

I Dreamed Children Greeted Me on Mother's Day

The Kashtalyan family home is a place of refuge for abandoned children



Irina and Alexander raise 10 kids (9 orphans) as their own in a small village.

old and had escaped from his orphanage. We fed him, gave him a bed, and called his sister to come and get him.

Three years later, we had our own child together; and then there was a knock on our door. We didn't recognize Sasha, he had grown up. We cried and spent time with him. After that we started visiting homeless kids at the railway station. Our daughter was still little but someone at church asked us to become a foster family.

We talked and prayed about it, and when we said yes, the Lord showed me a dream where many children came to greet me on Mother's Day with flowers. God confirmed His vision for our lives."

Irina wiped the tears from her eyes. "These children have their own stories, she said. We don't see abandoned children; we see their potential, children that need love and a home. How could we say no?"

Did your mother ever hug you?

"Dima was 7 when he came to us, Irina said. He and his sister Dasha are very creative. Now he is 16 and too old to be adopted. They will be with us for their life. When we got them they were abandoned, skinny and malnourished.

I asked them, did your mother ever hug you? Can I hug you?"

Piskivka, Ukraine – The tears welled up in Irina's eyes. She looked at her husband Alexander for reassurance. I looked down at my lunch of beets, pickled tomatoes, liver, dumplings and fish. At that moment a few of their ten children returned from school, took off their boots, and smiled when they saw food on the table. Mom had baked a cake for the special guests and the kids were excited. Irina wiped her eyes and began her story.

"I met Alexander at church and within one year we got married. We both had a heart to help abandoned children. I had worked for a Christian foster family and had learned to love children from the street.

About a year after marrying Alexander, I recognized a little boy named Sasha hanging out at the train station. I knew him from the foster family. He was about 9 years



The kids got excited when they saw the cake.



Dima said matter-of-factly, “No, mother never hugged us. We hugged her when she was on the floor because we were trying to stay warm.” (Their mother had passed out from alcohol and neighbors found the children lying on the floor hugging their mom.)

“Our Dream Is To Finish Our House So the Children Will Have a Permanent Home”

Alexander told me that for many years they lived in a tiny 500 sq foot apartment with up to 8 kids. He received a disability payment and used that to buy the land. Then they built this wooden house with help from friends, families and other churches as a church-plant outreach to the Gypsy community.



The house above was meant to be a church. They live there now and have services every Sunday.

They started construction three years ago on a permanent two-story home but ran out of money. I felt like the Lord wants Mercy Projects to help them build their house, but I didn’t want to get their hopes up. Just the fact that I was sitting at their table had raised their hopes far more than I knew. When the kids came in from school, Irina asked:

“Kids, did you pray?” Guess what, we have an answer from God. Jeff from Mercy Projects is here and he told us we may receive some money to build the house!”

“My mother helped us, Irina said. A church bought the windows. We had money left over for the basement and the walls. Inflation has gone up so much since then. We don’t have our own bedroom in this house. I hope one day we can. But our foster daughter Tanya is at university and she has no place to sleep when she comes home. Five girls sleep in one room and four boys in the other.”



Walls, the roof, and windows are finished. Lots of work however is still needed.

The Door Is Always Open

“Some of our past children come home to spend holidays with us, Irina said. We are their only family. If we can build this house, then our son will do the drywall work and other volunteers will help. We only need to finish the first floor and two rooms on the second floor to move in.”



Bogdan is a boxing champion.

Irina shared that their 12-year-old Victoria has scoliosis of the back and no relatives wanted her. They also have three siblings who were taken away from an abusive single mother. She smiles, gives one of them a hug, and points to Bogdan (L) with his award and medals. “He is a boxing champion,” she said.

“My 76-year old mother gave us \$250 to build the roof. She said she knew what it meant to build something. It was all she had. I cried of course, but I also believe that God has a future for these children,” she said.

Note from Jeff: If you would like to help just let us know. We pool funds together to help as many families as possible who are assisting abandoned kids. Thank you!