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Left to Right Front Row: Graham, Theresa, Wade, Dr. Valery Chumakov  
 Back Row: Matt, Amanda, Noah, Nila, Casey, Dr. Dennis Buffington

### **Did You Know??**

#### **Weather**

**By: Wade Taylor**

Did you know that Russia is the largest country on the planet? It spans over 6,200 miles from east to west and around 2,000 miles from north to south in its widest part. It has a total land area of around 6.5 million square miles and has 602,485 miles of coastline. Russia also borders more countries than any other nation. There are several climatic zones that this massive country covers ranging from steppes in the south and much of European Russia, to a sub-arctic climate in Siberia, to a tundra climate in the polar north. The highest point in Russia is Mt. Elbrus at 18,510 ft above sea level, located in the Caucasus mountain range in southern Russia near the Black Sea.

This magnificent country houses many natural resources such as oil, natural gas, coal, timbers, and many different minerals. Russia is the world's second largest producer of diamonds. Russia also



Roman, Graham, Wade, and Matt  
 on a Moscow River Boat Ride

### **Spring Fun**

#### **Activities**

**By: Graham Rupe**

houses the world's deepest freshwater lake, Lake Baikal, which makes up one fifth of the world's surface fresh water at a depth of 5,370ft.

The population is estimated 146 million with ethnic groups such as Russian 81.5%, Tartar 3.8%, Ukrainian 3%, Chuvash 1.2% and others. Russia's population growth rate is estimated at negative 0.38%. The life expectancy of a Russian woman is 71.6 years while a man is only 58.6 years. The decrease in population numbers could be related to economic conditions as well as other reasons. All in all, Russia is an enormous country with many great attributes, resources, and people.

Information cited from World Factbook 2000 and Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000.

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## **A History of Russian Faith**

### **Culture**

**By: Casey Saxton**

Religion is a large part of the history of Russia; however, in the past having faith and being able to attend church were two different things. During Soviet times religion was almost non-existent. Karl Marx believed religious faith was not necessary and in his writings generally referred to it as "opium for the masses." Because of the writings of Karl Marx, the Soviet government felt compelled to suppress religious faith. Many in power feared the religious strength of the church during Soviet times. People in power saw the church as a huge political enemy, and in turn the structure of the church was eliminated.

Many of the churches were left unharmed; however, the people controlling the churches were taken away, leaving a mass of people with faith but with no one to lead them against religious persecution by the government. The Communist Party's policy was separation of church and state and they took a very dim view of religion; suppressing it quietly while trying not to provoke a revolution.

The later years of Communism were much different; more religious freedoms were granted to the people. However, having a choice on the type

Spring has finally come to Moscow and it is about time! Over the last two weeks it has been getting warmer and warmer. Many of our Russian counter-parts have warned us that a snow could come at any time, but most of us have given up on that idea. With weather so nice for such an extended amount of time it is unbearable to think for even a second that a late snow could ruin a week or more of our stay.

