

First Steps: Gifts of Kindness

Thank you for partnering with us!



\$25 - A bag of soybeans

A 30 kg sack of soybeans will provide a daily cup of nutritious soymilk to 30 children for a month. First Steps is currently reaching 100,000 children with a daily cup of soymilk.

Donate \$ ____ towards a bag of soybeans.



\$50 - Sprinkles

The micronutrient Sprinkles program provides 18 months of sachets for a baby (6 to 24 months) and 1 year of sachets for a pregnant and nursing mother. A lack of nutrients in the diet impacts growth and brain development. Sprinkles prevents rickets and lowers rates of diarrhea and pneumonia (the leading causes of death in children under 2 years of age).

Donate \$ ____ towards Sprinkles.



\$100 - Stainless steel milk can

A 20-litre stainless steel milk can safely stores and transports soymilk from production centres to the children we serve.

Donate \$ ____ towards a milk can.



\$4,000 - A VitaGoat

The VitaGoat is powered by combustible fuel (wood, coal, etc.). It processes soybeans directly into soymilk and provides about 1500 cups of soymilk per day to hungry children. The main difference from the VitaCow is that the VitaGoat runs without electricity.

Donate \$ ____ towards a VitaGoat.

name _____
address _____
city _____ prov. _____ postal code _____
phone _____ email _____

Please make cheques payable to First Steps and forward to: 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada
BIN: 878227511 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes.
For further information contact us at: 604.732.0195 or www.firststepscanada.org

FIRST STEPS

news

WINTER 2013

“Feed My sheep.”
John 21:17

Following a recent visit to North Korea by Phil and Linda Schafran and Hannah Dissen (Oct. 27 – Nov. 2) there is much to be thankful for and much to lament as well. But first, thanks to each of you who faithfully pray for North Korea and respond to the words in John 21:17 to “feed My sheep.”

Thank you for your boundless outpouring of love and prayers, made possible by the gift of Christ through the Holy Spirit. That gift, both inside and outside of North Korea, is the foundation of our relationships, the basis of the trust invested in us and the reason we join in service as the Lord Himself ministers to the hearts of those we serve, working through us to accomplish what He wants.

In equal measure to the joy that comes with this work are the frustrations we sometimes experience. Recall Dokchon, the extremely deprived area we first assisted in August, 2012 following a flash flood and landslide that left thousands homeless and 46 dead. Since then we have visited Dokchon four times to confirm



A boy at the Wonsan Baby Home (orphanage) enjoys his cup of soymilk.

shipments, and earlier this year we were formerly invited by the local officials to work in partnership to supply soymilk to 18,000 very needy children up to age five. Despite the warm welcome and earnest request for assistance from the local stakeholders, during our most recent visit the First Steps team was advised that Dokchon no longer requires assistance. Even as we accept this decision, we'd cherish your prayers for wisdom and discernment as we go forward.

Another challenge has been the enormous logistics involved in shipping to North Korea. Given recent difficulties in getting a couple of our shipments through China customs we've decided to send only single-item shipments (i.e. Sprinkles or soybeans) in the future. This means that we will no longer be able to accept knitted items for inclusion in our shipments. We are so thankful for all the kind donations we've received so far.

Most of all we are thankful to partner with each of you on this journey of faith and for the opportunity to bless the lives of so many people in North Korea.

—Susan Ritchie, Executive Director

First Steps is a Christian humanitarian organization reaching out to children in DPR Korea. First Steps is based at 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada. BN: 87822 7511 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes. For further information, visit www.firststepscanada.org or call us at 604-732-0195.

Challenges and Joys Hannah Disson

I last visited the DPRK about 3 years ago and this time was surprised to see many changes after arriving in Pyongyang. New buildings had gone up while others had been markedly modernized through renovations. There were new traffic lights, pedestrian lights, and overall everything was more lit up (and stayed lit up!). There were many more cars on the road, as well as newer buses and taxis. People were abuzz with talk of new recreational facilities – a waterpark, an equestrian riding centre, a fitness centre, and even a ski hill under construction near Wonsan. There were many new restaurants, coffee shops, and more imported items for sale. It was good to see how things were being modernized and improved for the fortunate people living in Pyongyang.

