

Nastya's Story

When orphans leave the orphanage at age 18, they are assigned a room in a communal flat by the government. Communal flats, a legacy from the Soviet Era, can have as many as 10 rooms with shared bathroom, toilet, and kitchen facilities. The residents may be a mixture of families and single people. Orphans leaving the orphanage are not at all prepared for this kind of independent living. At the Harbor, however, the participants learn how to set up a domestic household, shopping, cooking, budgeting, paying bills, and how to get along with one another in a family setting, etc,

Nastya graduated with the second class of Harbor participants. She then experienced a year of independent living in the post-adaption (next step) apartment with three other graduates. On September 1, 2006 she moved from there to her assigned room in a communal flat with about five or six additional residents including some families who had lived there for as long as 20 years or more. The first morning after Nastya moved in one of the neighbors stopped her and said, "It is impossible to live in this apartment because everyone hates each other. They do not talk to one another and they are always doing something mean.

One of the neighbors had friends over. They partied all night. Another neighbor tired of the shouting and screaming, sprayed pepper spray through the keyhole into the room and immediately left the building. Everyone, including Nastya who was studying late, began to experience symptoms. They had difficulty breathing and began coughing. The police were called, but they didn't know what to do because there were no eye witnesses to who had done it.

Nastya expressed her fears to Luba, the (Harbor director), but she had no other choice, but to pray and be patient. Nastya prayed and she began to act. Every morning thereafter when she saw one of her neighbors she always said, "Good morning." They looked at her with puzzled faces as if she were crazy. Nastya persisted in greeting them, asking how they were doing, and praying for them. Eventually they began to return her greeting.

In Nastya's apartment there is a rule that everyone takes turns cleaning the kitchen, bathroom, hallway, and toilet. Not everyone had been doing it, however. This provoked constant arguing. When Nastya observed that the bathroom and toilet were always dirty she initiated cleaning them herself even though it was not her day. Her neighbors were incredulous, "Why are you doing this? It is not your day! Nastya replied, "I am a Christian, and I want to do good work." Nastya was now finding an open door for her testimony to her neighbors.

One day the Harbor family came to Nastya's apartment to celebrate *novoselie* that is, moving in day. At the end of the day Nastya took the leftover cake, carefully sliced it knocked on doors, and offered pieces to her neighbors. They were stunned and speechless. Slowly the atmosphere began to change and now most families talk to Nastya. She has begun to tell them more about her life story and the Harbor.

The Harbor graduates need wisdom, patience, and coping skills in these kinds of situations. What would Jesus do? They need prayer supporters!

In the Russian orphanage system there are three levels of orphanages: 1) A top level for the most capable orphans, 2) A middle level for the average, and 3) A bottom level for the mentally disabled. For 12 years Nastya was in the top level when tragedy devastated her. A caregiver, with whom she had closely bonded,

died suddenly. From that point on Nastya became inconsolable and began to fail. The orphanage director took the easy way out. She transferred Nastya to a mentally disabled orphanage where she remained for the next 6 years.

The director of this orphanage, having learned about the Harbor called Luba and begged her to take Nastya into the program. Most of the Harbor staff were skeptical about taking on such a challenge, but Luba felt a call from God to take her in. Luba poured her heart into meeting Nastya's needs. For example, she found tutors to help Nastya in her school subjects. As a result Nastya began to thrive. She completed two years of high school in one year and completed high school before leaving the Harbor. Luba also invited her to church. At church the invitation to come forward to pray was given. Nastya immediately responded. Afterwards Luba and Katya, the Harbor psychologist at that time, began excitedly to hug Nastya. Nastya's response was "What did I do?" They explained and she began steadily to grow spiritually. Not long after she was baptized.

What is Nastya doing today? She is completing fashion Design College, is a Harbor volunteer, contributes to the program financially, and will soon enter the university to become a counselor and a manager. Nastya has announced to Luba. "I want to become the next Harbor director."



Nastya with Luba

What an amazing story! We have an awesome God! Thank you for partnering with the Harbor in raising up new disciples and Christian leaders like Nastya.

Blessings with love, The Harbor and Alex