



Oksana Tyulyaev, MHS parent, and her sisters celebrate New Years Day in their Ukrainian apartment. She plays with the neighborhood kids in a field. Tyulyaev lived in eastern Ukraine for 19 years. "I really liked that we had such a nice community there. Young people would gather together, and we would have so many events. Everybody was so social," Tyulyaev said. *Photographs used with permission by Oksana Tyulyaev. Illustration by Emma Tyulyayev.*

Conflict in Ukraine

Families from Eastern Europe speak out, take action

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Loud explosions have taken over the once peaceful Romanian village where Yana Dragnev, junior, remembers visiting relatives.

A recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has left many Eastern European cities in a similar state. Dragnev's grandparents went to California for a vacation just before the conflict began, and they have remained there in case Romania becomes threatened by Russian forces.

"Since they live in a community that is close to bordering Ukraine, they could be amidst the conflict and all the suffering that comes with war," Dragnev said.

Dragnev is one of many MHS students and families feeling the effects of this international conflict.

Oksana Tyulyaev, MHS parent, was born in eastern Ukraine and lived there for 19 years. She is also fluent in Russian having grown up close to the border.

"I feel like, in my soul, I am Ukrainian because we learned a lot in school, and my parents were speaking Ukrainian at home," Tyulyaev said.

Tyulyaev said she has two uncles who live in Ukraine, one of whom lives in the territory that has been taken by Russia.

"We text them. We see that they read messages, but they don't answer," Tyulyaev said. "We think that they are afraid to write anything because they are afraid they will be persecuted, punished or someone is watching or listening to their conversations."

Tyulyaev's family has been sending them money and trying to convince their family members in the Ukraine to come to the U.S.

She said she fears the Ukrainian culture will be greatly suppressed if the nation is conquered by Russia.

Tyulyaev said she doesn't want Ukraine to be a member of NATO because Ukraine, in her eyes, is neutral.

"Ukraine would be a connection between Russia and Europe, and I think that Ukraine would play an important role in peace," Tyulyaev said.

Teacher Perspective

Katie Bauman, European history teacher, said this war started over the Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea because the land was economically beneficial as they could put ports on the coast of the Black Sea, but it also had nationalistic importance to Russia.

This conflict and invasion has caused people to flee to the border into Poland, but only women and

children.

"Men are largely not allowed to leave because they are expected to serve in the military," Bauman said.

Europe has historically been hostile toward refugees, Bauman said. For example, a few years ago Syrian refugees were closed out of European countries. The attitude toward refugees now will depend mostly on the view of the international community.

"Most people feel that what is happening in the Ukraine is unjust, so I think that they will ultimately welcome refugees," Bauman said

Taking Action

Seniors Kate and Nick Bobrusev started a relief drive with MHS Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Underground Bible Study Club for Ukrainians struggling from the crisis.

The drive, which primarily supports Ukrainian women and children, started Monday, March 7, and ended Thursday, March 10.

Two women in the community were able to find a freight company that would ship the donations from Chicago to Ukraine free of charge.

"Women and children in Ukraine really need our help right now," Nick said. "They are the ones who are being forced to evacuate the country."

Kate and Nick are Latvian-American. Though they were both born in St. Louis, their mother is Ukrainian and Latvian, and their father is from Uzbekistan.

Being so culturally close to the conflict, Kate said, has taken a toll on her mental health.

"I've had to turn off the news to get my mind off of everything," she said. "I can't even take notes in class anymore without constantly thinking about the fact there are kids my age fighting for their families right now."

With the drive, Kate said their goal is to bring awareness to the war and provide relief.

"We think of life as just school, sports and homework, but it's so much more," Kate said. "We need to realize there are kids our age going through so much. We are so blessed to have all that we do."



Fast Fact

The sunflower is the national flower of Ukraine and has become a symbol of hope.

Timeline: Russo-Ukrainian Interaction

February, 2022:
Russia Attacks
Ukraine

January, 2022:
NATO and U.S.
forces on stand
by, ready to be
deployed

2021: Russia
sends 100,000
troops to
Ukraine's Border

2014: Crimea
secedes from
Ukraine and is
annexed by
Russia

2014: Russian
soldiers
enter Crimean
Peninsula

2008: U.S.
supports efforts
to bring Ukraine
into NATO, but
Russia opposes

1994-2004:
Ukraine develops
into a capitalist
nation

1991: Ukraine
declares
independence
from Soviet
Union & USSR
collapses

1989: Anti-
communist
protests begin
in USSR

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