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7th Tiger Conference - Dec. 11, 2018

The Kyiv Post Tiger Conference was born in 2012, with then-Economy Minister Petro Poroshenko and then-Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili giving the opening keynote speeches. What a difference six years make, as these former political allies became adversaries.

Why Tiger? We want to showcase ways in which Ukraine can become a fast-growing economy, like such Asian tigers as China and India, regularly achieving 6–8 percent growth each year. Life hasn't turned out this way for Ukraine, whose economy dropped by half from a 2013 high of \$180 billion to a 2014 low of \$90 billion.

We all know the reasons: revolution, war, corruption and the need to put the welcome mat out — and not roadblocks up — for investors. Ukraine is back on a growth path of 3 percent yearly — but it needs to hit Tiger-scale growth to become a prosperous nation and meet the demands of its 42 million citizens.

We are optimists. Ukraine is an innovative nation and we have high hopes. That's why we called this year's conference "Ukraine's Innovative Future." We have gathered top experts to discuss breakthroughs in security and defense, connecting Ukraine and powering regional development. We will highlight success stories, proper corporate governance and the booming food industry.

Any doubts about Ukraine's bright future will fade away with the evening Top 30 Under 30 Awards, now in its third season. That's when we honor the 30 brightest young talents that our jury could find around Ukraine based on an open nomination process.

Please thank our sponsors and supporters for making this event happen and enjoy the Tiger Conference!



Publisher: Adnan Kivan
Chief Editor: Brian Bonner
Commercial Director: Alyona Nevmerzhytska
Deputy Chief Editor: Olga Rudenko
Editors: Euan MacDonald, Ilya Timtchenko
Staff Writers: Natalia Datskevych, Oksana Grytsenko, Vyacheslav Hnatyuk, Toma Istomina, Artur Korniienko, Denys Krasnikov, Matthew Kupfer, Jack Laurenson, Veronika Melkozerova, Illia Ponomarenko, Oleksiy Sorokin, Daria Shulzhenko, Oleg Sukhov, Bermet Talant
Photo Editor: Pavlo Podufalov
Photographers: Kostyantyn Chernichkin, Volodymyr Petrov, Oleg Petrasiiuk
Designers: Vladyslav Zakharenko, Yuriy Borovyk
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December 11, 2018

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CONFERENCE AGENDA

9.00–10.00 Registration and welcoming coffee

10.00–10.15 Opening remarks

10.15–10.30 Keynote Speaker: Michael Carpenter

10.30–11.30 **PANEL #1**
INNOVATIONS IN SECURITY AND DEFENSE

11.30–12.00 Coffee break

12.00–13.15 **PANEL #2**
HOW TO POWER REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

13.15–14.30 Lunch

13.20–14.20 Breakout sessions
– **FOOD STORY: SHAPING THE FUTURE**
– **MODERN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

14.30–15.45 **PANEL #3**
CONNECTING UKRAINE

15.45–16.15 Coffee break

16.15–17.30 **PANEL #4**
STARS OF UKRAINIAN BUSINESS

17.30–18.00 “Voices of Ukraine” Book Presentation

18.00–18.15 Closing remarks

18.15–19.00 Cocktail

19.00–21.00 **TOP 30 UNDER 30 AWARDS**

Panel 1

Innovations in Security & Defense

As Russia's war on Ukraine has shown, it will take more than military might to defeat the enemy. Besides strengthening its armed forces, Ukraine needs innovative strategies to fight on new fronts. The battlefield includes cyberwarfare and disinformation, made more potent by greater reliance on the internet and social media. Ukraine also needs allies: Economic and other sanctions may have helped check Russia's imperialistic impulses, but they require unity among the countries of the democratic world to be effective. The Nov. 25 Russian attacks in the Black Sea underscore Ukraine's basic challenge: How can a war be won when the enemy cannot be defeated militarily?

PANEL MODERATOR



Michael Carpenter

Senior director of the Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania

Michael Carpenter is a nonresident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center. He is also senior director of the Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania.

Carpenter is a former deputy assistant secretary of defense with responsibility for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia, the Balkans, and Conventional Arms Control. Prior to joining the Department of Defense, Dr. Carpenter served in the White House as a foreign policy adviser to Vice President Joe Biden and as director for Russia at the National Security Council. Previously, he was a career foreign service officer with the State Department, where he worked in a number of different positions, including deputy director of the Office of Russian Affairs, speechwriter to the under secretary of political affairs, and adviser on the South Caucasus. Dr. Carpenter also served abroad in the U.S. embassies in Poland, Slovenia, and Barbados.

During his career at the State Department, Carpenter received four Superior Honor Awards and three Meritorious Honor Awards. He holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from the University of California at Berkeley, and a B.A. in international relations from Stanford University. Carpenter was a Fulbright scholar at the Polish Academy of Sciences and has received fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, MacArthur Foundation, and IREX Foundation for his academic research.

PANEL SPEAKERS



Hanna Hopko

Ukrainian member of parliament and the head of the committee on foreign affairs of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Hanna Hopko is a Ukrainian member of parliament and the head of the committee on foreign affairs of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. She is also a member of the executive committee of reforms of the National Council of Reforms and the Anti-Corruption Action Centre. She received an M.A. in international journalism at Lviv University and a CEP diploma for achievements in ecological teaching from the Civic Education Project. In 2008, she completed the leadership program in tobacco control from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. In 2009, she was awarded a Ph.D. in social communications at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. In 2012, she studied at the Ukrainian School of Political Studies. In 2017, she completed the Transformational Leadership: Leadership at the Edge course (Saïd Business School, University of Oxford). Her political career started when Hanna headed the list of the Samopomich Party and was elected to the parliament of Ukraine. She was appointed chairwoman of the foreign affairs committee on Dec. 4, 2014.



**Brian
Whitmore**

Senior fellow &
director of the Russia
program at the Center
for European Policy
Analysis

Before joining CEPA, Brian Whitmore was senior Russia analyst at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He also worked as a foreign correspondent for The Boston Globe in Moscow and Prague; as a graduate instructor in the Department of Government and International Studies at the University of South Carolina. He was a visiting lecturer in the History Faculty at Mechnikov National University in Odesa, Ukraine, and at the international relations faculty at St. Petersburg State University.



**Archil
Tsintsadze**

Advisor on defense
reform issues to
Ukrainian Prime
Minister and Ukrainian
Defense Minister

Archil Tsintsadze is an advisor on defense reform issues to Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Ukrainian Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak. He is also the security and defense sector reform coordinator at the National Reforms Council.

He is a native of Tbilisi, Georgia, and graduated from Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, the Moscow Military Academy and the Command and General Staff College in the United States. He won the Legion of Merit award from the U.S. Secretary of Defense.

He was a battalion commander in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in 1992-1993 and participated in the fighting in Sukhumi as a colonel in the Georgian Army. He was military attache at the Embassy of Georgia in Washington, D.C., from 1999 to 2005 and charge d'affaires of Georgia in Kyiv in 2007.



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Panel 2

How to Power Regional Development

It took Ukraine more than 20 years to finally start disbanding the centralized power system it inherited from the Soviet Union. Today, Ukraine's cities and villages have more power than ever to make their own decisions. How should they use it? And what can be done to help Ukraine's regions bloom?

PANEL MODERATOR



Michel Terestchenko

Mayor of Hlukhiv

Michel Terestchenko is a candidate for president of Ukraine. He is also the mayor of Hlukhiv, a city of 33,000 people in Sumy Oblast, since 2015. He announced he would resign on Sept. 27, 2018, in frustration with what he calls a centralized "kleptocratic and oligarchical" system that frustrated his reform attempts, but decided to return to Hlukhiv when martial law was imposed in the country in late November. The 64-year-old French businessman is a descendant of one of Ukraine's richest 19th century families. The Ukrainian industrial dynasty of sugar producers built schools, hospitals, orphanage and churches. His grandfather, Mikhail, was forced to flee to France when the Soviets came to power in Ukraine after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

PANEL SPEAKERS



Ivan Svitek

General Manager of Alfa
Bank Ukraine

Ivan Svitek is one of the leading experts in finance and banking, as well as a top-level manager with extensive experience in the EU countries, Eastern Europe, Latin America. He was born in 1967 in Prague, Czech Republic. In 1984, he and his family immigrated to the United States. He earned a bachelor's degree in economics and political science from Claremont McKenna College in California. In 1993-1994, he completed a master's in business administration from INSEAD business school in France. A Czech by nationality, he is fluent in Czech, English, Portuguese and Russian.



Olivia Allison

Partner, Head of
Forensic & Risk
Consulting KPMG in
Ukraine

Olivia Allison joined KPMG's forensic practice in London in January 2011. In 2016 she moved to Ukraine to set up the forensic team, after living and working in several ex-Soviet countries and leading numerous complex international engagements. Before joining KPMG, Olivia worked as a journalist and researcher, and then worked in international business risk consultancy in the former Soviet Union, Africa and the Middle East. She specializes in helping clients to assess and manage risks, conduct due diligence on counterparties, and leading internal investigations and preparing expert witness reports for use in international litigation and arbitration.



**Sofia
Belenkova**

Ex-executive of
Kharkiv IT Cluster

A native of Kharkiv, Sofia Belenkova has spent over 13 years working both locally and internationally in executive consulting, business development, change management, and project management. She spent over five years working for Deloitte, three years as the manager of Lifecells' organizational development division, and most recently served as the executive director of the Kharkiv IT Cluster, a non-governmental organization that unites information technology companies, government, and educational institutions to develop the tech sphere.



**Jaanika
Merilo**

Vice Mayor of Dnipro,
Advisor to Minister
of Infrastructure and
Transportation and
Mayor of Lviv

Jaanika Merilo has 20 years of experience in IT and 15 years in technology and investment management. During these years she participated in creating Estonian government backed Estonian Development fund, dedicated to financing high export potential innovative projects, was Managing Director of Investment fund US Invest, and since Maidan has dedicated her work and time to create the good business and investment environment in Ukraine by implementing e-government solutions from e-democracy to open budgets and procurements. Jaanika is considered as one of the main drivers of Ukrainian Digital Revolution and was nominated in 2015 by Google and Financial Times to top NE100 of "Innovators whose innovations change the world for better".

Jaanika has graduated her masters from the University of Cumbria in UK and studied Executive Management in Cornell and is lecturing in several leading universities in Ukraine. She is currently Vice Mayor of Dnipro, Advisor to Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation and to Mayor of Lviv, and expert on National E-Government Agency in Ukraine.

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Panel 3

Connecting Ukraine

Ukraine is the largest country in Europe but it has some of the worst roads and slowest trains on the continent. Domestic flights are scarce and expensive. Getting from the east to the west can take 30 hours. A better connection between Ukraine's regions could stimulate its economy and relieve political tensions. In a country so large and facing so many challenges, how does one make the 603,628 square kilometers of territory truly connected?

PANEL MODERATOR



Igor Smilyansky

CEO of Ukrposhta

Igor Smilyansky leads Ukraine's national postal operator that had 75,000 full-time equivalent employees and 11,500 branches when he took over in 2016. He has successfully designed and manage turnaround strategy. He achieved 20 percent annual revenue growth, compared to an average 3 percent for the prior seven years. He integrated with over 150 countries, increasing Ukrainian business on e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Etsy, along with growth in imports from China's Alibaba and JD platforms. He managed digitalization and simplification of product lineup. He also led the design and development of the company's full rebranding campaign. He has a master's in business administration and law degree from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

PANEL SPEAKERS



Volodymyr Omelyan

Minister of infrastructure
of Ukraine

Volodymyr Omelyan is a Ukrainian diplomat and politician who became infrastructure minister in 2016, after having served as deputy infrastructure minister from 2014-2016. He graduated from the University of Lviv in 2000 and the Lviv Polytechnic in 2001. He has a degree in finance, international relations, economics and entrepreneurship. From 2000 until 2008, Omelyan had a career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He then worked in the embassy of Ukraine in Vienna, Austria before returning to the Foreign Ministry. From 2012 to 2013 he was a top civil servant in Ukraine's Ministry of Finance.



Yevgen Treskunov

Aviation expert, founder of the
aviation consulting company
Avioplan

Yevgen Treskunov is the Chairman of Strategic Development & International Relations Committee at the Airports of Ukraine Association since 2015 as well as the founding partner at AviaPlan, an independent aviation consultancy focused on local aviation development. Yevgen specializes on strategic analysis and long-term business planning of the aviation sector. Before, Yevgen was the Executive Vice President of Strategy & Development as well as Chief Information Officer at Ukraine International Airlines. He was also Executive secretary at Ukrainian Aviation Group Strategic Alliance and deputy CEO at Aerosvit Airlines.



Serhiy Vovk

Director at Center for
Transport Strategies

Serhiy Vovk is Director at Center for Transport Strategies, an independent information and consulting center that focuses on research into individual transport and infrastructure projects, as well as on analyzing and forecasting the development of the transport complex. Serhiy has headed the center since its establishment in August 2011. At CFTS, his responsibilities include determining the strategy for the overall development and management of CFTS. Before joining CFTS, Serhiy was the editor-in-chief of the InvestGazeta financial and business weekly from 2006 to 2011. Serhiy graduated from the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy National University with a law degree.

