

God Provides Through the Storm of Pandemic and Loss

Note from Jeff: *This month we expect 200 kids to take part in our summer camps. It costs \$15 day, or \$135 per camper. We gave the last minute "Ok" in faith though we had not raised the money yet. God is greater than Covid-19 and we are grateful for His faithfulness and your continued prayers and support. Thank you!*

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The past 18 months has been a challenge for our team in Ukraine. First was the sudden loss of our director Irina Skrypnik from pancreatic cancer. A few months later the Covid-19 pandemic arrived. Irina, however, had put together an amazing staff and recommended that Yulia take her place.

Andrey and Yulia

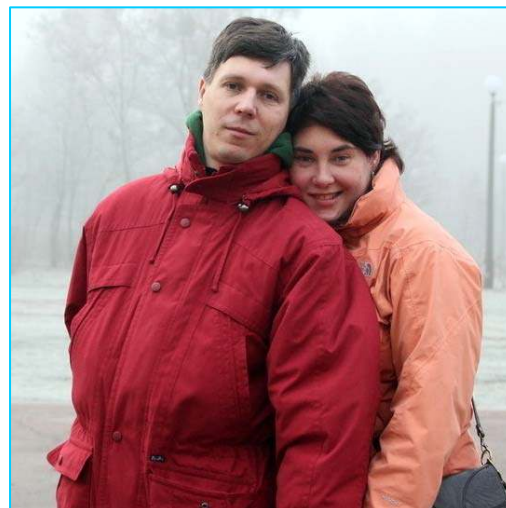
Andrey and Yulia Khoroshylov were born in the Soviet Union to atheistic parents. They are first generation Christians in their families and are strong evidence of how the Holy Spirit continues to work in this formerly communist part of the world.

"I was born in Kharkiv in East Ukraine," Andrey said. "I was so quiet as a child that the other kids called me 'a monk.' They said I never talked. Growing up I was more of a thinker, and I remember questioning Darwin's theory of evolution in college. Some Christian students gave me a Gideon's New Testament and talked to me about God. I knew evolution did not make sense, so I was interested.

"Then in 1999 my uncle invited me to a Salvation Army youth meeting. He said there would be lots of girls there, so of course I wanted to go. God touched my heart and I repented at that meeting."

Andrey knew right away that he wanted to serve God, to join the Salvation Army, and to tell other people about Jesus. No longer known as a "monk," he actively fed the homeless and shared his faith. After several years he was accepted to a Salvation Army officer's course 400 miles away in Kyiv. The Lord spoke to him that he would meet a special girl at the officer training school.

Andrey instinctively knew that chocolate was the key to a woman's heart. He bought a chocolate bar, and when he saw Yulia at the meeting, he gave it to her. Actually, Yulia was not interested, but Andrey's persistence paid off.



Andrey and Yulia married in 2014 and a year later their son Fyodor was born.



Andrey taught a robotics course to orphans last month in the Chernobyl zone.



He helps the kids study topics not offered to them at their village school.

Yulia's Story

"I grew up in a close-knit family in Uzbekistan. Our East Asian culture meant that all family members were involved in everybody's life. My mom was one of six siblings, and I was 12 years old when older relatives began to die. I remember thinking that my relatives were so involved in my life, and now they were gone. It made me question what happens when we die. I couldn't accept that we simply stop to exist," Yulia said.

"I remember in 1994 my older sister got married and moved to Ukraine. She could speak English and became an interpreter for some churches. She wasn't a Christian but through translating she became one! I visited her a few years later and she took me to church. It was my first visit ever to a church. When I returned home, a friend invited me to a youth meeting and I gave my life to Christ."

In 2001 Yulia moved back to Ukraine and lived with her sister's family. She served in the church youth ministry which led to helping at her first EEO summer camp in 2002. By 2005 Irina hired her to come on full-time staff and lead the camp ministry together with a co-worker Yana.

She Finally Agrees To Marry Andrey

Fast forward to 2014 and by this time, Andrey had bribed Yulia with lots of chocolate. They got married and shortly thereafter moved to Andrey's hometown of Kharkiv. His job was there and his ministry with the Salvation Army was there. Irina offered Yulia a leave of absence, thinking she did not want to lose her. During the year of 2014 the Maidan revolution took place and military fighting exploded in eastern Ukraine. Irina needed someone for our IT department as well as teaching at-risk kids. Andrey was more than willing and the new couple returned to Kyiv.

"I still can't comprehend that we won't see Irina on this earth again," Yulia said. "Often I catch myself thinking she is on a business trip and will come back next week. We all owe her so much. She was like a mother to us."

The heartbreaking loss was magnified three months later when the pandemic hit and everything changed again. Yulia's steady leadership, however, looked for new ways to encourage families and build relationships.

Summer Camps Planned For This Month

"We have lots of fresh ideas how we can make disciples and encourage families. Pray for us because very soon we will have hundreds of kids coming to our summer camps. And thank you for your love and support everyday. We are excited. God is good," Yulia said.



Yulia teaches a cooking class at summer camp.



Andrey and Yulia with their son Fyodor in the Kyiv office of MP.



Yulia at summer camp in 2005. Today she leads the team to make disciples. God is good!

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

Proverbs 16:9