

## **Galya**

Galya [GAL-e-ya] and her husband were born into Muslim families in a Central Asian country. She graduated from the U.S. equivalent of high school and attended economical college. Both accepted Christ in 1998 and were the first believers among their relatives. That number of believers continues to grow, including one of the couple's young children.

A few years later her husband became a leader of their home group and Galya was working with the women and teenagers. He graduated from a Bible college in 2002 and in 2004 both Galya and her husband entered a theological college in Eastern Europe.

The economy of their country is very poor and many people, including church leaders, move abroad to earn enough money to provide for their families. The divorce rate is high. When a bordering sea began to dry out, diseases multiplied, including tuberculosis. Anemia is common among women and often results in them giving birth to weak babies. The government prohibits churches, talking about Christ in public and assembling together in homes. Government representatives persecute believers. When believers do meet together they are careful to set the table for tea so that it appears they are only visiting one another.

In their town of about 15,000 there are 35 believers who do meet as a home group. Their "church" also has adult, youth and children's groups. A special women's group meets every other month. Galya and her husband fear the government and unbelievers working with them will harm their family and the believers that gather in their home. Despite their fears they serve God by opening their home to worship and welcoming those with problems.

Galya has worked as a seamstress and it is her desire to begin a small garment business out of her home. The government would allow such an industry. Galya says: "If we will do that business, then there will be a good opportunity to serve God. Firstly many people will come to our house to order and buy clothes that we will sew. It gives us an opportunity to meet together with believers without fear. Nobody will notice who comes to order clothes whether they are Christians or not. Secondly, we will have an opportunity to tell about Christ, to those who come. Thirdly, for some believers who will work with us will be an opportunity to earn money for their families. And of course it will be a good support for my family too."

## **Mila**

Mila [MEE-la] was just 14 when her father kicked her out of their house. Both parents are deaf and even with the use of sign language there were considerable misunderstandings between Mila and her parents. After living with a cousin for two years, Mila arrived in a European capital city where prostitution was the only way she could feed herself. All communication with her parents was lost at this point in her young life; Mila could not forgive her father.

During her time as a prostitute Mila met a Christian woman who runs a restoration ministry for girls who are sexually trafficked and surviving in the sex industry. Mila responded to God's love and the support she received and her life changed when she became a believer. She realized that God had love and forgiveness not only for her but for her father whom she was able to forgive. Slowly the relationship with her parents was repaired.

After Mila's father became sick and her mother retired she decided to return home. It is a miracle how God changed not only Mila's heart, but also the hearts of her parents. Just a few weeks after she returned home, Mila found a job. At the same time, a young female student known to the woman who rescued Mila was introduced to her. She invited Mila to her church where she is now a volunteer in their evangelistic program for children.

## **Adonette**

Adonette is a Burundian refugee that arrived in the U.S. from Tanzania refugee camp last fall. At 46, she is living with her husband, 11 of their 13 children and two of her husband's sisters; the 13 people live in a small three bedroom apartment.

Adonette and her husband belong to a group of refugees that have suffered from ethnic killings and massacres between Tutsi and Hutu of Burundi origin. Unlike the recent killings and genocide that took place in Rwanda most of the refugees like Adonette have not lived in their Burundian homeland. They are children of surviving parents who left the bloodshed and have continually moved from one country to another in surrounding nations such as Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Once in the U.S. a Christian woman who served as the family's medical interpreter befriended Adonette. Their native languages are similar enough for them to communicate with each other. She commented that she was blessed with Adonette's husband's friendship too so that she could visit in their home as well as welcome Adonette into hers.

The new friend is also Adonette and her family's advocate. Their over-extended case worker had yet to help the family find an English class, learn to use the bus route, understand their Food Stamps or their financial situation. Within days of the end of their financial assistance the family realized they needed jobs to pay their almost \$900 a month rent and money to begin to pay back almost 10 thousand dollars for the tickets an agency paid to bring them to the U.S.

Adonette is in poor health and receiving even minimal care has proved to be a tremendous challenge. She cannot read the labels of food items nor does she know how to shop for and prepare the fresh fruits and vegetables lacking in their diet. The family does receive Food Stamps but has no understanding of what they can be used for since all of the literature and food labels are in English.

Her new friend writes: "Adonette has confessed to me of living through various abuses and beatings, and I am very concerned for her. I desire for this wonderful Christian lady to know her rights in this country, to be empowered by her Christian sisters and to gain skills that will help her live successfully in America." Adonette is passionate about embroidery and the hope is she can use her skills to help provide for the needs of her large family.

