

FIGHT  
FOR  
RIGHT

— KVINNA  
— KVINNA

# BEING AN OWN GOAL

Female Leaders with Disabilities  
during the War in Ukraine



Second Edition



# INTRODUCTION

Outside the hotel window in Lviv, a gray pre-winter rain is falling in the dusk. Inside, there is comfortable and warm light, calm women's voices and pleasant memories. We are having dinner and sharing stories of growth, weaving the past with the present and the path to independence – our own and Ukraine's. We are considering the strong pattern of the Ukrainian women's movement, feminism and human rights activities. A woman for a woman. I'm carefully tracing the role of women and girls with disabilities in this pattern.

Five years ago, in one of the hotels in Kyiv, it was incredibly joyful, emotional, and exciting. **One of the most important dreams came true, and the first Female Leader School of Political Participation for Girls and Women with Disabilities "Leaderka" was established.** About twenty women from throughout Ukraine, so different, inspired and honest, voiced their true dreams for the first time, as well as shared their most ambitious plans and challenges. We became visible. We became the voices of hundreds of thousands of women who, due to their disabilities, are still in the shadows, experiencing rights violations and discrimination. Together we became stronger. We became a community.

Then we studied much, undertook internships and faced challenges, adventures and achievements. We supported each other, established networks and strengthened. **We learned how to be our own goal and continued remaining the strength of our villages and cities, families and communities. Furthermore, we are proud to be leaders in Ukraine and for Ukraine.**

After the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, I started wearing traditional Ukrainian necklaces: red coral beads, Huzul black necklaces (sylvianky) and protective bead amulets (zgardy). They are so Ukrainian and about Ukrainian women, our lives, important feelings, things and actions. I spoke in the UN, wearing red coral beads. I never even dreamed of it, because since childhood I had heard that because of my disability I would not be able to do anything important. And wearing a Huzul black necklace, in Vienna, I spoke of the unique emergency response and case management mechanism that women with disabilities had established to save thousands of lives, once again doing something that was definitely not expected of us. The brass Huzul amulet with the crescent became an additional support for me that will not break until victory. It is about my resilience.

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# EACH OF THESE STORIES IS UNIQUE AND AT THE SAME TIME FAMILIAR TO MANY OF US

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And during the full-scale war, our team collects the stories of leadership, struggle and faith of girls and women with disabilities as carefully as beads, as well as their memories, words and experience, in order to preserve them, to show the world, to share them and to perpetuate this significant contribution to the fight for justice and peace and paving the way to an equal society.

Each of these stories is unique and at the same time familiar to many of us. Often they are about pain and overexertion, and, of course, about obstacles – constant, daily and inevitable, as well as about overcoming

such obstacles, their avoidance or transforming them into springboards, not to complete success, but to the opportunities which people without disabilities usually take for granted. The characters of this brochure, having gained such opportunities, turned them into success, into changes in their communities and their country, into the strength of every girl and woman with disability, who, reading about them, will feel that this story is also about her, about her disability and her own strength to be a Leader and to be a goal for herself.

**Yuliia Sachuk,**  
**Head of Fight For Right NGO**



A portrait of Anastasia Zakutna, a young woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue top. She is smiling and holding a light blue butterfly. The background features a map of Ukraine with a location pin on the Sumy region labeled 'Okhtyrka'. There are also decorative elements like a white archway and blue horizontal bars.

# ANASTASIA ZAKUTNA

## Volunteer

Anastasia was a schoolgirl when she began volunteering during the Revolution of Dignity. At that time, the girl with physical disabilities since birth, along with her family, brought food, medications and other necessary things to people on Maidan Nezalezhnosti.

**“At that time, I decided to stay in Ukraine regardless the situation and do everything I could for it,” the volunteer recalls.**

Since the outbreak of war in 2014, Anastasia, along with her grandmother, cooked and brought food to soldiers. She painfully remembers the defenders who died in the Ilovaisk Trap, because she knew many of them through her volunteer work.

**Later, the girl began fundraising for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.**

Before the full-scale Russian invasion, Anastasia moved to Okhtyrka in Sumy Region, where her fiancé lived with his parents. The guy was already serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine at that time, and Anastasia stayed to support his parents and continued volunteering.

Since the summer of 2022, the woman began travelling with the soldiers to the de-occupied territories. **Anastasia remembers writing a note to them, as they dissuaded her from such trips, “I promise to return safe and sound!”** Her relatives were also worried and asked her not to go, but, then, they themselves volunteered, so they understood the importance of her actions. By the way, Anastasia’s grandmother was awarded a medal for volunteering.

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# “BEING FREE TO MOVE IS A MANDATORY COMPONENT OF PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE”

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In the de-occupied cities, Anastasia worked a lot with children. She held creative master classes, brought necessary things, went to hospitals, and talked there to the parents of children who became disabled due to the Russian invasion. She told them about her experience of living with disabilities, that disability does not prevent her from being an active, successful and happy person.

At the same time, the volunteer organized fundraising for relatives and friends of soldiers, looked for vehicles and ammunition, and attracted foreign benefactors.

Now Anastasia is at home, in Okhtyrka, restoring her mental health and working. She arranges flowers and makes fashion jewellery from beards.

And in 2023, Anastasia completed training at Female Leader School of Political Participation for Girls and Women with Disabilities of Fight for Right Association. And now she is going to establish her own public organization to make her city accessible: “Being free to move is a mandatory component of personal independence.”

