

## Buffalo's worried Ukrainian community rallies to support home country

Buffalo News - Natalie Brophy , Mark Sommer - Feb 26, 2022



*Rev. Marijan Procyk, right, presides over a rosary service at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, where local Ukrainians prayed for peace in their home country on Thursday. More Ukrainians in Buffalo gathered at the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center on Genesee Street on Saturday. John Hickey / Buffalo News*

Tetiana Zelinska-Kettelman was born in Ukraine but now lives in Buffalo with her husband.

On Saturday she was one of more than 100 people who crowded the library room at the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center on Genesee Street looking for ways to help the Ukrainian people, who are fighting for their country after Russian troops invaded Thursday. Attacks have since killed and injured civilians as a reported 150,000 Ukrainians have fled to nearby countries for safety.

Zelinska-Kettelman said she wants to start a social media campaign to get the attention of Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen and the Bills Mafia to come together to support and raise money for Ukraine.

Like many Ukrainians living in Western New York, Zelinska-Kettelman has family and friends back home she's worried about. Her mother lives in the western Ukrainian city of Ternopil, and while she is safe right now, she is scared. One of Zelinska-Kettelman's friends and her new baby fled the capital city of Kyiv while the friend's husband stayed behind to fight.

"It's horrible what's happening there," Zelinska-Kettelman said. "I never thought in my life I would ever see this type of war happening in my country. I hate the fact that I'm not there, because I do want to be there to help."

Alexandra Savka worries about her brother's safety since he joined the Ukrainian Army earlier this week to resist Russia's military onslaught.

"I don't know where he is now," said Savka, a Buffalo resident born in Ukraine. "He is 55 and left his kids and grandkids and is somewhere in the army. I am worrying he is in Kyiv, where there were bombings all night."

Savka is able to talk to her mother, but the conversations are grim.

"She's worried and saying goodbye," Savka said.

Savka said she hasn't been able to sleep the last three days and stays up all hours of the night to catch up on international news. Ukrainian clocks are set seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Conversations with other relatives are now fewer and further between, as they head to underground shelters or to Poland, which has accepted Ukrainian refugees with open arms, Savka said.

Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, who was at the Ukrainian Cultural Center on Saturday, said the city of Buffalo is preparing to accept Ukrainian refugees if needed.

"We all have a responsibility to stand in solidarity with Ukraine," Brown said.

Sophia Kenn said she has heard sirens on the other end of the phone as she talks with her relatives in western Ukraine. The sirens alert citizens to move to a bomb shelter.

"I am very proud of my president and especially the soldiers that are fighting and protecting our land," Kenn said. "They are afraid but they are fighting. They are not giving up. They are standing up for Ukraine."

Yuri Darmograi said his brother, two sons-in-law and a brother-in-law, who all live in a village in western Ukraine about 400 miles from Kyiv, rushed to join the army. They are prepared to fight if Russian troops make it into the region.

"I am worried but not scared," Darmograi said. "I am sure we will make a victory. Everybody there believes in victory."

### **How you can help**

Emil Bandriwsky, president of the [Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center](#) in Buffalo, said the most impactful thing the Western New York community can do to help the Ukrainian people is to educate themselves on what's happening.

"Ukraine is a peaceful, democratic country that wants to live by European standards," Bandriwsky said. "They want to live like Poland, like Germany, like France, like Italy. They want to live like civilized people, not like Russian serfs."



*Yuri Hreshchyshyn, who grew up in Buffalo, is president of the Buffalo chapter of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. He called the threat from Russia a prolonged one.*

*John Hickey / Buffalo News*

Yuri Hreshchyshyn, president of Buffalo's Ukrainian Congress Committee for America, also encouraged people to pray for Ukraine.

There are three prayer services scheduled at Buffalo churches:

- 6:30 p.m. Feb. 28 at St. Stanislaus Church, 389 Peckham St.
- 6:15 p.m. March 3 at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, 308 Fillmore Ave.
- 6:15 p.m. March 10 at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church

"It's important to pray," Hreshchyshyn said. "It's probably our most powerful weapon."

Buffalo's Ukrainian community leaders have organized a letter-writing campaign and urge citizens to reach out to their elected officials by mail, email and phone. Sample letters are available at [UkrainiansOfBuffalo.com](http://UkrainiansOfBuffalo.com).

Kenn is among those who have written more than 2,000 letters so far to leaders urging financial support for the Ukrainian Army and actions against Russia.

"We know the whole world is watching us, but we need more support," Kenn said.

**People can also visit [UkrainiansOfBuffalo.com](http://UkrainiansOfBuffalo.com) to donate to the Ukrainian American Freedom Foundation, which is working to ship badly needed medical, surgical and humanitarian supplies to Ukraine. Checks payable to "UAFF Ukraine Aid Fund" can be mailed to UAFF-Dnipro, 562 Genesee St., Buffalo, NY 14204.**

## Local Ukrainians gather at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church to pray for peace



### St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church

Ukrainians arrive for a rosary service Feb. 24. at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church.

John Hickey / Buffalo News



### Lighting candles

Olha Synyshyn, left, and Ann Serediuk light candles during the rosary.

John Hickey / Buffalo News



### Ukrainian rosary service for peace

Rev. Marijan Procyk, right, presides over a rosary service at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, where local Ukrainians prayed for peace and an end to Russia's invasion in Ukraine.

John Hickey / Buffalo News



### Ukrainians pray for peace

Parishoners gather at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church to pray for peace.

John Hickey / Buffalo News



### **Praying the Rosary**

Rev. Marijan Procyk presides over a rosary service at St. Nicholas Church on Fillmore Avenue.  
John Hickey / Buffalo News



Nadia Mark prays the rosary on Feb. 24, 2022.  
John Hickey / Buffalo News



Elaine Nowadly says the rosary prayer.  
John Hickey / Buffalo News