

Answered Prayers

Dima Chernov's Story of Despair, Kindness, Struggle, and Redemption

“Dima came to our Christian orphanage as a toddler after being orphaned and neglected.”

Lillya - Director of ARK



Dema on a 2007 HART Newsletter

Our hearts overflow with joy each time another young person chooses to follow the path of Jesus Christ. We want to share the story of Dmytro Chernov—or Dima, as everyone calls him—a young man whose life is a testimony of grace, resilience, and redemption.

Dima came to the Ark Orphanage in 2003, not long after it was founded. He was the seventh child in the extended Chernov family—six of whom had already come to live at our center.



Lillya (Director)

His mother, was tragically consumed by a life of destructive passions, ultimately leaving little Dima behind—an orphan, while just a toddler.



Dima at the age of 3

The older children did their best to survive. They shared with us about the constant hunger while at home, even eating tree buds in the springtime, how they skipped school to look for food, and took turns caring for baby Dima.

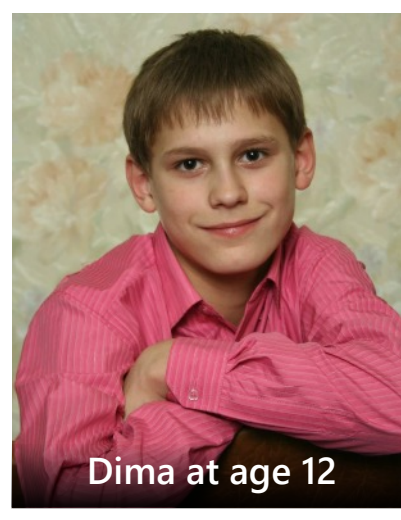
It was Svitlana, his aunt, who spent the most time looking after him. Sometimes neighbors lent the children money for bread, which we later repaid after they came to live at the Ark.

Dima was not yet four years old when we got to know him better. With his blonde hair, snub nose, and bright, sincere smile, he quickly found his way into our hearts—and onto the pages of a **HART Newsletter**.

Over the next 15 years, Dima grew up in our care.

What made him stand out most was his exceptional kindness. He gave freely, even when he had very little.

I remember once buying him a brand-new pair of jeans. He wore them proudly to school, but one day he came home in someone else's worn-out, too-short pants. When the teacher asked what had happened, Dima explained simply, "My friend liked my jeans, and he didn't have any like them, so I traded." What could I say to that? His warmth, generous heart, and happy eyes never stopped inspiring me.



Dima at age 12

After finishing 9th grade, Dima enrolled in a vocational school to study electric welding. Unfortunately, **the influence of new friends led him astray.** He began to imitate their destructive habits, lied to us, and one day ran away.



Dima at age 16

Eventually, we had to withdraw him from the school and transfer him to a secondary school in the village of Olesk, where he lived at a rehabilitation center and continued his education.

Even then, we didn't give up. We supported Dima however we would—visiting often, organizing performances for the school and village, and bringing him treats. When he came of age, we used the orphan support funds from the state to buy him a small home and furniture—giving him a chance at stability.

The following years were difficult. Dima wandered. He struggled. He fell. **And through it all—we worried, we prayed, we fasted, and we never stopped hoping.**

Our prayers were answered when he finally made his way back to a rehabilitation center, determined this time to get clean and sober for good.

Our prayers were answered again, when, in 2025, at the age of 25, Dima made a conscious decision to follow Jesus.

There is no greater joy than witnessing one of your children choose Christ—and to stand beside them as they make that sacred vow to God.



Dima's baptismal service and celebration with Lillya & the ARK children

EPILOGUE: Dima's life post baptism

After Dima was baptized, he decided to serve at the rehabilitation center. He is now part of a close-knit team working with people struggling with alcohol and drug addiction.

The director of the center speaks highly of him—his responsibility, reliability, and gentle spirit.

He's become a source of joy at Christian camps in the area and also serves alongside chaplains, traveling to eastern Ukraine to support both civilians and soldiers in war-torn regions.



Dima in frontline areas supporting civilians and soldiers

Thanks to HART's Child Sponsor Program and Dima's sponsor.

I would like to offer a special thanks to God for Dima's sponsor from Canada, **Theo Timmer**, who never gave up on him—especially when things looked hopeless.

Even after Dima aged out of the child sponsorship program, Theo continued to support him with gifts and prayers. This unwavering love, care and faith was an inspiration to us all.

The HART team is truly special. Your mission is sacred. Another soul has been saved—and we thank God for you!

Lillya and the entire ARK team

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