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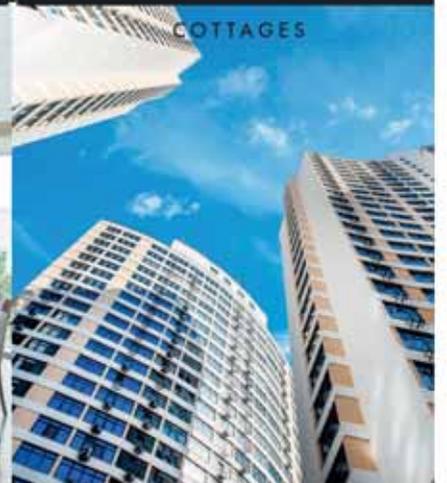


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Panel 4

Stars of Ukrainian Business

Doing business in Ukraine isn't easy. It's a turbulent place and an unstable economy. Here, the richest people are invariably connected to politics. And yet there are those who break through it all and build successful and innovative companies that are ramping up Ukraine's economy. They are real business stars and they come from various industries from traditional agriculture and infrastructure to cutting-edge technology.

PANEL MODERATOR



Julia Petryk

PR & Media Manager
at MacPaw

Julia Petryk is the PR & Media Manager at MacPaw, a software developer from Ukraine. MacPaw is a globally acclaimed developer, with over 30 million people using its macOS and iOS applications around the world. The company's success abroad is largely down to Petryk's efforts. She has successfully developed and promoted MacPaw's global PR strategy and kept the company in the spotlight in the Western media. Apart from promoting MacPaw, Petryk helps Ukrainian tech start-ups gain global coverage through her work as a mentor and through the training course Global PR she teaches at tech school Projector.

PANEL SPEAKERS



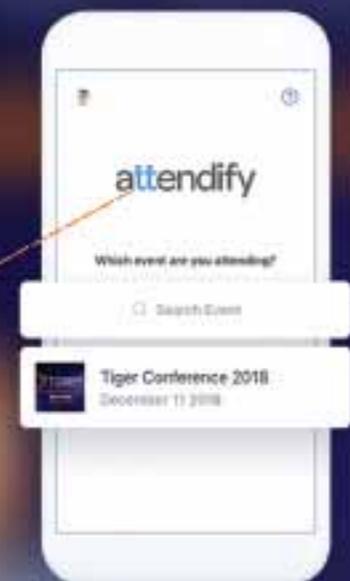
Andreas Flodström

Co-founder and CEO of
Beetroot

Andreas Flodström is an entrepreneur, co-founder, and CEO of Beetroot, a Swedish-Ukrainian IT company specializing in building distributed teams of developers. Beetroot was initially founded as a part of Andreas' master thesis in social entrepreneurship, while he was completing a degree in technical entrepreneurship at Chalmers University. The company now engages more than 300 people in Ukraine and Sweden. In 2014 Andreas has also started a social enterprise, Beetroot Academy, which is an IT school currently located in 11 cities of Ukraine.

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the QR code to download
Attendify, an app with all the key
information about the Tiger
Conference and its participants.





Kira Rudik

COO of Ring Ukraine,
and General Manager of
Ring Research, and Ring
Community

Kira Rudik is the COO of Ring Ukraine, and General Manager of Ring Research, and Ring Community. She has built, and continues to develop, an innovative research and product development company, creating state-of-the-art smart home security systems. Thanks to her management skills, the company has grown from 3 to 700 people in a single year and continues to grow. This year, Ring Ukraine joined the friendly family of Amazon.

Kira, as COO, is the heart of her team and an expert in people management. Her skillful day-to-day administration and smooth operation of the business creates a unique atmosphere in the teams we are managing.

Her expertise, gained in the roles of Project management, Head of Project Management and Co-Founder of several business projects, confers upon her a deep understanding of project and people needs, and her experience in managing quality assurance processes at large gives her the perfect understanding of all project stages.



Dan Pasko

Co-managing
partner at Diligent
Capital Partners

Dan Pasko is co-managing partner at Diligent Capital Partners, investment markets and strategic management expert. Primary investment focus of Diligent Capital Partners is Ukrainian agribusiness.

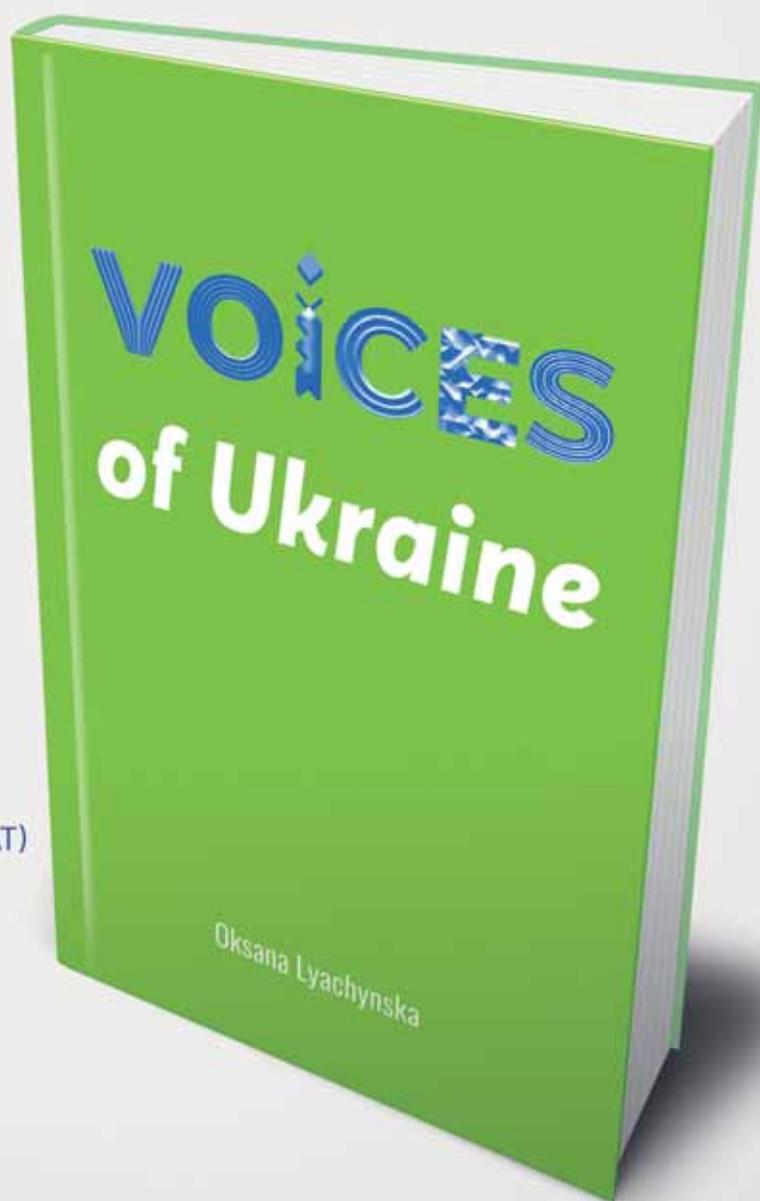
Dan has a lot of experience in managing such companies as Bostovan Wineries, Inkerman Wineries, Vitmark, Nova Poshta, Preply and one of the latest strategic partnerships – Allseeds.

Dan is well-known civil society activist - he is the founder of the project on deregulation of the Ukrainian economy called Easy Business; from 2014 to 2016, Dan was a member of the National Council of Reforms, an advisor to the Prime Minister and the Administration of the President of Ukraine.

In 2004, Dan obtained Master's degree in Law at Odessa National Academy of Law; in 2007 - Master's degree in Financial Management at Kiev National Economic University; Dan also attended Harvard Business School in 2008-2010.

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Breakout session

Food Story: Shaping the future

Food is not only essential to life but one of its greatest pleasures. The importance of food supply is felt even more acutely in nations like Ukraine that have known famine in the last century.

This group will explore the challenges of the 21st century, including such questions as:

How has consumption and preferences changed in the last 5-10 years in Ukraine?

Is it important for consumers to trace the origin of food?

What percentage of an average Ukrainian income is spent on food?

How can food waste be reduced?

What role can new technologies play in production of more nutritious and affordable foods in the assurance of a safe, healthy and sustainable food supply?

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John Wiles

Ph.D. Global Technical
Portfolio Strategy
Leader
Corteva
Agriscience™,
Agriculture Division
of DowDuPont

John Wiles is a technical portfolio strategy leader in the Integrated Field Sciences (IFS) function within the research & development organization for Corteva Agriscience™, the agriculture division of DowDuPont. IFS is responsible for leading the biological characterization and development of crop protection, trait, seed applied technologies, biologicals, and other pipeline technologies.

John originally joined DuPont Crop Protection in 1997, at their European Research and Development Centre, in Nambshiem, France. During his career he has held various international roles, including Regulatory Ecotoxicologist, sales and marketing representative in the United Kingdom, technical manager for insecticides and nematicides in Europe, Middle-East and Africa, Six Sigma project manager, and global technical product manager for a new nematicide. In his latest role, Wiles is global technical portfolio strategy leader for the insect and nematode management portfolio, connecting with market-facing R&D sub-function partners to provide technical biological support to both the seed and crop protection platforms around the world.

John received a B.S. degree in agricultural biology at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K. and a Ph.D. in ecotoxicology from Southampton University, UK, and has always had a passion and enthusiasm for agricultural research and crop production, stemming from his rural upbringing in the UK.

PANEL SPEAKERS



Olesya Olenytska

Director Government
Relations and Public
Affairs at METRO Cash
& Carry Ukraine

Olesya Olenytska is responsible for anti-crisis, internal & external corporate communications strategy development and management, CSR and sustainability, sponsoring, corporate events, media relations, stakeholders engagement, lobbying.

From 2014 – till 2016 was a Head of Corporate Communications at MCC UA.

2004–2014 has been working at “Philip Morris Ukraine” on different positions, from GR Executive and growing to Manager Corporate Communications and Contributions.

She also worked at the Parliament of Ukraine as a spokesperson to the Members of Parliament group, and as an analyst of press service of Presidential Administration of Ukraine.

She changed variety of positions in Ukrainian media.

Education:

2001-2004 National Academy of Management, Law

2001-2004 Postgraduate student of Shevchenko University

1995-2000 Kyiv National Shevchenko University, Master of International Journalism



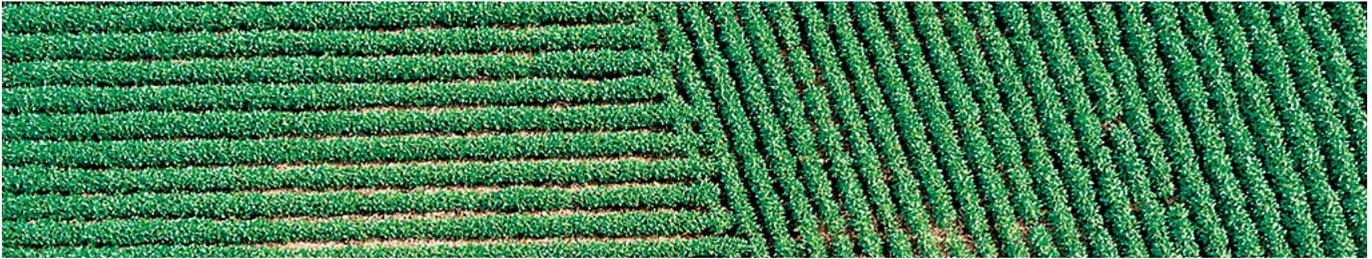
Dmytro Borysov

Owner of Borysov
Restaurant Chain

Dmytro Borysov is a cook, an owner and the brand-chef of a self-titled restaurant chain. His goal is the development of Ukrainian gastronomic culture with an eco-approach to everything – relations with guests, partners, communication.

His first restaurant, Barsuk, is eight years old and it's still hard to find a vacant table there in the evening. Later they opened a GASTROROCK gastronomic pub (now it's our Odesa cuisine restaurant – LYUBCHYK), an Asian steakhouse - Oxota na Ovets, Kanapa, a new Ukrainian cuisine restaurant. They had a dream to open modern dish restaurants in Ukraine and amp up the seafood trend. So they've created the РИБАЛОВЕ and Crab's Burger. For the youngest they invented the Babyrock. Other projects: RONIN, a Japanese-Peruvian cuisine restaurant and Ostannya Barykada. In 2017 they opened restaurants devoted to various aspects of Ukrainian regional cuisine: Bessarabian Danube herring, Carpathian porcines, eel of Shatski lakes and Black Sea crustaceans, Ukrainian cheeses and oysters, beef and lamb, All of the aforementioned you can try in Bessarabia South-Ukrainian cuisine restaurant and Vatra meat restaurant. Besides that, they created a restaurant about and for Kyiv, Chicken Kyiv and Kanapka bar on Andrew's Descent.

Agriculture at The Crossroads



By 2050, the earth's population will reach almost 10 billion people, and their appetite for quality, nutritious food will grow even quicker. Yet the amount of arable land will decline by almost 10 percent as the quality of soil degrades and the forces of urbanization push ever outward. A changing climate adds further stress.

Those of us with a stake in the future of agriculture are well aware that we have reached a crossroads, an inflection point, in our efforts to meet the challenges of feeding an ever-hungrier world. Can we increase agricultural yield and food security while farming sustainably? Can technology help meet the demands of consumers around the world for higher quality, safer food? Can we improve the economic conditions of farmers and farm workers?

In Corteva Agriscience™, Agriculture Division of DowDuPont, we believe strongly that the answer to all these questions is yes. But addressing and overcoming these challenges will require that everyone with a stake in solving these problems—farmers, agricultural companies, food manufacturers, governments, non-governmental organizations, and everyday people—learn to work together to bring about the progress in farming practices, policies and technologies that the world so desperately needs.

