

Heart of Giving Podcast – April 4, 2023
Art Taylor Interviews Kateryna Zhuk (Katia)
Transcript, Part 1 of 2

Art: [00:00:00] Our featured BBB Wise Giving Alliance accredited Charity Seal holders for this episode are Mercy Home for Boys and Girls Learning Ally National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. To find out more about these and other BBB Wise giving Alliance accredited charity seal holders. Go to give.org.

Announcer: You're listening to The Heart of Giving Podcast with Art Taylor, powered by BBB Give.org. Here we explore the motivations that form the basis of giving and service. We inspire, generosity, and celebrate the transformative effects that giving and service have on the human spirit and on community. The conversations featured on the podcast also uncover giving strategies that educate [00:01:00] and provide tools to help listeners make impactful gifts of both their time and money. We hope you enjoy this episode.

Art: Welcome to The Heart of Giving podcast, powered by BBB Give.org. Give.org is the nation's standards based charity evaluator, and it's your one-stop source for information on giving and reports on the most asked about charities. I'm Art Taylor, your host.

Art: We continue to turn our attention to what's going on into Ukraine when the war started. Now, over a year ago, we saw an outpouring of support from American philanthropic institutions, companies, and most importantly, American citizens to support the efforts underway to help people who are affected by the war in the region.[00:02:00]

Art: And I know our website got an enormous amount of attention during that time because people wanted to know where they could go to support charities that were doing important work in the region at the time, and who could act, actually deliver aid and other needed support to people who were escaping from the war in the Ukraine, or being forced to move from their homes to other places.

Art: We decided that we would try to stay in tune with what was going on there, and over the last year or so, we've had other individuals speak to us about the situation, including some charity leaders, individuals who are parts of. Large international relief organizations who are assisting in the area, and we were also able to speak with an advocate for the [00:03:00] Ukraine who gave us some insight as to what might need to happen if we're going to deliver the kind of support that people need.

Art: That was with former Ukrainian finance minister, Natalie Jusco, and I commend that podcast to you as well as the ones we've done with other international organization leaders today. However, we're going to introduce to you someone who is actually a Ukrainian citizen. She's lived and worked in the Ukraine, all of her life.

Art: She is currently the co-founder and director of the charity monitoring organization in the Ukraine called Charity Turner. She also worked in the journalism field prior to that, and she's

also a CSR specialist and media trainer but we wanted [00:04:00] to reach out to her because of her, her status as a monitoring organization leader.

Art: Just like Give.org, which is tasked with identifying the most trustworthy charities in the United States for people to give to. We have partner organizations of separate of course, but partner organizations like Charity Turner and Ukraine, and a host of others around the world that are doing monitoring work to help people in those countries understand what's going on with the charity.

Art: But today we have Kateryna Zhuk, we call her Katia, and Katia is going to speak to us about what she's seeing, what charities there are ones, and how we go about determining how we can support them. Because I know Americans are still very concerned about what's going on there and still want to provide some of their philanthropic [00:05:00] dollars to help that situation.

Art: So Kateryna, we are thrilled to have you and I should add, we've commissioned Kateryna to begin doing blogs every other week, and you'll be able to read her blog on give.org, which will provide insight to you from a bird's eye view. Now, Kateryna is not living currently in the Ukraine, and we're going to hear that story. She's living in, in Poland, in Warsaw.

Art: Right. But you're going find out that she has a bird's eye view on the situation in the Ukraine and what the needs and aspirations are for philanthropic groups that are trying to help people on the ground. This will be part one of our interview with Katia and part two will be coming up the following week.

Art: I hope you'll listen in for that as well. So Kateryna, [00:06:00] welcome to the Heart of Giving podcast.

Katia: Thank you so much.

Art: I'll just say upfront that English is not Kateryna's first language. She speaks Russian as her first language. And so you're going have to be a little patient at moments.

Art: We're going have to repeat some things just to make sure we get it clear, but I thought it was so important that give.org be in a position to share with you the insights of someone who is there in the area and who can tell us. What the needs and aspirations are. So, Kateryna, again, I want to welcome you and I want to just start by asking you to tell us your story.

Art: As it as it happens. Your story is not very different than many people who lived in Ukraine when the war began and now find themselves in the [00:07:00] region. Now you're in, in, Poland, but what, at what point did you have to leave home? To get to Poland?

Katia: Um, no. We live in Kiev in March year ago with my husband and was with my three kids.

Katia: Also that was, we lived not far from Bucha in Gusto. It's near 10 or 50 minutes, 15 minutes near our homes. And then that was times the first days of March when you started surrounded by Russian Corps. At that time, so all my friends started to tell me, Hey, Katia you should go.