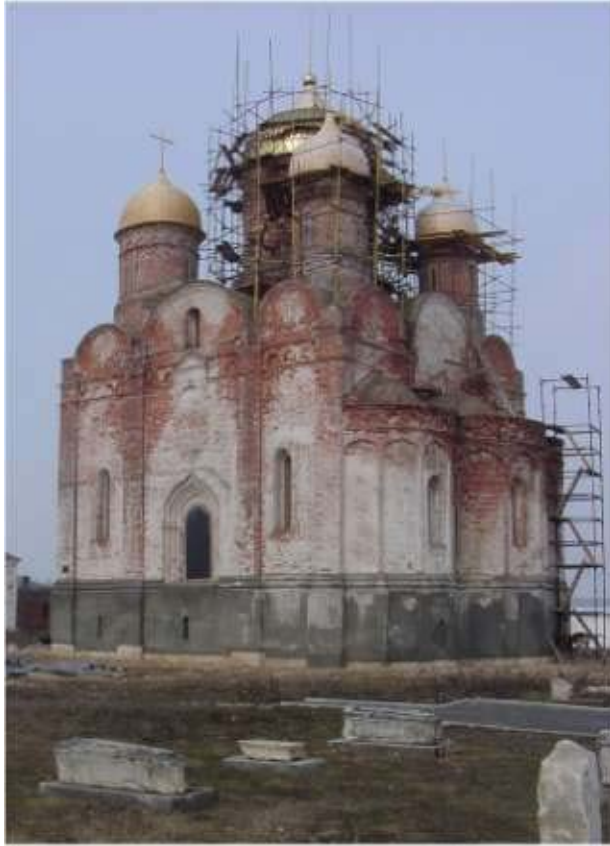
With spring in the air, the group has been much more active when it comes to outdoors events. Each of has reacted in different ways to this. Noah and Wade have taken a new interest in Nerf football. Since many Russians have never seen this sport before, somewhat of a crowd tends to gather to watch. Theresa has been running around the city finding new and interesting things to do. It seems that almost everyday she comes home with a story that starts out with, "Guess what I found today...." Nila and Amanda have been spending much time out in the city as well. They have found many new places to shop for clothes and Nila has even bought a few items. Even Casey has been getting out much more. The increase in temperature has seemed to weaken his chemical bond with his computer. I think that it has something to do with the "law of thermal expansion," but I'm not sure. Matt has found that his favorite place in Moscow is floating down the river on a luxury tour boat in the late afternoon. I have been taking the increase in temperature very serious as well. Since I do not have the option to run home and work in the fields, departing for Red Square or to Botanical Park for a walk has become almost everyday practice. I am making sure that nothing stands in the way of my getting outside and this includes classes. It is just so hard to sit through three hours of Russian when it is sixty-five degrees outside.

After writing this article I am going to go outside and make the most of this beautiful day. Spring is the most beautiful time of the year in many parts of the world and Moscow is no exception. In two weeks we will be going to Saint Petersburg and I hope that spring has arrived there also. Well, I need to get outside and soak up some sun. I hope spring has arrived where you are as well.

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of religion was still restricted. The Russian Orthodox Church was the only religion supported by the government.

Today the Russian people have a vast variety of religious choices.



Rebuilding of a Monastery

## Russian Education System

### Education

By: Amanda Allbritton

In Russia, the ABC's and the three R's are not taught. Instead, they teach the *ABV's* and *chtemeye, pravopisaneye, and arifmetika*. Russia's education system has done an excellent job of reaching the masses. The population of Russia currently has a literacy rate 99.4% for females, 99.7% for males. In all primary schools in Russia, a second language is also taught. Foreign language classes usually start in fifth grade, but can begin as early as first grade.

Formerly, children in Russia started the required

## The Intriguing Life of Alexander Pushkin Special Focus

By: Nila Kreidich

Alexander Pushkin is frequently mentioned as an outstanding example of Russian culture. While living in Moscow we have seen the Pushkin ballet, Ruslan and Ludmilla, as well as an art museum and the metro station named in his honor. His poetry is greatly revered all around the world. I was compelled to learn more about the life of this respected author.

Alexander Pushkin was born in Moscow on May 26, 1799. He became recognized as a great writer while a student in the Lyceum from 1811 to 1817. After graduating he spent time in St. Petersburg with fellow writers who shared his views on politics along with his love for wine, music, and women. Between 1817 and 1820 he reflected liberal views in revolutionary poems such as his ode, "Freedom". In April 1820, his political poems led to an interrogation by the Petersburg governor-general. He was exiled to south Russia where he spent time traveling through the Caucas Mountains and Crimea. While in exile he began writing one of his most famous works, Eugene Onegin. With the aid of influential friends he was transferred in 1823 to Odessa, where he engaged in society and had love affairs with two married women. After writing a letter about his views on atheism he was exiled again, this time to his mother's estate, Mikhaylovskoe, in northern Russia. There he wrote the second chapter to Eugene Onegin, a political novel. After petitioning the Tsar Nicolas I, Pushkin was released from exile. Then in 1831, after a five-year search for an especially beautiful woman, Pushkin married Natalia Goncharova in Moscow. Pushkin's relations with the Tsar were directly affected by his wife's beauty and they were often invited to court balls. In 1834, his wife Natalia met a handsome French royalist named D'Anthes with whom she had an affair. D'Anthes married Natalia's sister and Pushkin refused to attend the wedding or to receive the couple in his home. Pushkin and D'Anthes eventually confronted one another resulting in a duel where Pushkin was fatally wounded. After his death, royal society sympathized with D'Anthes; however, thousands of people of all other social levels came to