Agriculture is at a crossroads and we hope to contribute to the dialogue about these critical issues. Our goal is to provide an open, inform-

ative, balanced view of both the challenges facing the global agricultural industry and the many ways they are being met.

We want to reach—and provide a platform for—every stakeholder in the future of agriculture. Farmers large and small, agricultural suppliers, food manufacturers, and policymakers, to be sure, but also non-governmental organizations and consumers who are increasingly curious about where their food comes from and what goes into producing it. In short, everyone who works in the soil, those who derive sustenance from their noble work, and everyone in between.

We believe that success in feeding the world will require the willing, informed partnership of everyone involved in this mission. For us, the term “crossroads” isn’t just about the challenges we face. It’s about providing room for the intersection of all the players in the industry of agriculture.

Our goal is to help inform the discussion about the future of agriculture. But in doing so, we also want to listen to you, to hear your voices, your concerns, your needs. That, we believe, is the only way to connect the grower in the field with the family at the table and everyone in between. We’ll meet the challenge of feeding the world over the next several decades, but to do so we need to draw the world of agriculture closer together. At Corteva Agriscience™, we believe in growing progress, and we believe we all have a role to play.



Agriculture Division of DowDuPont

James C. Collins, Jr.

*Chief Operating Officer, Agriculture Division of DowDuPont
and Chief Executive Officer-Elect for Corteva Agriscience™*

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Build together

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Kyiv Post
UKRAINE'S GLOBAL VOICE

2017 Top 30 Under 30 Winners



2016 Top 30 Under 30 Winners



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Co-hosted by Andriy Chemes
and Alexa Chopivsky





Kateryna Akymenko

With her husband, Akymenko launches educational program for nation’s leaders at Stanford University

By **Natalia Datskevych**
datskevych@kyivpost.com

After graduating from National Pedagogical Dragomanov University in Kyiv, Kateryna Akymenko, 29, knew what she didn’t like about the Ukrainian education system.

“I got used to the fact that studying in Ukraine is just a part of life, during which you’re taught how to live, but your own personal opinion is never asked,” Akymenko said. “As a result, after graduation from university you don’t know what to do next.”

Akymenko and her husband Olexandr have for the last two years been helping young Ukrainian leaders to study at California’s Stanford University, one of the leading teaching and research institutions.

Akymenko helped found the Ukrainian Emerging Leadership Program in 2016, with the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute.

In 2015, Akymenko gained a place at Stanford. Her husband was a participant in another educational program and had the right to bring along his spouse. The program paid for both of their studies.

They came up with the idea to create a special educational program for Ukrainians. They decided that it should be focused on ambitious leaders who plan to return to Ukraine.

“At some point at Stanford University, we realized that before this trip we had never had a comparable experience in our lives, and a lot of people the same age as us or older would never have the chance to see what real practical training abroad is all about,” Akymenko said.

The couple noticed the small number of Ukrainian students at Stanford.

Michael McFaul, a professor of political science at Stanford University and a former U.S. ambassador to Russia, whom the Akymenko family asked for help, welcomed their idea and suggested that the famous professor Francis Fukuyama oversee the program.

The Akymenkos returned to Ukraine and started to search for sponsors to meet the \$130,000 per-student cost. They were successful. Support came from Okean Elzy’s frontman Svyatoslav Vakarchuk; Dragon Capital CEO Tomas Fiala, the Western NIS Enterprise Fund, Astem.Foundation, the Omidyar Network, MacPaw, and Victor and Iryna Ivanchyk, founders of Believe in Yourself Charitable Foundation

Competition for a place on the two-year program is fierce, with only three places annually and 300 applicants. This year’s winners are Nataliya Mykolska, the former deputy minister of economy; Ivan Prymachenko, an educational technology innovator; and Oleksandra Ustinova with the Anti-Corruption Action Center in Kyiv.



✓ **Name:** Kateryna Akymenko

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** National Pedagogical Dragomanov University

✓ **Profession:** Co-founder of Ukrainian Emerging Leadership Program in Stanford University

✓ **Did you know?** Akymenko did active volunteer work when she was a student for the international HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Red Cross, as well as helping children with disabilities.

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(Oleg Petrasjuk)



Ruslan Baginskiy

Hat designer takes international fashion scene by storm; even Madonna dons his stylish headgear

By **Toma Istomina**
istomina@kyivpost.com

Ukrainian designer Ruslan Baginskiy first entered the world of fashion in his student years. Although he studied geography in his hometown of Lviv, the western city of 720,000 residents located 540 kilometers west of Kyiv, after classes he worked as a stylist.

As Baginskiy created styles for various photoshoots and fashion projects, he noticed he had a particular interest in hats, so he asked for an internship at a local hat atelier to learn basic skills. He says that this affection might date back to his childhood — he remembers his family, including his mother and grandmother, had lots of hats.

At first, Baginskiy created hats to order and collaborated with Ukrainian designers as he continued to work as a stylist. However, he started getting so many orders that he changed his profession.

So around two-and-a-half years ago, Baginskiy moved to Kyiv, where Ukrainian Fashion Week takes place and where the country's glossy fashion magazines are based.

After that, Baginskiy took his first trip to Paris to attend a fashion show of French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier and established contacts. He says the experience taught him that he must put a lot of effort into his brand's public relations. PR, he said, "is a driving force, which works for every brand all over the world."

Baginskiy and his team decided to get famous people involved. They contacted stylists and fashion bloggers, introducing them to the products. It worked. When Russian model Lena Perminova posted a photo of her wearing a straw boater hat on her Instagram page, which has 1.8 million subscribers, and tagged Baginskiy, the brand started winning fans from all over. Then the situation reversed — stylists messaged Baginskiy to order his hats — straw fedoras, felt gamblers, leather berets and his famous baker boy caps.

Baginskiy's hats now supplement the wardrobes of many celebrities and fashion divas, such as Madonna, Bella Hadid, Pamela Anderson, Natalia Vodianova, Paris Hilton and Khloe Kardashian.

For Madonna, the Ukrainian designer created a choice of 12 custom hats over three days. The singer thanked the brand for their work, and wore their hats to a photo shoot for the cover of Vogue Italia.

"It was great because it's Madonna — she's a queen," the designer said.

Today, around 200 retailers from various countries sell Baginskiy's products, which cost \$180-\$315. Baginsky believes that design is a form of art that should have a commercial basis. But the main secret of his success? "We work a lot," he said.



✓ **Name:** Ruslan Baginskiy

✓ **Age:** 29

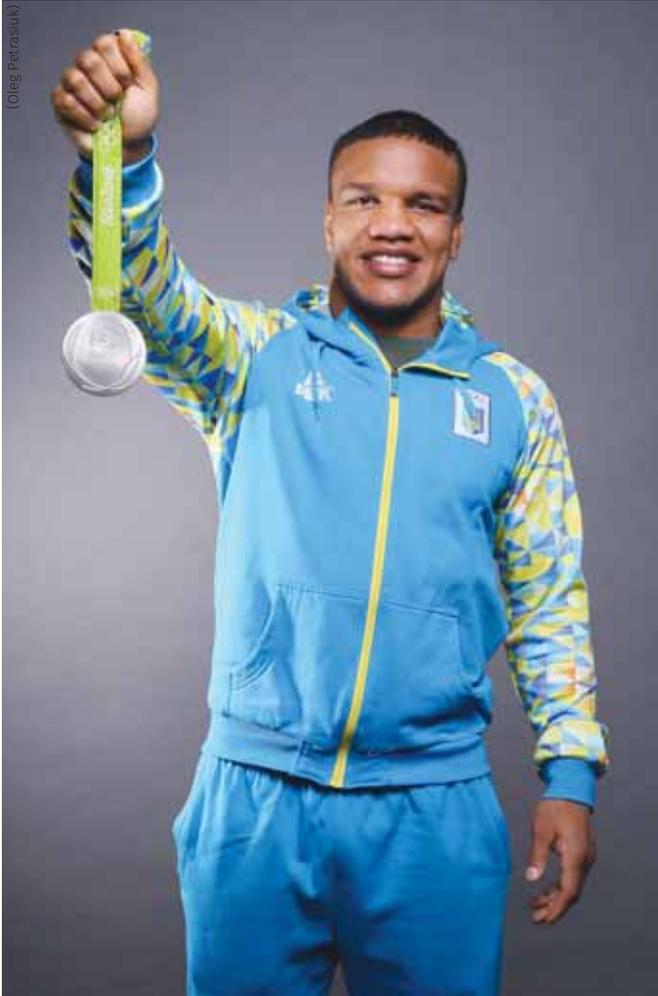
✓ **Education:** Geography, Ivan Franko Lviv National University

✓ **Profession:** Fashion designer

✓ **Did you know?** One of his hobbies is flower arranging.

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Zhan Beleniuk

Champion wrestler refuses better offers abroad to stay at home: 'I belong here'

By **Veronika Melkozerova**
melkozerova@kyivpost.com

Zhan Beleniuk entered the world of Greco-Roman wrestling in 2000, when he was 9. Sixteen years later, Beleniuk won a silver medal in the up to 85 kilograms category of Greco-Roman Wrestling at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. And now at 27, he's known both great triumph and great tragedy.

At age 11, his father, Vincent Ndagijimana was killed in a military conflict in Rwanda. He was a pilot from the Hutu ethnic group. He met Zhan's mother, Ukrainian Svitlana Beleniuk, in the 1980s while studying at Kyiv National Aviation University.

His father was called up for military service and left Ukraine in the 1990s. "It was his duty, so he had to go," Beleniuk said briefly. From the 1960s until 2009, Rwanda was riven by military conflict, revolution, a civil war and genocide. Beleniuk visited his father's grave in 2017, when he met with the African part of his family in Rwanda.

Beleniuk turned professional wrestler in 2010. "I just felt it was my thing, and I like it a lot," Beleniuk told the Kyiv Post.

Since then the champion has won medals in three world and three European championships. He took silver in the European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2015, and a year later he did the same at the 2016 Rio Olympics, when he was also named wrestler of the year by International Wrestling Federation.

This year, Ukrainian authorities awarded him an apartment in Kyiv, which he had earned for one of his victories in 2015. A modest and soft-spoken athlete, Beleniuk became a prominent critic of the Ukrainian government, calling for more financing and better training conditions for athletes who represent Ukraine on the world stage.

"Wrestlers do not need much equipment for training — only a mat, a thing our government can provide. But we have only one training base where more than eight athletes can train all at once," Beleniuk said. "I wish the government started the construction of new arenas for us, because we have enormous potential in Ukraine."

In Ukraine, Olympic champions do not lead a lavish lifestyle. Top athletes earn less than \$300 in monthly wages from the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The poor conditions lead athletes to join other teams and even change citizenship to represent other nations.

"I've had offers from China, Azerbaijan, and many other countries, where the government finances wrestling much better," Beleniuk said. But Beleniuk decided to wrestle for Ukraine, "not because I am such a patriot. I just belong here. The other team would never fully accept me," Beleniuk said. "And people who have always supported and believed in me are all in Ukraine. I don't want to betray them."



✔ **Name:** Zhan Beleniuk

✔ **Age:** 27

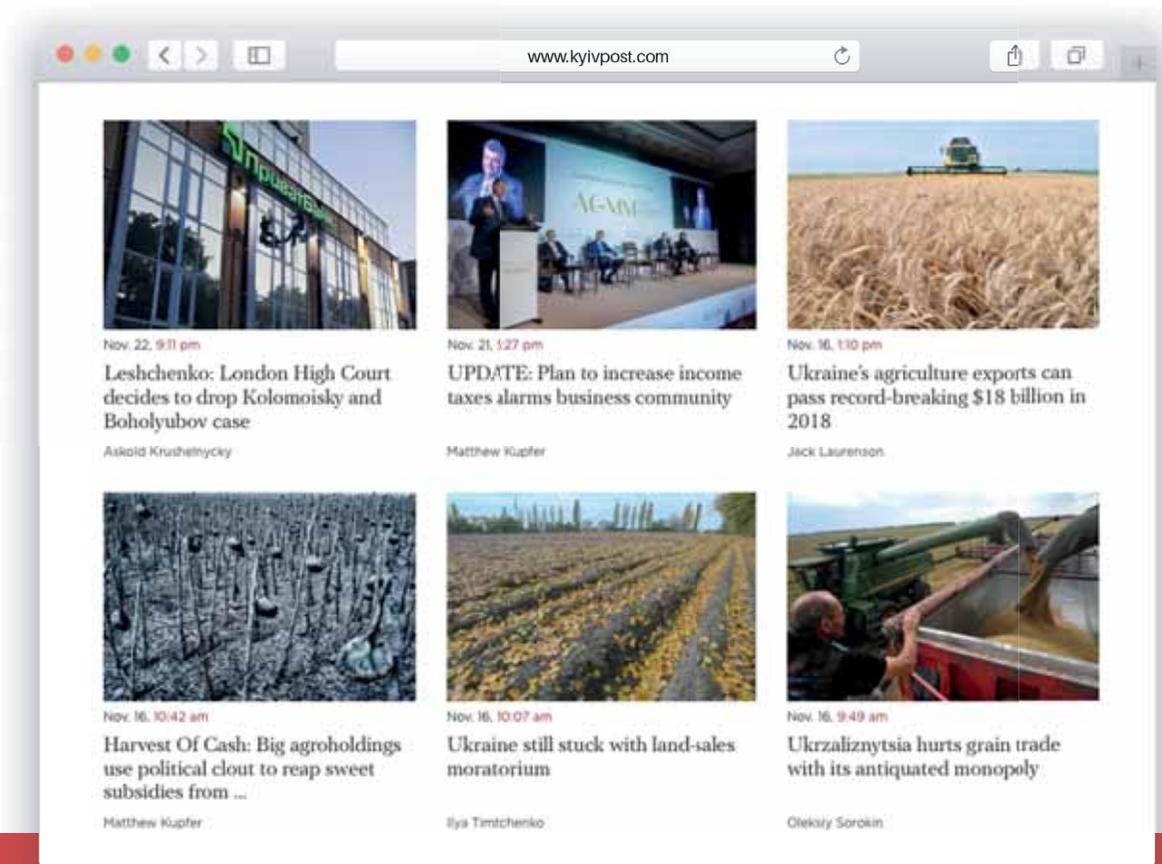
✔ **Education:** National University of Ukraine on Physical Education

✔ **Profession:** Greco-Roman wrestling champion

✔ **Did you know?** Beleniuk has been a junior lieutenant of the Ukrainian Army since 2017

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Anna Bondarenko

Young activist hopes to make volunteering a universal practice in Ukraine, as in USA

By **Vyacheslav Hnatyuk**
hnatyuk@kyivpost.com

Anna Bondarenko's passion for volunteering and social entrepreneurship dates back to when she was 15 years old and went to a school in the United States for an academic year as a FLEX program participant.

