



TRAGEDY STRIKES Pavel Kurilov's family home, which was constructed over 17 years by the family, lies in ruin in the aftermath of the Russian takeover of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. Kurilov, his wife and his three children now live in Sacramento. **PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL ZACHARIA**

Ukrainian families adapt to life in US after fleeing war

BY SAMHITA KUMAR

Although the war in Ukraine began months ago, its very human impact is continuing to be felt in Sacramento and the Country Day community.

Michael Zacharia — father-in-law of high school English teacher Jason Hinojosa — and his wife, Debi, have been fostering a family from Ukraine since March 29.

Zacharia, who had been following the news, wanted to do something to help those in Ukraine. He began with an unexpected connection — John, the man who had installed the family's wood flooring two years prior. Zacharia contacted the flooring store and invited John and his family over for a meal.

Although the families had a "wonderful" dinner, Zacharia said John's family, which was established in the United States, had no immediate need of aid.

A few days later, he received a text from John.

"There was a picture of this beautiful young family with three kids," he said. There was also a photo of the family's bombed-out house.

The family, the Kurilovas, had arrived in Sacramento from Mariupol in eastern Ukraine that day, and needed a place to stay, Zacharia said.

The city of Mariupol, under relentless attack from Russian forces, has faced bombing and humanitarian crises since the war began.

Soon after the family's arrival in late March, Zacharia and his wife met with the

Kurilovas, along with two Ukrainian-American families who served as translators.

Escape from Ukraine

The father, Pavel, or Paul, Kurilov, explained that the family had previously been hiding in the basement of a local church after the invasion of Mariupol.

"There was no power, there was no water, there was no light and there was no heat," Zacharia said. "And they stayed there for about a week."

Eventually, the Kurilovas returned to their house, which they had saved for and built themselves over the last 17 years.

Kurilov asked his friends whether to stay in Mariupol or evacuate; after failing to receive a clear answer, he turned to religion. One night, he asked God to send him a sign: if his family could get cell service,

which would be vital to planning an escape, he would evacuate the city.

Early the next morning, Kurilov and his wife were awakened by the flash of their phones. They had regained cell service.

The family promptly set out for the Romanian border.

"Two days after they left, their home got a direct hit from a Russian artillery shot," Zacharia said. Their house was completely destroyed — if the family had stayed, they would have been killed.

After crossing the border on foot, the family approached a man wearing a large cross, who gave them a place to stay for the night.

"They got to his home and he asked to see their Ukrainian passports," he said.

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Teacher turnover harms students; Country Day makes changes

BY SIMONE DEBERRY

For years, freshman Cara Shin identified herself as an active participant in the classroom, but, seated in the back of French III, she found that confidence dwindling. She was overwhelmed by her lack of foundation in French, and for the first time, she dreaded her teacher calling on her.

Shin, like many other students,

was suffering the consequences of rapid teacher turnover in the language department.

In the past five years, Country Day replaced four different middle school French teachers and 2 different Latin teachers. With each replacement, students wasted crucial time adapting to new teachers' techniques and expectations, falling farther behind on the expected material.

"By the time I got to high

school," Shin said, "I noticed that I didn't even know a lot of the 'review' information."

Country Day arranges the French program in such a way that returning middle school students begin French III upon entering freshman year. As a result of the middle school turnover, high school French teacher Richard Day recently adapted the French III curriculum to include an additional few weeks of review

at the beginning of the year.

Still, he finds himself particularly surprised by where students' inconsistencies lie.

"They'll show signs of knowing and understanding more sophisticated concepts, but then they won't know some of these earlier, more basic ideas," he said.

Much like math, languages build on themselves. For students who lack a strong foundation, this format proves difficult.

"It doesn't matter if you can remember the new vocab when you struggle to write sentences," Shin said.

Although Shin managed to recover, rising freshmen remain fearful.

Following a turbulent few months at the beginning of the year, the eighth-grade French students welcomed their third

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CAMPUS CORNER

YEARBOOK DELAY

The 2022 Medallion Yearbook's release has been delayed, and will not be available before the end of the year. Instead, it is scheduled to release in the summer. Before then, students will receive special folios for signing before they head off to summer break.

ANCIL HOFFMAN

For the first time since September 2019, Country Day hosted its annual whole-school Ancil Hoffman capture-the-flag match at the namesake park on Friday, May 20. Congratulations to the red team, consisting of the sophomores and juniors, for winning!

INSIDE the ISSUE

Seniors, signing off...

Seniors on The Octagon say their goodbyes, reminiscing about their time in Country Day. (PAGES 12-15)

GRAPHIC BY GARRETT XU



Ukraine: Family describes benefits, costs of U.S. move

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"The next afternoon the same man comes back to his home with an envelope, and he says, 'open the envelope.' They open the envelope, and there are five airplane tickets from Romania to Mexico."

In March, it was only possible to enter the U.S. as an asylum seeker through Mexico, Zacharia said. The Kurilovas arrived in Mexico City then traveled to Sacramento.