For Anastasia, her own independence is also freedom in thoughts, words and actions. “And also the understanding that people will support me and not condemn me, even if I am wrong, and will help me get out of the difficult situation,” the woman adds.





# IVANNA MYKHAILENKO

Head of World of Silence Public Association, Expert of the UN Children's Fund project in Ukraine at the Secretariat of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Before the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, Ivanna studied law in Kyiv University of Intellectual Property and Law of the National University "Odesa Law Academy" and volunteered at the Social Unity Public Association. **The acquired knowledge and experience enabled the girl to support hundreds of people with disabilities since February 2022.** Ivanna began providing free legal assistance to people with hearing impairment, and also starred in videos where she described in sign language the dangers of the war, the importance of psychological support, etc.

Ivanna founded World of Silence Public Association, a team of young and active people with hearing impairment who are able to make changes.

At the same time, the girl continued her studies at the university, underwent

on-the-job-training in different organizations and trainings in human rights. In particular, in 2023, she studied at Female Leader School of Political Participation for Girls and Women with Disabilities "Leaderka", which encourages defending their rights and world outlook, using the tools of political participation, and motivates them to be active in the political and public life of the country.

Ivanna got used to achieving her goals. For example, she entered the university that had never admitted students with hearing impairments. **"I have dreamed of this university. At first, I was scary, as I thought that people who can hear are smarter than me, but it appears not true. We are all equal. Before my entering the university, many people said, "You won't be able to study, because you**

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# “YOU WON’T BE ABLE TO STUDY, BECAUSE YOU HAVE HEARING IMPAIRMENTS.”

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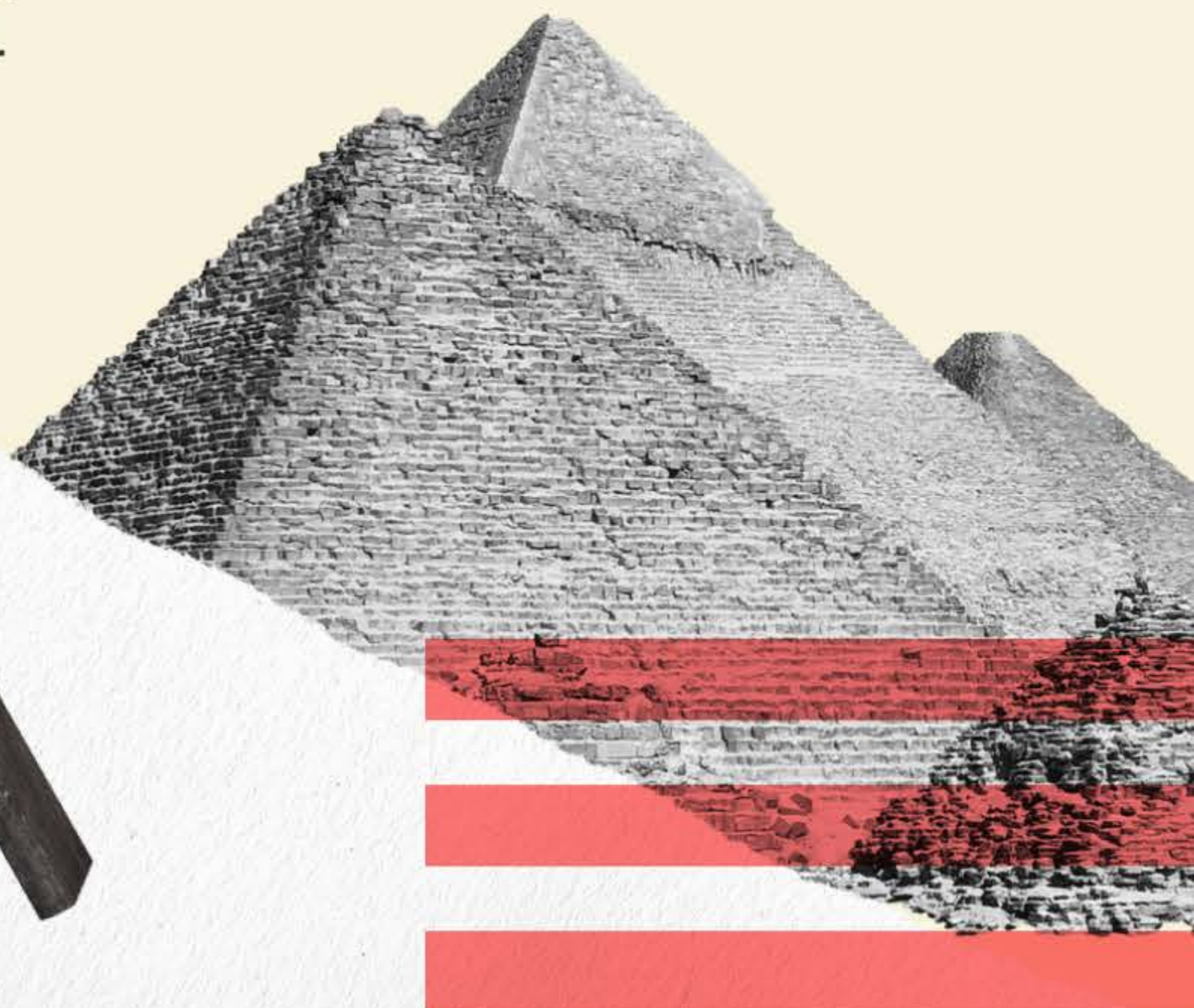
**have hearing impairments.”  
Nevertheless, I have already got the  
bachelor’s diploma with honours.”**

Ivanna also implements her own projects. “It was the full-scale war that made me become even more active, since many people with hearing impairment went abroad and many people needed assistance in Ukraine,” says the human rights activist.