Her American host "mother" had a passion for volunteering, which she would gradually instill in her Ukrainian guest. Bondarenko's first volunteering experience was cleaning litter from Yosemite National Park in California — a job she enjoyed thanks to the fact that English was not really required for it. At that time her English skills were not great, but she improved quickly.

She then attended a criminal law course taught at her American school by an ex-cop of the California police. It impressed her so much she decided to study law in Ukraine upon her return.

But studying was not enough for Bondarenko, and she started to look around for volunteering opportunities. She joined the team of the Vyshyvanka Festival in Odesa, an annual parade of people wearing national embroidered shirts that has been held since 2009 in Odesa, Ukraine's third largest city, with 1 million people located 440 kilometers south of Kyiv on the Black Sea coast.

The most difficult year for the festival was 2014, when the pro-Russian protesters threatened to take control of Odesa following the EuroMaidan Revolution, which saw Ukraine's Kremlin-backed President Viktor Yanukovich abandon office and flee the country. Bondarenko and her colleagues felt there was a danger of Odesa splitting away from Ukraine, and feared that the pro-Ukrainian participants of the Vyshyvanka Parade could be attacked.

"But not holding the festival would be like acknowledging that Odesa is a Russian city," Bondarenko recalls.

On the day of the event it rained heavily, and the organizers were afraid that no one would turn up. But minutes before the parade was scheduled to begin, vyshyvanka-clad people started to pour out of cafes, small lanes, homes and marshrutka taxi-buses.

"It was a perfect festival," Bondarenko says.

About 3,500 people attended it, all wearing national clothes. They held hands to form a chain and symbolically "unify" both Ukraine and Odesa.

Today, Bondarenko is the CEO of the Ukrainian Volunteer Service, organizing volunteer management seminars for like-minded people from every region of the country. Her goal is to make volunteering a popular, universally accepted thing in Ukraine — like what she saw in America in her school years.



✓ **Name:** Anna Bondarenko

✓ **Age:** 23

✓ **Education:** Bachelor of Laws from Odesa Academy of Law, Master of Non-Profit Management from Ukrainian Catholic University

✓ **Profession:** CEO and founder of Ukrainian Volunteer Service

✓ **Did you know?** At the age of 10, Bondarenko created an online forum role-playing game "Kingdom of Elves" which became very popular.

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(Oleg Petrasiiuk)



Serhiy Breus

Civil rights lawyer puts rebellious side to use in defending vulnerable citizens

By **Vyacheslav Hnatyuk**
hnatyuk@kyivpost.com

Serhiy Breus believes that being an effective civil rights activist requires more than just a law degree — it’s about one’s state of mind. There are people who want to help those in need simply by applying the force of law and justice — but a rebellious streak can also be of use, as Breus found when he was studying law at the National Academy of Interior.

There, Breus was irked by the military-style discipline. After openly questioning university commanders in front of students and lecturers, Breus was blocked from running for office in the student union.

However, his defiance won him the trust of his fellow students. He went on to help defend their rights and interests after being voted to head a student scientific society — a body over which university management had no influence.

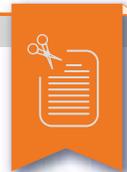
Breus established the scientific society as a champion of student rights and interests, and even won over the leadership of the university: When he graduated in 2014, university commanders recognized his grit, describing him as a champion. Since graduation, he has been devoted to “enhancing people’s commitment to the legal way of resolving problems.”

The student activism was good preparation for the work Breus is doing now — providing free legal aid to vulnerable citizens. He started as a lowly rank-and-file specialist of one of the city’s free legal aid centers. But when Justice Minister Pavlo Petrenko visited the center one day, one of the elderly clients approached the minister and said that Breus was the only person working effectively. Within six months, in April 2016, Breus was appointed as the acting director of another such center in Kyiv. He was made its director in March 2018.

Breus acts proactively, cooperating with unions and societies that help people with disabilities, orphans, victims of violence and the elderly. The lawyers visit such groups and lecture on relevant issues of law. The center has created legal materials in Braille, employed a sign language translator and is helping people to understand how legal aid works and how to apply it correctly.

All these achievements would not have been possible without his team, to whom “he can forgive everything but corruption.” This sin will result in “dismissal of the offender and my personal resignation.”

Breus is not considering politics now. Instead, he wants Ukraine to have a properly functioning legal system that is not manipulated by populist politicians. He dreams of a nation in which “citizens would not be afraid to speak out, and the state would not be afraid to listen to them and to react accordingly.”



✓ **Name:** Serhiy Breus

✓ **Age:** 27

✓ **Education:** The National Academy of Interior of Ukraine in Kyiv

✓ **Profession:** Lawyer, human rights activist

✓ **Did you know?** Breus can cycle 120 kilometers a day, and does so when he wants to visit his sister in Chernihiv.

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Anastasia Deeva

Ex-Interior Ministry official wages fight to end discrimination against women and HIV-positive people

By **Veronika Melkozerova**
melkozerova@kyivpost.com

Like many ambitious Ukrainian millennials, Anastasia Deeva joined the Ukrainian government in her early 20s. Unlike many, she started at a high-profile position.

While still working on her master's degree in political science in 2014, she became an adviser to Eka Zguladze, then deputy interior minister. Deeva was coordinating the European integration and gender policies implementation in the ministry.

Ironically, while trying to stop discrimination and misogyny in law enforcement, she endured a rough misogynistic attack. Soon after Deeva, then 24, was appointed deputy interior minister in 2016, media circulated her semi-nude photos from old artistic photo shoots posted online.

Commentators were merciless, quickly matching the photos with Deeva's youth and concluding she lacked professionalism to work in the ministry.

"This is a matter of choice. You either cry, trying to stay away from the stigmatization. Or you just continue to do your job as a professional," Deeva said, recalling the incident two years later.

She chose to work. She is happy with the decision.

"The Interior Ministry has become one of the first ministries in Ukraine to implement complex gender-balanced policies," Deeva said.

Many young women face similar and even harder challenges in their careers, Deeva said, among many groups facing discrimination in Ukraine.

"A young woman can face criticism for being too beautiful; an older woman can be named not stylish or not good-looking enough for her job," she said. "A successful man can be challenged for who his parents were. For me, that's absurd. We have so many real problems to solve."

Deeva wanted to work in a field where she could fight discrimination. Since politics never attracted her, she opted for a job in the third sector.

She left the Interior Ministry in 2017 and soon joined the HeForShe campaign of United Nations Women Ukraine.

And in March, she became the executive director of the All-Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV, a charity organization that helps HIV-positive people in Ukraine get treatment.

"For me, the work in the network is an opportunity to help people who literally fight for their lives every day," Deeva said.



✓ **Name:** Anastasia Deeva

✓ **Age:** 26

✓ **Education:** Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

✓ **Profession:** Executive director of Network of People Living with HIV charity organization, coordinator of the United Nations Women Ukraine program

✓ **Did you know?** Deeva follows a sustainable lifestyle: she recycles and doesn't use plastic bags.

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Yuriy Didula

Volunteer rebuilds homes damaged by war, strengthens ties between east, west

By **Bermet Talant**
bermet@kyivpost.com

Lviv native Yuriy Didula, 28, manages We Build Ukraine Together, a volunteer network that rebuilds homes damaged in Russia’s war on Ukraine in the Donbas.

In four years of mending mortar shell holes in the walls of damaged houses, the project has also helped to build bridges between Ukrainians in the western and eastern parts of the country divided by propaganda-fueled prejudices and overblown differences over language.

Didula’s first volunteer job was to repair a balcony and windows in an apartment in Kramatorsk, a Donetsk Oblast city of 150,000 people located 689 kilometers southeast of Kyiv. The city was liberated in July 2014 by the Ukrainian army after two months of Russian-backed occupation.

“When we finished, other residents of the building were lining up asking to help them,” he said. “But the most amazing thing was to see how their attitudes towards the Ukrainian-speaking volunteers were changing.”

At first, residents of predominantly Russian-speaking Kramatorsk were wary of volunteers from western Ukraine.

“Kremlin propaganda was very strong,” Didula recalls. “There definitely was a lack of trust, and locals didn’t understand why we were there. They thought we were nationalists who had come to force everyone to speak Ukrainian.”

For Didula, too, the experience has been transformative. He stayed in Kramatorsk for a year, where his organization started a youth center.

“For me, there’s no geographical divide: Ukrainians living in Kramatorsk are not different from those living in Lviv,” he says. “Although we spoke different languages, we understood each other and wanted to live in Ukraine.”

In 2016, a group of volunteers from Kramatorsk went to Lviv to help rebuild the fire-damaged house of a local activist. It was time to break stereotypes about the Donbas people in the west, Didula said. Lviv saw a surge of internally displaced people who fled the war, which stirred suspicions of newcomers and “their Russian mentality.

Over four years, 1,500 volunteers have joined in the We Build Ukraine Together effort, repairing nearly 200 homes in 48 towns and villages. The project has received support from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Black Sea Trust, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and receives other donations.

Didula says the biggest reward for him is to see people they helped going on to help others.



✓ **Name:** Yuriy Didula

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** Bachelor’s degree in history, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv; Master’s degree in Central and Eastern European Studies, La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

✓ **Profession:** Manager of the We Build Ukraine Together project at Lviv Educational Foundation

✓ **Did you know?** Didula is a former soccer player and used to play in local leagues.

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Vladyslav Greziev

Leader runs multiple projects; his main focus now is to monitor elections

By **Oleksiy Sorokin**
sorokin@kyivpost.com

Vladyslav Greziev should run a time-management course. He is adept at juggling multiple projects at the same time.

Greziev is not only the co-founder of recruiting agency Lobby X and election monitoring platform Opir.org — he is also the head of TEDxKyiv, organizes networking meetings for young professionals, and has more projects in the making.

“Now I take weekends off, but back when I started Lobby X, I didn’t have a day off for weeks,” says Greziev.

Greziev’s family moved to Kyiv in the early 2000s from Luhansk Oblast. He remembers that one of the reasons was his passion for music and the family’s desire to let him pursue it at a Kyiv music school.

Greziev gained a degree in economics from Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Until the EuroMaidan Revolution that drove President Viktor Yanukovich from power on Feb. 22, 2014, he worked as an economist in a corporation, while also planning to open a taxi startup.

The revolution changed everything for him.

In February 2014, Greziev co-founded Opir.org, an election monitoring platform. “Opir.org becomes a full-time job at election time,” he says. The platform tracks campaign integrity and election transparency as it gears up for the presidential elections in March.

His most famous project to date, recruiting platform Lobby X, came soon after. “We saw active people, who had wonderful ideas, yet we couldn’t see who would implement those ideas,” says Greziev. The platform was started as a volunteer project for government institutions and NGOs, and attracted young and talented job seekers. Over the years, Lobby X had become a popular head-hunting platform for both social projects and businesses, who are charged a fee. In March 2017 the project started up in Warsaw.

Greziev has also been involved in TEDxKyiv, an independently organized Ted Talks event, since 2012. Since becoming the curator of the project in 2014, Greziev has organized 10 conferences and received a second-level license from TED.

Another initiative that Greziev is proud of is the Networking Change Makers project. “Last year we saw there was a need to create a space where people can share their ideas and receive support in their quest for change,” he said. The idea was to create a platform where proactive citizens could meet like-minded people. The project brings together in nearly-weekly meetings proactive government officials, activists and entrepreneurs who share common values. Networking Change Makers has held more than 60 meetings, with more and more people getting involved, Greziev said.



✓ **Name:** Vladyslav Greziev

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** economic theory at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

✓ **Profession:** CEO of Lobby X, head organizer of TEDxKyiv

✓ **Did you know?** Greziev finished music school, specializing in piano. He spent eight years singing in the Revutsky Academic Male Capella choir.

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Olesia Kholopik

Lawyer campaigns for safe roads to save lives and clean courts with new judges

By **Olga Rudenko**
rudenko@kyivpost.com

When she graduated from law school, all doors were open for Olesia Kholopik. A star student, she headed the Students League of the Ukrainian Bar Association and through it became acquainted with the legal market of Kyiv. She picked a well-paying legal job at Samsung Ukraine.