The members of the man's church had raised enough money to purchase five plane tickets, which would allow the Kurilovas to enter the U.S.

After their arrival in Sacramento, the Zacharias prepared to take the family in.

"We then put out the word to our church, family and friends for donations and help to try and turn this downstairs area of our home into a place where this family could live as independently as possible, so that they can have as much dignity as possible," he said.

The Zacharias' church, the Oak Hills Church in Folsom, helped prepare a separate kitchen and bedrooms for the Kurilovas as well as providing new clothes and kitchenware.

"This was our neighborhood community coming together at a time when there's so much division in our country," he said.

Pavel Kurilov and Hanna Kurilova are now planning for the future, Zacharia said. They're working on obtaining driver's licenses, strengthening their refugee status, which allows them to stay in the U.S., and improving their English. Another goal is to bring other relatives to safety.

Hanna Kurilova recently received bad news about her father, who required daily heart medication and had been forced into hiding from Russian bombing. Unable to leave his basement, her father passed away from starvation, Zacharia said.

Her mother, sister and brother, along with their spouses and children, had been able to find refuge in Romania. Paperwork is underway for Oak Hills Church to sponsor their arrival in the U.S.

Zacharia described the Kurilovas' journey as one profoundly affected by their Christian faith.

"This is not just a bunch of circumstances, this is God providing for this family and drawing us to them through the contact of this Ukrainian floor-layer that we hadn't

seen for two years," he said.

Country Day Family

Another Ukrainian family, the Kavranskas, have also arrived in Sacramento.

Ilona Kavranska and her three children — including Country Day fourth-grader Yan and first-grader Diana — are staying with host family Helen and John Sundet.

"I'm from the city of Odessa, Ukraine," she said, speaking through a translator, Country Day junior Shakhzoda Khodjakhonova.

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"I was alone, and now I'm not."

ILONA KAVRANSKA

Kavranska came to the United States to protect her children, she said. Bombing in a nearby city, Mykolaiv, spurred the Kavranskas to take action.

"My husband went to protect my country, while I went to Poland," she said. "We had to travel on a full wagon and we had to sit on the floor. To sleep, eat, drink — everything was done sitting."

The family didn't have enough funds to afford hotels, so they spent nights in the airports their flights landed in, Kavranska said. "There was not enough money to get the necessities for a comfortable trip."

Once she arrived in Sacramento, difficulties continued.

"When I came to the United States, I was alone and the American people didn't help me at all," she said. However, her host family, which took her in the first week of April, provided significant support.

"They took me in and gave my kids education, food, a warm bed and a good shelter," she said.

This support was especially important to Kavranska because of the impact it had on her children. Before the war began, they were still dealing with the effects of COVID-19 on schooling; once the war began, their education continued to suffer.

"My kids, before coming here, they were scared to sleep because they were scared that they would miss out on the siren," she said. The siren warned Ukrainians of im-

pending bombings and signaled residents to take cover in a sheltered location.

"But now, after coming here, they are very calm. They're smiling. They're happy."

Her children play soccer and basketball with friends from Country Day, and the Sundets have set up a basketball hoop for their use.

Sarah Gerber, who teaches first-grader Diana Kavranska, said that Diana's presence has "been a gift to our classroom community."

"She has a sunny personality, with a bright smile and lots of enthusiasm," Gerber said.

An issue for both Ilona and Diana is the language barrier; both only speak Russian.

"Diana has a choice board with pictures of things that she can do at school. There is a picture of markers, a picture of the bathroom sign, a picture of blocks, her book box, etcetera," Gerber said. "She may point to a choice in order to communicate with a teacher about her hopes, needs or plans."

Ilona has noticed the ease of communication her children and their classmates seem to have.

"If my kids point at the ball, the other kids are like 'Oh, let's go to play,'" Ilona

said. "If someone else is running to the swings, they are also running to the swings — they understand each other."

The Kavranskas frequently use Google Translate to talk with others, such as their host family. Ilona is also studying English; she attends volunteer-run classes on weeknights, and practices her English daily.

"I sit, read and repeat everything," Ilona said.

The Kavranskas also experienced some culture shock.

"Compared to my native city, things are completely different," she said.

The biggest surprise to her was the way Americans interacted with others.

"You could go into a grocery store and you could see just two strangers interacting like, 'Oh, I'm sorry. Excuse me. Are you okay?'" she said. "They don't know each other, yet they're being nice to each other."

This kindness was "astonishing" to Ilona. The Sundets are not related to her, she said, but are still choosing to support her and her children.

"I'm just grateful for everyone's kindness and everything I've been given through my journey," Ilona said.

"I was alone, and now I'm not."



FLAGS UP The Kavranska family poses under the Ukrainian flag after arriving in the United States. **PHOTO COURTESY OF HELEN SUNDET**

Teacher: Rapid changes cause sporadic learning

(continued from page 1)

French teacher in three years, Faten Ghariani. In the transition, the class lost some valuable instructional periods.