Katia: You should go. Like, come on, you should go. You have three kids, you should go. We don't know what it would be. After [00:08:00] some days we really didn't know and we are some scared because we heard all the things that was near us and the. Only when we was in, in Warsaw, the end of March. This was , yesterday, or two days ago.

Katia: That was a really sad anniversary of the invasion, your rememberable world. Remember this, this date that's last days of March when Ukrainians came to, to this little villages. Yeah, little cities, satellite cities near Kiev. It was horrible. So I'm really - we heard it all. And we goes by evacuation.

Katia: With some other refugees because I, I have my car, but without any gas. [00:09:00] Mm-hmm. Yeah. So my car, yes, stay near my home some, some weeks. And then volunteers came and get my car for drive until the July. So there was some, some telephone numbers and I called to Synagogue. One of the community, Jewish community in Kiev and asked them about help with location for my family.

Katia: And they told me that they go now only to Moldova, not to Poland, but to Moldova. And they told, okay, okay, let's no reason I go to nowhere, you know, goes to nowhere. I don't know where to live, what to do, what to eat, how to work, and. I don't know anything. I understand only that after two or three days , my kids [00:10:00] will be as far as possible for from home.

Katia: So that's was in our minds. And we, and after today, that was 7th of March and 9th of March, we start to go to to Moldova. And it goes 10 hours. In the peaceful life that was three and a half hours from Kyiv to, to, you know, to border with Moldova. That's, that's not far, but we go 10 hours because there was a lot of Russian corpses in...yeah.

Katia: Then after border we go to, Place in nowhere. Still in nowhere. That was my first time in Moldova. And we goes to, I don't know, that was a place for for Ukrainian refugees the border with the border, Romania and Moldova. Sowe go to Moldova. So from [00:11:00] Kiev to this place in, in Moldova. 20 hours for our trip by bus with another people and...

Katia: Staying on the border

Art: Or something that would normally have taken three hours.

Katia: Yeah. Normally it's three hours, three, three and a half hours. , from Kyiv to border. Ws, Moldova, that's not far. Yeah. And, but we go the 20 hours to this some center for for refugees in Moldova. And they started to searching to search some, place in Chisinau for family to rent maybe some flat apartment for one day or some day because I understood at that moment that we can stay in the, this summer camp.

Katia: That was really summer camp in the winter. It's really [00:12:00] cold without, without kitchen, without stores. This was problem for us. This problem for family was little kid.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Katia: Because my Bronca had this time mm-hmm. One, one year and 11 months. So. Yeah, she had to do two, two years. Oh, birthday in, in Warsaw. Yeah. And my, my friend from Holland, he, he helped us, he find a place because there's no, any internet, you know, that's only, only messenger. With some words by some minutes, you know, that's really problematically story. So he find for us, place for three nights, one, one room, little apartment. And then I started to search some ways how [00:13:00] to, to get So I don't know what it was and I don't know what was in my mind.

Katia: I really, that's forever refugee that's, I know after this year and work with refugee also. I understand that it's not about when, maybe it's not about logic. Some misuse, you know, that's, that's about emotions. I understood that I mm-hmm. Want to go worse, so, the place not far from, from Ukraine place with opportunities and at first was opportunities to help.

Katia: Yeah other Ukrainians. So that was in my mind. I that's was in Avitation named saying that your. Every day, every month, many years, [00:14:00] you help someone you know and even when something change in in your life, you want. To do the same. That's your life. You'll, you'll live it. Yeah. So it's fun was start to go worse.

Katia: So, and my colleague from , IFI Anna helped me a lot find, found for us a place, apartment in war. Place to stay. And then we started to search some, some apartment for rent. Of course. Yeah. And yeah, we really can search it more than three months, but, but now I'm here. Yeah. So the my older daughter goes to the sixth class in [00:15:00] Polish.

Katia: My kids now in kindergarten. My younger kids, my son and my daughter now in kindergarten, and they, they speak Polish, their kids speak Polish. It's really interesting because I don't speak Polish. I understand. But I don't speak Polish. That's, that's hard.

Art: (laughs)

Katia: But understand 99% I. But I, I, I can't start to speak, you know, that's some block. So we are here and from after some weeks we started to go out from apartment, something far, the one or two streets. Yeah. To understand where we are and what to do because we was disappointed something. Yeah, we were disappointed, you know, didn't understand what to do [00:16:00] and how to leave you know, and they everyday news it's, this was horrible.

Katia: This was horrible months. And then I found job in in Warsaw. As a relocation officer in Jewish community. So I worked there four months and worked with also with refugees. Same as me! (laughs) With people. Same people. So we we understood each other. Yeah. And we talk a lot about their plans. And as relocation officer, I helped them to go to another country or maybe just to stay in Poland.

