

## A New Generation Leads the Way

“Sponsorship is not just about supporting families,” Yulia said. “It’s about equipping them to serve God.”  
*(Please go to [mercyprojects.org](https://mercyprojects.org) to learn more about sponsoring a family in need)*

From Jeff – Bible camps for children have been a major part of our ministry for almost 30 years. Thousands of kids have attended the camps and many have grown up to serve the Lord. Sponsors provided funds, wrote letters, and prayed for their sponsored children. This newsletter is about two of those children, Alla and Tasha.

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Best friends Alla and Tasha, both sponsored “at-risk children” came to our bible camp as 8 year-old little girls. They grew up attending MP bible camps. They didn’t know that 23 years later they would still be best friends, raising their families, serving people in need, and sharing Jesus with this new generation in Ukraine.

MP Director Yulia shares; “I was a camp counselor back then and I remember these two special young girls who had so much potential. They were active leaders among our small group. They took part in every event and they were very creative and loved worship time.”

### Alla Shares Her Story

“I am the oldest of four kids. My parents started attending church when I was six. We were really poor and people from the USA sponsored us through Mercy Projects. I was eight years old when I went to the camp for the first time. My parents were happy that I could have a vacation at a Christian camp. I was very excited. It was something completely new for me. The counselors were very kind and always inspired us. I loved the master classes but the best part was the team of foreigners. They came from so far away to spend time with us, it really impressed me.

After camp I started reading my bible and became interested in a personal relationship with God. It changed my life. I grew up going to the MP camps. I started singing in worship groups and as a teenager, served as a counselor at the camps and in youth ministry at our church. I met my husband Andriy at the camp!”

Alla’s husband, Andriy Kolbovskiy has been a close ministry partner of Mercy Projects for many years. Alla says ministry has remained at the core of their marriage.



At left, Yana and Yulia were camp counselors when Alla and Tasha grew up attending MP camps. Yana recruited Andriy to be a counselor, where he met Alla at the camp.



Alla, in her teens, learned archery at the camp.



Andriy and Alla as camp counselors



A younger Andriy working as a counselor at the camp.

“When I first met Andriy, we were both doing ministry. It is an important value for our family. Over the 13 years of our married life, the face of our ministry has changed, but never paused. Now, we organize camps in the villages by Chernobyl. Andriy is from there and we have a heart for at-risk children there.

“When the war started, I left the country with our two children for six months. Andriy evacuated people and took them to safer places. Now he makes regular trips to the east and south of Ukraine - the cities that suffer the most from the war. I am very worried during each trip but now my main ministry is raising our children. We collect clothes and toys for children who have lost their homes. I hope that we as parents can show our children a living faith in God. And I hope and pray that we will survive this war and win.”

### Alla’s Best Friend Tasha

Tasha also shared that her time at camp was life-changing: “I was eight years old the first time I came to the camp. I grew up in a dysfunctional family without a father. Mercy Projects sponsored me.

“It was the brightest event in my life! I still remember my Ukrainian and American counselors who gave me a family atmosphere, hugs, acceptance, love, and also introduced me to Jesus for the first time.

“After the camps I would relive bible lessons in my mind, sing worship songs, and even teach my neighbors to sing praises. I learned to pray in the camp and continued to pray at home.”

Tasha also met her husband Taras at the camp. They got married and continued to serve as counselors before starting a family of their own. Of course, Alla was a bridesmaid. They remain very close.

Tasha and Taras eventually started a child development center. They offer daycare, private tutoring, and special education classes. Like everyone else, the war interrupted their lives, but now they have returned to Kyiv with the dream of buying their own building.

“Our goal is to build friendships with parents and their children. We will have seminars, bible studies, and master classes,” Tasha beamed.

### Sponsors Equip Families: “Teaching Them How To Fish”

Andriy and Alla, and Taras and Tasha, two families whose lives were radically changed, now lead the way to serve others in their country of Ukraine.

Yana and Yulia just smile. All of them have remained good friends and partners in ministry. “When you see the fruits it is a joy and a great blessing,” shared Yulia.

“We support families today in the hope that they will also learn to serve in God’s kingdom. But you know, sponsorship is not just about supporting families. It is about equipping them. I believe in the saying don’t give fish, but teach them how to fish.”



Tasha and Taras with their 4th child.



Tasha came from a dysfunctional family but now reaches families with God’s love.



Huddled together during an air raid, away from windows.