"I don't really feel ready for next year," eighth-grade French student Grace Mahan said. "With the switch, I think we got a bit off track."

Fellow eighth grader Sophia Monasa said she expects to be missing a bit of material at the start of next year.

Day intends to respond accordingly.

"I expect we'll have a lot of review to do at the beginning of next year just because the current eighth-graders haven't had a consistent teacher, but assuming Madam Ghariani stays for a while, we should see the middle schoolers start to get back on track in the coming years."

And, Ghariani does intend to stay. In fact, she excitedly anticipates starting next school year with her current students.

"I feel like I missed a starting point," she

said. "We had to take time to get to know each other and learn about what worked for each of us, but next year, I will get to meet them all at the beginning of the year like all of the other teachers."

Regardless, French language learners are not the only students affected by the inconsistent staffing. Junior Latin student Karabelo Bowsky joined Country Day her sophomore year. After just one year, her Latin teacher left.

"You think you know what your teacher expects, but every teacher expects different things," she said. "They all want you to be on different levels, and you have to completely adapt how and what you study."

At Country Day, the rapid rotation of teachers appears, for the most part, confined to the language department, a phenomenon shared nationwide.

A 2018 study compiled an in-depth account of the United States' now 70-year world language teacher shortage. In detail, it tracked the profession's increased demand, with foreign language becoming the most needed subject in 2017.

Today, researchers suggest that the low retention rate stems from many factors, including attrition, retirement and general perception of the profession. To combat it, analysts encourage schools to make active attempts to both recruit and integrate new teachers into the school community.

Head of Middle School Rommel Loria explained Country Day's structured process of hiring and supporting new educators.

At Country Day, new teachers are greeted by mentors and support, Loria said.

"However, onboarding is just one piece of the puzzle around retaining teachers. Even perfect onboarding would not prevent turnover because each case is unique."

Currently, Brooke Wells focuses his efforts on finding and maintaining a new Latin teacher.

"In recent years, the Latin teacher has been shared between both middle and high school, which some previous teachers found difficult to manage," he said. "There's less sense of a community because you're constantly alternating between two different realms."

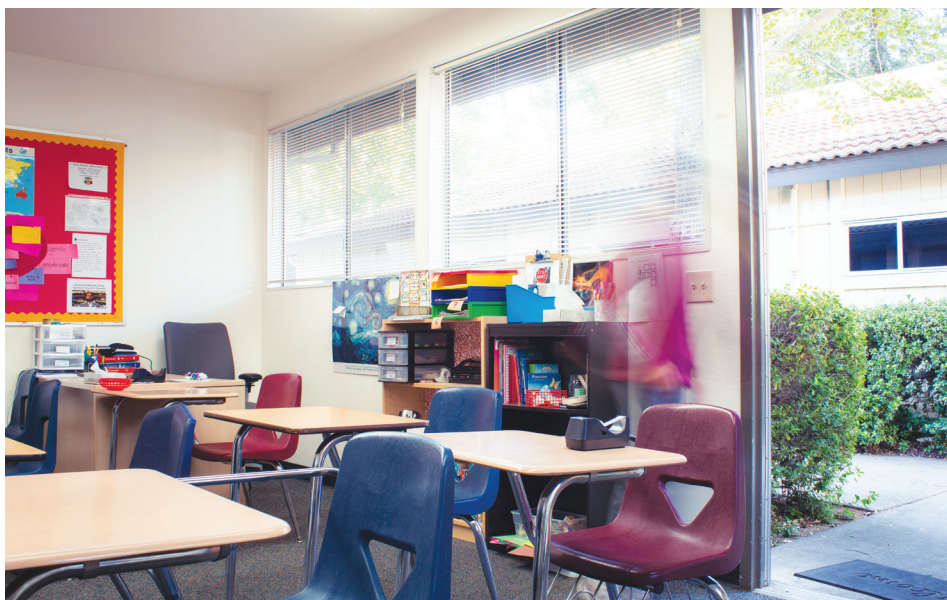
Consequently, the school has considered hiring two new teachers, one for the high school and one for the middle school. However, recent yet-to-be-announced changes have complicated the process.

Still, the high school intends to move away from the traditional one-subject teaching approach. For the new Latin position, the school expects candidates to be willing to teach different departments.

"With class sizes growing, teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to manage an entire subject matter alone," Wells said. "Now, we're going to have teachers doing a couple of different things."

Starting in the fall, high school students should expect to see a new Latin teacher working in the humanities and a possible new teacher concentrating on ninth-grade history and AP U.S. History, although exact details rely on the hires' specialties.

Meanwhile, the school encourages struggling students to express their concerns.



DISAPPEARING ACT A student exits the empty middle school French room. In the past five years, Country Day has replaced four different middle school French teachers. **PHOTO BY ARIJIT TRIVEDI**