

## The Fritz Family Believes in Miracles, Hard Work, and caring for Widows and Orphans

Yuriy and Svitlana Fritz are people who do not consider themselves special or talented. When they first obeyed God's call to care for orphans however, they had no idea of the impact it would have on so many young lives. This story is a small part of their journey as a foster family in Ukraine. And yes, they believe in miracles.

"It was a long time ago," Yuri said, "but I had never cried in my life. But in 1993 during my very first visit to a church, I suddenly found myself kneeling down and crying my heart out to God."



In addition to their 4 biological children, Yuriy and Svitlana have fostered and adopted a total of 14 children. 8 kids still live with them today with possibly more on the way.

Fast forward 10 years and Yuriy felt God speaking to him again from the book of James 1:27: *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* With the words of scripture ringing in their hearts, both Yuriy and Svitlana knew that God was speaking to them. In Ukraine, the official designation for families who foster multiple children is a "family-type orphanage." The Fritzs' however, are just a loving family where kids find a permanent home.

*Yuriy said: "I understood that it's us who have to care about orphans and widows. Not some other more talented or wealthy people. No, it was us, me and Svitlana."*

### Ira's Story

Ira's birth mother was an alcoholic who didn't take care of her daughter. She found out about the Fritz family, and decided she would give her daughter away without telling anyone.

"Ira's mother never told us, or her, about the plan to give her away," Svitlana said. "We met the mother at the railway station to learn more about her situation. The mother simply abandoned Ira there with us. We had just come to talk and learn more. Ira was terrified of course, but never said a word. We didn't have clothes or bed sheets for her at home. So right from the railway station we went to the village outdoor market.



Gotlib and Ira now have 3 girls of their own.

Most of the sellers at the market were gypsies. I later found out that the poor girl was convinced that we were going to sell her to the gypsies!”

Svitlana continued: “When we brought her home, Ira thought we would sell her later. She lived with that fear, asking for nothing and sharing her feelings with no one. After 6 months she realized what was going on. One day she shared her heart of fear with me. I was shocked. We both cried and laughed and hugged each other.”

Today Ira is married to their son Gotlib and they have three beautiful daughters. They live next door as an extension of the family, providing foster care themselves for three other girls in addition to their own three.



Ira and Gotlib live next door and are raising six girls as one big happy family.

## Yuriy and Svitlana Believe In Miracles

The oldest child they have today is Nadia. She was nine years old when she arrived in 2007 and today she is 22.

“Our Nadia has learning difficulties but by God’s grace and prayer she understands everything and is a good helper in the house,” Svitlana said. “We also have siblings Angelina and Grigori. We got Grigori when he was four years old and took him to see many doctors. His stomach was swollen but no one could diagnose him correctly. So we just prayed and handed this problem to God. After some time, we noticed that Grigoriy was totally fine without any medication! I guess we’ll never know what diagnosis he actually had.”



Nadia is 22 and will always live with them. Grigoriy is healthy and loves to sing with his family.



Yevgeniy and Volodymyr

In 2012 they adopted two brothers, Yevgeniy and Volodymyr. Yevgeniy has brain damage. Learning doesn’t come easy for him. But God is faithful and they have seen a gradual improvement. Now Yevgeniy wants to become a pastor.

Yuriy says, “Before we took Yevgeniy and Volodymyr they were like weeds on the ground. But today they are part of God’s family. Today their last name is Fritz. I am so proud of my sons. They are diligent and hard-working as best as they can.”

Yuriy believes in hard work and serving others. Besides running their two homes, one for the boys and one for the girls, Yuriy is also the pastor of their local village church. The kids serve in the church and Yuriy makes sure they feed the goats, work in the garden, and get their schoolwork done.

The village is peaceful, and Yuriy’s next project is finishing work on the old school building used as the boy’s house. He made it clear from the beginning. “We believe in miracles,” he said.



Everybody serves and works hard in the Fritz family.