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For Immediate Release

November 5, 2013

Polina's Promise hosts 'Dinner, Documentary and Dessert' New nonprofit to announce launch and mission of global orphan care

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS—It was less than a year ago that a Northwest Arkansas family was at the center of an international drama that centered around the adoption of their special needs daughter, Polina, from Russia.

The Skaggs' family experience opened their eyes—and the eyes of others—to the extreme need of orphans both in the United States and abroad, especially those with special needs. That desire to make a difference is why Polina's Promise was born.

Polina's Promise is a non-profit organization advocating for domestic and international orphans and special needs families. The organization will host a launch event 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 16, at The Lodge (on the Fellowship Bible Church campus) in Rogers.

For a \$10 ticket, participants will be treated to a homemade chili dinner and viewing of the Russian documentary *Mamas, Kids and the Law*, which features the Skaggs family's story. There will also be a silent auction and a dessert auction to finish out the evening. All profits go to support various projects within Polina's Promise including projects in Africa, the United States, China and Russia.

"The mission of Polina's Promise is simple: Forever Families. We exist to help orphans find their families and assist the families of special needs children remain intact," Skaggs said.

Tickets can be purchased online through PayPal (polinaspromise.com) or by contacting Kendra Skaggs at polinaspromise@yahoo.com.

About Polina's Promise

Kendra founded Polina's Promise in the Fall of 2013 in response to the dire need for proper care of special needs orphans abroad. Polina's Promise gets its name from the promise the Skaggs made to their daughter Polina while visiting her in the "Home for the Invalids" in Dmitrov, Russia in 2012 - *"we will come back for you, we will not leave you."*

As someone who spent 10 years teaching special education in California and Arkansas, Kendra was deeply moved by the lack of knowledge of orphanage workers and care given to the children inside what was supposed to be "the best" orphanage in the Moscow region.

As their adoption journey continued and they were caught in the American Adoption ban, the Skaggs' instincts were confirmed through the support and encouragement of the Russian citizens. During this journey, Kendra was also put into contact with a missionary who lived and worked in the Soviet Union in the 1990's and now in China. This relationship has forged a partnership to work in that country as well.

The goals of Polina's Promise are simple:

- We hope to keep special needs children with their biological families whenever possible.
- For those children who do become orphans, we aim to provide them with more adequate care while finding them families.
- We aim to accomplish the above through education of the public and orphanage workers, training for local therapists, interventionists, foster and adoptive families, and providing the equipment and funding needed to reach these goals through partnering agencies across the globe.

The story behind the story

For Kendra Skaggs, the founding of Polina's Promise is very personal. Her daughter, Polina, was the last special needs orphan adopted from Russia before Vladimir Putin's controversial Anti-Magnitsky law went into effect. The Skaggs family was caught in the middle of the ban, not knowing if their adoption would be completed.

In the confusion of it all, Kendra wrote a blog entry *Death Would be Better* (on her blog *Pennies for a Princess*) that was translated and published in Russia leading to an international media blitz including ABC, CNN, The Wall Street Journal and numerous Russian and European news outlets.

Kendra believed there needed to be a face behind the story and took the risk of putting themselves and Polina out there for the world to see. The risk was a success and Jason and Kendra Skaggs brought Polina home on Feb. 2, 2013. Unfortunately, more than 300 children who were made the same promise by their parents were not able to come home.

After travelling to Russia in September 2012 to accept their adoption referral for Polina, the Skaggs knew that it was just the beginning of a greater journey than their own adoption story.