

Thursday, November 1, 2018

To whom it May Concern:

Grâce des Enfants was an organization that I became involved with before we had adopted our ten and a half year old daughter. The services and support we received from this organization helped provide a strong foundation for our adoption journey.

In November of 2016 my husband and I, had just sent off all of the dreaded paper work to the Ukraine and were anxiously waiting to hear if our dossier had been approved. During this time our anxieties of the “what ifs” were racing rapidly through our minds. A newly adopted mother of two beautiful boys from Ukraine recommended I call *Grâce des Enfants*. Well looking back this was one of the most important calls I ever made. My husband and I met with Lyuba, one of the founders of *Grâce des Enfants*, who was a warm, kind caring woman passionate about helping children in Ukraine who are growing up in orphanages. We discussed how *Grâce des Enfants* might help us in the future. We were relieved to have met Lyuba because one of our concerns in adopting a child from the Ukraine was helping them adjust not only to a new country and culture but also to a new language. This may not be as significant with younger internationally adopted children but with older children communication was imperative.

Several months later, while in Ukraine, we called *Grâce des Enfants*, to inform them that we had adopted a beautiful, bright, 10-½ year old girl. We introduced Lyuba to our newly adopted daughter via Video-Call so that our daughter would have a familiar face once in Canada. Our daughter was immediately relieved to meet someone who spoke her language.

Once back in Canada we met with Lyuba, from *Grâce des Enfants*, weekly for the first 3 months. Lyuba accompanied us to various doctor’s appointments. Imagine being 10 ½ years old in a strange country, with strange people, talking a strange language. Our daughter felt more at ease because she had someone who could explain what was happening. Furthermore, Lyuba was helpful in explaining to our daughter about simple safety rules. Our daughter spent a great part of her childhood in an orphanage and was very sheltered from the outside world. Simple things like crossing the road, wearing a seatbelt, greeting new people, where all new to her. Furthermore, she was quickly approaching the “TWEEN Years”. Lyuba helped us diffuse simple misunderstandings regarding cloths, toys, and social activities. Looking back I am not sure how we would have helped our daughter make these adjustments with out the services from *Grâce des Enfants*.

Adopting an older child is a challenge in itself. Older children already have defined needs and wants. As parents we also have an established roles/routine/lifestyle that must also change. Now add a new language and culture into the mix. There

was only so much Google translate and charades could do. I challenge you to go home and spend 24 hours with your loved ones with out words or language to communicate your needs. Now try and do this with a stranger. Got the picture?

We have been blessed with a wonderful, bright, charming daughter. The journey of our forever family has not always been easy. However, with the supports and resources like *Grâce des Enfants* we have made it through many challenging times. We are convinced that these same supports will continue to help to flourish.

Services like *Grâce des Enfants*, helped us realize the dream of building a loving forever family. We are grateful that they were there for us at the time of need and continue to be a great support in our lives. They say it takes a village to raise a child and we have found that having *Grâce des Enfants* “in our village” has been a tremendous advantage.

With thanks



Eoanna Nantsios
Adoptive Mother