## **Fatima**

Fatima is a 30 year old mother of one who survives in a Gypsy village with her mother. They live in a crude but clean home. Fatima's husband is in prison for selling drugs; a common "occupation" in her culture. At one time Fatima worked with her husband and ended up in prison for three years where she was beaten and raped. Fatima receives the U.S. equivalent of \$7.00 a month from the government to provide for her son. To supplement this income she scours through garbage piles for saleable metal scraps.

Despite her life circumstances Fatima is filled with joy. Her eight year old son is the primary source of her happiness; she believes he is special and those who know him agree! When Fatima looks at her son she sees hope for her people. Her desire is that he could continue to attend school and make something of his life. Despite Fatima's sacrifices, her brilliant young child faces obstacles such as lack of school supplies, food, clothes and shoes to walk the muddy route to school. Fatima and her family are active in the small Christian church in their Russian village.

## **Mayumi**

Mayumi is a college student in the United States. Her studies include English as a Second Language (ESL). She is the daughter of a Methodist pastor in Japan. Though she grew up in a pastor's home, she was more interested in fun than faith and graduated from university having never committed her life to Christ.

In 2001 a Japanese missionary in Thailand invited a group from Fukuoka Jogakuin Methodist Church to work among the Karen [KAH-ren] people in Thailand. Mayumi, who had recently earned a degree in intercultural studies, went with the group, as did her father and sister. During their ten days there, they visited an orphanage, a boarding school, and a vocational training center. Most importantly, they spent time getting to know the Karen people. Mayumi was especially affected by the deep faith of the children.

The church spent the next year collecting clothes, school supplies, and money to assist with the work in Thailand. A group from the church, again including Mayumi, returned to the places they had visited before.

Her experiences among the Karen have totally changed the direction of Mayumi's life. Now a committed believer, she hopes to continue her English studies and attend graduate school. First, however, she is planning to apply for a two-year program that is the Japanese equivalent of the Peace Corps. She is open to serving wherever she is needed, but will always feel a connection with the Karen people who brought this pastor's daughter to genuine faith.

## **Valentina**

Valentina was well loved by the children in the Russian kindergarten where she worked. No one knew what her home life was like. Valentina's husband was an alcoholic who beat her. With their small son they shared a two-bedroom apartment with her mother-in-law. Many times, in order to save her life, Valentina was forced to flee her flat with her son and stand all night near the few warm radiators at the entrance of the building.

After her husband died and her son grew up, he too became an alcoholic and physically abused Valentina. She took refuge at Safe Harbor, one of a handful of crisis centers in a city of 15 million plus persons. Through their ministry she participated in a support group and learned about codependency from a trained counselor. Due to the positive changes in Valentina's behavior, her son became less aggressive and more respectful toward his mum.

Valentina has turned her life over to God, joined a church and prays for the salvation of her son. Nina Belyakova, founder and administrator of Safe Harbor, says this of Valentina: "This woman is my dear friend. I felt pity for her in her hard destiny. She was a teacher of my children, and I could help her 15 years later. Today we are sisters in Christ."

## ***Stephanie***

Stephanie was born in the United States and raised overseas by missionary parents. As a college student back in the U.S., she is preparing to serve in a place where she can make a difference in the lives of women and children. Out of her concern for young women at-risk for being sexually trafficked, Stephanie utilized a summer internship to live and serve in a rural village in Eastern Europe. She first lived with a Christian couple who helped her learn the language and culture of the people. Her adjustments included watching chickens taken all the way from a pin in the yard to a dinner plate; taking fewer showers because of the sporadic availability of water; keeping warm with sparse heat and difficulty staying in touch with her boyfriend, family and friends with poor Internet connections. Stephanie also spent time living in a transitional house with several girls who had “aged out” of the local orphanage. In most countries when girls reach 18, or another specified age, they are turned out of the orphanage or foster care with no provisions or skills training. At the transitional house where Stephanie lived and worked the girls receive training and are taught how to live on their own and avoid being sexually trafficked. Stephanie befriended the girls and they enjoyed sharing each other’s language, stories and watching movies. After graduating with a degree in social work, Stephanie plans to fulfill her call to serve God in full-time ministry.

## ***Zheng SiSi***

Zheng SiSi is a young woman with a vision. Her passion is to improve education and living standards for the impoverished Chinese. SiSi’s efforts are limited because she is the only able worker in her family and must support her parents as well as herself and her nine year old daughter. Recently SiSi and her friend, Global Women Global Associate Cammie Brennan, spent days traveling to a remote village. The final leg of their journey was on foot up a steep and rocky mountain trail. Arriving in the village they were greeted by festively dressed women and children waiting to welcome them. The time in the village was spent establishing friendships SiSi and Cammie hope will lead to opportunities to work with the women in beginning a crafts industry, improving the conditions of the local school and empowering women and girls in these communities to become educators and the safe-keepers of their culture.