Among the projects implemented by Ivanna, there is the Law for All Project aimed at informing people with hearing impairments of human rights in sign language (in video format and brochure).

Another project, Ukrainization.deaf, promotes the study of Ukrainian sign language among doctors, psychologists, rescuers, volunteers, and law enforcement officers.

Ivanna considers her achievements to be personal independence and adds, **“My independence means implementing projects which I am interested in and which work for the results and for the people around me.”**





# MARIA NIKITINA

Head of Chernivtsi Public Association Protection

Before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Maria and her Chernivtsi Public Association Protection worked in several areas, namely: helping young people in difficult life situations, building a barrier-free society and supporting public activists.

**At the early 2022, Maria and her association planned a joint project with Moldova and Georgia, but all plans were changed by a full-scale war.**

"On February 25, 2022, we established the office for internally displaced people, and it became a temporary shelter for them. We thought that the shelter would work for two weeks, but it worked for 504 days. Within this period, 1,769 people and their animals lived there," the woman says.

At the same time, Maria's team helped local people with disabilities and other shelters: "We provided them with microwave ovens, household equipment for children, kettles, hair dryers, etc. We attracted grant funds to improve the equipment of other shelters: for example, we replaced the door in one of them."

Maria and her team still maintain contacts with some of the guests who stayed at the shelter: **"I am very happy that we were able to help people when they needed it most.** I remember a family from Mariupol came to us with a newborn baby, and we were looking for a better shelter for them. I called my friend, and he hosted them. Then I found out that some kind people had gifted this family a house."

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# “MY PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE IS RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS.”

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The woman also provided online assistance, namely: she advised people on crossing the border and put them in touch with families who had already met refugees outside of Ukraine.

For two and a half years, Maria's team has grown from 5 to 13 people, and has also developed new partnerships and coalitions with other public organizations.

“In 2022, we found support and established Grow Up Resource Center. **Our goal is to build a democratic barrier-free society through community development.** We also hold reading clubs, inclusive cooking workshops, and trainings on inclusion and barrier-free access,” says Maria, who is a member of the Barrier-Free Access Council of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The woman suffers from blackouts. She lives on the 6th floor and uses a wheelchair, so she waits for hours at work for the lift to start. She is preparing for winter blackouts.

Maria considers fighting for the right to live in Ukraine with dignity and independence as the biggest challenge. “My personal independence is respecting human rights. It is the opportunity to lead an independent lifestyle and to freely leave the house. When I don't have to ask if I can get into a certain room without outside help to get a service or just meet a friend for a cup of coffee. This is when I can live a high-quality life and pay my bills on my own, to independently choose what I want to be, where to get an education, and what to work as.”





# OLEKSANDRA KUTAS

## Model, Entrepreneur and Social Activist

Oleksandra Kutas is a model in a wheelchair, entrepreneur, and has been working in the British charity sector in support of Ukraine since 2022.

**Oleksandra's activities were completely changed by the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Until 24 February 2022, the woman was actively working on an adaptive clothing brand, and her modelling career in the UK continued apace.**

"Now it's difficult for me to even remember those plans and dreams. The day before the invasion, I took to the streets protesting in London against Russian aggression. Articles about a possible attack had been circulating in the press for more than four months, so from time to time my husband and I discussed what would happen if it were true. But this was the first time when reality turned out to be even more

horrible than the worst predictions," the woman says.

At the beginning of the full-scale war, Oleksandra joined the Techfugees project, which supported Ukrainian refugees. Six months later, she began working at the Choose Love organization and headed the area of assistance to Ukraine.

Over two and a half years, the level of support, according to Oleksandra, has changed. "At the early 2022, British society was optimistic: finally, the vaccine became effective, people were returning to usual life after COVID-19, began travelling again, etc. After the full-scale Russian invasion, people in Britain made generous donations, so the opportunities to help Ukrainian organizations were completely different from now. However, given other events in the world that our neighbours take a

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## “ONLY AT THE AGE OF 23 I WAS ABLE TO LEAVE MY APARTMENT ON MY OWN”

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hand in, the level of involvement and financial support has decreased. But this does not mean that our pain has become less.”

Oleksandra also notes, “Unfortunately, when tragedies grow and drag on, people harden their characters. However, millions of Ukrainians who continue working for victory at the front, in the rear and abroad, try to convey the truth, not to tolerate propaganda, speak up, not to be people pleasers, and to fight. This is what keeps the fire of support and stimulates changes in narratives in our favour. We survived when no one believed in us, so we finally have a chance to become a nation of winners, in order our children and grandchildren will never fear for their lives because they are Ukrainians.”

Personal independence for Oleksandra means the freedom to be ourselves. **“Not to be people pleasers, to make remarks all the time, that there is a war in Ukraine, and not a local conflict, to have freedom of speech, to make statements, to call a spade a spade, and Russia – a terrorist country, and to have freedom of movement...”** Only at the age of 23 I was able to leave my apartment on my own for the first time in Ukraine. At the age of 23, I took out the garbage from the house for the first time, and this moment was special for me. Something so ordinary to others was out of reach for me due to the lack of infrastructure.”





# KHRYSTYNA STYRANETS

## Project Assistant at Fight For Right NGO

Before the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, Khrystyna completed her studies and received a bachelor's degree in psychology at Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University. At the same time, the girl studied at Leader School of Fight For Right NGO. She also conducted online classes for teenagers with disabilities on a volunteer basis at Seeing with the Heart Public Association.

