

## **International Day of Families Observed in Russia**

Olga Nedzayminva, Dmitry Oficerov and Dmitry Samko  
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Moscow, Russia—UPF-Russia marked the 2015 United Nations International Day of Families with events in three major cities.

### **Ryazan**

In the historic old city of Ryazan, which is about 120 miles southeast of Moscow, a festival was held in the Ryazan Regional Children's Library on May 15. In the warm atmosphere of the gathering, participants spoke about the value and importance of families and the need for good interpersonal relations.

The participants of the festival advocated doing good deeds, and agreed that in doing good for others, one is sure to receive back a reward from others.

Families that participated in the festival created artwork on the theme "Our Happy Family" and congratulated their new friends with their dances, songs and poems.

Each participant went home with the desire to convey their warmth and care to those who are near to them.

### **Novosibirsk**

A discussion and seminar on "Family and Goals of Sustainable Development" was held on May 16 at the Center for Implementation of Technology in Novosibirsk, the largest city in Asian Russia. Among the participants were young people, leaders and representatives of socially oriented NGOs. The main topic of discussion was the role and impact of the family on personal development and world peace. Dmitry Oficerov, secretary general of UPF-Russia, Siberian chapter, gave two slide presentations: "Family Values and World Peace in the 21st Century" and "The Family as the School of Love and Peace."

The state of the family has long been on the agenda worldwide. Although much has been said and done in support of the family, the divorce rate and the number of orphans have not decreased. It is therefore necessary to promote family values strongly, especially now, when the UN members are widely discussing the theme of sustainable development. Unfortunately, the issue of the family in their discussions is not defined.

Panelists tried to assess how our society can encourage a culture of marriage and family. Of special concern is the fact that although in the mass media problems of "unfortunate" families are often discussed, there are no programs about successful and happy families.

In particular, UPF proposes that the state and society pay special attention to the following issues: it is necessary that schoolchildren be taught communication skills; premarital counseling should be promoted and made available; courses on marriage enrichment should be developed; and centers where couples with difficulties can seek advice should be founded. In addition, it would be widely useful, with the participation of the media, to organize public events to honor couples who have been married for decades, and to adapt the social system and structure of taxation and loans in favor of the family.

The United Nations has designated June 1 as the Global Day of Parents. Russia already has a holiday on June 1 known as Children's Day, so the date will be doubly valuable. The participants agreed to hold an event on June 1 that would continue to advocate for the family.



## Moscow

On May 17, the UPF-Moscow chapter and the Young Ambassadors for Peace met in the Russian State Library's Youth Department for a meeting entitled "Evolution of the Family in the Twenty-First Century" which was related to the UN International Day of Families.

The Day of Families is aimed at directing the world's attention to the many problems of the family. According to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "When any rights of even one family are violated, the unity of the entire world human family is under great threat." The well-being of the family is the guarantee for the successful development of the nation and the world, because it is in the family that a person experiences love, patience, compassion, mutual forgiveness, respect and affection. And these qualities are the basis for world peace.

The theme of the International Day of Families 2015—"Men in Charge? Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Contemporary Families"—stimulated a quite active and productive discussion, because the participants were mostly young people, whose main concern was how to build strong relations with the opposite sex, create a strong family, and not add to the sad statistics of divorce.

The participants listened with great interest to Alina Kontaryova, president of the "MnogoMama" Center for Assistance to Large Families. She shared her experience as a mother of four children, and as the head of an organization that helps 15,000 large families. Young people must understand that marriage is not just living under the same roof with a partner but sharing a common destiny forever, she said.

Christina Marandy, head of Children's Theater World, said that many parents are trying to realize the dreams of their youth through their children, regardless of the wishes of the children themselves, thereby sometimes creating the opposite effect.



"Miss University" winner Anna Kozlitina asked the audience what happiness means to each of them. It appeared that for many, happiness means a complete family with both parents and children. "Mr. University" winner Pavel Shlyakhin proposed a task, "Let us imagine how you would spend a day with your loved one when true love, in their opinion, should be revealed in full understanding."



Understanding and the ability to listen and trust are often said to be the most important conditions for strong and stable relations. One roundtable participant, Klara Klarina, warned against the "safety cushion": when people try to achieve everything by themselves without allowing the partner to realize his or her potential. For example, many women think about their career and social position, subconsciously surmising, "What if my husband will not be able take care of me and our children?!" In turn, some men try to become so independent that they no longer need a wife. All the participants agreed that we should "first try to understand, and then to be understood," as written by Stephen Covey in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*.

With the rapid changes in society's standards, the family is also changing. There are positive trends, but also challenges to traditional moral values and the rejection of such concepts as fidelity, marriage, chastity, trust, willingness to give life to children, etc. In this regard, the discussion of maintaining the happy and loyal family as the guarantor of stability and confidence in the future looks very important.