By contrast however, we saw few changes outside the capital. Daily life still remains very difficult for most people – they work hard in the fields (mainly by hand or with oxen), they wash in the rivers, they walk long distances to get places or carry goods, and it's still a daily survival story as

people struggle to supply the basic necessities for their families.

As you may imagine, working in the DPRK comes with both challenges as well as joys. We work in collaboration with local government officials, and often they are helpful and co-operative. But at other times we encounter frustrating barriers for reasons that we don't always understand or that seem illogical to us. But then I'm reminded of verses like Titus 2:11 that talk about how God's grace is for ALL – not just those sweet little children we visit, but also the soymilk factory employees we meet, the officials we interact with, the young soldiers we see passing by. Does God's love stop short for them? I think God sees all His children just the same, and I remind myself to try to look at each person as someone loved dearly by the Father.

During this trip we spent a few days in Wonsan, on the east coast of the DPRK. There, we visited the Bongchun soymilk factory where First Steps recently set up three new "Super" VitaCow machines. These machines



Hannah with a few of the boys at the Wonsan Kindergarten Orphanage.

can each feed up to 4,000 children daily! Bongchun Factory is delivering nutritious soymilk to 19,300 children.

Our team also visited several clinics. The doctors always tell us how helpful Sprinkles are for the pregnant women and babies that come to their clinics. Our hope is to raise enough funds in the next few months to send another 3 million Sprinkles sachets. At less than 5 cents a sachet, it only costs \$50 to supply a pregnant and lactating mother with Sprinkles for a year as well as a baby with Sprinkles for 18 months. The amount we can send relies on the generosity of donors such as *you* and we would love to have you prayfully consider supporting this program.

First Steps Featured Child

Sang Yun Kim is 13 years old and lives at the Wonsan Secondary Boarding School (orphanage). Most of the soymilk First Steps provides is made at a centrally-located food production centre and supplied to children in daycares and kindergartens. First Steps has also placed VitaCow and VitaGoat soymilk machines in orphanages for children up to age 16 in Nampo and Wonsan. Children like Sang Yun benefit from the soy-goodness! We got to visit with Sang Yun while she was studying after school. She was very shy, but told us her favourite subject is literature and when she has free time she enjoys playing soccer. When Sang Yun grows up, she would like to be a doctor.



My Impressions in the DPRK Linda Schafran

This was my third visit to the DPRK; the last was in July 2011. The highlight of the trip for me, as with the other visits, was seeing the kindergarten orphanages and schools. I teach kindergarten in Abbotsford and have said before that I felt a real connection with the children and teachers. It was the same this time.

We were greeted warmly with big smiles when we entered their classrooms, as they stood and spoke in loud voices, "An yeong hashsumnika!" which means "Hello" in Korean. It was a big surprise when we were all given a huge hug by the children at one school, who came running into the room to greet us.

One of the things we always enjoy observing is at their snack time when they each drink their soymilk. They all sit so calmly and quietly drinking, and let us snap their pictures. We observe the smiles of contentment and delight on their little faces as they drink.

In asking questions of the principal at one of the schools we visited, we learned that the school has 22 teachers and there are on average 20 students per classroom. One of the teachers told me that the day went from 8:40 to 5:00. It included singing, drawing, learning and writing, simple math, playing,



Children at the Wonsan Primary School (orphanage) greet the First Steps team.

nap time, and physical exercise, with each session lasting 30 minutes.

After each visit, I was further convinced that without the provision of soymilk by First Steps, the children would not have the same vibrancy and joy that they displayed. Having the opportunity to drink the soymilk tells us that they are growing healthier and stronger because of this protein-rich beverage being added to their daily diet.

First Steps Featured Caretaker

Eunju Lee (pictured here with Linda) has been working at the Wonsan Kindergarten Orphanage for seven years, and usually works from 8 am to 5 pm, six days a week. On Sundays she works half a day. She told us that playing and teaching the children she works with makes her happy. She hopes that the children will grow up well and be loyal to their leader, Kim Jong Un. School and orphanage teachers and caregivers show incredible warmth and gentleness toward the children .



"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Colossians 3:13-14