

Granny for an hour? No problem!

Sofya Tsurko convinced that only those with kind hearts are always suitable as volunteers

By Tatiana Lysenkova

The wartime generation truly appreciates friendship and mutual support. Its desire to help is a need. Sofya Tsurko notes, "We are children of the war, having seen mud huts and ruins. My mother supported us financially and was responsible for the household. Of course, we were glad to help but our strength had its limits; we dreamt of growing up quickly, to start our own life and earn money. My choice of profession was no surprise to anyone: a typesetter at Polespechat printing office. I took a room at a hostel and began studying with Moscow's Polygraphic Institute, by correspondence. I also worked as a brigade member. Sadly, my eyesight suffered and, even after an operation, I never regained my full vision. I then joined a society for the support of sight-impaired people, where we encourage each other to fulfil our potential."

Some of our heart's desires remain a whole lifetime and those of Ms. Tsurko are no exception. She always dreamt of being on stage and eventually found her niche reciting poetry and singing in a choir. Continuing through her retirement, she was awarded at the *Veterans'*



Granny for an Hour service brings joy to many families in Gomel

Soul Never Grows Old contest.

A year ago, Ms. Tsurko heard of the *Elderly are a Golden Resource of Society* project (run by Gomel's Social Projects Regional Public Association). She was initially interested in classes on landscape design and on becoming an excursion guide.

Meanwhile, the *Granny for an Hour* volunteer initiative is being implemented as part of the national *Dialogue is the Venue* programme, supported by the Memory, Responsibility and Future German Fund). However, co-ordinator Irina Kekukh recognised that women such as Ms. Tsurko are much

needed by lone mothers and by families without their own grannies. By taking on childcare responsibilities, elderly women gain a new sense of purpose and create valuable bonds with the younger generations.

Of course, training is useful, reminding the 'grannies' of ways to amuse chil-

dren: the telling of fairy-tales and the playing of games. "There were about thirty of us and I was rather worried as to what kind of children I might be asked to look after," Ms. Tsurko admits. At last, she met little Zhenya...

"I was greeted by her family as an old friend. Oksana, her mother, was very chatty and

Zhenechka was open and welcoming, saying, "Granny, would you love to see my toys?" We established an immediate friendship, playing with dolls for a while and then went for a walk..."

Ms. Tsurko tends to look after Zhenya on Saturdays, so that her mother can go to the market, shops or sauna. "We visit the park — riding on the merry-go-round, feeding ducks and squirrels, and admiring the majestic Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace. We used to visit St. Peter and Paul's Cathedral, lighting candles for those in poor health. Afterwards, we'd have an ice cream (with money given by Oksana), sitting on a bench." Outings include riverside walks and picnics in warmer weather, with blanket, mineral water and sandwiches, as well as books. After 4pm, Sofya takes the girl home.

Initially, Oksana would phone her 'granny child-carer' every hour to check on things but now feels completely at ease with the situation and makes far fewer calls. She trusts Sofya utterly.

The *Granny for an Hour* service has brought happiness to many Gomel families, with kindly ladies looking after children as their own — all free of charge.

Staff are ultimate asset

By Andrey Anufriev

China to participate in venture fund project in Belarus

The possibility of establishing a Chinese-Belarusian venture fund was recently discussed by the Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technologies, Igor Voitov, and the Vice President of China CAMC Engineering Co., Ltd. (CAMCE), Wang Yuhang.

According to Mr. Voitov, interaction between Belarus and China in science and technology has already proven fruitful, with major scientific and technical co-operative agreements signed. These constitute the legal foundation for contacts between the R&D organisations of our two states. Moreover, our bilateral commissions on sci-tech co-operation have also proven efficient, as has the Commission for High Technologies, set up in



2012. However, Mr. Voitov stresses that innovations require adequate financial support, so a variety of funding mechanisms need to be explored, including venture financing.

Mr. Yuhang emphasised his faith in Belarus' great scientific potential and highly skilled staff, particularly in the fields of IT, medicine and biotechnology. "They are your main assets: an advantage you should further develop," he added. "We're ready to provide certain benefits and financial support to Belarus, via the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, while also helping you attract highly skilled professionals from around the world."

According to the Director of the Belarusian Innovation Fund, Alexander Shumilin, his organisation plans to finance the production of new high-tech goods. "We finance innovative projects, and those related to the manufacture of high-tech products. We also want to launch a venture financing mechanism through the Belarusian Fund," he explains. About 100 projects have already been implemented in medicine and healthcare, environmental protection, the efficient use of energy, microelectronics, and instrument and machine building. Horizont JSC is producing household appliances via the joint project while ZTE Corporation is considering opening a centre to monitor public safety.

A tripartite agreement on co-operation is soon to be signed, while proposals regarding several bilateral projects are being considered.

Transportation comfort and convenience above all

All Belarusian roads in order by 2017

By Alexey Dolgopolov

Since February 1st, Belavtodor department at the Transport Ministry of Belarus has received a flurry of calls on its new '125' phone number, reporting problems with roads. Although, no daily statistics are kept, the traffic control service received about 150 calls in a single day early on, mostly from the capital region.

There should soon be fewer calls and complaints, as major works are carried out nationwide on the main highways. Among the first being tackled is the road between Minsk and Gomel. "Work on this highway is being done in three stages," notes Yevgeny Rokalo, who heads the administration of Belavtodor Road Network Maintenance Department.

This year, the road from Pukhovichi to Bobruisk is



Traffic on south-west Vitebsk bypass

to be revamped, followed by the Bobruisk-Zhlobin route. The segment from Gomel to Zhlobin is to be ready by 2014. This year, road builders also promise to complete work on parts of the Minsk-Mogilev route and will reconstruct the M5 highway (Minsk-Gomel). Meanwhile, the 1st category routes of Minsk-Grodno and Minsk-Vitebsk are to be upgraded, alongside the Minsk-

Mikashevichi highway, which will join the 1st category.

This year, five capital streets will be significantly extended: Dzerzhinsky Avenue, alongside Kabushkin, Tashkentskaya and Mogilevskaya streets and Dolginovsky tract. Each will receive eight lanes. Additionally, this year, another 10 pedestrian underpasses are to appear in Minsk.