

Port Staff Member Travels To Educate Orphans

As Port Manatee Warehouse Manager Mac McGaha watches hundreds of thousands of bananas being unloaded into chilled warehouses at the port, he can't help smiling.

He smiles because it reminds him of the many orphans he and his wife, Ann treated to bananas on one of their trips abroad as missionaries.

"They were so excited to have such a sweet and fresh snack that they ate the peel and everything," McGaha said.

Unknown to many of Mac's port colleagues, nearly a decade ago he and his wife began traveling abroad as missionaries. Their experiences, although challenging, are inspiring -- especially for the children whose lives they touched.

Their first trip in the mid-1990s was three weeks long. They traveled to Siberia teaching educators Christian ethics and morality curriculum. McGaha remembers it as being extremely challenging. "It was March and it was cold, but the people were so warm and inviting."

After that first trip, Campus Crusade for Christ asked the McGahas to go to the Ukraine for a year. This time they supported teachers and actually taught English and bible stories to 6th through 11th grade students.

They ended up living in the Ukraine for four years. Although their living conditions were rough, they enjoyed working with the children.

"The culture and lifestyle there was tough to get used to, but the children were so inspiring," McGaha said.

With their faith motivating them, the McGahas continued traveling to the Ukraine, making friends and providing hope and guidance to those in need.

Last summer the McGahas organized a trip with 15 others to strictly help orphanages.

“My wife and I started visiting the orphanages when we were teaching,” McGaha said. “The children are so bright and their situation is so sad. We would go and read to them, give them snacks like bananas and just pay attention to the them...they loved it.”

After their trips, the McGahas often continued writing letters to the children. Many of the replies beg for their return.

This summer they plan to embark on another visit to the orphanages with another group of people from their church, including their 17-year-old granddaughter.

Even though the McGahas have been married for nearly 31 years, raised two daughters and are enjoying give grandchildren, they don't plan to slow down. However, no they plan to reach out to children closer to home. They're currently taking steps to serve as foster parents.

(This article was written by Chrissy Kruger-Gruendyke and appeared in the May-June 2005 issue of Deepwater, Port Manatee's bi-monthly newsletter)