In 2022, Khrystyna was going to continue her studies and become a psychotherapist in cognitive behavioural therapy. **"Life seemed to gain new momentum," the girl recalls. "But after the full-scale invasion, of course, there was no talk of entering the university,** and we also had to say goodbye to classes for teenagers due to blackouts caused by Russian attacks on our energy system.

Then I decided to look for a new job in accordance with the realities, because inaction was eating me up from the inside. One day, I came across information that Fight For Right NGO was looking for case managers for the emergency response team for the winter period. I sent my curriculum vitae without hesitation, not even imagining what way and what incredible people awaited me."

For more than two years, Khrystyna had worked as a case manager in the Emergency Response Department of Fight For Right NGO, which was restructured into the Support and Protection Department. Now, she enthusiastically talks about her new job: "Since 2024, I have been working as a project assistant and am engaged in communication with contractors with regard to procurement of necessary

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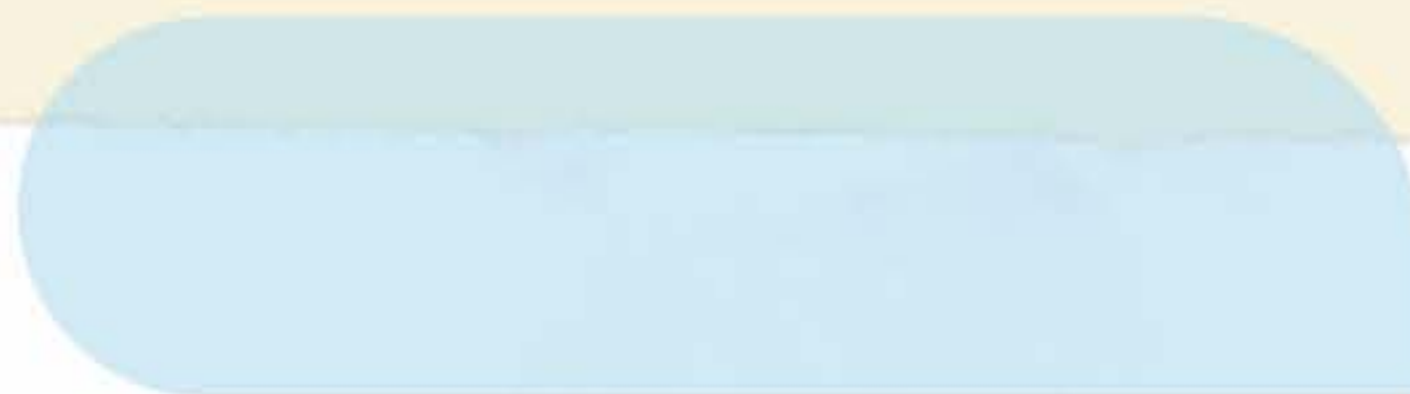
## “SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE IS IMPORTANT FOR ME”

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items for the Support and Protection Department, namely: technical rehabilitation equipment, personal hygiene products, etc..”

During this time, Khrystyna had to do many things for the first time. “It was difficult, sometimes even scary. For example, giving interviews or participating in filming an educational course as a lecturer. I am sure that there are still many such firsts waiting for me, **but every time you face the fear and do what you are to do. Not because you are a leader, but because you really care about your country and what it will be like in the future.**”

Personal independence for Khrystyna is not only architectural barrier-free and financial independence. “For me, social independence is important: it is when, for example, you want to take a course in tactical medicine held by the Hospitaliers and don’t think about how strange you look to others. Or when you want to go to a firing range and don’t worry that someone might find it eccentric, and it is unlikely to be accessible for a person in a wheelchair. “When I don’t have any thoughts about whether I’ll look like an eccentric woman because of a certain activity that someone considers unacceptable for people with disabilities, and we can talk about independence for me personally.”





## Blogger, Transplantation and Donation Expert in Ukraine

Alika's story is public. The woman began her media activity in 2018, evoked by personal pain, as Alika suffered from renal failure.

**"The inability to undergo donor transplantation in Ukraine made me speak about myself from the perspective of a person with a disability,** of a person with a severe complicated form of diabetes, of a recipient waiting for a donor organ, of a person undergoing various types of dialysis, and of a person who fights against all the odds," says Alika.

The woman had always been proactive in social media before and also obtained a degree in Marketing and SMM. "I have realized: if I want to change something for myself personally and for people like me, I have to go public. And with great moral effort, I began to open up this side of my life," says Alika.

Becoming a media person is work, the woman emphasizes. "It's the same work as promoting any brand or product on the market. Only you are promoting your personal brand and story. You will need different skills here: both PR and communication. In my case, copywriting and targeting skills are also useful."

**For Alika, being an ambassador means conveying information on donation, transplantation, and destroying myths and overcoming prejudice.**

"It's great that people are open now, they are ready to listen to the information. There is less narrow-mindedness and less fear when you talk about death and what comes after it, as well as what will happen after you go to a better world," the girl says.

The kidney was transplanted a few days before Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine.

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# “I SAY THAT MY DISABILITY IS SLOWLY KILLING ME, BUT YOU WON’T SEE IT WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME”

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Alika was forced to leave for another country... All this led to depression. In addition, Alika’s blog on Instagram was blocked, so she was unable to tell about her problems.

**“Only in 2023 I resumed my activities. I passed the competitive selection for Female Leader School of Political Participation for Girls and Women with Disabilities “Leaderka”, and I saw how many inspired and proactive women with disabilities are in Ukraine.** This probably became the starting point for my return,” the activist says.

