

## From Siberia to Rover Launch

A young girl by the name of Sofi was born in Siberia, a bitterly cold and desolate area of Russia.

A difficult place to be a child, but Sofi's life was going to be even rougher than most. She was an orphan. Suddenly, at the age of 2, she was adopted, sight unseen, by Laurie Collis, a single mother in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Sofi entered an essay contest in 2003 to name the two Mars rovers when she was in the third grade, and out of 10,000 applicants, she won! Toymaker Lego and The Planetary Society sponsored the event. As a result of winning, her family received an all-expense-paid trip to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida to watch the liftoff of the Mars rover Spirit.



While there, she was asked to read an excerpt from her winning essay. Here is part of it:

*I used to live in an orphanage. It was dark and cold and lonely. At night, I looked up at the sparkly sky and felt better. I dreamed I could fly there. In America, I can make all my dreams come true. Thank you for giving me the Spirit and the Opportunity.*

Dave Lavery, a program executive at NASA, said her essay clearly stood out from the rest. The names “Spirit” and “Opportunity,” he said, “just fit so well to begin with, but also talking about what the country is all about. What America can offer and especially what it can mean to children who are growing up and want to get excited about science and technology and, most importantly, exploration. It spoke to us.”

Asked how she came up with the names Spirit and Opportunity, Sofi said, “Well, you couldn't really do anything at the orphanage. And when you come to America, you can do whatever you want to do and be whatever you want to, and that was spirit and opportunity.”

There is something to be said about the big influence of small things. She was just a little girl and it was just a simple story about her experience. But it struck the right cord.

The question begs to be asked: What about you? What are your dreams?

You, too, have spirit and opportunity.

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance (Proverbs 21:5 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter