

Camp Counselors Carry On the Mission in Ukraine

A new generation of summer camp counselors, formerly sponsored children, now carry the vision and mission of reaching at-risk teens with the gospel.

Summer Update by Jeff Thompson

It seems like every year the summer camp ministry to hundreds of at-risk children rushes upon us. The storm of activity preparing for camps engulfs our Kyiv office like a whirlwind. Our small staff prays over the curriculum, the theme, the crafts, the kids, and the schedule long before summer arrives. When summer does come, the time for action takes over.

In the midst of all this action, we can sometimes lose our view of the big picture. Here it is in a nutshell. With your support, disciples in Ukraine who are formerly sponsored kids from poverty-stricken homes are now making disciples of the next generation. That's it—disciples making disciples. A sponsor gives and prays and a single mother in Ukraine is encouraged. Her child is invited to camp. The child becomes a follower of Christ, grows up, and disciples the next generation of children.

Three Different 9-Day Summer Camps Planned

With your help, Mercy Projects is taking a step of faith. This summer we will sponsor three 9-day camps, each for a different age group of 85-90 campers, and each will cost approximately \$13,000 or \$150 per person.



Buses brought kids to camp last year from all over Ukraine. Your support makes this happen!



Morning calisthenics, followed by breakfast and chapel, start the day.



David cares for his mom and attends university with his sponsors' help.

Former sponsored child David Tischenko, now a university student, shared his experiences about MP camp.

"I grew up as a sponsored child. I always had a sponsor and I loved it. I went to many camps and I loved them. We had a lot of fun with other kids and the counselors were great. I think this is very important to be a counselor that kids can look up to."

"David, what do you like most about camp?" I asked.

"The atmosphere is great there. It is like a wave of great feelings. The camps always encourage me. I love going. This summer I will be a 'helper counselor' because I want to be an example for the younger campers."

David's mother also shared. "One time we were given tickets to the normal state-run camp. I sent three of my kids there and the next day they called me crying saying they wanted to come home. When I dropped off Daniel the first time at your camp, he didn't want to be there. But he cried all the way home when we left ten days later. He loved it so badly he insisted I send him every year."



Sonya (top right) works for the second year as a counselor.

Sonya's Life was Changed

New counselor Sonya Matvienko shares this about camp. "I entered Mercy Projects' program when I was 8 years old. My sister and I had sponsors, and because of them I could come to the camp now for ten years. I remember my counselors very well. The one who really impacted me was Gena Korovay. His testimony was very powerful. Also, Tima and Kira encouraged me to become counselor. They trusted me and God's work in me. This was very powerful.

"What do I do as a counselor? Well, I have two younger brothers, an older brother, and a sister, so I understand the kids. I speak their language. I try to be a friend, an older sister, and I pray for that one person I can really connect with. I am on the worship team and I try to spend lots of time with the kids in my group."

An Investment in the Future

- \$ 75 = 5 days of camp
- \$ 150 = Camp for 1 at-risk child
- \$ 750 = Camp for 5 children
- \$ 1,500 = Camp for 10 children
- \$12,750 = Entire camp for 85 people

From Despair to Hope: A Bright Future for At-risk Children

Mercy Projects camps will host orphans, foster kids, kids with single parents, kids living with grandparents, kids from large families, kids affected by war, and others not in our sponsorship programs.

With your help we can reach these kids for Christ and trust God for a bright future for them.

God's Word changes young lives. Many teenagers who attended camp five years ago are now sharing their faith and making disciples.

Please support the camp ministry this month. Your support encourages young people like David Tischenko to follow Christ in tough places like Ukraine.



Most of our sponsored children come from non-Christian families. They return home to share their new faith.