

Why Crozet: Art, Volunteers, Donations & Cupcakes Honor and Support Ukrainian People

April 9, 2022



Father Robert Holet at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Church in Greenwood. Photo: Malcolm Andrews.

Tatiana Yavorska-Antrobis paints scenes from local weddings in real time, but that's just a fraction, a tiny part of who she is as an artist. She has advanced degrees and experience in theater design, costume design, and art restoration. She's created huge frescoes in Europe, worked for London's National Gallery, and teaches art and languages (Ukrainian and Russian). She's had several local exhibits since her move to the area in 2006.

These days, she's added more art, more work, more outreach and advocacy

as well as more frantic texting back and forth, to her daily routine. Yavorska-Antrobus is from Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, and she's raised a significant amount of money with her art to channel back home for supplies, for hospitalized children, and for refugee support. She talks to her mother—who fled Kyiv for the Polish border—daily, and texts with friends. "I don't want to bother them, so I check first to see if they've appeared on social media in the last few days," she said. The chaos of daily life in her country's cities is so great that sometimes she receives a one-word message back: "Alive."



Tatiana Yavorska-Antrobius paints images inspired by the war in Ukraine. Submitted photo.

She feels a certain measure of guilt: "We're here, surrounded by peace, with clear skies, able to go about our lives as usual," she said. "I find I can't tell my friends back home that I understand. Obviously, my life—all our lives—are so different. How can we understand?" Still, she's mystified when people here complain about small inconveniences caused by the war, or equate their challenges with what's going on in her home. "It's really mass murder, rather than war as we understand it."

Yavorska-Antrobus finds comfort in the communal observances of her faith, and in prayer. Surrounded by ancient symbols and familiar music, she spoke before a Lenten service in Greenwood's St. Nicholas Ukrainian Orthodox Church. She said she was haunted by the understanding that her people back home are unable to sleep or even to rest: "They're bombed day after day," she said. "They can't fall asleep, or it could mean death for them."

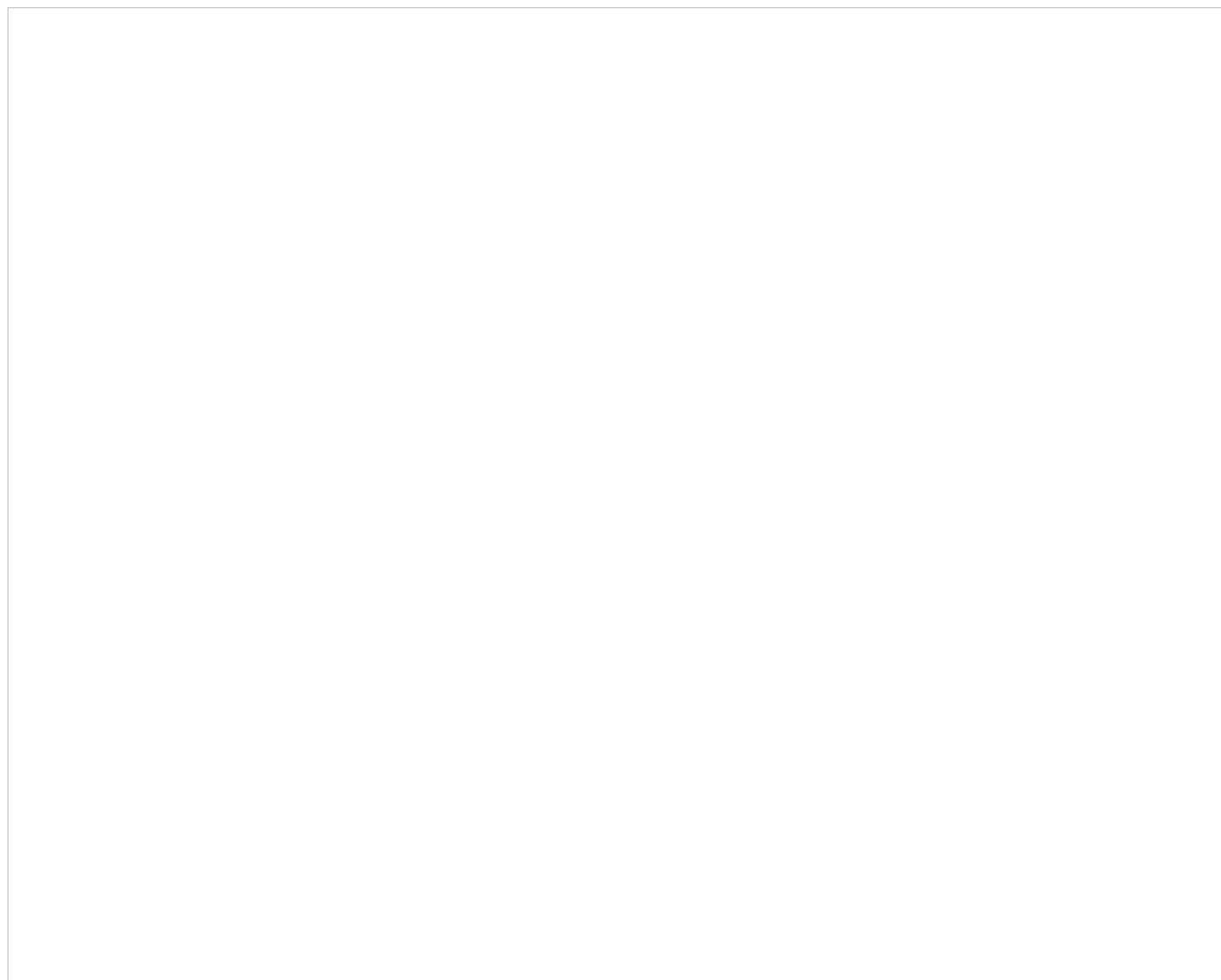
Painting helps, she said; also, praying and being with the community at St. Nicholas, and talking with her priest. "Father Robert has been very helpful," she said, "very understanding."

