs and hygiene goods into a shipment container destined for Belfast where the lorry awaited its 9 tonne load ready for departure with Steve and John on the 9<sup>th</sup> December. Also travelling with John and Steve was the intrepid explorer 'Teddy'

from the Ramsey Grammar SEN unit. Teddy made the journey a very special time!

After travelling the fair seas from Larne to Cairn Ryan 500 extra shoe boxes were squeezed into the lorry at Carlton, Bedfordshire and after a little sleep the journey continued. Such journeys always have their challenges and this journey was no exception with a heavy load and the stench of burning rubber getting worse the lorry had to stop and a rescue mission ensued. Fortunately and rather miraculously the explorers found themselves right next to a commercial vehicle workshop! For next to no money their mechanics set about fixing the vehicle and John, Steve and Teddy were back on track to Rivne. But challenge two struck at the Ukrainian/Polish border as the temp headed for -13 degrees and three days of wrangling with officials took place. Despite two nights of trying to sleep in a freezing lorry and morale at an all time low the 'Border Inspector' was finally satisfied and a flurry of activity saw the lorry driving into the Ukraine at last and the mood in the lorry lifted to almost ecstatic levels.

Teddy, Steve and John finally arrived in Rivne with their precious load safe and sound and once refreshed by a little food, sleep and shower-action the team set about connecting with the local charity 'Morning Star' and their residential homes for children of all ages and their contacts with families experiencing extreme social deprivation around the city. The face of every child and family who received gifts was incredible and despite temperatures dropping to -20 degrees joy filled their eyes. They were truly thankful. Teddy particularly enjoyed giving gifts!

The journey home saw heavy snow around a foot deep and after a few delays along the way and another night sleeping in the lorry at Calais Teddy, John and Steve eventually arrived back on the Island.

The Ukrainians, Steve, John and Teddy would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped to make this happen - those who gave shoe boxes or 'extras' such as blankets, to those who checked and prepared the boxes ready for transport; individuals, schools, churches and organisations such as Dalmeny, Eastcliffe Unit, Government Office, W.I., Royal Bank of Scotland, Kewaigue, Auldryn Schools and Ramsey Grammar Schools. Your generosity and support has made this most needy trip happen. Thank you.