



A caring community passionate about
connecting people to Jesus Christ

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TURNING RUSSIAN HEARTS TO GOD

Recently the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games put our minds back on Russia, so I wanted to give you some glimpses of what God is doing there with Cru.

As Russia prepared to welcome the world's most elite athletes onto its frozen soil for the Winter Olympic Games, **Victor Podluzhny, an Athletes in Action (AIA) staff member in Russia, was striving to create avenues to share the Christian message by capitalizing on the popularity of this global event.** "Russia is a country where sports has first position in society," says Podluzhny.

Sports ministry in this country has been expanding for many years. Carl Dambman, one of our US staff who served in Russia, helped to open the AIA outreach there and spent 35 years serving the Russian people through sports ministry. Carl was one of the chaplains at the Sochi athlete's village, his fifth time ministering to Olympic athletes while they compete at the highest levels.

Many years after Carl started the work, God used the ministry to grab Podluzhny's attention. A former Soviet military swimming champ, Podluzhny spent 12 of his 20 years as a Soviet Navy submarine captain competing in sports.

In 1992, after attending many camps and events held by AIA, the retired captain gave his life to Christ. "After watching the Jesus film 20 times and hearing over 50 testimonies and gospel presentations," says Podluzhny, "I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior." Shortly after that, Podluzhny joined the staff of Athletes in Action.

By the year 2000, AIA had staff serving across Russia and several former Soviet republics. The ministry has gained a great deal of credibility within the world of Russian sports, and was involved in outreaches like coaching high school teams, leading chapels for elite athletes, sharing about Christianity during major sporting events, and preparing and distributing sports Bibles and brochures.

AIA, in partnership with other organizations, holds over 100 sports ministry conferences and trainings in Russia each year. "Local sports ministers can represent AIA in their own cities," says Podluzhny. "Our volunteers attend conferences for teaching, training and practice. We also supply them with sports materials. We now have 35 volunteers who are doing ministry in 22 cities and districts."

Podluzhny and his team are excited to see the number of churches and volunteers involved throughout the nation continue to grow before the next global sporting event comes to Russia.

[Read the full report at athletesinaction.org/news/](http://athletesinaction.org/news/)

We so appreciate your prayers as we work to prepare those who are stepping out into God's harvest fields worldwide. Please pray for more fruitfulness in our work getting people ready to go to Russia and wherever American staff and STINTers are needed.

Thanks for your partnership and prayers this month.

With love and thanks, Steve, Rochelle and family



Russian Outreach Efforts