But just two years later, in 2015, she left corporate law to follow her dream: bringing about social change. She joined the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law, a Kyiv-based think tank better known as CEDEM. Kholopik started as a coordinator of a regional program, on a fixed short-term contract. Three years later, she is the deputy director of the center, managing a team of more than 40 people.

Her main focus over the past two years has been an advocacy campaign for road safety. She has been trying to fix one specific problem: to make Ukrainians buckle up. It is crucial: Of the more than 3,000 people killed in road accidents every year in Ukraine, some 800 people would have survived if they had been wearing seat belts, CEDEM estimates.

Two years into the battle, Kholopik is close to victory: A bill that increases fines for not using a seat belt from Hr 51 to Hr 850 passed its first reading in parliament in September, and will come up for a final vote in the coming weeks. Kholopik and her team drafted the bill.

Only 23 percent of Ukrainian drivers use seat belts, according to a CEDEM study published in November. But even that is a big improvement compared to the previous year, when only 15 percent of drivers buckled up. Kholopik attributes the growth to the highly-publicized bill that increases the penalty. Another factor, she says, is media coverage of gruesome road accidents.

Her second focus is on the Ukrainian court system. The notoriously corrupt courts have been undergoing a reform that requires, among other things, that all judges are recruited anew, in a transparent competition. Kholopik, via the "Chesno. Filter the Judiciary!" initiative of civil society watchdog Chesno, monitors the selection process and researches the candidates. The process has not always been effective, she admits, and some shady judges have managed to get through the selection process.

"Still, it helped bring in a lot of new people from outside the system," Kholopik says. "There are some successes."

She is also working on creating a public database of all Ukrainian judges. And after that? She says she'll find some other battle to fight.

"Here I can see how even small actions are changing people's behavior. This way, I can be a real participant in change."



✓ **Name:** Olesia Kholopik

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Academy of Advocacy of Ukraine

✓ **Profession:** Deputy Director of the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law (CEDEM)

✓ **Did you know?** Kholopik left corporate law to work on advocacy campaigns in the voluntary sector.

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(Oleg Petrasjuk)



Daria Korzhavina

After rare cancer left her blind, she took up mission to help those with disabilities

By **Daria Shulzhenko**
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

As a child, Daria Korzhavina was diagnosed with retinoblastoma, a rare form of eye cancer that has left her blind. After battling with the disease, she decided to become a journalist and an activist, to be able to fight discrimination against people with disabilities.

Korzhavina is now a co-founder of Fight for Right, a Kyiv-based non-profit that promotes inclusion, supporting people with disabilities and their rights for education and employment.

“I believe that I can change something, and I can do something, so why not,” Korzhavina says.

Korzhavina had dreamed of becoming a journalist from early childhood, and at school she published several stories in a magazine printed in Braille — the writing system for people with vision impairment. She earned a journalism degree from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv in 2016, and worked for a short time for Hromadske Radio in Kyiv.

Then in 2017, Korzhavina together with her friend Juliia Sachuk, 36, founded Fight for Right to help people with disabilities.

“Not that many people are willing to help others for free, as volunteers. This is disappointing, so I decided to become that one person who helps others,” Korzhavina says. “I understood that I really wanted to change something.”

Korzhavina started first aid courses for people with vision impairments, and together with Sachuk initiated a series of events called “Be Together,” where they teach people how to combat discrimination against people with disabilities, and where people with and without disabilities can communicate and spend time together.

With other activists, she raised money to purchase Ukraine’s first BrailleBox V5, a printer that can produce up to 900 pages in Braille per hour. In Ukraine, people with visual impairments often complain of the shortage of literature in Braille, according to Korzhavina.

Korzhavina also takes part in “See! Can! Help!”, a charity cycling marathon that aims to raise awareness of the problems that people with disabilities face.

She is also an active participant in Kyiv Pride and a member of the reformist political party Democratic Alliance, which she joined in 2016, hoping to help make Kyiv more welcoming for people with disabilities.

According to Korzhavina, it was during the EuroMaidan Revolution that ousted then-President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 that she first thought she was strong enough to change the country.

“What I realized was that people should not wait for change, but act,” Korzhavina says.

“If you want to build a new country — do it!”



✓ **Name:** Daria Korzhavina

✓ **Age:** 26

✓ **Education:** Institute of Journalism of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

✓ **Profession:** co-founder of the non-profit Fight for Right

✓ **Did you know?** Korzhavina has a three-year-old daughter, and takes Brazilian jiu-jitsu classes.

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Ivona Kostyna

Taking care of war veterans is passion of activist who helped start Veteran Hub

By **Artur Korniienko**
korniienko@kyivpost.com

Ukrainian veterans returning home after fighting Kremlin-backed forces in Donbas are often seen as a source of problems or hazards. Ivona Kostyna, the co-founder of Veteran Hub in Kyiv, disagrees. She thinks veterans aren't a problem, but rather a solution for Ukraine's future.

"We don't work with a problem, but with great human resources, whose strong experience and skills can be used in civil life, and from whom we can learn a lot," says Kostyna.

Kostyna, who is 22 and never went to college, opened Veteran Hub in November to bring together several non-profits helping veterans.

Although Kostyna didn't serve in the military, she had a traumatic experience of her own.

She was one of about 400 people whom Berkut riot police brutally dispersed on Nov. 30, 2013 in the first days of the EuroMaidan Revolution. The violent dispersal brought more people to the streets and they eventually drove President Viktor Yanukovich from power on Feb. 22, 2014.

To help supply friends who went straight from Independence Square to defend Ukraine from Russia's war in the Donbas in 2014, Kostyna organized a fundraising art festival in Kyiv. She brought supplies to soldiers at the war in September 2014 until March 2015.

The fallout of being a part of a close-knit, somewhat isolated community is that it can be difficult to reintegrate into regular society, Kostyna says. The process is exacerbated with personal trauma, like the death of a close friend that Kostyna experienced during the EuroMaidan Revolution. "I didn't know about traumatism and its psychological effects back then," she says. "But at the front lines I understood that the stories of soldiers are similar to what I experienced after the EuroMaidan Revloution."

In 2015, Kostyna joined Pobratymy, a non-profit that provides social and psychological support. She also helped assemble Ukraine's first team for Invictus Games, a sports competition for injured war veterans. During the spring of 2018, Kostyna ran a media campaign "Thanks to You" that encouraged people to express gratitude to veterans.

Her latest undertaking, Veteran Hub, which brings together eight nonprofits that provide legal, psychological and employment assistance to veterans. Kostyna drafted the project and gathered financial support from the Victor Pinchuk Foundation.

"It's just a start," she says. "When the war ends, the issues of veterans and their families will be very important for the whole country in the next 20 years."



✓ **Name:** Ivona Kostyna

✓ **Age:** 22

✓ **Education:** Kyiv High School No. 112

✓ **Profession:** Chair of the board of Veteran Hub, deputy chair of Pobratymy

✓ **Did you know?** Kostyna studied in British-curriculum schools in Libya and Nigeria as a child of a Ukrainian diplomat. She graduated in Kyiv, but didn't apply for college, choosing instead to hitchhike across Europe.

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Nadiia Kushnir

Creator of popular cartoon character Goose also writes books for children

By **Denys Krasnikov**
krasnikov@kyivpost.com

Nadiia Kushnir hit the headlines after she created a cynical cartoon character with a typical Ukrainian mentality — the Goose. Kushnir first came up with the Goose two years ago, when she started placing him in various life situations as a comical character, and it became a ubiquitous internet meme. The character’s virtual behavior resonated with Ukrainians, and it has become a big hit.

The Goose character talks about everyday problems in a mix of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, often using profanities.

"The Goose is like a free psychologist. People see how he copes with problems similar to their own ones," Kushnir told the Kyiv Post. "But mainly, I guess, I'm just doing what I love, and so people love it, too."

Due to public affection, the Goose has become a commodity: two books about the Goose have been published, the character has appeared on credit cards, t-shirts, mugs, and even on safety posters in the Kyiv underground.

Today the Goose is the centerpiece of Kushnir’s creative work. However, although she loves the character, she thinks its success relies on the way it expresses emotions and handles controversial topics, rather than simply Kushnir’s own skills as an illustrator.

Her other accomplishments at just 25 are impressive: she has illustrated over 50 children’s books. But what really makes Kushnir proud is her own children’s books, which she not only illustrated, but wrote too.

Kushnir has published two children’s books written and illustrated by her, called "Tooth" and "Belly Button."

"When the text is mine, it feels like I can do absolutely anything I want," she said. "When the text is someone else’s, it might be hard to feel what the author wants to say."

Despite her success as an illustrator, she says her royalties are not large and it’s hard for her to earn decent money without working all the time, at nights and weekends, while caring for her newborn baby.

"I just want to live normally," she said. "In our country, you’d have to work a lot to achieve that."

Kushnir has worked with clients from the United States and Poland, but she likes living in Ukraine more. She said she understands what Ukrainian children need when growing up here.

"Abroad, the mentality differs. I could draw all sorts of things, but people wouldn’t understand," she said. "Here... I grew up here myself. I can understand what a kid needs, how to bring children up; I know what to show them and how to teach them with my illustrations."



✓ **Name:** Nadiia Kushnir

✓ **Age:** 25

✓ **Education:** Ukrainian Academy of Printing in Lviv

✓ **Profession:** Illustrator

✓ **Did you know?** Kushnir illustrates children’s books and also writes them. She has written two books so far — they are called "Tooth" and "Belly Button."

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(Oleg Petrasijuk)



Myroslav Laiuk

Author’s work gains popularity in Ukraine and abroad as part of his mission ‘to bring joy to people’

By **Jack Laurenson**
laurenson.jack@gmail.com

Myroslav Laiuk, a 28-year-old author from the mountainous, western Ukrainian region of Ivano-Frankivsk, is already making waves in the tough, competitive world of literature, in both his home country and abroad.

His popular poems and prose have been published in English, German, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian and Azerbaijani, as well as his native Ukrainian, and the prolific poet and novelist is often being recognized and awarded for his work.

In 2016, Laiuk was shortlisted for the British BBC’s Book of the Year award where Tanya Malyarchuk, also from Ivano-Frankivsk, took home the top prize.

Laiuk has begun to attract international attention, although he’s “just getting started.”

“Now we see considerable interest in Ukrainian authors abroad... it’s connected not only with the subject... or those who talk about the Revolution of Dignity and Maidan, but also, quite simply: interesting writers,” Laiuk said. “A few weeks ago, I returned from one of the largest festivals on the African continent: Poetry Africa. Ukrainian poetry for them is something new. They almost know nothing about us, but as it turned out, we have much more in common than it might at first seem.”

A philosophy and literature graduate of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, that boasts alumni such as theologian and philosopher Grigory Skorovoda and classical composer Maksim Berezovsky, Laiuk is well on track to join the ranks of that school’s esteemed and famous graduates.

Laiuk likes to find creative inspiration, as many famous writers do, in the more mundane and ordinary experiences of everyday life. “Grumpy and funny people in the subway; frosty weather; pigeons on a monument — in all this, the author lives,” he says. “All this, becomes creativity.

“I’ve been writing since a preschool age,” he says. “At first, relatives didn’t believe it was my work and they searched for the books that I was copying from... I have always written.”

As an author, a young man “and as a person,” Laiuk says he has only one real ambition. “To bring joy to people,” he says. “Every moment of life is filled with emotions, the discovery of a new consciousness of importance. And joy is possible when you change for the better the lives of those around you. The opportunity to create is what develops us as people and allows us to get answers to the most important questions.”



✓ **Name:** Myroslav Laiuk

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** Philosophy and Literature, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

✓ **Profession:** Poet, author and novelist

✓ **Did you know?** Laiuk recently performed at a poetry festival in Africa, where the audience especially enjoyed a poem about his grandfather.

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Sofiia Lapina

Gay activist fights for LGBT rights, hopes to help others accept their sexuality

By **Toma Istomina**
istomina@kyivpost.com

Sofiia Lapina used to have homophobic views before she turned 20 and realized she was gay.

Back then, in 2010, Lapina lived in Chernivtsi, a city of 262,000 people located 535 kilometers southwest of Kyiv near the Romanian border. She remembers having a discussion with her friend one day and telling her she would never date a woman. The day after that Lapina met the woman whom she would date and live with for the next three years.

After Lapina joined the local LGBT community, she started attending educational lectures about human rights run by the European Union's Erasmus+ program. There, Lapina learned about LGBT rights initiatives around the world, but she also realized she didn't know much about the situation in Ukraine. She decided to find out more.

In 2016, Lapina went to the All-Ukrainian National LGBT Conference, where she met Ukrainian-Canadian director Marusya Bociurkiw. The filmmaker had come to Ukraine to present her documentary about the LGBT community in Ukraine, so Lapina volunteered to help her organize a screening in Chernivtsi. But in this conservative and religious city, where Lapina was one of only four openly gay people, the screening wasn't welcomed, and was sabotaged.

For Lapina it was a turning point.

"I didn't like it that someone could come and stop me from doing something I have a right to do," she said. Determined to act, Lapina organized a roundtable with local authorities, police officers and activists to discuss the incident.

After that, Lapina joined the LGBT Human Rights Center Nash Svit ("Our World") and since then has organized 10 more roundtables.

Also in 2016, Lapina attended her first March of Equality, a pride rally in support of equal rights. "I was inspired because there were so many people united by one goal."

