

## **FOCC Silverdale & Arnside - Charity No. 1146476**

26th April 1986, saw the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in Northern Ukraine explode & subsequently blanket Belarus with radioactive contamination. The 'Friends of Chernobyl's Children' is a registered charity working throughout the UK providing respite care for disadvantaged children from the contaminated areas of Belarus following this nuclear catastrophe.

**Area:** The most northerly village in Lancashire abutting the Cumbrian border. Silverdale in Lancashire links with Arnside in Cumbria to form a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The village of Silverdale nestles in beautiful countryside where the Kent Estuary opens into Morecambe Bay. Silverdale is a perfect place to offer respite and a warm welcome to children from the contaminated areas of Belarus.

**Group Coordinator & Charity Founder:** Olwyn Keogh M.B.E.

Tel: 01524 702330 or [E-mail: olwyn.keogh@btinternet.com](mailto:olwyn.keogh@btinternet.com)

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Friends of Chernobyl's Children (Silverdale & Arnside) is working with children and families who live in the contaminated regions of Krichev, Cherikov, Kostokovichi and Krasnapolie near the Russian border, all living within the swathe of land which is severely contaminated by the Chernobyl disaster.

A group of 19 children, 7, 8 and 9 yrs old children from needy, socially disadvantaged families and 2 interpreters visited Silverdale and Arnside in September 2014 for 4 weeks, to breathe our clean air, eat good, clean food, enjoy some wonderful TLC from local host families and enjoy our magnificent surroundings. For most of the children it was the 3rd annual visit to us but we did have 3 new children including beautiful girl twins, the children improve our very eyes during their stay and it is wonderful to see.

After 4 weeks spent with us our children returned to Belarus, waved off on their long journey home by their host families who had cared for them so well during their stay, with bags packed to bursting with things they need to help get through their harsh winter. These children and their families will now come under the support network of FOCC and can always come to us for help should they need it. The same children will return to us each year to complete their 5 years of FOCC care and respite from the terrible conditions in which they live.

The months of preparation, the fundraising and all the work whilst the children were here culminated into what became yet again a truly unforgettable and very successful month for everyone involved and the lives of all those people will never be quite the same again. The farewell concert provided by the children was truly memorable with dancing, singing and short poetry, all learned during their stay with us.

Imagine if you can 19 children (see photo) from Eastern Europe all 7,8 or 9 yrs old arriving in a strange country which is entirely different than their own after a 17 hour journey, hearing people speak a different language, different food, everyone a stranger except the interpreters who have travelled with them.

Yet all who are involved in every FOCC group countrywide are amazed by the way the children settle down, adapt, eat and literally become part of the family they are staying

with in a very short time, not to mention the speed in which they learn to speak English. But the language of love needs no interpretation and they have received so much love, care and kindness from everyone they have met here. For all of these things our children will hold Silverdale and Arnside in their hearts until they return next year and we cannot thank our local communities enough for their support.

Whilst here the children have been seen by a Dr, Dentist and Optician and we are so grateful to those who have made their time and talents available to us. We have had the most wonderful weather for our visit in 2014 and we were able to get outdoors on some great outings all of which were either given to us free or kindly sponsored by a local person. This year amongst other things we managed two lovely walks in the Lake District which is no mean feat for children not used to walking any distance. They loved the beauty of the countryside and splashing in the sea at Morecambe Bay in the wonderful warm weather.

FOCC is a hands on, flesh and blood Christian Charity with no paid staff. We have 31 FOCC groups countrywide bringing approx. 500 children each year. We exist primarily to give recuperative care to children from disadvantaged families who live in contaminated areas of Belarus. FOCC is about people from different denominations, different localities, different walks of life and different talents all pulling together to produce something quite wonderful. Working together we can and do make a big difference.

Special thanks to our local church communities, Silverdale Cricket Club, the WI's of Arnside and Silverdale, Holgates caravan park, Bleasdale School for the use of their swimming pool and Silverdale St Johns School for making our children so welcome each week. The AONB, our dentists, opticians and Drs who gave us their time and expertise freely. To the Rotary Clubs of Carnforth and Lunesdale who provided two great days out for the children.

Lastly but by no means least our sincere thanks to the hosts of our children and interpreters without whom none of this could be possible. The childrens lives have been changed forever but then no one whose lives have come into contact with our children or our Charity, will ever be quite the same again.

Thanks!

*Olwyn*

