

June 18 Lviv, Ukraine Update from Ben & Kristy Williams

Summer is here! A big part of our mission organization (Josiah Venture) focuses on summer ministry. English evangelism camps are kind of our specialty.

This summer, JV will have about 60 camps in 10 Eastern European countries. We are organizing 3 of them in the Ukraine. Our camps are usually made up of 5 teams:

- Josiah Venture Missionaries (Ben & I; Jay & Cameron; Val & Brittney; Katka from Czech)
- Summer Intern Team (3 American college students - Steph, Collin, Josh)
- American High School Youth Groups (15 day trips - AR & NJ youth teams)
- The non-Christian campers who are invited by their church friends
- The local Ukrainian Church! (youth from Zdolbuniv, Lutsk, & Cherkassy)



PHOTO 1: Stephanie + Katka + Collin + Ben + Kristy + Josh + Val + Brittney = Team Ukraine 2007

PHOTO 2: April Ukrainian English Camp Leadership Conference in Lviv – these Christian youth are the future church leaders of Ukraine! We want to train & empower them to have healthy, effective youth ministries.

We wouldn't be doing camp if it weren't for the local church! We use camp as a tool to help empower the local church in youth ministry. We come along side them in Christian leadership, evangelism, and discipleship, all in the effort to draw their youth into a genuine relationship with Jesus. We aren't here to push Christianity on anyone, but we believe that God loves English camp and uses it to draw people to Himself. We want to see students make decisions to follow Christ this summer! This is our purpose here.

Below are photos of 2 other youth groups in whom we have serious interest. However, we will not have camp with them ☹ The first is Frydlant-Frydek, Czech ~ the place where we've led NJ youth teams in '04,'05, & '06. Since NJ is now serving w/ us in Ukraine, this group will have a new American team, but many of the same campers as last year. We'll miss them! Also, we're going to miss our Lviv youth group, New Life. We just had an "American Party" with them (complete w/ chips, salsa, brownies, & ice cream) ~ there were about 40 of us! The next day we drove to the foot of the Carpathian Mts. and did a river/beach day/cook out w/ 22 of us. New Life has their own summer camping trip in Aug., and we are sad not to be around them this summer. ☹



PHOTO 1: Frydlant, Czech Youth Group Visit when we were in CZ in April

PHOTO 2: Camp Site in Carpathian Mts. With New Life Youth

Please partner with us in prayer this summer. We need supernatural **strength** – we are already feeling our weaknesses. Pray for our **willingness** to serve God and the **energy** to do so. We have a very busy schedule through August 16 - basically non-stop serving others.

<http://www.benandkristy.com/Files/2007%20Summer%20Calendar.doc> ~ check out our detailed calendar!

- Leading an intern team means overseeing spiritual development, camp logistics, English teaching, laundry/food/housing, fun, traveling all over the country, etc. for our team. This is for 80 days straight, while we also juggle our own life, **marriage**, attitudes, & relationship with God. **Passion, patience, and balance** are 3 words that come to mind.
- Pray for **relationship** building. It often takes time to build trust w/ E. European students. Plus, the language barrier often slows things down. Pray against awkwardness and inability to connect with campers. It is so much easier to be passionate about missions when you **connect well** w/ students.
- Pray for **local church leadership**. Honestly, our JV team here does not always see eye-to-eye with the national leadership styles and camp plans. Without **unity** between our 2 teams, it will make it hard to show the love of Christ in a genuine way. Pray that God remove barriers and make both sides **flexible** to do God's work the way He wants it.
- Ben is speaking at all of the camps for the evening program. Each night he gives a **"talk"** (basically a mini sermon w/ a passage from the Bible and a lot of great personal examples) and then dismisses us to our **small group discussions**. May God speak through Ben and may God open the campers' eyes to hear about Him.
- If you like to pray for people by name, pray for Boris, Lena, Pastor Sergiy, Tolik, Katja, Serilogia, Vanya, Yura, Dale, Yulia, Masha, Jana, Vlad, Sasha, Zhenya, and other Ukrainian youth who desire boldness to lead their youth groups and tell their friends about Jesus. Pray that they are willing to go outside of their comfort zones and reach out to their peers.
- We are so excited – we just received **300 Gideon New Testaments in Ukrainian!** We are handing them out at camp (and maybe to the authorities who always pull us over, too!) and we believe that God will clearly speak to people through the Bible.
- May we not lose sight of the reason we are here. So many students will have the chance to clearly choose between a life following God or life in this world, trying to get by "being a good person". May their ears & hearts be opened to God's word and their need for a **Savior**.
- We just found out 2 of our 3 camps are **tent camps** for 9 nights a piece. This is a serious stretch for many of us. Pray for **positive attitude** and **joy** in whatever the circumstance. And pray against rain.



(Notice the t-shirt Ben bought me as an attitude reminder for this summer...)

Culture Items

Normally we fill you in on the “it’s not weird...just different” culture things we’re experiencing. For this update, we thought we’d send a few pictures instead of just text.



1) Outhouse on the side of the highway. Most highways here are one lane in each direction, scattered with potholes. You bring your own TP to gas station bathrooms. This particular “restroom” was a hole in the ground. Good prep for our 2 tent camps.



2) Men love pointy shoes here – right now, white basket-woven pointy slip-ons are in. But we were at a souvenir market in Kiev and spotted these pointy-toed SLIPPERS. Hilarious.



3) Shopping in general here is a challenge, as is cooking when you can’t read the directions. We do ok shopping for meat – ground beef, boneless chicken, pork filet, and hard salami are our typical purchases. But all animal parts are available for purchase...if you can’t tell, we are experiencing 2 types of culture shock – the 1st is exposure to farm/village life (we’re still such suburbanites), the 2nd is Ukraine in general.



4) Our intern, Collin, holding a muffler we bought for our missionary partner, Jay, while in Poland...on the same weekend, our van’s muffler was hanging by a thread until Ben secured it w/ a duffel bag strap.



5) Protests – this is one of many protests we've seen since moving here – this one is in the main square of Kiev. The red flags represent the Communist party. We've seen labor protests, Nazi flags, and a variety of people on soap boxes w/ bull horns.



6) The Ketchup Aisle in each grocery store – this country LOVES ketchup, mayo, & sour cream on everything. But still no regular yellow mustard! Only spicy.

Mailing

Contraband! Our Aunt Les & Uncle Jack tried to send us Funfetti Cake Mixes, Brownie Mixes, and vanilla extract (items we crave) through FedEx. The package was confiscated in Kiev, and the authorities refuse to ship it to us ~ even though it was nonperishable items! So if you want to send us anything but simple letters, PLEASE click this link to our Website.

<http://www.benandkristy.com/Files/Meest%20UKR%20Shipping%20Instructions.doc> Read about how to send things through the MEEST private courier service.

Well, that is all for now. We will be on the road most of the summer, so our emailing will be sparse. But check our blog at www.benandkristy.com/blog for more frequent updates. From there you can link to updated picture albums, too. We beg you for your prayers for our summer ministry. We thank you deeply for sending us here! It is so exciting to be on the front line, fighting for God's kingdom. Stay in touch, ok? We love hearing from you and will respond when we can.

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