Alika launched the project and podcast Visible People. “I have chosen the name Visible People, as I represent a group with an invisible disability. It is invisible at first glance, but it can constantly be life-threatening. Feeling unwell and pain. I say that my disability is slowly killing me, but you won’t see it when you look at me.”

Alika’s podcast is aimed at making people with disabilities more visible in society, present in all spheres. “And I also want society to start seeing us as living people: without excessive heroism,

but with awareness of the challenges we face; without pity, but with understanding; without any expectations with regard to the image of people with disabilities,” the woman says.

Through her podcast, Alika shares topical information and encourages a conscious attitude towards transplantation and donation in Ukraine. The woman regularly receives messages from people who, after reading her story, decided to sign a donation agreement.

**For Alika, personal independence is the opportunity to speak and write what she thinks, to openly share the experiences and problems which people with invisible disabilities face.**

“This is a financial opportunity to launch a podcast and project with regard to people with disabilities, as well as to have not only moral, but also material motivation to create a socially important product. Also, my personal independence lies in my own everyday mobility and independence, which I am afraid of losing due to deteriorating my health condition,” Alika adds.





# MARYNA LYTOVCHENKO

Athlete, Medallist of the 2016, 2020 and 2024 Paralympics and the World Table Tennis Championships

Maryna Lytovchenko from Kharkiv became the vice-champion of the 2024 Paralympic Games in table tennis among athletes with locomotive system disorders. Before that, in 2023, Maryna became the European champion, and she won the title of champion of the 2020 Summer Paralympic Games and was the winner of the 2018 and 2022 World Championships.

Due to the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, the woman left for the Czech Republic. In Prague, Maryna doubted for some time whether sport would remain in her life, **but later she felt inner strength and support of her surrounding and found a new training gymnasium.** Soon, her coach moved to the Czech capital, and Maryna resumed her sports activities.

**“When life brings us big challenges, it is important not to give up and move on.** These years were not easy, but we managed to find opportunities for training and move on. The most important thing that I have gained within this time is invaluable experience and inner strength, which have become my greatest achievements in this process,” Maryna wrote about her achievements at the Paralympics in Paris this year.

Simultaneously with sports, the woman is in the postgraduate program of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. In order to support the restoration of the destroyed buildings of her alma mater – V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University – the athlete sold her gold medal awarded at the 2020 Paralympic Games

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## “DESPITE THE WAR, I CONTINUED COMPETING AND GLORIFYING UKRAINE”

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in Tokyo and, together with friends and the people concerned, raised over half a million hryvnias.

Maryna’s priorities are career, studies, sports and health, relationships with family, friends and partners and, of course, providing assistance to society.

“Despite the war, I continued competing and glorifying Ukraine with victories and was able to maintain the status of European and world champion,”

Maryna answers the question about her achievements.

**“And personal independence for me means making decisions and acting independently, as well as bearing responsibility for my actions;** it is financial self-sufficiency and the opportunity to live according to my values and beliefs, preserving and feeling dignity and freedom,” the woman concludes.





# VIRA ZAPOROZHETS

SAD Activist and Journalist

The beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion forced Vira from Odesa to flee abroad with her child. “I wouldn’t do it now, as I know that the Russian soldiers kill everyone randomly, tying their eyes and hands behind their backs, and not according to lists of activists, as I thought at that time,” the woman says.

**While abroad, Vira with an invisible disability experienced increased panic attacks.** “I really regret leaving my country, but I appreciate this experience, as there I met many people from the temporarily occupied territories who had undergone Russian filtration and had been living under occupation and waiting for Ukraine for 10 years, or those who suddenly had lost their homes, like the people from Mariupol,” Vira adds.

The woman began supporting the same people who seek refuge from the war abroad, she accompanied them to hospitals, helped with translation and paperwork, etc. “They were mostly people with disabilities, gypsies, or just people lost in a huge city.”

A year later, Vira returned to Ukraine. She immediately began volunteering individually for her military friends and helping people with disabilities. She also supported people without a permanent place of residence as part of the SAD (Street Aid Daily) team.

**Homelessness is a big problem in Odesa, but there is no program to solve it, Vira explains.** “Homeless people are becoming meme characters, and only a few years ago shelters appeared, with terrible and humiliating conditions. Few of the city residents

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# “THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THIS ACTIVITY IS TO BREAK THROUGH THE WALL OF MISUNDERSTANDING AND PREJUDICE”

