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Ryongsu Kindergarten were almost like professionals. A group of about a dozen six-year-olds played guitar together with bounding enthusiasm and well-coordinated theatrics, all the while in cute little costumes.



Guitar players entertain at Ryongsu Kindergarten.

Others sang and played piano. All of this was starkly presented in a cold room under the dim light of a single bulb powered by a battery. I thought this must be what happens when children don't spend five hours per day watching TV.

We were treated to another wonderful performance at the Nampo Kindergarten Orphanage. The children sang and danced in bright costumes and the choreography was unbelievable for a group of five-year-olds. I taped both performances and when I got home my own children were speechless when they watched the video.

The bright lights would not be there without the work of First Steps. The soymilk program is so simple, yet brilliant at the same time. The children are given nutrition they otherwise would not receive. However, the benefits go beyond the children.

The adults who process the soybeans, who use the grinders, the VitaCows and VitaGoats – they take real pride in their work. In a country where it must be hard to see the results of individual effort, I could see there was a real sense of satisfaction for those lucky enough to be working with First Steps.

My resolve to assist First Steps further has been strengthened. In a small but growing way, this amazing organization has hit the mark when so many others have fallen short. I am blessed to have been a witness to all of the good work.

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The scientists at the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) were equally enthusiastic about the new educational material that they had printed to distribute to pregnant women to explain the benefits of taking Sprinkles (micro-nutrients). Later in the week at a clinic in Wonsan, we saw a Sprinkles poster hanging proudly at the entrance to the clinic and inside we talked to moms who expressed their appreciation for the brochure they received to explain the benefits of Sprinkles for themselves and their babies. With Sprinkles receiving the full endorsement of the government, we discussed with ICN the next stage of potential Sprinkles production within the country.



Doctor Kim and Susan with new Sprinkles poster.



Healthy mother and child, both Sprinkles users.

**Yes, I want to help First Steps feed a child.**

- I have enclosed my gift of \$100 to purchase a milk can
- Here's a special gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help purchase a VitaCow (\$8500) or VitaGoat (\$3500)
- Here's a special gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help purchase Sprinkles
- Here's a special gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help purchase soybeans
- Here's a special gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help purchase whatever is needed

name \_\_\_\_\_  
 address \_\_\_\_\_  
 city \_\_\_\_\_ prov. \_\_\_\_\_ postal code \_\_\_\_\_  
 phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to First Steps and forward to: 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada  
 BN: 87822 7511 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for Income tax purposes. For further information visit our website, www.firststepscanada.org or call us at 604-732-0195.

FIRST STEPS news SPRING 2010

**Local Impact Brings Light**

by Susan Ritchie  
 First Steps Executive Director

At a recent gathering, the question was asked: "Is there any hope at all for North Korea - where is the light. . .?" The subtext was that everything points to a worsening political

environment and an utterly hopeless humanitarian situation. Thankfully, of utmost interest to us at First Steps is not what is happening among the powerful on the political stage, but what is happening

among the little people; not what is having a global effect but what is having a local impact.

On the following pages you will read three accounts written after an April 14 - 24 visit to DPRK (North Korea) by a First Steps team that included Terry Martin and David Thomas, both long-term supporters, as well as John Cuddeford, First Steps newly-appointed part time program director, and myself. The accounts point to a reality beyond the one so often portrayed in the news. May you be blessed as you read these accounts and as you participate and pray for the ongoing work of First Steps.

I have the privilege of meeting and sharing with hundreds of people, including readers of this newsletter, who are praying for North Korea and joining with First

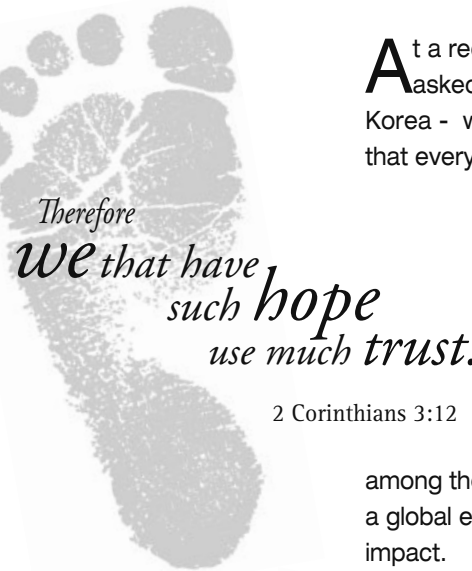
Steps to reach out to hungry children with the love of Jesus Christ. I rejoice that the love and kindness is being embraced and multiplied by so many partners, caregivers, teachers, workers,

children and families in North Korea. With the bonds of trust and friendship building deep in our hearts and personal knowledge of the One who gives us this hope, how can we

refrain from having hope? "Therefore we that have such hope use much trust;" 2 Corinthians 3:12 (Wycliffe New Testament)

Here are just a couple of good news stories from our recent visit. Thanks go to the persistence of a woman who demanded that she be allowed to produce soymilk for the children in her district. According to a senior Nampo official, she followed him everywhere he went until he promised to provide a VitaCow and a site where she could start production for the children. When we visited the new site, we met a young woman with boundless enthusiasm and gratitude who told us that she wanted her's to be the best soymilk in Nampo. This new site increased the total number of First Steps production sites to 23, daily providing soymilk to more than 80,000 children.

