

ZHENYA'S STORY



When I was very young I remember my brother coming home from prison. He drank heavily and would beat me. Mama was away at work most of the time, but when she was home she and my older sister would drink also. There was never enough money for food because it was all spent on vodka, so my little sister and I would steal vegetables from the neighbor's garden. Eventually Mama lost her job and there was no food at all. So we looked for dogs, killed them, and ate them.

One day our house caught on fire and burned to the ground. We had nowhere to live. A friend gave us an apartment in Kirovograd, and we moved there. But my family still continued to drink. And there was still no food. So we kids would bring garbage bags back to the apartment and rummage through them looking for food.

I remember when the social workers came and took my little sister and me to the orphanage. I never saw mother again. I couldn't understand why she never came for a visit. Finally in ninth grade I learned the truth. Mama had died of alcohol poisoning years before. I was devastated. And so I began to drink also.

During this time, Christians (*Heart for Orphans Orphan Outreach Team*) would come to the orphanage. They told us that God loved us, and they loved us also. I thought it was strange. I wondered what they wanted from me. At the same time my sister called me and cried, "Do you want to die from alcoholism, just like our mother?" It made me think about my life. I realized I was living wrong and I wanted to change. I began to pray that God would change me and give me a family.

Soon after that I was invited to come live in Michael's House (a *Heart for Orphans Transition Home*). It was hard at first. I couldn't understand many things, such as how to behave, or helping around the house. But the weirdest thing was that the house parents thought of me as a son! For the first time I felt loved. I learned so much from them.

I have changed so much! I am kinder to people and I behave better. I am no longer easily angered. This summer I will be baptized. I hope for a good job in the future, maybe as a videographer or with computers. Mostly I hope for a good wife and a happy family.

Thank God for this ministry to help orphans! Thank you all who pray for us or donate so that we can have this house. You gave me a family. You taught me how to live, and how to love!

CROSSROADS CLUB

For an orphaned teenager with no place to call home, a place to hang out, feel accepted, and get a good meal . . . well, that is very appealing indeed! And that's what they get at Crossroads Club.

Crossroads is our newest teen outreach program. Each week, our team in Kropivnitski welcomes 10-20 teens to our transition home, Michael's House, and teaches them to cook. Afterward, they share the meal together, study the Bible, talk about life, laugh, play games, watch videos, and worship the Lord! They build relationships with one another. They build friendships. Over time, they become family!

Outreach Coordinator, Luba, sums up the program up by saying, "We teach the orphans basic skills such as how to handle social situations without being aggressive, and the difference between right and wrong. They are learning to cook – and are surprised to find that they like it! The trust-building process is slow and requires dedication. However, once the kids see that we are truly invested in them, the barriers come down and relationships form."

This is what it's all about! Loving Christ. Loving one another. Providing family where there is none!



MEET AMBER

Amber first connected with Heart for Orphans in 2013 when she and her daughter, Natalie, went on a Vision Trip to Ukraine. On that trip, their eyes were opened to the incredible need in Ukraine, and they knew they wanted to do something. Amber joined the Board of Directors in 2014. In 2017, she and her husband Ryan became liaisons for their church – leading church members on Vision Trips, and actively helping to connect the ministry with members that are interested.

Amber Linnekin joined our team as the Director of Development in May. She has been in the banking industry for 18 years, most recently as Vice President/Branch Manager of a local community bank. For her, combining her business experience with her passion to help those in need is the ideal combination!

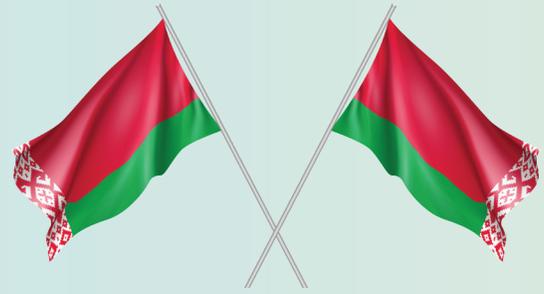
Amber and Ryan reside in Williamsburg with their two children Eli and Addison. Their oldest daughter, Natalie, is now attending the University of Mary Washington.

Welcome Amber!



CONNECT WITH US:





LARISSA & IVAN

BRINGING HEART FOR
ORPHANS TO **BELARUS**

Larissa & Ivan* have a unique ministry. Not only do they minister to orphans in Belarus, but they also reach out to the broken parents of these children. Most children growing up in orphanages in the countries of the former Soviet Union have living parents. Most have lost custody of their children because of alcoholism.

Ivan knows what it is like to grow up with alcoholic parents. He did. Ivan was 17 when the Soviet Union collapsed. Foreign missionaries came to Belarus and started a church where Ivan and his sister repented and asked the Lord into their lives. Ivan's parents didn't allow them to go to church, but they persevered and went anyway.

When Larissa was 11 her parents divorced. Both parents remarried and started new families. Gradually her mother began to drink and to neglect her children. Eventually she was hospitalized with cirrhosis of the liver. While in hospital, she gave her heart to Christ, and she was miraculously healed! Larissa saw this and also gave her heart to the Lord. She and her mother began to attend church. Larissa's mother began a ministry to drug addicts and alcoholics which eventually grew into a rehab center for women.

Larissa was always drawn to orphans. She knows their pain. As a child she often felt rejected, as though a glass of vodka was more important than she was! She and Ivan knew God was calling them to adopt, and to minister to orphans. One day when Larissa and Ivan prayed about adopting a child, the Lord spoke, *You want to take a child for your own. But even your biological children are given to you only for a short time. I want you to take a child and serve his family as well.* They knew it would be difficult, but they humbly said yes.

Today Larissa and Ivan have joined the Heart for Orphan family. They now have 9 children – a combination of biological, adopted and foster children. In addition, they lead a team of people in serving orphans in the orphanage. They play, sing and teach them the Word of God. They also help to rebuild families by providing them food, clothing, firewood, and other vital needs, so that they are able to take their kids back from the orphanage. But more than this, they teach them how to parent their children the right way...

...with God at the center.



TRAINING THE TEAM

Ministering to orphans is a complex and demanding job. Many of our kids have been through unimaginable trauma. And most haven't even learned simple life skills, like brushing their teeth. Our dedicated staff loves these children, but sometimes love isn't enough.

Heart for Orphans is serious about training. We're serious about giving our staff the tools they need to do the job. Whether it's teaching orphans life skills such as budgeting their money or cooking, or more serious concerns like helping them to heal from their painful past.

Heart for Orphans is currently developing a more robust training program. We have received a grant for \$10,000 from the BMF Foundation to start our Life Skills Training modules for orphaned teens. Also, many of you have donated specifically towards training our staff in caring for kids who have been through trauma. You understand how vital this is. Thank you for investing in the lives of these children! You realize that love alone is sometimes not enough.

*Join us in partnership:
Make a difference in a child's life!*

We minister to over 200 children in 11 orphanages each month through our Orphan Outreach program.

DONATE AT HEARTFORORPHANS.COM



Poland

Ukraine

2020 VISION TRIP

PLEASE JOIN US ON A VISION TRIP TO UKRAINE

Come see how God is
changing the lives of
orphans!

OCT 31 – NOV 10, 2020

For more information, email
barbara@heartfororphans.com

Heart  for Orphans

Kyrgyzstan

Nepal

India