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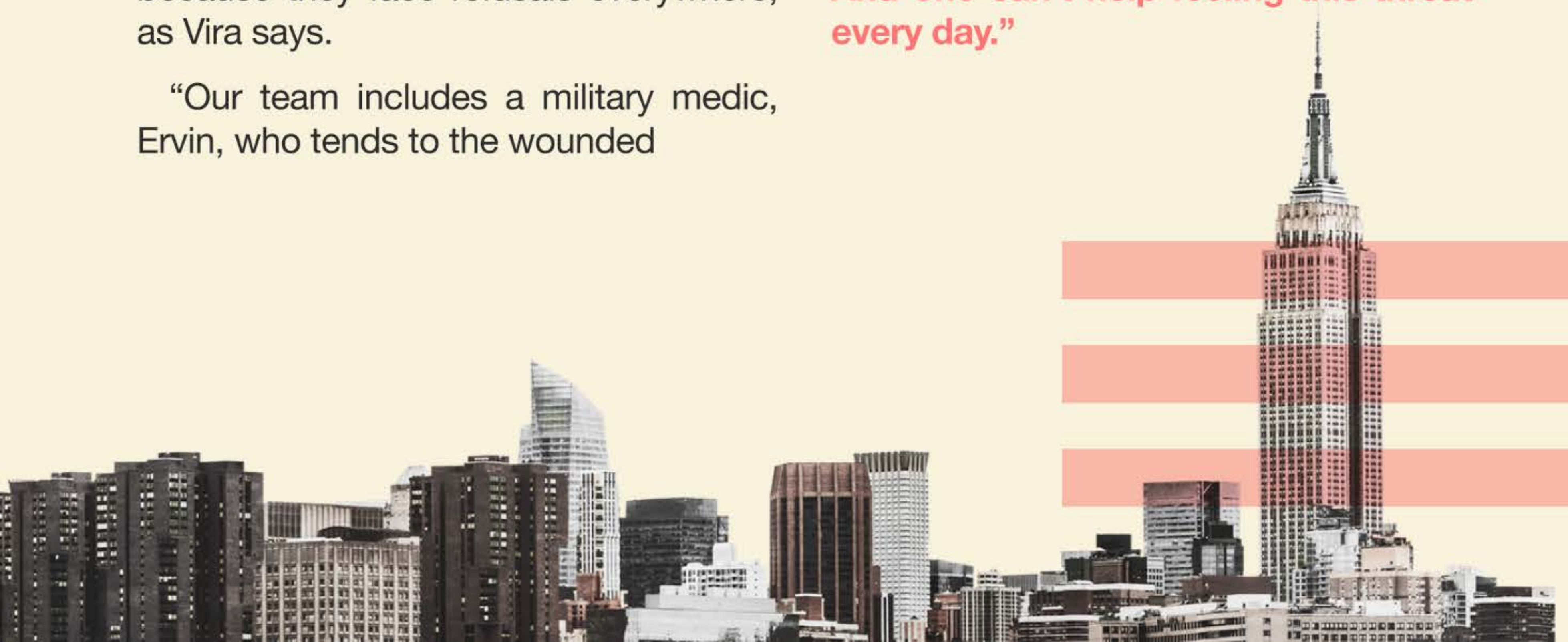
know which place to recommend to homeless people, where they can spend the night and wash. And the people living on the streets themselves suffer from police brutality, from excessive people’s vigilance during the war, and endless labelling. **Among the homeless, we meet former military personnel who went AWOL (absence without official leave - ed.), many displaced persons, people who simply cannot fight for their rights and have chronic diseases,” says the activist.**

SAD tries to satisfy the urgent needs of homeless people for hygiene products (underwear, sanitary pads for women, soap or shaving products) and medications. People on the street get used to not taking care of themselves because they face refusals everywhere, as Vira says.

“Our team includes a military medic, Ervin, who tends to the wounded

homeless people when he comes on holiday, and a junior physician, Davyd, who provides advice on dermatological problems,” Vira adds.

The most important thing in this activity is to break through the wall of misunderstanding and prejudice, the activist emphasizes. “Usually, society simply wants to remove a person as far away as possible for their appearance or smell not to irritate, condemning them for being unable to overcome life’s challenges. And we constantly fight against such prejudice. We also try not to act like benefactors, not to dominate, not to mentor, not to condemn, and to speak to everyone as equals. **Many of us live in hazardous dwellings, some have already lost their homes due to the war, and everyone can lose them. And one can’t help feeling this threat every day.”**





# ANNA SERPUTKO

Editor of Braille Studio

Since 2016, Anna has been an editor at Braille Studio, which is jointly implemented by Fight For Right NGO and the Volyn branch of Generation of Successful Action Non-Governmental Organisation with its centres in Lutsk and Kyiv. **The purpose of this project is to make modern Ukrainian and foreign books accessible to people with visual impairments.** Firstly, these are books printed in Braille script, less often in universal design (both in Braille and the so-called surface printing, with the text of an enlarged font) for people with visual impairments and the blind.

Due to the full-scale Russian attack, most of the project team (and these are people with disabilities) scattered across Europe. “I found myself in Poland without any working tools, even without a laptop. Later, volunteers donated

a laptop, with the necessary display bought and sent by Fight For Right NGO. It displays texts in Braille script, which is very helpful in editing and making books in special formats,” says Anna.

However, the team did not have any funds to print new books. **“Publishing fiction is not included in budgeted items of the utmost need, especially in the extremely difficult conditions of the beginning of the large-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.** Therefore, we suspended our activities for almost a year and only distributed the books left of previous editions to children in Ukraine and Europe, as well as provided files of previously prepared books for Ukrainian students in Polish schools,” the woman explains.

