

## Miracles at the Hearts of Love Center

From Jeff - Our ministry to at-risk children in Ukraine means strengthening families, encouraging single mothers, sharing the gospel and helping the poor. The Hearts of Love Center is unique, however, because they focus on children with special needs. They accept all children regardless of their handicap. The local public schools often refer families to them. About 55 children attend classes and receive help each week.

In other words, when the limited public resources have been exhausted, weary parents bring their child to the center, hoping for an answer. The center receives no government support and relies completely on the help of our faithful supporters. Lena, the director, is the chief cheerleader and family counselor, as well as school director, employer, problem solver and prayer warrior.

### **"I am infinitely grateful to the Lord for you..."**

I received this letter from Lena a few months ago and wanted to share it with you. With the help of a Canadian organization, along with Mercy Projects, Lena organized a summer trip to the Black Sea. This immense undertaking, during the time of Covid, was deemed by some to be risky and foolish, yet she felt compelled this was what God desired. She invited families with handicapped children from the center. However, she also invited families with traumatized children from the war in eastern Ukraine. They filled a bus with almost 50 people and drove to the sea. Lena writes:

"Dear Jeff and Mercy Projects,  
I am infinitely grateful to the Lord for you, and for your help! This summer we had an extremely rewarding experience for our children and their mothers going to the Black Sea. It was a true test of faith. We also invited children from the frontline zone of Avdiivka. These children have spent their childhood in a war zone, in basements, hiding from gunshots. Our combined group was very complex. We had children with disabilities, their mothers, and the kids from the Avdiivka war zone."

### **A summer of miracles**

"Most of the children, and their parents, could not swim and had never seen the sea. Combine these thoughts with the coronavirus, and terrible pictures were drawn in my mind. I wanted to stop everything and not take



"My greatest fear is that our center will stop accepting children," one mother recently said.



Lena at right, receives packages of supplies from our staff and the Ukrainian Salvation Army.

these risks. But in the depths of my heart, where the waves of anxiety and doubt did not reach, there was peace and tranquility. Some people thought I was crazy because the risks of this trip were great. The Lord truly gave us His peace.”

### **Oksana learned to swim underwater, and then she learned to talk**

“Oksana 14 years old (autism, schizophrenia) learned to swim underwater, and she never swam in the sea or river before. She lowered her head into the water and moving her arms and legs swam in the right direction. Despite the fact that no one taught her, she felt comfortable in the water. Her mother Alyona cried just watching her, thanking God for this miracle. Before our trip, she had a vocabulary of 10-15 words and communicated in one word. At the sea, she began to logically express her desires, building a sentence of 3-4 words. This had never happened in 14 years of her life. She can now briefly express her wish and her condition (‘Oksana is happy’ or ‘Oksana wants to sleep on the bed’). Everyone who knows Oksana thinks of this as a miracle.”



Miracles happened in the lives of many of the children.

### **A hug from 12-Year-old Darynka**

“Darynka (12 years old, autism), closely monitors her personal space. She does not allow anyone but her mother to be close to her. This is a problem because in public or other crowded places Darynka becomes hysterical. She was afraid of anything new, and her personal space being violated was always a reason for her hysteria. On the third day of her stay by the sea, Darynka approached me and hugged me with both hands. I could not hold back my tears. It was so obvious that only the Lord could break this barrier between the child and the world around her.



Andrew loved the water and had no seizures at all.

Andrew is our oldest pupil, 22. He has a severe form of epilepsy and was watching the children swim in the sea with fear and unspeakable desire. We offered his mother help and put a large life-buoy ring on him. Andrew was very afraid; it was his first time in the water. But when he moved his legs and relaxed and swam a little, happiness knew no bounds. During his entire stay at the sea, Andrew did not have epileptic seizures, although at home he has several each day.

Adults, while the children were still asleep, gathered for a morning prayer meeting with coffee. Together we prayed for the children, listened to God’s Word, and opened our hearts to Him.

Thank you for supporting us. I wish you could see now the happy eyes of our children and their parents. The Lord is a God of miracles and we often see His wonderful power in our work. This is probably the greatest happiness in life - to be useful to our Lord!”



Parents met for morning coffee and prayer. They are all now praying to be able to go back!