

Renovation of the Heart and Home

“Hey Jeff climb in,” Andrey said. “We are driving about two hours today to a village near Chernobyl to see Marina and her kids.”

I always enjoy spending time with Andrey because he is thoughtfully passionate about helping at-risk kids. His wife was a sponsored child in our program. She grew up attending our camps, was saved, and married Andrey. Today they are missionaries reaching others for Christ.

After a few minutes he said, “I work in the Chernobyl region because nobody likes to go there. Life is depressing, there are no jobs and lots of people are alcoholics. I mentor the kids at the Snowdrop Shelter, but I also go to families. That’s why we are going to visit Marina. She has five kids and her husband left them several years ago.”

“The kids in these villages have been failed by the adults in their lives. Even their teachers point out who the orphans are. There is a social stigma. Thus, when you begin to build a relationship with them, they really don’t trust you, so you have to earn their trust,” Andrey explained.

“They really need an adult in their lives who believes in them. It changes everything. While some kids are good at math, others have skills like sports, raising animals or building. We just try to encourage them and help them pursue their goals.”

Your Help Means A Lot



Andrey is proud of the kids’ work in the barn.



Andrey Kolbovskiy is a missionary with Mercy Projects. His help is a lifeline for families like Marina’s.



A broken down farmhouse was given to Marina for shelter.

We arrived at the house and the older son proudly showed Andrey the work he was doing in the barn. Natalia, the former director of the Snowdrop Shelter, works with Andrey now and lives nearby. She is a widow and understands what it means to raise kids alone in a small village.

Marina thanked us for everything being done to help her. We saw the chicken coop, the barn, and a small water heater in the kitchen. A wood burning stove keeps one room warm in winter. She looked at me, Natalia, and then at Andrey. She wiped her eyes and simply said, “Your help means a lot.”

We walked outside and Andrey shared, "I have known Marina and her kids about five years. Some of them were in the orphanage. Her husband left her, he was an alcoholic, and so was she. Life was terrible for the kids. But a miracle happened and she turned away from alcohol. God is changing her life slowly each day. In my mind, if kids have a safe place to stay at home with their mom, then that is the first step. The next step is to mentor them and show Christ's love. "

Marina's Home Needs Renovation

He continued, "Marina has 3 boys and two girls and was given this broken down house to live in. It needs heat, plumbing, everything. It still needs windows, doors, etc., but at least they have a roof over their heads. We are rebuilding the barn and now they can have ducks, chickens, and a pig, like a small farm. We buy the wood and the boys can do the work with our help. They learn to build, and to take care of themselves at the same time. All of the kids work hard and Marina is doing her best."

From Survival to Hope for the Future

Andrey shared that Marina is actively helping her neighbors. They help feed the 3 kids next door with produce from their garden. With support from MP, Andrey and the boys built a fence around the house for protection. A drunken neighbor tried to break in, but Marina feels safe now. Yes their home needs a lot of work, but she is hopeful about the future.

Andrey is excited because Marina is thinking about college for her son. He is interested in construction and hopes to go to a vocational school.

"They went from a mindset of survival to thinking about education," Andrey said. "They now help other people. They are no longer depressed but now have dreams, hope, and ideas about life. And please pray for a good local church. They need reliable Christian friends. Thank you!"

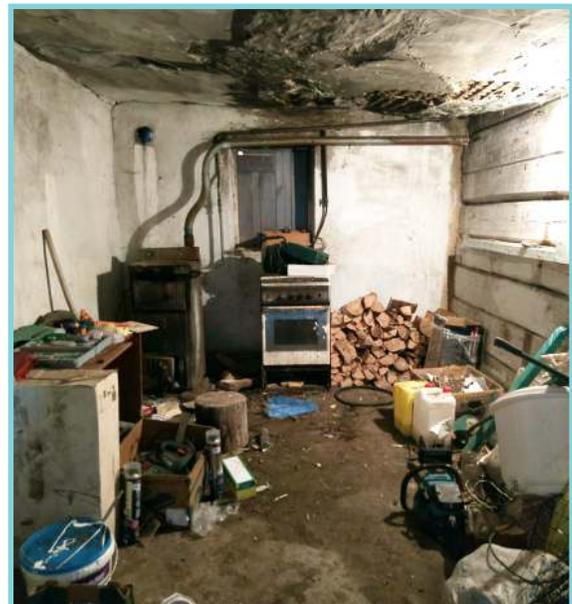
Armenia Dairy Farm Update

I flew to Armenia in January to negotiate the purchase of the farm. It is a beautiful piece of property with 18 acres and a brand new building to house 42 dairy cows. The purchase process, however, in former communist countries is never easy. The farm was part of a government agricultural program and the owners must obtain permission to sell it.

We ask for your prayers as we trust the Lord in this process. Pray that the owners get their paperwork in proper order. I will keep you updated as we make progress. We hope to start buying cows sometime this spring!



The kids need a warm place to sleep.



The wood-burning stove provides some heat.



Please pray for the purchase of this beautiful 18 acre farm.