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## “READING AND MAKING BOOKS ACCESSIBLE TO OTHER BLIND PEOPLE”

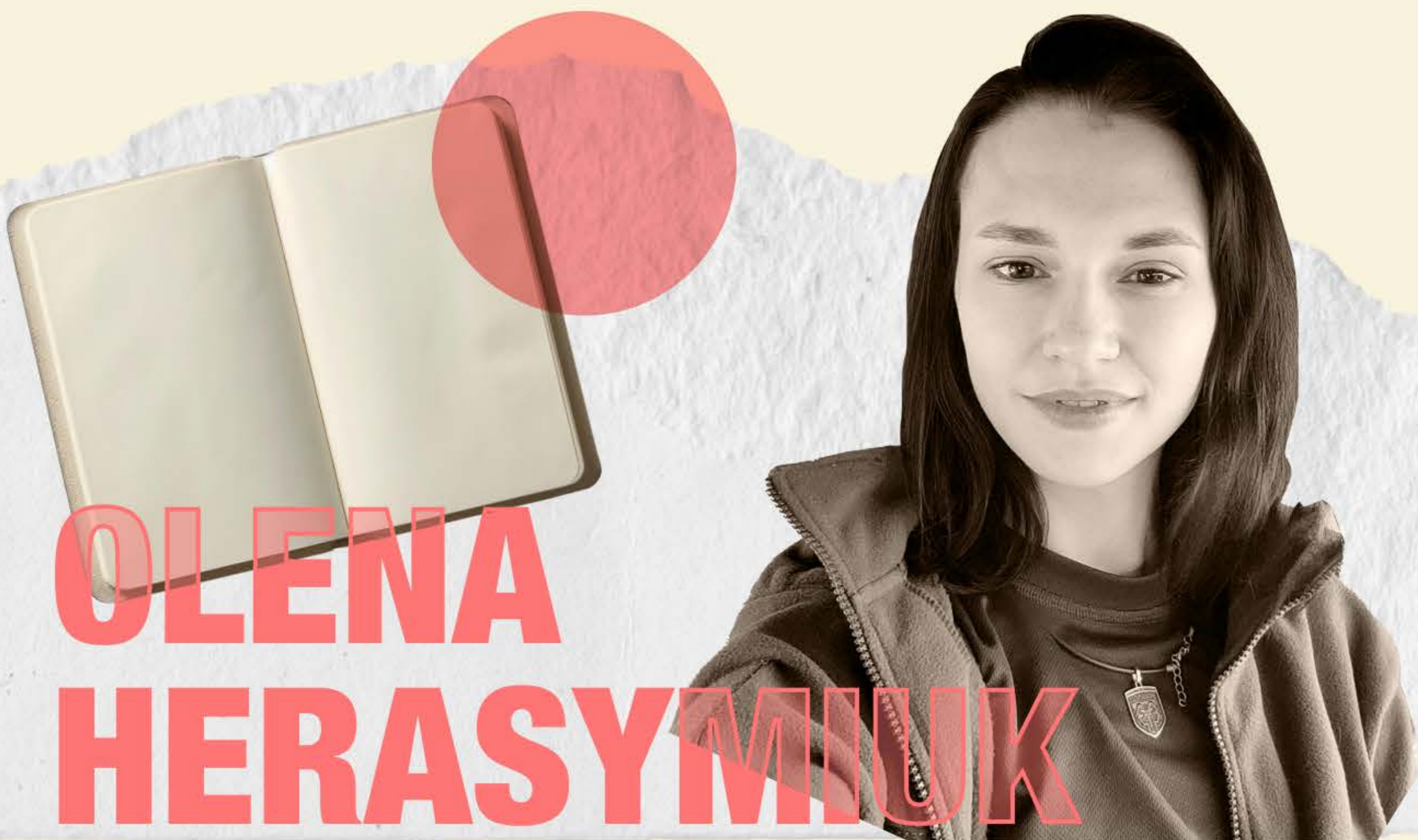
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In the spring of 2023, we resumed our project work due to one private order. “We started publishing books little by little, not in Lutsk, as before, but in Kyiv. We restructured the team and gradually established full-scale publishing,” says Anna.

**In 2024, the Lutsk City Council renewed funding for the project, with our team establishing cooperation with various publishing houses and authors.** And this year, Braille Studio has renewed large-scale publishing books for schools and libraries across Ukraine. “This is probably my greatest joy and pride,” the woman says.

“My source of inspiration is reading and making books accessible to other blind people. Without exaggeration, this is my superpower. **And my personal independence is to live a full life, despite everything, and make this world a better place in the struggle,**” the woman concludes.





# OLENA HERASYMIUK

(call sign Hera), Writer, Paramedic of the Hospitaliers

The war for Olena began in 2014, immediately after the Revolution of Dignity, in which the girl took an active part. At that time, Olena was a student of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv at the Department of Literature and a notable poet. With the war, the girl's life was divided in half: one part was devoted to providing assistance to the army, and the other – to attempts to remain a writer.

**“I was a volunteer, organizing various events, raising funds for the army, and later, in 2017, I joined the ranks of volunteer health professionals,” the woman says.**

Olena had been preparing for the full-scale Russian invasion for about a year under the order of her battalion

commander. “Despite the training and previous participation in hostilities, the Russian attack was unexpected and treacherous for us too,” says Olena.

**On the evening of 24 February 2022, Olena was supposed to hold a literary club meeting with veterans. They wanted to discuss Vitalii Zapeka's book ‘Puppy’, but these plans failed.**

That morning, there were so many people who wanted to join the battalion that its number increased 8 times. There was an urgent need to organize a wide system of support and training for rescuing the wounded in hot spots.

Due to a severe lung disease acquired in previous years of service and interrupted rehabilitation, the woman was unable to immediately join the crews. So for the first half of the year,

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## "THERE IS A FEELING OF A VERY LARGE VOID WHICH APPEARED AFTER REALIZING THE LOSSES"

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Olena and her team worked to organize everything necessary for the needs of paramedics in saving lives.

On 26 February 2022, the Hospitaliers got the first Kraken long-distance evacuation vehicle (resuscitation ambulance). Unfortunately, on 26 June, it got in an accident while travelling to Bakhmut to pick up the wounded. Olena painfully recalls that surgeon Nataliia Frausher, one of the leading emergency physicians, died then. "At Nataliia's funeral, our battalion made a promise to her family that the evacuation vehicle would be named in her honour. Nataliia's mission will continue, against all the odds, it will continue to save people," Olena says.

