

Women Transcending Boundaries Monthly Program Meeting
September 18m 2022 3:00 to 5:00 PM
One Family's Journey from Ukraine to Syracuse
Held at CNY Rise Center, 275 West Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse 13207

Attendance: 16 women in addition to 3 presenters. 5 sites in attendance by Zoom

Chairs in the large room were set up in a semi-circle facing a couch on which the presenters were seated. On the facing wall was a screen for virtual Zoom participants.

Refreshments were displayed and available on a table in the meeting room.

At 3:06, Barbara Bova, past president, opened the meeting warmly welcoming everyone to the monthly program meeting. She especially thanked the presenters for coming.

Melek Yavuz, current WTB president was implementing Zoom process throughout the meeting while participating in the discussion.

Sue Savion read the *WTB Mission Statement* and Barbara Bova then read the *WTB Safe Place Declaration* as is traditionally done in WTB meetings.

Gay Montague announced a special award before beginning the program. She paid tribute to Barbara Bova, thanking her for all the extra work over three years. Applause by the members expressed their thanks. Gay said "there are not enough accolades we can give." Barb was presented with a lovely bouquet of roses and a plaque affirming her dedication over the past years.

To Barbara Bova with profound gratitude for your willingness to continue serving as president of Women Transcending Boundaries throughout the COVID pandemic. You were a tower of strength for all of us, holding together the threads of WTB during this difficult time.
With Great Appreciation, The Women of WTB.

Carol Lipson introduced the program by saying how concerned the WTB group has been about the war in the Ukraine. She then introduced Katya Bratslavsky and two young Ukrainian women named Lisa and Katya Rohova.

Katya Bratslavsky began the program by telling her own story of immigration to the United States from Russia 30 years ago in 1992. She said she met her husband in the U.S. 25 years ago. He had been an immigrant from Ukraine.

Katya's husband, Gennady Bratslavsky, MD, is now the head of the Urology Department at Upstate Medical Center and thus began her story of their involvement in providing assistance in various ways with the very serious medical needs currently in the Ukraine due to the war. She said when the war started and they began to hear how difficult life was in the Ukraine, they reached out to help. Katya herself is an artist and through sale of her art and other venues has raised large amounts of money, beginning with \$300,000. for purchase of various kinds of supplies for medical aid which now has further evolved. Gennady has established a not-for-profit through which funding for the medical supplies/contributions is done.

Katya and Gennady have long term relationships with the parents of Lisa and Katya Rohova, the young women with her today. The father of the girls has been a friend of Gennady's since

childhood, and is currently a pediatric trauma surgeon in Kyiv (Kiev). Katya said Gennady has family in Ukraine, and the two of them have travelled to Europe to visit with friends there on a number of occasions.

In addition to raising money for medical assistance, Katya and Gennady invited these two young women to come to the United States to live with them for the period of the war. Katya and Gennady have 3 biological sons, and Katya said she now has some “daughters.” She described the significant bureaucratic barriers to get the girls here, especially since young Katya was under 16 at time, but all was accomplished through the help of a lawyer. A visitor’s visa was obtained for the mother of the girls so she could accompany them here. After staying with the Bratslavsky family for a week, she went back to Ukraine. The Bratslovsky family now also has a 21-year old male from Ukraine living with them.

Lisa and Katya Rohova then told their story. On February 24, 2022 in the middle of the night living in Kyiv, the girls began hearing explosions they first interpreted as possibly fireworks, when the shelling by the Russians began. After a time their parents came into their room, said it was dangerous, and they would need to leave in their car. They have an older sister who had a 6-day old baby who also left Kyiv with them. Men were not allowed to leave Ukraine as we heard here on the news, and it was just the women and the baby in the car. They packed a tent, food, and necessary items. Initially, they thought they would just go far enough to get to a forest and stay there for a short time. As they were driving, they checked by phone and found out there would be no school for at least two weeks. and decided they should keep moving. They said the traffic was difficult with so many people leaving Kyiv. After a trip which took over two days, they arrived in Bratislava, Slovakia. Soon after arriving, the baby was admitted to the hospital, was given good care, and recovered. The family stayed in Bratislava until August when they returned to Kyiv. In addition to speaking Russian and Ukrainian, Lisa and Katya had learned some English in Kiev, and are gaining more fluency here.

The three students living with the Bratslavsky family are now enrolled in schools. Katya now attends the Jamesville-DeWitt School System in the 11th Grade, and Lisa is studying language at Syracuse University. Katya said the situation in Ukraine continues to be very difficult. The father of the girls is “working day and night” in the medical care for Ukraine.

The Bratslavsky family has over the year of the war continued to facilitate major contributions to medical care and other supplies for Ukraine. Katya related a story about how expensive it is to send personal clothing and supplies privately. Dr. Bratslavsky has visited Poland and Kyiv during the war bringing supplies and providing funds for the purchase of a total of four ambulances.

Several people asked about making donations. Katya gave the website for her art as: *Katyabratslavsky.com*. Funds from purchases of her art go toward the Ukraine medical supplies. People can donate to her husband’s non-profit through the website: *helpfreeukraine.com*.

The program ended at 4:40 PM (Notes written by Cara Steiner)