

Almira Kurmangaliyeva's Story - Peace in the Storms of Life

As a business woman and mother of three, one might expect Almira to be flying from one meeting to another and from one family crisis to the next. Not so. Almira is a calm and quiet presence in the midst of any storm. Her manner conveys inner peace, even when life is hectic. Her smile and tender spirit radiate to everyone around her.

Those remarkable qualities were evident even while she attended Co-Serve's International Servant Leadership Principles course at the Kazakh-American Free University. She was one of the "Lady Leaders" in the class of 2006.

Today she owns two businesses in Ust-Kamenogorsk and assists her husband in running a third business. Before they married, Almira's husband, who emigrated from Turkey to Kazakhstan, told her she would not work or even complete her university degree after they were married. His traditional role of the wife in marriage did not cause rebellion in the heart of this quiet leader. Rather than argue with him about her future, she used gentle persuasion, showing him another way. "His attitude changed," she says with a slight smile.

Almira started a home goods shop called Evim, importing furniture, decorations and souvenirs from Turkey. Now she employs five people in the shop and has the distribution rights to sell products in all of Kazakhstan. Her early success inspired the idea of expanding the business across the border, into Novosibirsk, Russia. Unfortunately, the timing was not good. The downing of a Russian war plane by Turkey in 2015 resulted in a hostile business environment and the business had to shut down.

Nevertheless, Almira's husband became interested in the business potential in Ust-Kamenogorsk. Together they opened "Istanbul," a Turkish restaurant in the city.

Running businesses means dealing with employees as well as customers. That is where the values of servant leadership came in. Almira noticed that Evim employees would sometimes compete with each other for sales commissions. They even expressed rudeness to customers. "A person must change first," she admits. "If you want employees to serve others and work hard, you must do it yourself." She teaches her employees how to communicate with the heart of a servant to customers.



Almira



Almira (front center in blue) attends the Servant Leadership Principles Course at KAFU in 2006.



Almira today with her children.

As a busy mother, Almira home schools her children, runs her shop, helps with the restaurant and, over the past year, has supported her husband in fulfilling his own dream. He started an elevator manufacturing business in Ust-Kamenogorsk. Using his talent with technology, he creates 3 dimensional images of the elevators he builds so that his clients can see exactly what his company will deliver.

Almira's plate is full, but she is not finished. She recognizes that there is much work to be done. In particular, she plans to develop a clear vision for the future and a mission statement that will help her employees sense the important role they play in serving customers.

Her values and her special talent as the quiet leader amidst the storms of life make Almira an effective servant leader.