



What is Summer of Hope?

Swimming, boating, horseback riding, gymnastics, soccer....these are but a few of the activities that make up a summer program of fun for children. What is unique about Summer of Hope is that the participants are orphans - children without families who reside in orphanages across the world. They travel to the U.S. for a summer visit and spend four to six weeks experiencing life with a family. Christian host families recruited from the community provide housing and care for the children during their stay.

For the children, it's a vacation away from the often grim, institutional setting of the orphanage. But it's much more than that. It's a chance for these children to be given a future and a hope for a better life. Every day thousands of children reach the age when they are no longer adoptable. Their greatest fear is being forced to leave an institution with no one to belong to and no place to call home. Through Summer of Hope, many of the children find permanent families as a result of their sojourn to the U.S. What greater gift can be given a child than the promise of a "forever" family? Please consider how you might be involved in this very worthwhile project by hosting a child or volunteering in some capacity. The rewards will be beyond measure.



Host Families Are Needed

The children who participate in the summer program are typically between 7 and 14 years old. During their stay in the U.S., the children are placed with Christian host families who are either considering adoption or who will advocate for a child to find a permanent family. People love to adopt babies, but are often afraid of the unknowns and challenges they will face if they adopt an older child. Many are scared away by the images of institutionalized children they have seen in news reports. The Summer of Hope program can take the fear and risk out of adopting an older child by giving prospective families an opportunity to see and evaluate first-hand the challenges and rewards of adopting an older child. Hosting a child is an opportunity for a family to meet and interact with a child in the home environment in order to make sure it is the right fit for their family before making a lifetime commitment.

During their stay in the U.S., the children participate in day-to-day family life. The host family provides a nurturing environment and the basic necessities. Each child is covered by a major medical insurance policy but minor medical care or visits to pediatricians are the responsibility of the host family. The children do benefit from receiving dental care, which is often much needed. Medical and dental services are often donated by physicians and dentists within the community. The children are involved in summer activities such as swimming lessons, gymnastics and soccer. Summer of Hope volunteers organize a number of



activities designed to bring host families and children together, and to give non-hosting parents who are interested in adoption a chance to interact with the children as well. Surprisingly, the language barrier in hosting a child is not a critical problem. The children learn much English from other children they interact with in the summer activities and quickly pick up household words. Volunteer “native language” speakers are available to interpret and help families communicate with their children.

Host families who are not planning to adopt, or who are unsure about adopting, must do all they can to help their child find a family by exposing him or her to as many prospective parents as possible during the child's stay. This includes participating in all program events, completing weekly personality profiles of the child to share with prospective families, making videos and photos of the child available and being accessible to talk with the sponsoring agency and prospective families about the child.

Families interested in hosting a child must complete the necessary requirements and pay the necessary fees. Part of the process of being approved as a host family includes a visit from a licensed social worker followed by a written assessment of the family's suitability to host. Host families must also participate in 10 to 15 hours of formal training to adequately

prepare them for their hosting experience. Before the children come, host families will have an opportunity to attend a number of orientation sessions where they can learn from the experiences of other adoptive families who have adopted older children. A host family handbook with helpful materials is also provided.

As the local sponsoring organization, we must raise the funds needed to bring the children. Volunteers are recruited to help with the community fund raising efforts and host families are expected to contribute time to this as well.

At the end of their summer stay, the children must return to the orphanage. Those families who have committed to adopting begin the paperwork process through the adoption agency representing the child and then travel to their child's country to complete the adoption. The time required to complete the adoption will vary depending on how soon the parents make the decision to adopt, and how quickly they are able to complete the necessary steps. The separation and waiting time is hard once a family has bonded with a child. However, the adoptive families are usually able to keep in contact with their child until they are reunited.

Volunteers Are Needed

We need many different types of people to assist with the Summer of Hope program. The outcome of finding permanent homes for the children will be worth every ounce of energy and effort spent. Please consider how you might be involved in this unique project. We will be working over the next few months to have all of the mechanics in place to bring these precious children to our community.



We need individuals who can help with publicity and fund raising. We must raise \$3,500 per child to cover the cost of travel, medical insurance, escorts and other expenses associated with carrying out the summer program. Our goal is to also raise additional funds to help defray the adoption costs for any families who commit to adopting children they met or hosted during the summer.

We need people to help recruit and assist host families and to advocate for the children while they are here. We need people to arrange for support services for the children including summer program activities, medical and language support. Events need to be planned that bring host families and children together and give non-hosting parents who are interested in adoption a chance to interact with the children as well.

Lastly, we need people to commit to praying for the children and their potential placements. It is our hope that each child coming to our community will find a permanent home.

How Can You Be Involved?

- Open your heart and home to a child in need
- Be a host family
- Be a child's advocate
- Help raise funds for this program
- Arrange support services for the children
- Donate funds to bring the children
- Donate funds to assist families with the cost of adoption
- Assist with summer program activities
- Pray for the children and their host families



If you are interested in being involved in Summer of Hope 2011, contact:

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