

# Ukraine



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS CLARK

## Makhorkina wants people to learn about her homeland

BY PHILIP WALZER

**A**s president of the Tidewater Ukrainian Cultural Association, **Anna Makhorkina (M.A. '00, Ph.D. '07)** mostly focused on community celebrations promoting the country's centuries-long history and culture.

Her role became more urgent after the war started. She helped organize rallies in support of Ukrainian independence. She was interviewed by local TV stations. She lobbied members of Congress to help refugees and went to Washington to advocate for continued support.

"My heart hurts for all of Ukraine," Makhorkina said, "and I worry about my parents' safety." Her parents live in Lviv in western Ukraine. That part of the country is farthest from Russia, so damage has been less severe, though the city, like the rest of Ukraine, has suffered extended power outages. "It's relatively safe," she said, "except for the occasional missile flying by."

Makhorkina left Ukraine for graduate school in 1998. She chose Old Dominion, where she earned master's and doctoral degrees in

international studies, for the program's strong reputation and connections to NATO.

She later taught international relations and ran a translation business. After that, she became assistant director of the ODU Peninsula Center and associate director for regional transfer centers. In January, Makhorkina was appointed to the new position of associate director of transfer initiatives, helping guide students to degree completion and academic success. What's most satisfying, she said, is when graduates she worked with call to thank her for her guidance after they get their first job.

When the war broke out, "I was not surprised but disappointed," Makhorkina, 46, said. "There was peace in Europe for almost 80 years. It's unacceptable that it was so brutally disrupted."

She believes "there can be no negotiation unless Russia completely pulls out of the country. Ukraine's sovereignty is inviolable."

She appreciates the strong U.S. support for Ukraine, though she wishes it had come sooner. Makhorkina, who became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2005, also marvels at the kindness and generosity of Americans. What else does she think they can do? Write politicians on behalf of Ukraine. Learn more about the country. ("It's a huge economic powerhouse. It's also beautiful, with mountains and lakes and forests the world is not seeing right now.")

Her degrees, she said, prepared her for her expanded duties at the association – giving interviews, explaining Ukraine's significance. "When I talk, people listen. They know I know what I'm talking about."

The thread that links her job at ODU and her activism for Ukraine, she said, is the belief that "you can truly make a difference in somebody's life."

Makhorkina and her two children climbed Ukraine's tallest mountain, Mount Hoverla, in the Carpathians in the summer of 2021. She's confident they will return. "I'm optimistic the war will be over soon. We will have a huge Ukrainian celebration then, and everyone is invited."