In 2017, Lapina moved to Kyiv and joined the KyivPride NGO, which organizes the March of Equality and other events. Today the activist continues working for Nash Svit, and she is also responsible for public relations and information campaigns at KyivPride. Lapina curated the organization's joint project with Ukrainian singer Iryna Bilyk. Her music video for the song "Ne Hovai Ochei (Don't Hide Your Eyes)," which features LGBT people, premiered on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

Lapina plans to continue her advocacy for her own good and that of others too. "It's about my rights, and about helping others who still don't dare to come out."



✓ **Name:** Sofiia Lapina

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** Sociology, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University

✓ **Profession:** organizing committee member for KyivPride, human rights expert at LGBT Human Rights Center Nash Svit

✓ **Did you know?** During the 2013-2014 Euromaidan Revolution, she was the assistant of the camp commandant heading the self-organized defense forces.

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(Oleg Petrasjuk)



Oleksandr Lemenov

Anti-corruption crusader frustrated by lack of reform in law enforcement

By **Oleg Sukhov**
sukhov@kyivpost.com

Oleksandr Lemenov is one of Ukraine’s leading anti-corruption activists and law enforcement experts. He has also provided corporate legal consulting services. He once thought of joining government but decided that civil society needed him more.

Lemenov was born in Bila Tserkva, a Kyiv Oblast city of 230,000 people located 80 kilometers south of the capital.

He graduated from Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University with a law degree in 2012. He also gained a degree in international law, human rights and economics from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland in 2014, and a master’s of business administration and public administration degree from the MIM-Kyiv Business School in 2017.

He started out as an anti-corruption crusader in 2012, when he joined the Chesno civil society watchdog.

“Back in 2012, I realized that (then President Viktor) Yanukovich had completely buried jurisprudence,” Lemenov said. “There was no rule of law. I’m categorically against bribery and influence peddling.”

The EuroMaidan Revolution, which ousted Yanukovich in 2014, triggered an upsurge in civic activity, and Lemenov became a law enforcement expert at the newly-created Reanimation Package of Reforms.

In 2015, he founded StateWatch, a nongovernmental organization that monitors the performance of law enforcement agencies and defense procurement. The NGO also provides legal instruction.

One of Lemenov’s priorities is the State Investigation Bureau, a yet-to-be-launched body that is expected to take all investigations away from the Prosecutor General’s Office. Earlier this year, Lemenov became the chairman of a commission to recruit bureau investigators.

However, the bureau’s leadership dragged its feet on appointing the investigators for months until they were finally hired in November, and the bureau’s launch has been rife with scandal and political intrigue.

Lemenov said the selection of the bureau’s leadership had been rigged in favor of government loyalists. The bureau denies such accusations.

Lemenov is frustrated with the pace of post-EuroMaidan changes. The distrusted and discredited law enforcement system remains almost intact.

“In fact, no reform has taken place,” he said. “There have only been some isolated attempts by civil society with foreign partners’ help to get things moving.”

He argues that the only chance for genuine change will come when “the political elite is completely replaced” — hopefully through elections.



✓ **Name:** Oleksandr Lemenov

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University

✓ **Profession:** anti-corruption expert

✓ **Did you know?** Lemenov’s hobby is running marathons.

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Dariya Loseva

Young scientist starts biotech firm with aim of getting people to eat well

By **Oleksiy Sorokin**
Sorokin@kyivpost.com

Dariya Loseva knew from the start that she would become a scientist.

“My mom was a medical assistant and since she raised me and my two other siblings alone, we spent a lot of time with her at work,” says Loseva. “I read a lot of medical textbooks and knew that I wanted to become a geneticist, even though, back then, I didn’t exactly know what they did.”

While remaining passionate about genetics, Loseva soon realized that there are too few options in Ukraine to get a full genetic analysis, not only for medical purposes, but for personal use as well.

Loseva and fellow science student, Ruslana Shadryna, decided that it was up to them to bring the strange-sounding term “biohacking” to Ukraine. That’s how Myhelix started in 2014.

Myhelix is a company that creates a nutrition plan based on the information from a client’s DNA test. Similar to the American biotech company 23andMe, Myhelix provides clients with test kits to collect a sample of their DNA at home and send it back for testing. Based on the test results, a professional nutritionist advises the client on how the person can improve their eating habits.

Four years since her company’s launch, Loseva says she is happy about the direction Myhelix is taking.

“Myhelix grew from a company of two passionate students to a group of 14 professionals — nutritionists, geneticists, salespeople and computer science specialists,” she says, adding that the company is expanding.

The driving force behind Loseva’s desire to create Myhelix was not only her desire to bring modern trends to Ukraine, but to create a Ukrainian company that is well known around the world.

“We participated in a TechCrunch event in San-Francisco, this inspired us to move forward”, Loseva says.

Myhelix is planning to enter the U.S. market, with some projects already in development, according to Loseva.

Even though Myhelix is the main thing on her mind, Loseva finds time to enjoy some small pleasures: Yoga and freediving give her the energy she needs for her job, she says. Speaking at events like TEDx Lviv also allow Loseva to share her ideas with the world. She says she hopes to inspire young scientists to stay in Ukraine and develop their careers here.



✓ **Name:** Dariya Loseva

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** Master’s degree in Biology from Biological Institute at Taras Shevchenko University. Currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in food biology from the National Academy of Science.

✓ **Profession:** CEO of Myhelix

✓ **Did you know?** Loseva had a fear of water, but overcame this phobia and took part in the Oceanman swimming race in Greece. She has also started freediving.

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(Oleg Petrasjuk)



Vladyslav Malashchenko

Bakery founder hopes employing people with mental disabilities will help change attitudes

By **Daria Shulzhenko**
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

Vladyslav Malashchenko has always wanted to help adults with mental disabilities, and at the age of 22 he runs a social enterprise that employs these people.

Malashchenko, the founder of Kyiv-based social enterprise Good Bread from Good People, gives people with mental disabilities a chance to socialize while offering them employment as bakers.

After graduating from the Institute of Screen Arts in 2015, Malashchenko worked on theater performances until 2017. However, he had always been interested in therapeutic education and eventually started learning how to teach people with mental disabilities. He also worked as a therapeutic teacher in two Kyiv schools.

But as Malashchenko also wanted to help adults, so he decided to launch a social enterprise. He got a grant for education at Startup Ukraine, an organization that supports people starting new businesses, and in September 2017 opened a bakery.

“My personal victory is that I established this bakery, and even if it will ever stop working, Good Bread from Good People has become an example, and a lot of people have started following our example and begun to employ people with disabilities,” Malashchenko said. “We inspire people, and this is cool,” he said.

Good Bread from Good People employs 13 people, nine of whom are people with mental disabilities, aged between 24–55 years. Malashchenko arranges art and dance sessions for his employees every Thursday.

“I don’t like the injustice that happens in our country, when these people are discriminated against,” Malashchenko said. “There is a need to show people what problems those with disabilities face.”

Malashchenko believes more social enterprises will help people with disabilities socialize and live better.

“It is better to employ 10 people with disabilities and take care of them for a whole year than to spend a day talking to one million of people with disabilities, as such talk changes nothing,” Malashchenko said.

He said that Good Bread from Good People doesn’t just make delicious cakes and sell them — they’re also changing society’s attitude.

“When people find out who have made those cakes — their attitude changes for the better,” Malashchenko said. “It’s a part of inclusiveness, and I’m proud of it.”



✓ **Name:** Vladyslav Malashchenko

✓ **Age:** 22

✓ **Education:** Institute of Screen Arts, Acting

✓ **Profession:** Founder of social enterprise Good Bread from Good People

✓ **Did you know?** Malashchenko plays bass guitar in a Kyiv-based grunge-punk band.

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Victoria Marchuk

Ukraine's star of para taekwondo dreams of even greater glory ahead

By **Denys Krasnikov**
krasnikov@kyivpost.com

Victoria Marchuk was abandoned as a baby by her family because she had a serious birth defect — underdeveloped arms. Despite that, she has grown up to be a track athlete, a swimmer, and now one of the world's best para taekwondo fighters.

Raised in an orphanage in Zaporizhia, the southeastern city of 750,000 people located 550 kilometers southeast of Kyiv, Marchuk has been a para taekwondist for six years, winning a world championship on average every year.

She won her first gold medal on the Caribbean island of Aruba in 2012, the first year she took up taekwondo. Later on, she won the same title in Portugal, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam. In 2014, Marchuk received the title of Ukrainian Master of Sports.

There's even a stand in the taekwondo museum in South Korean capital Seoul, the birthplace of taekwondo, dedicated to Marchuk. "They tell my personal story there," she says. "I am so very proud."

All these victories — representing Ukraine in elite global competitions — were made possible by dint of hard work and determination. She has two daily training sessions of at least two hours each. Sunday is her only day off.

"I long for victory," she says. Meanwhile, her shoulder joint, affected by the birth defect, needs to be replaced by an artificial one, she says. But the operation, which would cost 50,000 euros, is too expensive for Marchuk. Unable to afford the operation, Marchuk just has to live with the pain.

"My health is not always on my side," she says bitterly.

The Ukrainian government has never financed any of her trips abroad. Her salary as a sports professional, meanwhile, is roughly \$200 a month. Marchenko was given a room in a dormitory with a shared kitchen and bathroom, but she couldn't live there because of her disability. Now she lives at a friend's place, far from her training stadium.

Para taekwondo was confirmed as a sport in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games in January 2017, and this may help improve the situation, according to Marchuk. The government has now promised to invest more in this sport, and will at least finance her trips abroad to compete, along with the trips of other Ukrainian para taekwondists.

Notwithstanding the pain and financial troubles, Marchuk is fully engaged in preparations for the Olympics, which she has always dreamed of taking part in.

"I always dreamed of becoming an athlete. The doctors didn't always allow me to be one," she says. "Now my greatest ambition is to take part in the Paralympics, and I'm doing my best to do so."



✓ **Name:** Victoria Marchuk

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** Khortytsia National Education and Rehabilitation Center in Zaporizhia

✓ **Profession:** Sportswoman, para taekwondo fighter

✓ **Did you know?** Marchuk likes to embroider. She has even presented one of her works — a framed piece of embroidered art — to Chungwon Choue, the president of World Taekwondo Federation.

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Maiia Moskvych

Female war veteran brings home gold at Invictus Games after disability brings end to military service

By **Illia Ponomarenko**
ponomarenko@kyivpost.com

Before Russia’s war hit Donbas in 2014, Maiia Moskvych was a bookkeeper in Lutsk, the Volyn Oblast city of 200,000 residents located 400 kilometers west of Kyiv.

The war turned her life upside down. She became a volunteer fighter, drawing combat duties, then a disappointed veteran with health problems, and finally a triumphant gold medalist of the Invictus Games, the international sports competition for disabled veterans.

Her life started changing with the outbreak of the EuroMaidan Revolution that drove President Viktor Yanukovich from power on Feb. 22, 2014. She became an activist. When Russia invaded Crimea and Donbas in early 2014, Moskvych volunteered to fight.

Getting to the front lines wasn’t easy: the emerging volunteer fighting groups weren’t in a hurry to take a young woman aboard. Eventually, Moskvych succeeded: In August 2014, she went to the Donbas front with the General Kulchytskyi Battalion, part of Ukraine’s National Guard.

“In the war zone, my experience of a bookkeeper came in handy again,” Moskvych says. “When we were hunting smugglers in the no-man’s land, I was the only one in my combat formation to be good at documenting.”

However, she was always keen to join a force with a stronger nationalistic flavor. She first left for the Garpun Battalion, another volunteer group, but ended up spending two years with the Myrotvorets Battalion, subordinated to Ukraine’s Interior Ministry.

She became the only woman in her combat formation. “Serving at such a pace, on equal footing with men, was really hard,” Moskvych says. “Living in the same barrack with boys was tough, too. You want to sleep, but they are rumbling around.”

Her health deteriorated: violent back pain tortured her amid jeopardizing backbone issues. Sad and frustrated, she left military service because of disability in December 2017.

After the war, started a business to grow and sell garlic. She also applied to participate in the Invictus Games 2018 tournament in Sydney, Australia. Moskvych started training her archery skills in March 2018, even though she had never held a bow in her hands before. She beat all expectations — on Oct. 26, she brought the Ukrainian team a gold medal in archery. She won another gold medal as part of the three-person archery team. She dedicated her victory to “all those who survived the Maidan and the war.”



✓ **Name:** Maiia Moskvych

✓ **Age:** 28

✓ **Education:** Lutsk National Technical University

✓ **Profession:** Former volunteer fighter, entrepreneur

✓ **Did you know?** In the early days of the 2013–2014 EuroMaidan Revolution, media outlets in the Lutsk Oblast dubbed Moskvych “Jeanne d’Arc of Volyn” when authorities placed her under home arrest for supporting protests.

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(Courtesy of Yuriy Pitchuk)

Yuriy Pitchuk

Artist beautifies blank walls with murals that promote Ukrainian culture

By **Daria Shulzhenko**
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

For his art work, Yuriy Pitchuk, a painter from Ivano-Frankivsk, a city of 230,000 people located 620 kilometers west of Kyiv, nearly always has a very broad canvas. Pitchuk draws murals, pictures painted directly onto walls or other permanent surfaces.

The 29-year-old painter has already created nearly 30 murals, aiming to make Ukrainian cities more colorful. While he studied network engineering at Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, “I have always enjoyed the process of drawing,” Pitchuk says.