primary school at age seven. They attended the first, second, and third grades, and, oddly, there was no fourth grade. After third grade, children attended fifth through ninth grades. In 1998, the Ministry of Education made changes to the school curriculum that allowed children start school at age six and added a fourth grade. Like in America, one teacher is assigned to each class in grades 1-4, except for music and physical education. In grades 5-9, a different teacher teaches each of six class periods. Primary school begins at 8:15AM and continues until 2:15PM, for five, and sometimes six, days a week.

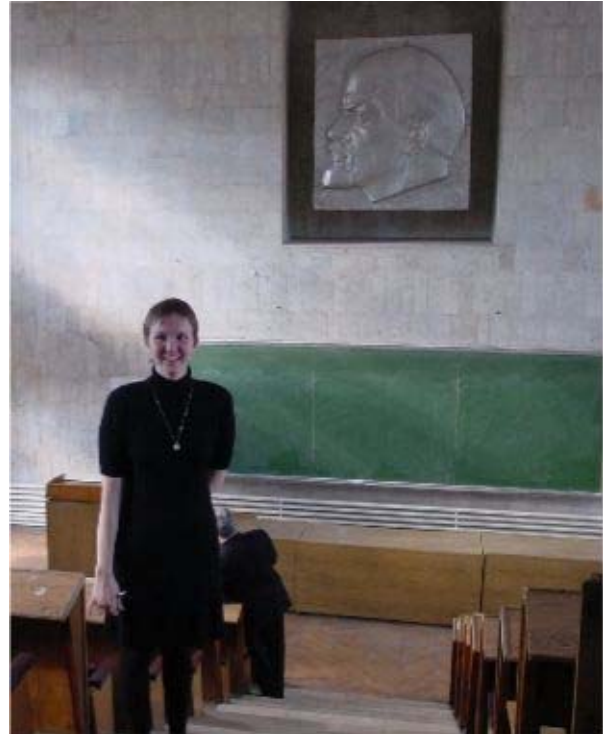
After ninth grade a student can opt to leave and get a job, or go to a technical school that lasts for 3 years and learn a profession. After these three years, students can also attend the university. Otherwise, the student remains in school until the eleventh grade. These extra two years are college preparatory courses. Students who stay in school until the eleventh grade almost always attend a university or academy that lasts 4-6 years.

Moscow State Agroengineering University (MSAU), our host university, is an excellent example of higher education in Russia. MSAU admits 600 students each year. This university has 2,500 students with five academic colleges that they call faculties: Economics, Engineering/Pedagogy, Technical Service, Power Supply, and Military. Each of these faculties has different specialties or majors under them. Students can receive the American equivalent of a bachelor's degree after four years. After six years at MSAU, students receive the American equivalent of a master's degree. Most students study here for five years and receive a specialist's degree, which is between a master's and bachelor's degree.

Russia may not use the same routes of education as America, but their system has been successful for many years. This system may face some changes in this century, but Russia will continue to produce a well-educated population.

Pushkin's apartment to mourn. He was buried beside his mother at dawn on February 6, 1837.

Pushkin's life tells a story similar to that of a modern day soap opera. His strong political opinions and his passion for romance are reflected in all of his writings. I encourage anyone to pick up a book of his poems.



Amanda at the top of a lecture hall overlooked by Vladimir Lenin at MSAU

Questions? Comments? [E-mail Us!](#)

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