Father Robert is Robert Holet, the founding pastor of St. Nicholas. He retired in 2020, only to be called back to serve until a new priest begins at the church. "I think I'm kind of like the bad nickel that keeps turning up," he said. He's glad, though, that he's there at a time when many parish members are worried about families and friends in Ukraine. "It's not good to be alone with these worries," he said. Fr. Holet said the Orthodox Church has many well-established ways to help the Ukrainian people, set up years ago after the Chernobyl disaster, and again during the bloody war of 2014.

Because much of Ukrainian history, especially its relationship with Russia, is poorly understood, he has tried to educate the wider community, and will make a short presentation Sunday, April 8, at St. Nicholas. People are often mistaken about the historic tension between Russia and Ukraine. "It's nothing new," he said. "It goes back to the czars."

More Art for Ukraine

Last year, Crozet artist John Russell painted a picture every day, a promise he made to himself and steadfastly kept. He found there was a good reason (besides COVID restlessness) to build up his inventory. He's selling his work to benefit "Doctors without Borders," the internationally respected volunteer group now actively helping Ukrainian refugees. He recently hung an exhibit at Tabor Presbyterian Church, with an opening reception earlier this month, featuring paintings reserved for fundraising.



Sales from artist John Russell's show at Tabor Presbyterian Church will benefit Doctors without Borders. Photo: Malcolm Andrews.

Russell said the sales were brisk, with watercolors almost selling out even before the reception. He plans to replenish the exhibit as paintings sell and

continue with the donations. "Everyone seems to want to help those in need," he said, "and sometimes we just need a little encouragement."

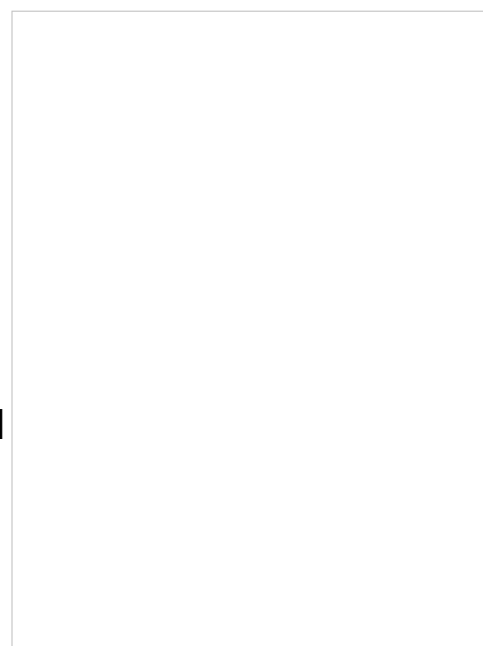
Saving Ukrainian Cancer Patients

The Gazette heard from Norman and Rosalie Moore of Afton that their daughter Katie, a pediatric oncologist, is raising funds to move children with cancer out of Ukrainian hospitals. Dr. Moore presently works in Australia and often visits her parents with her four children. She has a colleague in Melbourne who specializes in childhood brain tumors. Her friend Nataliya is from Kharkiv, which has suffered intense bombardment. Her fellow professionals wanted to show support and began a fundraiser to help Ukrainian childhood cancer patients trapped by the violence.

"It's hard to convey how complex, resource-intensive and time-critical childhood cancer treatment is," Dr. Moore said. "Even in the most sophisticated of hospital settings these are some of the most vulnerable pediatric patients you could imagine."

Moore observed that the pediatric oncology world is very much an international family, with health care workers all over the world working to evacuate patients from Ukraine and match them with hospitals all over Europe, led by the international arm of St. Jude's Hospital in Tennessee and equivalent European institutions.