The first step Pitchuk took in his artistic career was to attend vocational courses, where he learned the basics of painting and developed the discipline to spend up to five hours at a stretch.

In 2013 a friend offered him an opportunity that has since changed his life — to paint a mural. “My friend invited me to paint a mural at his car repair shop, as he had a huge empty wall there. That’s how it all started,” Pitchuk says. Since then, painting murals has become not only his hobby, but also a way to earn money.

A third of his murals are the size of a nine-story building. His artworks can be seen in Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Khmelnytsky and in Striy, a town in Lviv Oblast.

Pitchuk says that it usually takes up to nine days to complete a mural, and since it is seasonal work, he starts painting from the middle of spring until the end of autumn.

Even though Pitchuk says painting murals on exterior walls is more difficult than painting indoors, it is extremely interesting work. “I always try to develop my technique and introduce new elements into the pictures,” Pitchuk says.

Pitchuk says one of his favorite works is a mural in Khmelnytsky where he depicted a woman in traditional Ukrainian clothes, and divided his artwork into day and night sections. It is part of a campaign he started in 2017, in which he depicts women in traditional Ukrainian dresses from the particular region in which he paints it.

“In this series of works, I want to show the diversity of our history and culture, and to help people find something native, but from a modern perspective,” Pitchuk says.

Pitchuk prefers to paint murals in industrial areas, where such murals are needed. He tries not to paint in historical parts of a city.

“There will always be people who do not like murals, as tastes always differ,” he says. “In comparison to European countries, Ukrainians do not attend museums very often, so in this regard murals can serve as masterpieces that people can see every day.”



✓ **Name:** Yuriy Pitchuk

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, computer network engineer

✓ **Profession:** Artist, muralist

✓ **Did you know?** Pitchuk always paints his murals together with his wife Marta

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Taras Prokopyshyn

Media enthusiast builds responsible business, aims to build conglomerate

By **Artur Korniienko**
korniienko@kyivpost.com

Helping his fellow citizens be more proactive and responsible is what Taras Prokopyshyn tries to do with his online magazine The Ukrainians. Behind it, there is also an ambitious dream to build a quality media conglomerate — to which Prokopyshyn advances one step at a time.

It all started with some of Prokopyshyn’s own proactivity and that of his two friends right after the EuroMaidan Revolution, which ousted Kremlin-backed President Viktor Yanukovich on Feb. 22, 2014. Three friends pitched in their student scholarships to create a media in Lviv, a blog really, to tell stories of successful Ukrainians.

“We were actually constructing specific models of new Ukrainians,” Prokopyshyn says. “We didn’t like the discourse of Ukrainians as victims and sufferers. We wanted to talk about them in a positive way.”

The Ukrainians started publishing a big interview with a successful citizen every week — from Yaroslav Azhnyuk, a technology star, to Lyubomyr Huzar, the former supreme archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Prokopyshyn says it was a second job for the team of three, and it didn’t bring any profit.

“We now laugh at ourselves for that youthful exuberance. We saw it as a social project that can’t make money. But over time you realize that to grow and create a quality product, it has to pay for itself.”

After 18 months working as non-profit group, The Ukrainians took a break to run a fundraising campaign and sell two books of interviews. Both efforts succeeded by bringing them Hr 127,930 (\$4,600) and more money in royalties from over 17,000 book copies sold.

In 2016 The Ukrainians relaunched as a proper online magazine, keeping the interviews, but adding special projects sponsored by brands that share the magazine’s values.

The Ukrainians also started to create literary reportage stories. These are not necessarily about successful Ukrainians — they often tell stories of people with disabilities, sex workers, immigrants, war veterans.

These stories rarely work for the sponsors who would like to see their logos next to stories of success. That’s why in their third relaunch next year, The Ukrainians will partition into several domains, like Reportage and Creatives — professional interviews with creative people. The Ukrainians website will remain the main umbrella platform with interviews and special projects.

“We are also incorporating Radio Skovoroda (a radio station in Lviv). And just like we said that we want to build a media holding of European quality — with our media ecosystem we are moving in that direction,” Prokopyshyn says.



✓ **Name:** Taras Prokopyshyn

✓ **Age:** 27

✓ **Education:** Master’s degree in sociology from the National University of Lviv, master’s degree in innovations and entrepreneurship from Lviv Business School of the Ukrainian Catholic University

✓ **Profession:** co-founder and head of The Ukrainians

✓ **Did you know?** Prokopyshyn says he spends 150 percent of his time working on The Ukrainians. It should be easier now that it’s a family business, since Prokopyshyn married the co-founder and editor Inna Bereznitska.

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Illia Razumeiko

Talented composer forms a cultural bridge between Ukraine, Austria

By **Vyacheslav Hnatyuk**
hnatyuk@kyivpost.com

Illia Razumeiko is a hard person to track down, dividing his time between Ukraine and Austria, especially the cities of Vienna, Kyiv, and Ivano-Frankivsk. He is heavily involved in numerous groundbreaking cultural events.

A native of Zaporizhia, the city of 750,00 people located 560 kilometers southeast of Kyiv, Razumeiko moved to Kyiv to study music composition at the National Music Academy, from which he graduated in 2012. While studying there he met Roman Hryhoriv, and the two have since become the co-composers of major experimental operas such as IYOV, Babilon, and The Arch. These operas have been staged as part of the NOVA OPERA project, both in Ukraine and internationally.

Razumeiko is currently finishing his studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. He decided to study anew in Vienna because of a unique course offered there — electroacoustic composition. While studying in Vienna he has brought lots of innovative electroacoustic music to Ukraine by means of Porto Franko, an international arts festival he organizes in Ivano-Frankivsk. There, he and his team have staged musical performances that made use of the acoustic properties of an airplane and an old church, among other things.

Not all Razumeiko’s cultural innovations are welcome by everybody in Ivano-Frankivsk: Some more traditional listeners have found certain performances staged during the festival unsettling. One of Razumeiko’s opponents is Roman Martsinkov, the mayor. After attending one performance, Martsinkov asked local priests to consecrate a concert venue where he said an impure performance had been held.

Notwithstanding the mayor’s disapproval, Razumeiko and his friends continue to foster international cultural ties. Razumeiko takes inspiration from Vienna, a world center of musical arts. He has developed a tour of Viennese cemeteries dedicated to great composers buried in the city — Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, and others.

Razumeiko is working on his graduation paper. He has two great professors helping him with his work — Karlheinz Essl (composition), and Gesine Schröder (theory).

Razumeiko’s own pieces, instrumental music written under his German-style pseudo name Elias Spricht, are performed mostly in Austria, including at the famous Wien Modern festival in Vienna. Ukrainians who cannot afford a ticket to Vienna can download Elias Spricht’s music from cloud applications in the Internet.



✓ **Name:** Illia Razumeiko

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Kyiv Music Academy (2012), University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (since 2013)

✓ **Profession:** Composer

✓ **Did you know?** In the last five years Razumeiko has flown 70,000 km between Vienna and Kyiv with WizzAir

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(Oleg Petrasjuk)



Kateryna Sadovaia

Young philanthropist helps save babies born prematurely

By **Matthew Kupfer**
kupfer@kyivpost.com

It started for Kateryna Sadovaia several years ago, when a friend’s son was born prematurely.

The maternity ward where he was born didn’t have the necessary equipment to care for a pre-term baby. Sadovaia and her friends and colleagues gathered money to save his life, but they were too late. Her friend’s son died.

Then, one day, Sadovaia learned that Ukrainian oligarch and philanthropist Victor Pinchuk was supporting a program to help premature babies called Cradles of Hope. She began reading up on the issue and learned that, in Ukraine, one in 20 babies is born pre-term. These newborns require long, complex and expensive treatment that puts a strain on Ukraine’s underfunded hospitals.

Sadovaia began reaching out to the Ukrainian Philanthropic Marketplace, an organization sponsored by Pinchuk, to learn what equipment was lacking in Ukrainian hospitals. Then she thought about how to gather money for this cause and raise public awareness.

That’s how #BDayVykylyk (#BDayChallenge) was born. On July 24, 2017 — the eve of her 28th birthday — Sadovaia released a video calling on Ukrainians to donate money to help premature babies instead of birthday gifts. The project aims to gather Hr 2 million (more than \$72,000) to purchase modern Neopuff TMRD-900 infant resuscitators for 16 neonatal centers partnered with the Cradles of Hope program.

“Give babies the gift of life and the opportunity to happily celebrate their own birthdays each year,” Sadovaia said in the video.

At the core of the program was a common philanthropic practice: asking friends to make donations to charity. Sadovaia extended this approach beyond birthdays. She also involved celebrities like musician Onuka, television presenter Volodymyr Ostapchuk, and others who drew pictures and then sold them to raise money for the project. And Sadovaia organized paid talks by Ukrainian fashion designers to support the cause.

#BDayVykylyk has already raised nearly Hr 1.5 million (\$41,000). It has also provided Neopuff machines to nine of the planned 16 centers. Sadovaia collects all the donations online. It all goes to buy infant resuscitators, she says. In most cases, Sadovaia hands over the machines herself, which allows her to meet doctors and find out what else their hospitals need. In the future, Sadovaia wants to develop this program further and show people that charity can be honest — even in Ukraine.

“I would like to find support to develop this project beyond our country’s borders,” she says, “so that people aren’t afraid to donate to Ukraine and will know that charity can be transparent.”



✓ **Name:** Kateryna Sadovaia

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Master’s degree in marketing

✓ **Profession:** Head of marketing at Akva-Premium, charity activist

✓ **Did you know?** She loves to sing the songs of Tina Turner.

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Hlib Stryzhko

Proud nationalist champions education to make Ukraine ‘a better place to live’

By **Veronika Melkozerova**
melkozerova@kyivpost.com

It all started in 2017 when Hlib Stryzhko, a student from the southern city of Mykolaiv, started working in the History Institute of the Dnipro Development Agency. He was still studying at the Oles Gonchar National University in Dnipro, an industrial city of 1 million people located 600 kilometers southeast of Kyiv.

“I’ve met so many really adult, smart people at my work,” Stryzhko told the Kyiv Post. But I had to go back at my dormitory, and it’s small talk about computer games and other stuff I found depressing and unimportant.”

Once, during a nighttime walk on his floor, he came across an empty room that he soon turned into his own cozy corner — a quiet place where he could read or study in his overcrowded dormitory.

“I thought it would be cool to create an education space here. Two weeks later I created the Ukrainian Intelligentsia Forge there,” Stryzhko said. “My mom taught us to foster intelligence in ourselves. And that’s exactly what we are doing in the Forge.”

Stryzhko described the Forge as a place where people can improve in many ways: from different handicrafts to language classes, attending lectures and more. Stryzhko and other activist also created a library of 600 Ukrainian and English language books and a book club. In just a year, the small educational space in a dormitory has helped dozens of students discover what they really want to do in life.

University authorities tried to move the Forge, but Stryzhko and other students persuaded them to allow it to stay.

“I think it’s cool that students can attend lectures or discussions in our space, wearing a dressing gown and slippers. It makes education more enjoyable and helps young people to become better, and continues to make Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation better in the future,” Stryzhko said.

Stryzhko proudly calls himself a nationalist. He joined the Youth Nationalists Congress of Ukraine when he was 17. The image of a Ukrainian nationalist has been tainted with controversy: violence, racism and intolerance. But Stryzhko has his own definition.

“For me, a modern Ukrainian nationalist is an educated and intelligent person who loves his country but does not hate other countries or nations. He just does everything to make Ukraine a better place to live,” Stryzhko said.

Stryzhko graduated from university this year and passed the management of the Forge to a new generation of students in September. He has returned to Mykolaiv, where serves as a mentor at a local branch of the Ukrainian Leadership Academy.



✓ **Name:** Hlib Stryzhko

✓ **Age:** 22

✓ **Education:** Oles Gonchar Dnipro National University

✓ **Profession:** Ukrainian Leadership Academy mentor, founder of Ukrainian Intelligentsia Forge

✓ **Did you know?** Stryzhko has been scared of cats since childhood. He once tried to save a kitten from a sewer and fell into it himself. He spent five hours sitting in the sewer during a cold November day until he was rescued.

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Yevgen Tryhub

Environmentalist cleans up regional cities with recycling, waste management

By **Matt Kupfer**
kupfer@kyivpost.com

Yevhen Tryhub wasn't always interested in garbage. But that all changed when he began working as a public amenities inspector for the city council of Krolevets, his hometown of 23,000 people around 250 kilometers northeast of Kyiv in Sumy Oblast.

Part of his job was planning and implementing the removal of garbage from neighborhoods that lacked an organized removal system.

That experience led Tryhub to set up the non-profit called Rodinne Misto in 2015, which began working to clean up trash in Krolevets. It installed trash cans in the city, and began cleaning up parks and recreational sites in the city.

"Soon the result was clear," says Tryhub. Krolevets was cleaner, and Tryhub and his colleagues had managed to bring proper trash collection to the city.

Next, Tryhub and his organization began setting up recycling bins for plastic across the city. Today, there are already 16 of them. Twice a month, they collect the plastic from the containers.

Since late 2017, they have given part of the plastic to a local factory that employs people with visual impairments. That factory breaks down the plastic products and turns them into paving slabs that can be used to make sidewalks or patios. The slabs can hold up to six tons and have a life of up to 50 years.

Tryhub believes that projects like these and recycling in general have great potential in Ukraine — they just need a boost. And he has shown that they can be implemented not just in Kyiv, but also in regional cities.

