

A new way of life in wartime

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Complicated forms and uncertainty about the future haunted my family after the war in Ukraine started. With a family that was still living in Ukraine despite warnings to leave, we were scrambling for a way to keep them safe. They eventually were temporarily spending some time in Romania and then in Greece while we were hurriedly writing letters to Senators and Representatives for their help.

After a few months of fighting with the U.S. government, my family was able to get humanitarian parole for my aunt and her two children so that they can stay in the US for two years. The boy, Derys Iliash, only 9 years old, just started fourth grade at Charles Pinckney Elementary School, and the girl, Anastasiia Iliash, who is 11 years old, just started sixth grade at Thomas Cario Middle School. Their summer was amazing and filled with so many experiences that they

most likely wouldn't have had if they were living in Ukraine during that time. They got to go to the beach or pool almost every day with my grandmother, try new American food that disgusted them, and go to huge superstores, waterparks, and restaurants.

People have a misconception that my aunt and her kids want to stay in America forever. They have been living here for a few months and it's been an amazing experience for them, but every day is a little bit different and just not quite perfect. Here, they are without their friends or family or home that they grew up in. Their dad, Roman Iliash, is still stuck in their apartment back in Zovad'ske as he may still be drafted. Every day, they see news about the destruction on their phones. They love their home and their country, and we are all waiting for the war to end to get back some sense of normalcy.

It has been amazing having them live with us the past few months and it's always exciting for me to help them see or experience something new. Personally, I have never been a big fan of kids be-

cause I don't know what to do with them or talk to them about, but of course it is different with my family. Seeing their faces light up when we went to the beach together for the first time was an indescribable feeling.

I was able to bring them some happiness and excitement for a moment, letting them be distracted for an afternoon. Soon enough, they would be begging to go out every day of the summer, and of course, I could never say no.

It seems like discourse about the war has come to halt. Sure, I will see a news article every so often that will give important events or developments that have recently occurred, but even those are getting harder to come by for me.

Being a whole ocean away from the conflict, it's easy to forget about things like that. We have this mentality that because it doesn't directly affect us or harm us, there is no reason to care. It's become old news to my peers, and that's something that is hard to live with. Even with newspaper, it was hard to talk to people last year asking for more stories on Ukraine.



Senior Inna Volshchuk poses with her cousins after they arrive in America from Ukraine.
photo // Provided by Inna Volshchuk

People are often discouraged to write stories on Ukrainian people's struggles because too much attention to a certain town or city there could result in more bombing and destruction. All I hope for is more help, more humanity, and more love to all the people who are affected by the war.