"Imagine the double terror of having a child diagnosed with cancer while fleeing war to a new country," Moore said. "Not only are they the sickest of patients but also now refugees." Moore said the children and their families will need ongoing support, translators, and lodging.



Pediatric oncologist Kate Moore raises funds for Ukrainian children with cancer.

Volunteer Combat Medic Serving Refugees

In mid-March, Janine Szokoly of Western Ridge said goodbye to her son Alex, who headed to Washington, D.C. for a flight to Poland. There, he would meet other veterans and Polish soldiers to become part of a volunteer force. "When I saw the Russians were targeting medics and hospitals, I felt I had to go," Alex said. He's a retired combat medic and knew his knowledge would be badly needed. He also expected to be training unskilled volunteers in some of the basics of battlefield medicine. Although communication is difficult, Janine knows he's landed, he's bought a car, and that he's working with a small group near the Polish border tending to wounded and sick refugees. Alex reported that he was fired on within minutes of crossing the border, and that Russian forces continue to indiscriminately shell civilians. Gas masks are desperately needed as well as basic and advanced emergency medical supplies.

This effort is funded in part by tech entrepreneur Anthony Capone, who offered to pay transportation costs for members of an elite international legion. None of the volunteers are paid for their services, and none are active-duty military. As he left, Alex said he didn't know what to expect. "We may have tourniquets," he said, "but we may have only cloth and sticks."



Alex Szokoly's small group of volunteers evacuate their original camp after a missile warning. Submitted photo.

Hats for Ukraine Exchanged for Donations

Mary Gordon Hall is a novice knitter, but she managed to stitch up a hat in Ukrainian flag colors, adding a bright sunflower to dress it up. Hall, a retired Brownsville Elementary teacher, posted a picture of her finished product on Facebook. Suddenly, requests for hats started coming in, more than she knew she could ever fill. She asked for help and she got it, from all over Virginia and beyond. That's how "Knitters United: Hats for Ukraine" was born.



Knitters United are exchanging hats with Ukrainian flag colors for a donation to charities supporting Ukraine.

The idea was simple. The knitters and crocheters meet weekly at coffee shops in Crozet and Charlottesville to talk and help each other as needles fly. They release them to customers who make a donation directly to charities

that help Ukrainian refugees. "The goal is to see people all over town wearing these hats to show their support," Hall said. Besides donating to World Central Kitchen, the International Resource Center, and United Help Ukraine, supporters have sent blue and yellow yarn and funds to help with postage for mailing hats. Hall expects aid for refugees will be needed for the foreseeable future.

Cupcakes and Cookies Sweeten Life for Refugees

Nuala O'Loughlin, a 5th grader at Brownsville, said she loves baking and learned from a couple of early mistakes: "Once, I put too much olive oil in a batch of cookies and they were awful," she said. Since then, she's put her kitchen knowledge to the test for the benefit of Ukrainian families.

She was thinking about the refugees and praying for them with her family. "I woke up in the middle of the night with the idea for a bake sale," she said. She was joined in the sale by fellow Brownsville student Margot Murphy. In early March the two girls set up a stand on Creekside, in Old Trail. "I'm pretty comfortable selling," Nuala said.

The vanilla cupcakes, brownies, cookies and lemonade sold out within a couple of hours. The girls had a goal of \$90, but made twice that much for the International Rescue Committee. "People were so nice," Nuala said. "One person gave me \$20."

Resources:

Tatiana Yavorska-Antrobius has donated directly through friends in Ukraine and also to this children's hospital: <https://ohmatdyt.com.ua/> (this will require Google translator) and to www.amity.ngo. You can see Tatiana's artwork and arrange a sale and donation through her Instagram: [@weddinglivepainting](https://www.instagram.com/weddinglivepainting).

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA has a description of their aid to Ukraine and an option for donation: uocofusa.org/news_220329_1. Father

Holet also suggests International Orthodox Christian Charities (iocc.org); and New Horizons for Children (NHFC.org).

Donations from small fund-raising efforts, like Nuala's and Margot's bake sale, are welcomed by the International Rescue Committee:

tinyurl.com/3nduz5kc

Support Dr. Katie Moore's "Go Fund Me" for Ukrainian children with cancer:

www.gofundme.com/f/help-ukrainian-childhood-cancer-patients

Support Janine Szokoly's "Go Fund Me" for supplies and living expenses for military veterans volunteering in Ukraine:

www.gofundme.com/f/American-Veterans-Travelling-to-Ukraine

Find out how to buy paintings from John Russell's Tabor exhibition with free shipping by emailing him directly at mjrussarts@gmail.com.

Join the knitters or buy a Ukrainian-themed hat through the "Knitters United" Facebook page (you'll need to join)

www.facebook.com/groups/741180610197620.