Katia: That's, this was a people in the same situation. They, they was still, [00:17:00] , disoriented. Yeah. And but partly that was a new experience for me. Part of them was from , Mari. From Crimea. From Kyiv, the people without hope. Without hope because of bombs and because of Russian attacks. Mm-hmm. So people, yeah.

Katia: Yeah. So they, they there was time that the, they will, they, they tried to understand, Not even how, not how to be, how, how to breathe after all. That's the first what, where we are. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's, that's horrible.

Art: Well, let me shift a little bit. This is a incredible story and I, I listen to you talk and I, I say, wow, you had to go through that, but [00:18:00] you're one of probably a million people who've had to go through something similar. Given the number of refugees that we've seen over the last year or so, leaving the Ukraine. I'm not sure what the exact figures are, but I know it's, last I heard, was over a million people that had to leave the Ukraine and head to a surrounding country.

Art: Do you know what the exact stats are on that?

Katia: Oh, a lot. That was from first days of our, from early morning, 24th of February year ago. Started, yeah, I know thousands of thousands people started to go to Poland and staying on water. So I have friends that staying on water two or three days.

Katia: Days. [00:19:00] So, you know, when a community proposed us to go, not to Poland, but to Moldova at first, I, I thought, okay, okay. It'll be faster. That's my first, you know, that was the first. It'll be faster because my really close friend was a little kid. She stayed two or three days at the border.

Katia: So yeah, it's many thousands of people and you know, we go out from home and the middle of the day, 24 of February and first, the first that we saw. Horrible traffic. Horrible traffic that goes to, to out of the city. You know, that's, yeah. A lot of people. And they hear [00:20:00] still a lot of people more than in other countries because that's the first, the Polish language

Katia: Is mostly similar with Ukraine and Ukraine and Russian language with both this language. Yes. So we're starting to understand a Polish language is much faster than another language. Yes. In European Union and a lot of people from in Ukraine don't know English, English language. So that's, yeah.

Katia: What you can do without any language. Yes. Yeah. That's, that's the first and the second Poland always was, you know, really close to us. Mentality and some region in, in Ukraine, partly, partly talk on, on Polish language so I knew before in, [00:21:00] in Kiev not, you know, something far from Poland, from even in Kiev I knew before it goes to Poland.

Katia: Yeah, I use some words in Polish. So we are really close and yeah, that's the reason that people started to go at first to Poland. Yeah, because we are, yeah.

Art: Well, listen, we're into this pretty deep. We're going probably have to end it here, but I wanted to give our listeners just a sense of what you've gone through and some ideas about what you're doing professionally with your organization.

Art: To help people identify charities that aren't scamming them. Charities that are doing good. And also to appreciate the needs that are going on now, what you lay out as being housing, number one, and secondly, emotional support. That being [00:22:00] to help deal with the trauma that you've all experienced. And in that we've also found out that you see the situation as they're being Ukrainians are separated.

Art: You have those who are living inside of you, Ukraine, who may not see the trauma that they're experiencing, but they are nonetheless, and those outside of the Ukraine having different needs. So this has been very helpful, very enlighten. And we'll do these two, these two episodes. We'll do these separate episodes.

Art: We'll divide these up so that people can absorb how you've answered these questions in two bites rather than one straight episode to give them the time to go through it a couple of times if they need to, to appreciate what you said. And again, I want to just highlight for every. That Katia will be doing a blog for us that you can see on [00:23:00] give.org.

Art: It'll be starting soon and she'll be posting every two weeks to give us some insights into what's happening there and the charity scene in particular, and the needs of the people that we can help with. In the United States and other places where you're listening to this podcast. So Katia, thank you for joining us today and obviously there'll be much more to come through your blogs.

Art: And for all of those who are listening for the first time, I want to thank you for tuning in to the Heart of Giving podcast and I hope that you will be a supplier. Subscriptions are really important because the way the podcast algorithms work is that the more subscribers you have, the more people who are likely to discover that the podcast exists.

Art: And we've had such amazing guests on this show over the last year and a half, [00:24:00] two years and a half. Two and a half years we've been doing this that I just hope that more and more people get to know about it. And the way that happens is by you to go on your favorite podcast platform, whether that's Apple, Spotify, Google Play, or Pod Bean for that matter.

Art: And just like the podcast, like the show. And you'll be a subscriber and you'll get all of the new additions as they come out each week. This is a weekly show every Tuesday. Well, and if you want to support the podcast financially, you can do so by going to Give.org and making a donation there. And I hope you'll follow Katia's blog.

Art: It's really important for all of us here. In the United States and other places who want to support Ukraine to understand what's going on in the charity space. Because those organizations are filling the gaps. They are attempting to reach the needs of people in ways that we could never even imagine existed.

Art: So let's stay on top of that and that's [00:25:00] why I'm so excited to, to have Katia now and join us to provide that insight. So thank you for listening and we'll see you back here for a new episode next week.

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