

# Neah's Story

She was born outside of Drushkovka, Ukraine, February 26, 2003. The first eight years of her life were spent inside the walls of an orphanage where she was only allowed out to swing. She was never held or talked to, she never held a pencil or crayon, and she had only ridden in a car one time to transfer to another orphanage. When she was five years old she was found by Life2orphans, an American organization who rescues orphans from the worst of the worst institutions. The facility was shut down and she was moved into a village orphanage which, though still not up to par, was better. In 2009, her cute face was posted on a Swedish Facebook page with a plea for someone in America to adopt her. Alan and Marsha Whaley knew she was meant to be their daughter. She was adopted and brought to Texas two months before her eighth birthday. Her Ukranian name was Nadya. Through an interpreter, they asked Nadya for permission to change her name, and she loved the idea. The Whaley's wanted something unique that started with the letter "N". Originally, they named her Neah Yael Esther Whaley, but after having her awhile they knew it would be years before she would be able to pronounce it. They had already been calling her by her nickname, Neah May, so it was legally changed, and Neah was born.



From the first day she walked out of the orphanage, she loved her new life and had an interest in everything around her. She blossomed, both in knowledge and kindness. Marsha dedicated her life to teaching Neah basic things - spelling, reading, math, sewing, etc. Neah and Marsha were best friends and partners in crime. In the last 12 years, Neah tried everything from fencing to pottery. She joined 4H, volunteered at a food bank, she took karate lessons, she took fiddle lessons from Sherry McKenzie and competed at fiddle contests, and she was an award winning fiddle player. The mind blowing effort Marsha put in to helping Neah be the best she could be in all aspects of her life was nothing short of amazing. Even with her challenges and delayed communication Neah was smart. She could track conversations and she knew what was going on. Neah had a great sense of humor, she understood jokes, laughed easily, loved animals (especially dogs and foxes), loved playing the fiddle everyday, loved black Vans shoes, loved her mom and dad, loved Jesus, loved going in Joey McKenzie's instrument workshop, loved spending the night with Joey and Sherry, and she loved to have fun. She brought nothing but joy to everyone she knew. She was the purest soul alive, and she made us want to be better people. If ever there's a chance that a real angel lived among us, it was Neah. Her best friend was her brother, Rylan. They had a wing and movie night together every week and constantly teased each other. Luke, Seth, and Marissa were her friends, and she called Jihye and Jamie her new sisters. She will be missed by Andy, Cara, Clay, Juliya, and the rest of her siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends. As for her mom and dad, well, they look forward to being with their baby girl on the streets of gold someday, for earth will never be the same without their sweet Neah May.

