

School supports Ukraine relief

Commentary by Natalia Rekhter

GLOBAL The Carmel Russian School of Indiana was co-founded in 1994 by three immigrant families from Ukraine, Russia and Moldova. The Weisburd, Pekar and Kleyman families were Jewish refugees who fled persecution in the Soviet Union in search of freedom for themselves and for their families. They were supported by the Indianapolis community, settled in Indiana and have considered themselves Americans for the past 30-plus years.

Our organization's name may be "The Russian School of Indiana" (for now, more on that later), but our Eastern European members collectively overcame Russia's religious, ethnic and economic oppression in search of freedom in America. Since our school's foundation, our mission has been to build a multicultural community open to any Hoosier who is interested in the best parts of Eastern Europe's heritage: the arts, languages, science, music, history and food. We feel that our name no longer represents our mission, so we have decided to change it. We feel that it is best to get feedback from the community, so please send new name suggestions to info@indyrussian-school.com.

We aim to be a uniting organization, so we have historically stayed out of divisive politics. However, we feel a moral obligation to voice our vehement objection to the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces. We stand with the Ukrainian people against Russian President Vladimir Putin, his regime and the Russian military's invasion of Ukraine.

Many friends have asked us how they can support Ukraine, so we find ourselves in a unique position to help. We have contacts in Ukraine who have dedicated two hotel buildings in western Ukraine to host Ukrainian families who lost their homes; they also provide transportation to take Ukrainian families across the border to Poland and Moldova. They need help with winter and spring clothes for children and adults, feminine products, baby formula, diapers, wipes, baby supplies, and money for gasoline and to provide families with spending money for after they cross the border.

Learn more at amazon.com/registries/custom/307VTMFISTIFQ.

Natalia Rekhter is director and an owner of the Carmel-based Russian School of Indiana, which provides educational opportunities for children and adults from central Indiana.