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Smiles all around for Susan and Nampo orphan boy.

# Trip Diaries April 2010



Terry Martin



John Cuddeford



David Thomas

by Terry Martin

It was a great experience to be included as part of the First Steps team to DPRK.

The wonderful, harmonious cooperation established between First Steps and DPRK was remarkable. Susan's hard work in achieving this cooperation was evident at every level, from central government officials, provincial government officials, managers of soymilk production plants, and administrators at baby orphanages, daycare centres, kindergartens and schools. All were cooperating enthusiastically and working hard.



Nampo soymilk production site.

With the serious shortfall in food production, it is essential that First Steps continue to provide soybeans to help fill the gap. Maintaining a steady supply of beans ensures that vital nourishment will consistently reach the children in need.

The Sprinkles micronutrient program is a fantastic way to provide essential micronutrients to pregnant and nursing women, as well as their children after they are weaned.



Worker tends to her VitaCow.

Dr. Stanley Zlotkin, who developed Sprinkles at

Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital, and First Steps, which has successfully introduced the program in DPRK, are both to be commended for their tremendous contribution to people at risk.

It is reassuring to see first hand that all the contributions of First Steps to DPRK are being received by the children.

by John Cuddeford

Like most first-time visitors to DPRK, I had many misconceptions about what the land and people might be like. Although I was not surprised to find challenges such as poor infrastructure and scarce



New VitaGoat machine in Nampo.

food, I was amazed at the courage and resourcefulness of the Korean people serving the children. Whether it was creative rewiring of VitaCow machines to maximize soymilk production or innovative use of every part of the soybean to minimize waste, we were privileged to observe leaders and workers who turned obstacles into opportunities.

At the Institute of Child Nutrition in Pyongyang, we were greeted by a team who proudly showed us the posters and brochures they had printed to promote the use of Sprinkles. Later, we would see the mothers and babies at a nearby clinic who were benefitting from this wonderful nutritional supplement.

In Hyongjesan at our first soymilk site visit, we were encouraged by the energy and resolve of the orphanage director Ms. Kim and her coworkers. And as we travelled from site to site, we would find these same

attributes in all the people we encountered. At several sites we were grateful for the opportunity to be able to bring medicines to help care for the children.

From Pyongyang to Nampo to Wonsan, we visited 16 of First Steps' 23 soymilk sites. Everywhere

we saw signs of dedication and commitment on the part of the workers and healthy growth and happy smiles from the children. While there are still children who suffer from malnutrition, their daily allotment of soymilk is steadily bringing them



Soymilk time is happy time in Tongchon.

health and growth. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all who pray, give and serve. And our fervent prayers join yours as together we ask our Heavenly Father to bless these precious children and to give them, this day, their daily food.



Children and staff greet visitors in Wonsan.

by David Thomas

After returning from North Korea, I found myself with a strange collection of memories and emotions. DPRK is one of the most isolated countries in the world, cloaked in high security. Yet the hard working people and the children were magnificent and inspirational, despite their daily hardship.



Visitors see the sites in Pyongyang

I have known Susan Ritchie and about First Steps since 2003. I have been extensively involved with the Canada-Korea Business Association and in that year, Susan spoke about her work at the CKBA annual dinner. I was later able to direct

further support towards First Steps through my church, St. Francis-in-the Wood Anglican in West Vancouver.

The invitation to join this recent mission was a surprise and came with short notice. For someone who travels frequently, I found myself excited, like a kid, at the prospect. Over the years, my professional work has taken me to South Korea more than 50 times. This would be my first chance to

visit the 'other side.' I was interested to see the cultural differences, the famous landmarks and, with my keen interest in politics, witness first-hand the machinations of one of the world's few remaining communist states. However, it was the children and the ordinary people who work hard every day to help feed them

that left the biggest impression.

Each day of our travels was mapped out in a detailed itinerary.

The highlights of our trip were the visits to the orphanages and kindergartens, where we had time to interact with the children. Our first such visit was to the Baby Home in

Nampo. There we met a group of three-year-olds taking a break to enjoy a cup of nutritious soymilk provided through First Steps. The orphans were shy at first, but then gravitated towards our group, wanting to be held. It reminded me of when my children were small. There is something very natural about the need of a child to be held by another person. Even though my Korean is very limited, a bond was created and I used my fatherly tricks to generate a smile from the kids. The only trouble with our busy agenda was that these visits were never long enough.

Another lasting impression came at an orphanage and kindergarten in Nampo where the children put on spectacular musical performances for us. The children at



Children sing for visitors at Nampo orphanage.



David, Susan and Terry with triplets at Wonsan Baby Home.