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# WINDHAM Sister City Committee

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**DECEMBER, 2009:** As a committee, there has been little activity during 2009. John Breda and Barbara Coish did travel to Suzdal twice during the year. During those visits financial aid for the orphanages and the hospital was hand delivered. Orphanage #5 is undergoing major renovations and presently all of the children are housed at Orphanage #3. The children were found to be well cared for and we know that the director of Orphanage #3 will use the financial donations for the betterment of the children in her care.

The first visit in 2009, began the day after Christmas 2008 and extended through the New Year holiday. It was especially moving to share the New Year with friends in Suzdal. Russians celebrate New Year the way that we celebrate Christmas. Families gather, share a meal and exchange gifts at midnight. Often, Ded Moroz and the Snowmaiden will appear as happened at the home in which I was celebrating. Fireworks explode all over town set off by individuals at their homes. Young people enjoy dancing at the disco and sharing time with friends after midnight.

In April, John and Barbara traveled to Suzdal once again. John spent much of his time teaching in the schools, which is his passion. Students look forward to his annual visits and enjoy interacting with John and sharing cultural information. Families in Suzdal are really no different from families in Windham. Grandparents, parents, and children all care deeply for one another and are hospitable always to guests in their homes.

Windham visitors spent time on May 1 with members of the quilt club. A wonderful selection of donated fabric was delivered to them. The members did a presentation about the May Day celebration. Interestingly, the labor aspect of the day began in America.

A few months after our April visit there was a change in the Administration of Suzdal (Town). The 15 member Town Council held a vote of no confidence in Mayor Godunin. An interim mayor served until a vote in October. At that time, the resulting vote chose the first woman ever to be elected Mayor of Suzdal. Her name is Olga Guseva, and we will be excited to meet her upon our next visit. During our past several visits, we have become more familiar with the regional government and Mayor Ivanov. Both town and regional governments are housed in the same administration building in separate wings. Many more functions are falling under the regional umbrella, and we are forming a solid relationship with that arm of government.

During the summer of 2009, Galina Orlova from Suzdal came to Windham and stayed with the Dolloff family, with whom she had stayed when she visited with a group of students four years previously. Thanks to the Dolloffs. We all enjoyed having Galina with us for several months. It was a pleasure to see how she had grown into such a wonderful young adult.

The committee and all of Windham were saddened by the death of J Gross one of our most dedicated members and a faithful volunteer when housing of visitors became necessary. He will be greatly missed by us and his friends in Suzdal as well.

*Barbara Coish, Chairman*