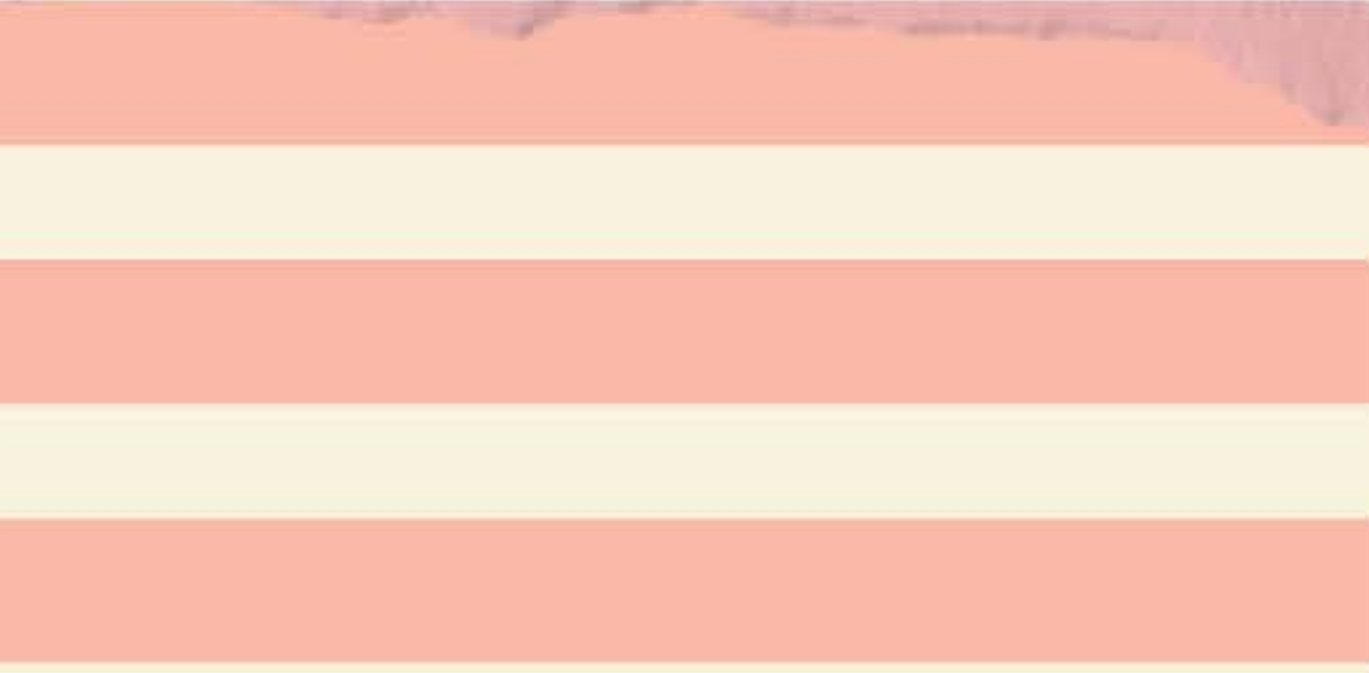
**To date, more than 6,500 wounded soldiers of the Ukrainian army have been transported by the Hospitaliers' crews. "This number may seem quite large to readers, but what we do every day is strengthening, but it is a drop in the bucket of the losses that Russia is inflicting on us.**

Therefore, assistance to the army should not stop for a single day. Everyone should understand the value of freedom," the woman emphasizes.

**"I call Avstriika my main poem of this war, because there is nothing more important than saving others.** The author is now in the background, because if I don't at least try to save people, I will have no more audience. This perception of creativity has reached a new level, and I cannot get rid of this terrible logic imposed by the war.

I greatly respect my creative colleagues who joined the ranks of the Defence Forces. Today, every artist should live and work for the people. This is the time when creativity can be transformed into a powerful resource, due to which the army is able to defend, liberate and save."







Now, due to health reasons, Olena is forced to break from her work in the battalion. But as a citizen, she cannot take a break from helping her country. "For example, the words I wrote formed the basis of a very powerful song by the Krykhitka and Hatespeech bands Under the Spring Rain. **We raised more than a million for UFVs for the assault combat battalion through the Return Alive Foundation and more than 350 thousand for tactical medicine for the Storks Foundation.** We dedicated the work to the killed artists who died because of the Russian invasion," the veteran says.

Olena is also working on a large-scale remembrance project.

"There is a feeling of a very large void which appeared after realizing the losses. Together with the writer and military man, Yevhen Lir, we started the Unwritten project, which aims to systematize the losses among people of literature caused by the Russian invasion from 2014 to the present.

We are establishing a website where we are going slowly, with the help of volunteers, to post processed materials about the names we found."

Now, there are more than 195 killed people from the literary sphere, as the poetess says. These are authors, librarians, typewriters, translators, literary promoters, and others. "Russia has caused irreparable losses to the Ukrainian intellectual segment. The Russians took their lives, but we will not let their voices be taken away. Therefore, together with volunteers, we are looking for data and opportunities to disseminate memories and works, translating them for a foreign audience. So while we are alive, we see our mission as speaking with two voices: for ourselves and for one of our killed colleagues. Their stories should be preserved for posterity. We should try to collect data on as many people as possible. **We thank everyone who shares the values of our mission," Olena concludes.**



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