Because the Ukrainian authorities — both national and local — pay little attention to the issue of recycling, a lot of people lack information, Tryhub says. Once you explain to them why sorting garbage and recycling are important, he has found that they are often receptive.

"We fought for people's minds for two years," Tryhub says. He and his supporters explained why recycling was necessary, gave speeches, and held lots of meetings with the public. Once the factory began turning the plastic into paving slabs, they were able to show people how plastic from the dump could have a second life.

To advance the fight for ecologically clean practices, Tryhub ran for Krolevets city council in 2015, and won.

Being on the council gives him a useful platform to influence public policy and opinion. And while previously Tryhub was limited to the resources of his nonprofit, now he can use state financing to advance ecologically clean practices in Krolevets.

And Tryhub says his work is far from over: "My task is to make sure that there is cleanliness and order in the cities of Ukraine," he says.



✓ **Name:** Yevgen Tryhub

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** B.A. in physical education from Glukhiv National Pedagogical University

✓ **Profession:** Krolevets city council member and recycling activist

✓ **Did you know?** Tryhub took part in the New Leaders civic initiative, made it to the semi-finals, and presented his project on Ukrainian television channel ICTV.

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Vitaliy Ustymenko

Stopping Odesa's illegal construction is aim of activist, despite dangers

By **Oksana Grytsenko**
grytsenko@kyivpost.com

Vitaliy Ustymenko has one of the riskiest occupations in Ukraine, in which threats and beatings are a usual thing.

He is a civic activist in Odesa, the Black Sea port of 1 million people located 475 kilometers south of Kyiv. Odesa is known for its criminal past and is led by Mayor Hennady Trukhanov, who is under investigating for embezzlement charges that he denies.

Ustymenko was physically assaulted numerous times. He recalls how the guards of a construction site that he protested as illegal punched him in the face. In a different instance, he came to a session of the city council, and Trukhanov's security guards grabbed him by the neck and pushed him out. This summer, two thugs crossed his way on a street and stabbed him with a homemade knife.

He got used to hearing verbal and phone threats and seeing red paint spilled on the front door of his house. Once, he received an envelope with some soil and a jack of spades in it.

Nevertheless, Ustymenko doesn't plan to quit. He leads the Odesa branch of the AutoMaidan civic movement, a group of 50 active members, and one of the most outspoken organizations protesting against illegal construction and embezzlement of public funds.

Ustymenko is one of at least 14 civic activists who have been attacked in Odesa in 2018. Although police have found two suspects in the knife attack on him, there is no sign that they are looking for the mastermind who ordered the stabbing, he said.

"The attacks distract a lot," Ustymenko said. He links most of the current attacks on him, including the recent stabbing, to his criticism of Trukhanov and his allies.

Ustymenko is also a member of a civic watchdog overseeing the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and an analyst at Centre UA, a Kyiv-based think tank.

He said that he was confronted by pro-Russian people, who attacked him for being a supporter of the EuroMaidan Revolution, which ousted President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014 and led to local conflicts and a fight for power in Odesa. Things changed starting in 2015. Most of the pro-Russian separatists in Odesa went underground and many local supporters of the revolution allied with Trukhanov. "In 2015, the public sector became dependent on the mayor through bribes and manipulations," Ustymenko said.

Now six local anti-corruption, environmental and nationalist organizations have formed a coalition with 300 active members. Ustymenko said the frequent attacks on the activists prove that they are influential. Activists are "the only force that can openly oppose (Trukhanov's) group," he said.



✓ **Name:** Vitaliy Ustymenko

✓ **Age:** 25

✓ **Education:** Political science at Mechnikov Odessa National University

✓ **Profession:** Civic activism

✓ **Did you know?** Apart from his activism, Ustymenko teaches private classes in history, training children for high school graduation tests.

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(Anna Kudravtseva)



Andriy Verkhoglyad

Only 23, young officer leads more experienced and older fighters in battle

By **Illia Ponomarenko**
ponomarenko@kyivpost.com

Like so many wars in human history, Russia’s war in the eastern Donbas has a very young face.

Since the start of Russia’s war in April 2014, two months after the Kremlin’s military invasion of the Crimean peninsula, thousands of young men and women have put on uniforms to fight for their country. Many have demonstrated extraordinary bravery and effectiveness in battle, and now even lead war-hardened combat units.

One of them is First Lieutenant Andriy Verkhoglyad, who became a company commander at 21. He comes from a family with strong military traditions, and when war broke out he was studying at the Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Ground Forces Academy in Lviv. Like so many of his fellow cadets, he yearned to be sent to fight in the Donbas.

Verkhoglyad’s time came just two weeks after he graduated from the academy, when he was deployed to the Donbas as a platoon leader with the 72nd Mechanized Brigade, one of Ukraine’s best army units.

“I always believed that genuine military service is done at the front-line, not in the rear,” Verkhoglyad says. “There, we do what we are born for: fighting and leading soldiers, not painting the grass green near our barracks.”

With his platoon, Verkhoglyad was deployed near Avdiyivka, one of the worst killing zones along the whole Donbas frontline. He was badly wounded in action in October 2016. Nonetheless, Verkhoglyad returned to his unit after a month in a military hospital, without even finishing his medical treatment.

But his hardest days in service came in January 2017, when Verkhoglyad took part in one the most dramatic battles for Avdiyivka, during which the Ukrainian army advanced south of the city, but lost many distinguished soldiers and officers during the operation.

His bravery in that battle won him the Order of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, 3rd Class, on Feb. 1, 2017. And as recognition for his leadership, the brigade command decided to promote the young officer, placing him in command of a company of over 100 fighters.

The soldiers, many of whom were in their 40s and even 50s, quickly acknowledged his authority. “At war, an officer’s age does not matter much,” Verkhoglyad says. “But his competence and bravery do. If you show your soldiers that you care about them, that you can be a skillful and wise leader, they will respect you. “If you’re not just another example of an ignorant tyrant with stars on an insignia patch, your soldiers will follow you to the very end.”

Today, at 23, Verkhoglyad is still in charge of his company. His 72nd Mechanized Brigade is fighting Russian-led forces on the front near Debaltseve.-



✓ **Name:** Andriy Verkhoglyad

✓ **Age:** 23

✓ **Education:** Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Ground Forces Academy

✓ **Profession:** Mechanized combat unit leader

✓ **Did you know?** In late October 2016, Verkhoglyad was badly wounded in an anti-tank grenade explosion. Hit by up to 20 grenade fragments, five of them remain in his body even after hospital treatment.

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Oleksandra Zaritska

Lead singer of band Kazka loves singing in Ukrainian, aims for ‘bigger, better’

By **Toma Istomina**
istomina@kyivpost.com

The lead singer of the up-and-coming Ukrainian band Kazka, Oleksandra Zaritska, has always been a creative person. From her very early years, she liked wearing bright clothes, took dancing classes, and enjoyed being in the spotlight. She loved singing as well, but was too shy to do it in public until she took the plunge and performed at a celebration in high school.

The audience’s reaction surprised her. “I was shocked because the audience stood up and applauded,” she said. During her student years, Zaritska took her talent to a bigger stage by entering the vocal show *The Voice of Ukraine*. However, she didn’t get very far in the televised competition.

After graduating from Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University in her native Kharkiv, Zaritska turned back to music. She didn’t take singing classes – instead, Zaritska moved to Odesa, performed in pubs with a couple of bands and learned music by practice.

At one such performance in Odesa, Zaritska was noticed by a scout from the Ukrainian music label Mamamusic. Soon Zaritska teamed up with multi-instrumentalist Mykyta Budash. The duo presented their first single “Sviata (Holidays)” at Ukraine’s *X-Factor* music show in 2017 and made it to the fifth live broadcast show in the competition.

“We wanted to experiment and find out if people liked (Kazka’s music),” the singer said. They did. The video of Kazka’s first performance at the show attracted millions of views and a lot of positive feedback.

After the show, the band released their first music video for the song “Sviata,” which now has over 19 million views on YouTube. Soon, Ukraine’s YUNA music awards named the band the “Discovery of the Year.”

In 2018, Kazka continued with firsts. After another multi-instrumentalist Dmytro Mazuriak joined the band, Kazka released their debut album called “Karma,” and gave their first solo show in Kyiv. The album’s songs are in an experimental pop genre, mixed with electronic rhythms and Ukrainian folk themes, and all the lyrics are in Ukrainian.

Zaritska says that she loves singing in Ukrainian and she believes that people enjoy folk musical themes, because they touch a nerve. “We really want to popularize Ukrainian songs,” the singer said.

One of the songs, “Plakala (Cried),” has been a real hit, with the audio version on YouTube now having 74 million views. Recently, it made history: “Plakala” made it into the Top 10 chart of Shazam, a global music mobile application, a first for a song in the Ukrainian language.

“Nobody expected such a success, but now we want to get bigger and better, so as to live up to the people’s love.”



✓ **Name:** Oleksandra Zaritska

✓ **Age:** 26

✓ **Education:** law, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University

✓ **Profession:** Singer

✓ **Did you know?** As a child she took ballet lessons

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(Oleg Petrasjuk)



Natalia Zharkova

Freediving champ reaches greater depths as she sets new world records

By **Natalia Datskevych**
datskevych@kyivpost.com

Natalia Zharkova, 29, is already an international star in the extreme sport of freediving, in which athletes dive to great depths without any equipment, using only the power of their lungs.

Zharkova set two world records this October at the CMAS Freediving World Championships in Kas, Turkey, diving to depths of 70 meters and 95 meters using only freediving fins.

“When diving to the depths, I’m concentrating completely on my body, holding my breath for an average of three minutes, which is equivalent to 6–7 minutes at rest,” Zharkova told the Kyiv Post.

Zharkova started swimming when she was 7, but initially her parents did not expect she would take up the sport professionally, even though her family was fond of sports. Her mother was a figure skater, and her father took part in athletics and track cycling events.

“Actually, it was my grandfather who supported me the most in all of my sports endeavors,” said Zharkova.

She stopped competitive swimming at 17, took a two-year break and decided to open a new chapter in her sports career — freediving.

Ten years later, Zharkova is a world champion, an instructor in high demand, and even owns a freediving school called Deep Division in her native city of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, with a population of 1.4 million located 470 kilometers east of Kyiv.

And Zharkova is not only a diver — she also has a master’s degree in architecture, which she received after graduating from Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture.

Her freediving school has already been open for two years, so far having taught around 50 people how to free dive. Over her entire career Zharkova has already trained some 1,000 divers worldwide.

“The age at which it is worth starting this sport is very important,” said Zharkova. “Freediving is not a sport for very young people, since when you’re 18 years old and you have a hot head, it will rather hinder you than help you.”

This sport requires self-discipline, body control and perseverance, the athlete said.

“You need to be able to take small steps forward every day instead of trying to run the whole distance in one day and then give up on the third day,” Zharkova said.



✓ **Name:** Natalia Zharkova

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture

✓ **Profession:** athlete, architect

✓ **Did you know?** Besides diving deep, Zharkova windsurfs and dreams of riding the big waves of Hawaii.

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Oleksandr Zhuk

Teacher of the year dreams of his own school to help children with special needs

By **Natalia Datskevych**
datskevych@kyivpost.com

Oleksandr Zhuk, a computer science teacher from Zaporizhia, won the annual national Global Teacher Prize Ukraine 2018 at the age of 29.

Working with children with hearing problems and the deaf at a boarding school called Dzherelo (Ukrainian for “a spring” or water source), the teacher feels personal responsibility for the children in his care.

“I understand that every day is important — both for the children and for myself personally. I do not perceive my work as a job, as it’s simply a pleasure for me,” Zhuk told the Kyiv Post.

Originally from Dnipro, Zhuk did not dream of becoming a teacher in a childhood. Instead, he wanted to be a banker, and he even entered Alfred Nobel Dnipropetrovsk University of Economics and Law.

However, Zhuk realized that this was not the profession for him. “When you work only with a computer, you don’t feel contact with people, and it really made me feel isolated,” he said.

So Zhuk decided to study psychology in Zaporizhia, the city of 750,000 people located 560 kilometers southeast of Kyiv, as well. Then, when he was 19, he started to work as social tutor at the boarding school, where he still works now. At first, Zhuk set the goal of understanding how the children he was teaching developed.

“My mom was shocked when she found out that I was going to work at a school. I thought I would try six months or a year there, but after two months I realized that I wasn’t going to leave,” Zhuk said.

Zhuk entered the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, where he studied speech therapy for the deaf. Later, he started to work as a computer science teacher at the same school.

Now his working day begins at dawn.

“I get up at five o’clock in the morning to wake up the kids at 6:45 a.m. After that, they have breakfast, we do exercises, and go to school, where the classes start,” said Zhuk.

After lessons, the teacher’s working day continues — he prepares children for various festivals and competitions. Zhuk’s students are winning prizes in computer graphics, web design, and ecology competitions. The children have traveled all over Ukraine. In December, they plan to visit Poland.

“At the beginning of each year I’m already planning where we will go, which competitions we’ll participate in, and what the kids will do on vacations,” Zhuk said. His biggest dream now is to open his own school of robotics and modeling, where children with special needs will also be able to study.



✓ **Name:** Oleksandr Zhuk

✓ **Age:** 29

✓ **Education:** Alfred Nobel Dnipropetrovsk University of Economics and Law, Zaporizhzhia National University, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, Zaporizhzhia Regional Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education.

✓ **Profession:** computer science teacher

✓ **Did you know?** Besides dancing and doing yoga, Zhuk designs clothes — even the wedding dress for his future wife.

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